

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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THE IRISH TRAVELLING PEOPLE

A resource collection

Editor: Aileen L'Amie

Volume 13 : Republic of Ireland

Part B : 1982-85

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

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VOLUME 13 PART B : REPUBLIC OF IRELAND 1982-85

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Editor's note to Volume 13: The Republic of Ireland 1982-85
Part B.

This volume forms part of a resource collection on the Irish Travelling People. The collection and its accompanying teaching kit of photographs, slides and tape are held in the library of the University of Ulster at Jordanstown. In addition to the 1 volumes listed below there are two supplementary collections, the first containing three reports/surveys by the West Midlands Education Authority and the second containing some recent annual reports of councils and committees for Travelling People in Ireland.

VOLUME 1 : Early History (Parts A-C)
VOLUME 2 : The Republic of Ireland 1951-81 (Parts A-H)
VOLUME 3 : Northern Ireland (Parts A-D)
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VOLUME 5 : The United States of America
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VOLUME 7 : Folktales and Folk Music
VOLUME 8 : Education (Parts A-J)
VOLUME 9 : Gypsy Site Provision in England and Wales (Parts A-D)
VOLUME 10 : Table of Contents and Bibliography
VOLUME 11 : Health and Welfare
VOLUME 12 : Annual Reports (Parts A-E)
VOLUME 13 : Republic of Ireland 1982-85 (Parts A-B)
VOLUME 14 : Gypsies and Other Nomadic Groups
VOLUME 15 : Miscellaneous

Due to the amount of material some volumes have had to be bound in separate sections, eg Volume 6, Part A and Volume 6, Part B. Many of the volumes contain material which has been specially written for the collection. The page numbers in each volume are prefixed by the volume number, hence 5.16 refers to volume 5 page 16 and 12A4 to volume 12 section A page 4. The supplement page numbers are prefixed by the letter 'S' followed by the page number. Any other page number present willrelate to the original book or journal from which the material has been reproduced. Where the material consists of an extract or extracts this fact is indicated in the table of contents, eg Maher, Sean (1972) The Road to God Knows Where, (extracts pp146-9). Where all or part of an article appeared directly relevant to more than one area of the collection it has been included in each of the volumes concerned.

Part B of Volume 13 contains additional material from the period 1982-85. As with Part A the material is arranged in chronological order. Only a small representative sample of the numerous newspaper articles and reports are included. For further details readers are advised to consult newspaper back-issues and/or files. The Irish Times has a very large file of items relating to The Travellers. As with the other volumes in the collection, thanks are due to many people including Betty Monteith for typing and to Carol Blair for checking the page numbering.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

August, 1986.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

SPATE OF ROBBERIES

IN a heated meeting outside St. Marks School in Springfield last Thursday, the Tallaght Action Group decided unanimously to act against the itinerants parked around Tallaght.

"Ever since Mary Robinson's High Court action which prohibited the removal of itinerants from fenced land, it has become increasingly difficult to get them out, and now they park on fenced land too", claimed Tallaght Community Council executive Noel Murphy. "There are some 100 caravans around Tallaght and there has been a spate of robberies. In the neighbouring estate to the itinerants, Virginia Heights, three houses were

Continued on page 8



● Itinerants in Tallaght are given their marching orders.

Itinerants blamed

●Confrontation: Michael J. O'Sullivan P.C. (centre), chairman of St. Marks R.A., Tallaght, puts his case to John O'Brien (right).

Cont. from page 1

broken into since they settled there.

All in all, a few hundred houses were broken into in the past 12 months. One 13 years old itinerant boy has 27 house-breaking charges against him".

Many Tallaght residents feel that the itinerants parked in Tallaght are not bona fide Irish travellers, but social drop outs. Some residents claim that some British local authorities have informed Dublin County Council that 150 travelling families are missing from the British register and indeed, some caravans with GB registrations and stickers have been seen in Tallaght.

When Tallaght Action Group chairman Richie Reilly asked the 350 Tallaght residents who attended last Saturday's meeting for suggestions, shouts like 'Burn them out' were heard from the angry participants. Other suggestions included moving the itinerants out forcibly and in spite of some calls to avoid violence, the majority decided to march and force them out of the area.

"Must be moved"

"We shall have to have them moved", Grace convery told the angry meeting. "After our march last Thursday, my 18 years old daughter was taken by six itinerants into the lane off Blessington Road and threatened by them. They pushed her and cursed her and was it not for a passing car, worse things could have happened. When we took her to the Tallaght police, they did not want to put in a report".

Indeed, the general feeling was that the Tallaght police could not be expected to do anything about moving the itinerants out. TDs were not much better. "In our meeting last Tuesday, Deputy Mary Harney (FF) promised to lead our march against the itinerants, but at a county council meeting on Thursday she reneged. She and Chris Flood voted against the march because, as she said, lives would be lost", Richie Reilly told the meeting.

"Until Thursday I felt that mutual education could solve the problem", said Grace Convery, "but now I feel the only way is to shift them. You should be able to walk safely around your estate. When it comes to the safety of your own children, it's time for action".

"The itinerants are well organised", said another resident, "they have a JCB and whenever they are dug out by the council, they dig their way back into the site".

"Resettling the itinerants should be a national problem, not a Tallaght problem", said Richard Raymond, TCC chairman. "We don't want to get like Clondalkin is now. Quite apart from the spate of robberies, the general tone of the area is lowered with their broken cars all over the place".

After much agitated argument, the meeting decided to act by holding a march this Wednesday which will not be just a protest march, but will aim to move the itinerants out, by force if necessary. People were asked not to bring children along and to prepare for battle.

Wednesday, May 12, 1982



1382

Irish Travelling People: a Resource C
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13 B3

Itinerant Problem

The People Make Their Protest

Now It's Time For Action

In-Action by successive Governments to tackle the problem of Itinerant Halting Sites is directly responsible for the growing anger of the settled community towards the travellers.

The people of Tallaght and particularly Springfield showed this anger when they held two peaceful demonstrations to protest at the presence of the itinerants and to demand that they move-on. The first March was held on Thursday 5th of May at which 600 people took part. The second, which took place on Wednesday 12th was attended by 300 people, many of the original numbers staying away because of fear of possible violence. But both marches were peaceful and well conducted.

Before the protest on May 12th the people gathered outside St. Mark's N.S. in Springfield where they were addressed by the chairman of the Action Group, Ritchie O'Reilly.

The crowd was also addressed by Fr. Vincent Travers Op. Parish Priest of St. Mary's, who offered his services in any way he could to help solve the problem. He felt that to march again might lead to tempers flaring and possible violence. Councillor Damien Murray spoke to the crowd and he also felt that the second protest should not go ahead.

The Action Group had come under pressure from various sources during the week, including a counter demonstation group, not to go ahead with the second march and the Action Group Committee had decided that their point was made, but, on a show of hands the crowd of 300 decided unaminously to march.

The residents of the area have a justification in protesting. They have to put up with the problems of dirt, wandering horses and dogs and robberies. The counter demonstrators also have the right to show that the itinerants need help, not intimidation. Now that the protest has been made perhaps some action, from all sides, will be taken to help solve this problem.

A further meeting will be held on Friday 14th May and it will be attended by Fr. Travers and all the local politicians.



Rose Dugdale, was at the Protest March supporting the Counter demonstration.

12TH MAY 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

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Protest puts families back on the road again

ONLY one hour after 800 people marched on itinerant encampments in Tallaght last Thursday giving them two days to get out of the area, some of the familles had begun to move their caravans out onto the Naas dual carriageway.

The march was over, the residents had finished their say, and the itinerants were frightened. Most of the 50 families along the four mile stretch stayed put but seven decided to leave immediately.

The residents from Springfield. Virginia Heights. Millbrook Lawns and Raheen had met at Springfield estate and moved along the Belfgard Road, to the Tallaght by-pass and then onto Fortunestown and back. A deputation of four people went up to each caravan asking the travellers to leave within 48 hours, while a dozen Gardai kept watch. But apart from one incident when a few people threw stones at one of the caravans, there was no violence.

Residents claimed that they had been robbed and attacked by the itinerants and it was now time to take action.

"The local church has been robbed, houses have been burgled and horses and goats are everywhere," said Barry O'Callaghan who is on the special committee formed last week to remove the itinerants.

Richie O'Reilly, who headed the deputation, was confident that the itinerants would move pretty quickly: "90% of them will go and it remains to be seen how we will move those who won't go," he said firmly.

Seven families were already on their way, however. "We had no idea that this was going to happen, but we are frightened and we are going," said Gerry Cash. His family of six children had been on the Tallaght by-pass for over a month, and now they had nowhere to go.

"We'll head back off down the country somewhere, because there is going to be trouble here. Those residents will be back," agreed Jim Connors who was taking to the road as well. "But everyone else is staying here no matter what."

"We don't want any trouble here," said Maggie Cawley who had promised to move off within the following few days. But her husband waved a pitchfork at the crowd shouting that he wasn't going anywhere.

Mary Connors too promised to leave, but said after the residents had left that she was staying put. "I have six children attending the itinerant school in Tallaght. It is the only place they can get any education, so we are staying. If there is trouble, all our men will get together and fight," she said.

But as darkness fell and the crowd drifted home, it was obvious that some itinerants had already received the message very clearly. A quiet trail of caravans wound its way down the Nass dual carriageway — on their way again.



A Tallaght resident voices her feelings at the anti itinerants meeting yesterday. Picture by Pat Cas

Compiled by Aileen Ward, University College Dublin

1384

MAY 1982



Mr. Richie Reilly, chairman of the Tallaght Action Group, addressing the anti-itinerant march last night.

MAY 1982

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1385

Residents to march again as council delays sites decision

'Force' threat to itinerants

RESIDENTS in Tallaght are this week threatening to step up their campaign to move itinerants out of the area — and have warned that they might resort to force.

And a decision on proposals to settle up to 25 itinerant families on each of 12 halting site locations in County Dublin will not be taken by councillors until Wednesday May 26.

Angry residents in Tallaght say they are "more determined than ever" to move itinerants from encampments on the Belgard and Blessington Roads, and they threaten to use physical force if necessary.

They are due to march again on the encampments in the area this Wednesday (May 10) after their demonstration last week only forced some of the families to move.

"While some families have moved from the Tallaght bypass, they have just gone to the Belgard Road site and others have moved to Blessington Road. Feelings are running very high among residents here - we are very determined this time," explains Richie O'Reilly, leader of the residents' group.

"We will move their scrap cars ourselves and we intend to just stay there until the families move. What means of physical force we will use has yet to be decided," he says.

Councillors said last week that they would meet residents' groups around the county to

By FIONA McDONALD

d the proposals for halting sites. The la the sites has already been earmarked by council officials for the 394 families already on unauthorised encampments.

Building enough big halting sites around the county is the only way to ensure proper housing for the itinerant families and education for the 1,500 children, county council officials insisted again last week at a special council meeting to consider the problem.

Strong opposition to the size of the sites and their location was expressed by a majority of councillors at the meeting.

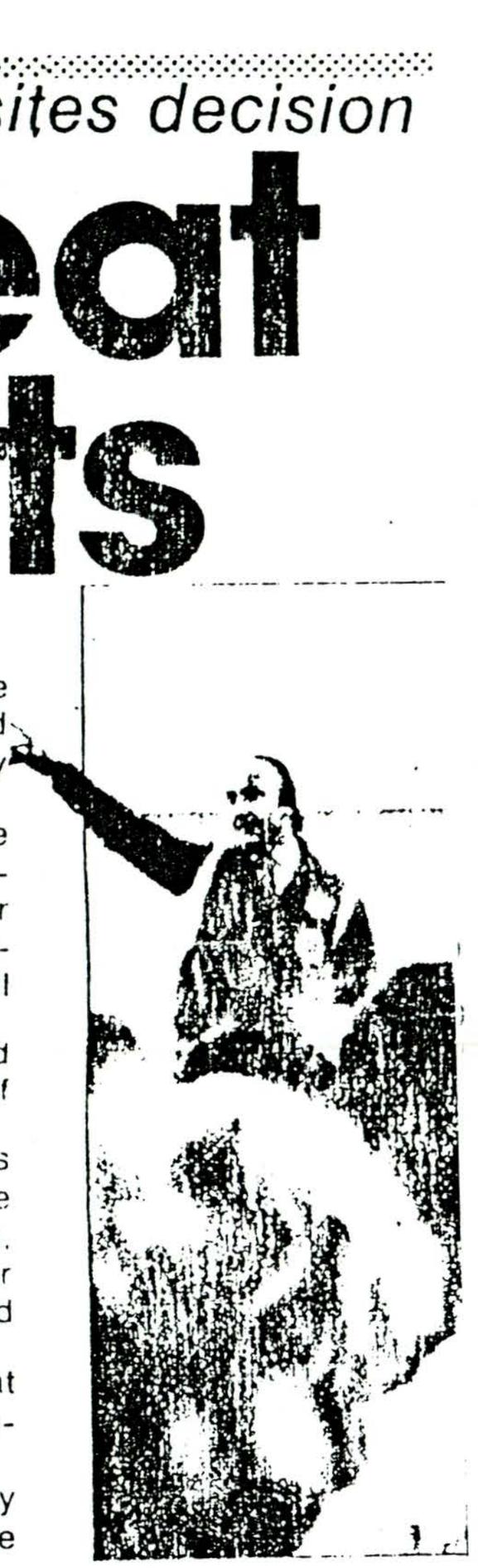
"A group of 20 halting sites in any one rea is too much. Ten families in an area can cause absolute havoc," insisted Damien Murray (FF), who was "totally opposed" to the fact that over half the proposed sites are in Tallaght and Lucan.

Since it was decided to have a s at Ballyogan, the itinerant problem there had increased, declared Paddy Hickey (FF).

Ian Brennan (FG) believed that the only way to integrate the wandering families into the community was to build chalets for them.

Barry Desmond (Lab) pointed out that the Supreme Court ruling made it impossible for the itinerants to be moved on unless alternative housing could be provided.

Councillors could not reach agreement on the plan and eventually decided to discuss it again on Wednesday, May 26.



"They will go." A confident Richie O'Reilly head of the depu to remove the ants from Tallag Bitter oppositi halting sites - Pa
Photo: Barbara C

RESIDENTS TO MARCH ON ITINERANTS

MAY 1982

ANGRY Tallaght residents are to march on local itinerant settlers tomorrow with an ultimatum that they get out of the area within 24 hours

The march was decided upon last night at a meeting of residents, called following a series of break-ins in the district, including a burglary at a local church.

The Tallaght area has been "swamped" by itinerant settlers, it was claimed, since last year's High Court ruling that itinerants could not be moved on unless alternative accommodation was provided.

Fianna Fail T.D. Mary Harney advised against the march on the settlements, saying the problem would not be solved by such action.

But she added that places like Tallaght had been carrying the itinerant burden for too long.

A proposal that the march should take place from the meeting was withdrawn. It was decided that it should take place tomorrow after notification of public representatives, community councils and residents from adjacent areas.

Councillor Chris Flood told the meeting he was proposing a programme for the establishment of 150 serviced halting sites in areas such as Killinarden, Balbriggan, Swords, Muthuddart, Portrane and Sandyford.

A Tallaght action group was formed last Sunday. A spokesman said they estimated that there were now 200 itinerant families on illegal sites in the area.

Irish Travelling People's Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen O'Carroll University Of Ulster

13B6

Anti-itinerant protest

group 'won't rule out force'

ANTI-ITINERANT protestors last night strongly rejected suggestions that they were "bully boys" but warned they have not ruled out the possibility of using force to remove an encampment from the Tallaght area.

An estimated 70 itinerant families still remain at the Blessington Road site in spite of recent marches on the settlement by local residents who have demanded they "get out" the locality.

Tension continued to simmer in the South Dublin suburb last night as the organisers, who rallied over 2,000 residents as well as a number of councillors and politicians to demonstrate against the encampment, vowed to continue their protest.

As darkness fell, horses owned by the itinerant settlers wandered around the nearby housing estate and the burnt-out remains of old cars littered the roadside.

Chairman of the action committee behind the protest, Mr. Richie O'Reilly, stated that the march on the itinerant settlers was the "last straw" and the only method left open to the residents to bring the problem to a final solution.

"But our community has been looked on as having a Hitler type approach to these itinerants and there had been suggestions that we are out to terrorise them," he said.

"We are ordinary people who are paying mortgages on our houses and we just want to live in peaceful and decent surrounding," he stressed

Mr. O'Reilly emphasised that the recent marches were peaceful and only action committee members were allowed into the field to speak to the itinerants so that there would be no violent confrontation.

But he stressed that the residents are pledged to continue their fight to get the itinerants to move out of the area "But as a last and final option I am not ruling out force," he said.

Meanwhile, the County Council announced yesterday they will send out a team of workers to remove the unsightly wrecked cars which have now been abandoned on the roadside.

"It is up to the council to provide itinerants with properly supervised halting sites and the itinerants themselves must learn to treat property with respect," stressed Mr. O'Reilly.

The public meeting scheduled for last night was cancelled because it had been called at such short notice. Another meeting is to take place early next week which will be attended by local T.D.'s councillors and clergy to discuss the problem further.

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EVENING HERALD

15 MAY 1982

13B7



• A garda keeps a close eye on marching residents.



Michael O'Sullivan, chairman of St. Mark's Residents' Association, talks with some of the itinera evenings protest march in Tallaght.

Compiled by Aileen E Ahlie, University of Ulster

TALLAGHT RESIDENTS THREATEN ITINERANTS "WITH FORCE IF NECESSARY".

OUT!

OVER 300 local people marched on itinerant families on the Belgard Road, Tallaght last Thursday, giving them just 48 hours to get out of the area. A later meeting in Springfield's St. Mark's School decided to move the itinerants out "by force, if necessary" and marchers were asked to leave their children at home and "prepare for battle".

On the march individual caravans were surrounded by hundreds of people while John O'Sullivan, chairman of St. Mark's residents association delivered the message to each family.

Martin Darby, P.R.O. for the Tallaght Community Council told the crowd after the walk that about 90% of the families had agreed to go — one voice shouted "We'll deal with the rest."



● Itinerant John O'Brien gives his side of the story.

GET OUT



● Cool it.

Cont. from page 1

Martin Darby, P.R.O. for the Tallaght Community Council told the crowd after the walk that about 90% of the families had agreed to go — one voice shouted "We'll deal with the rest"

However none of the families which *NewsWest* spoke to said that they had agreed to move. Paddy O'Brien has been on the Belgard Road for five years and four of his children are attending school there. "This will not make me move, I'm not moving my kids out of school," he said.

Tallaght residents are angry because they feel that the itinerants are being dumped in their area and that the County Council has made no attempt to distribute the travellers among other areas of the city and county. "They've made Tallaght a dumping ground for the past seven or eight years and we're sick of it," claimed Martin Darby.

The itinerants are also being held responsible for the increase in house break-ins in the area. However a local garda who has been stationed in Talaght for 11 years claimed: "if it was only the itinerants we had to worry about we wouldn't be so badly off."

"I think too much of the blame is laid on them," agreed 15-year-old Paula Flanagan from Raheen.

Hostile

The march was met by a small band of protesters holding banners and posing the question "Where Will They Go?", they were greeted with a hostile reception from the marchers.

John White from Jobstown, Tallaght, told *NewsWest* why he opposed the march:

"I think this problem is the responsibility of the County Council and we can't attack a small minority. I don't think that women and children should be put under this kind of pressure. I know that some families moved out to Clondalkin this morning when they heard the march was coming and what happens if the people in Clondalkin decide to hold a similar march. It means that we start playing ping-pong with people's lifes."

Force

Gardai were out in force and there were two ambulances on duty but the march was peaceful except for incidents in which three itinerant cars were set alight.

Tempers were high at the end of the march when Martin Darby announced that another meeting would be held on Saturday "We're sick of meetings, it's time we put them out," was the attitude of the crowd.

Local Councillor Damien Murray, Sean Walsh and John O'Sullivan, P.C. marched with the crowd. Damien Murray said he supported the march because people had had enough of the intinerants in Tallaght. He claimed that he did not see the itinerants as his constituents. "They don't want to be represented or part of a community. When a site was given to them in Clondalkin they didn't want it," he said.

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13B9

Tallaght marchers bid to oust itinerants

MORE than 400 residents of Tallaght marched to several itineran camps around the suburb demanding that they leave within 48 hours.

The march, which lasted for 90 minutes, was organised to express the frustration felt by mayn people at the inability of the local authority to solve the problems of dirt, vandalism and increased crime which the people associate with the presence of travellers.

Mr. Richie Reilly, chairman of the Action Committee, led a deputation to each caravan asking that the people leave. Apart from one or two raised voices, the march, under the supervision of local gardai, was peaceful.

A majority of itinerants said they would leave as soon as they could gather all their goods. Others weren't so co-operative: "I'm not leaving, I'm telling you straight. I've got nowhere to go to," said one father who refused to give his name.

"It's all right for you boys," said another, "that have houses to go to. I've got children going to school over there, what am I going to do with them? They have to be educated," he said.

One of the committee members, Mr. Barry O'Callaghan, said that the residents of the area were going to boycott all the travellers' goods, carpets, car parts, furniture and scrap, in the hope of getting them to leave.

However, not all the residents felt that the itinerants should be forced to go. Mr. Tony Hackett of Virginia Heights in Tallaght said that he was not in favour of the march and "there are man others as well who are nc but we haven't had a chance to organise. This is only burying your head in the sand, if you keep moving the problem fror one area to another".

Afterwards Mr. Reilly said he was very satisfied with the way the march had gone: "90% of them have agreed to go and the rest will follow them."

Earlier yesterday the St. John of God Order, who own the land for a hospital on the Belgard Road where itinerants are camping, applied for legal permission to move them off when they realised the trouble which was alleged to have occured on the site.

7 May 1982

Nan Joyce tells Councillors to 'get on with your job'

Mrs Nan Joyce of the Committee for the Rights of Travellers told a group of public representatives last week that their job was to settle travellers even if this meant opposing the wishes of residents associations.

Addressing the Joint Committee of Dublin Coporation, Dun Laoghaire Coproration and Dublin County Council for the settlement of travelling people Wednesday week (May 11) Mrs Joyce said that the "softly, softly" approach had been played too long and added that travellers would be "waiting forever" for proper accommodation if they were to wait for the settled community to accept them.

An she told the public representatives: "You will have to go against these people (residents associations) and get on with your job".

Mrs Joyce was speaking after the committee had been told that residents associations had opposed every one of the 35 halting sites earmarked throughout County Dublin for itinerant settlement.

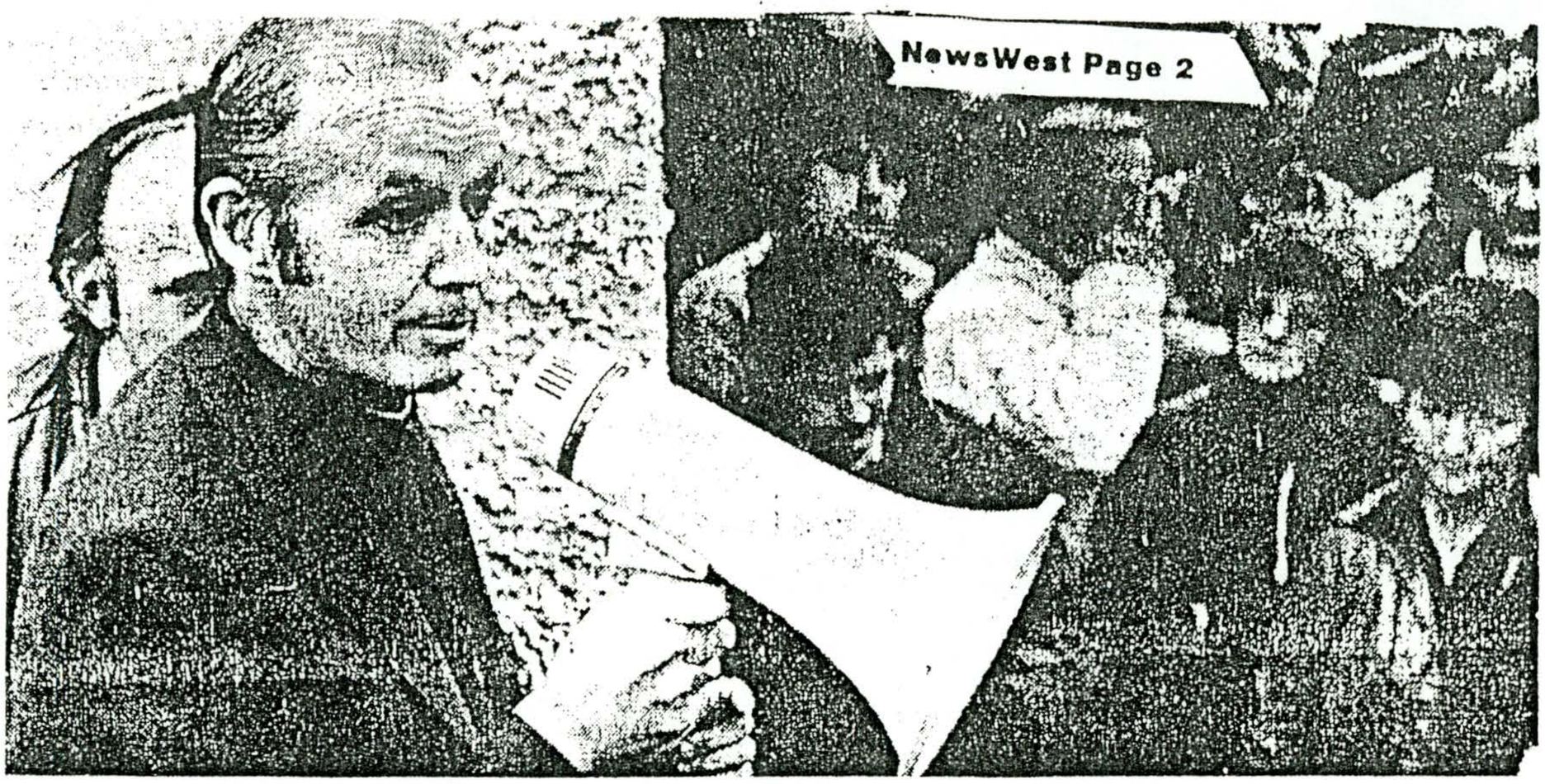
It is believed that the local authorities may now reconsider their policy of providing halting sites and try instead to implement the group housing favoured by many travellers.

The Committee for the Rights of Travellers also laid down a list of their basic demands at the meeting.

These included proper housing, and end to harassment and the implementation of the recommendations of the recent Review Body report.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

1 13 B 10



Wednesday, May 19, 1982

FR. TRAVERS of Tallaght, talking to a group of residents outside St. Marks Community School in Springfield, Tallaght, at the *anti-interant* protest march there last week.

Due to Fr Travers efforts to calm the crowd, the march passed off peacefully, and ended with a round of applause for the Gardai who were present, despite the fact that they came in for a considerable amount of abuse from the crowd when the March began.

Following a public meeting in St. Mark's School last Friday, to which members of the Press were not admitted, the Tallaght Action Group claim now to have devised "secret tactics" to solve the itinerant problem.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 11



of the Hanrahan, Wall and Donovan families on their Tallaght campsite. (Photograph: Maryann Stephens).

Anti-traveller protest may turn violent' Haughey told

by Darach MacDonald and Geraldine Grennan

'AOISEACH, Mr y, has been asked ervene in the ntation between esidents of Tallaght, Co Dublin, and itinerants ncamped in the area, it merged yesterday.

Fr Vincent Travers, parish riest of St Mary's, Tallaght, who quelled a march by angry emonstrators on the tinerant sites last Wednesday, called at the Taoiseach's home at Kinsealy on Friday evening. He asked him to move on the issue before "a tiny minority might resort to violence to resovle the problem".

Fr Travers told the Taoiseach that he believes the itinerant problem is national and needs urgent government action to avoid further, and probably more serious, confrontations.

"I believe you are in a unique position to launch this initiative," he told Mr Haughey. "The best minds in government and community should be utilised in finding a solution . . . Where evil needs opposing, and there are people who cannot help themselves, is where government and community groups properly belong".

Suggestions made by Fr Travers to Mr Haughey include the provision of halts for up to 30 families, spread throughout urban and rural Ireland, and substantial state funds to help itinerants to integrate.

Meanwhile, it has been learned that Dublin Corporation's welfare department is preparing contingency plans to avoid further confrontations in West Co Dublin where itinerants are concentrated. In cooperation with the county council, Dublin Corporation has been dealing with travelling families since the mid-1960s when a major influx to Dublin began.

Irish Travelling People: a resource collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University of Ulster

13 B 12

EVENING PRESS, WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1982

GARDAI WILL PROTECT ITINERANTS

Itinerant families in Tallaght, who have been given an ultimatum to quit the area, were today assured of Garda protection.

A Garda spokesman said: "If needs be. Gardai will beb brought frpm Donegal and Cork to ensure the safetv of these families."

understanding among the control

The families, in camps near the Springfield-Belgard Road were given until last Saturday to leave the area by the allaght Action Group, which has been behind a number of recent anti-ltinerant protests there.

Tonight, the group has organised a march to the camp ;ites, despite a plea by local parish priest Fr. Vincent Travers hat the demonstration be called off.

In a letter to the Group, Fr. Travers sai dthat he was conerned at hte threat made by a mall number of would-be protestors to use force to get the amilies out.

Asked if force would be used, Group Chairman, Mr. Richie O'Reilly said: "I am not prepared to say — that will be up to the meeting before the march."

EVENING PRESS, FRIDAY, MAY 7, 1982 6—

ITINERANTS: 'BLAME CITY COUNCIL'

THE blame for the serious problems calsed by itinerants in the Tallaght area was laid on the doorstep of Dublin City Council by local TD Mr Larry McMahon today.

He said that the Corporation had been providing free grazing for hundredsof itinerant horses for a number of years.

"I have spoken to itinerant families who moved to Tallaght from Limerick and Tipperary and the reason they gave was the availability of grazing for their horses here." said Mr. McMahon.

Over the years the Corporation had bought hundreds of acres of land in Tallaght for development but had not secured it properly. "I have approached the Corporation on many occasions to let the land to local farmers while they are waiting to develop it but my pleas have fallen on deaf ears," Mr. McMahon wen on.

He said that many itinerants had no qualms about breaking down fences and moving in on the Corporation land.

The Dublin South West TD said he supported last night's protest march by 400 residents of the sprawling suburb during which they asked the itinerants in each caravan to leave within 48 hours.

"I hope Tallaght action group will now turn their attention towards pressurising the Corporation to secure their land as I feel this will help the situation." said Mr. McMahon.

He said he feared an outbreak of violence, and another local T.D., Mr. Sean Walsh, spoke of the pressure being placed on Tallaght residents because of the itinerant problem.

Mr. Walsh, who took part in the march, said that he received complaints every day from parents saying their children were afraid to go to school because of itinerants' dogs or horses.

They also complained about vandalism, dirt and increased crime which they associated with the itinerants.

Mr. Walsh said that he would expect protest marches. "The problem is not just confined to Tallaght — Clondalkin and Finglas are just as bad." he declared.

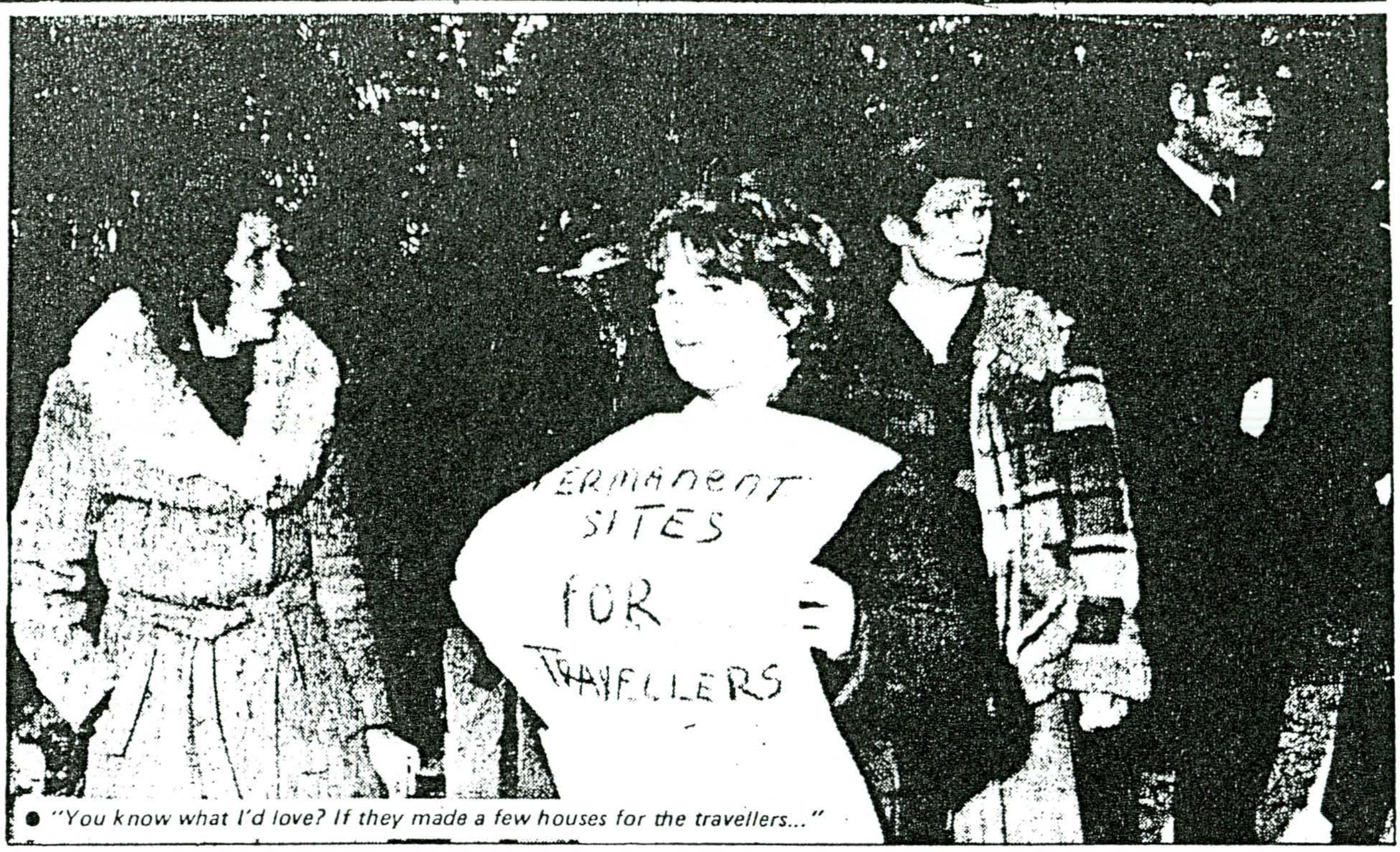
Referring to the Dublin County Council plan to spend £1½ million on 15 halting sites for more than 400 itinerant families, Mr. Walsh said he did not know if that was the solution to the problem.

He agreed with those councillors who pointed out that such facilities might simply attract more families from other parts of the country.

Irish Travelling People's Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen Ahern, University Of Ulster

13B13

20th MAY 1982



● *"You know what I'd love? If they made a few houses for the travellers..."*

'Travellers'

Victims of prejudice and ignorance

BY ROSE DUGDALE

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 14

LAST WEEK about 300 people marched in Tallaght, County Dublin intent upon clearing the travelling people out of the area. There was sufficient media attention for Father Travers, a Tallaght priest, to drop up to Kinsealy on Friday with an open letter for Free State premier Charles Haughey, and a warning, that if something was not done very soon, *"a tiny minority might resort to violence to resolve the problem."*

The Tallaght march came out of a meeting held the previous week when the Tallaght Action Group was set up. About 400 people had gathered in the local school, and marched out to visit each caravan in the area. They told the travellers that they *"had 48 hours to clear out, or to face the consequences."* Some estimate that there was nearly 1,000 marchers.

Last Wednesday's march was assembled amid a fanfare of publicity concerning threatened violence to travellers. There was a meeting first of some 500 people. Speeches were full of hate and incitement: *"Take the filth and dirt down beside you,"* they told the priest; *"move the rubbish and they'll move with it,"* said Ritchie O'Reilly, chairperson of the Springfield Residents. Passing comment was in a similar vein... *"I've the steel caps on tonight."*

As it turned out the march was a flop for the steel-capped heroes. In the face of battle-scarred defiant groups of travellers, supported by a fair few local residents and Sinn Fein supporters, Ritchie O'Reilly marched his men up the hill, and marched them down again.

Some local Tallaght people actively opposed the marchers. They opposed 'fascist evictions' and called on the County Council to build permanent sites.

Other local figures were not so forthcoming. Joe Connolly, local Labour councillor, commented that hard sites for the travellers would 'make them a veritable paradise' — they'd have every traveller in the town down on Tallaght. Larry McMahon, Fine Gael TD for Dublin South-West, explained the presence of the travellers on the bypass in terms of the superlative grazing available there. Father Battel, another Tallaght priest, when asked his attitude replied that he did not want to get involved — reminiscent of Bishop Casey's antics some years ago when he went so far as to join the barricade erected on Bohermore Estate, Galway, erected to prevent travelling families taking the house they had been allocated.

THE TRAVELLERS' VIEW

The travellers don't want out. They made that clear on Wednesday last. Some have moved down the road to be nearer each other. Mrs Cash and her family, with just a caravan, were left on their own.

"I'm here 24 years, between Tallaght and Clondalkin. There wasn't many houses built up around here then. What I worry about is the children — it's the most important thing I have in life, and if I have to shift on, then what are the children going to do in life?"

Mrs Cash's children are going to the local school. Little Andy is making his communion. *"The children don't want to leave. I think it would be a sin for them... I got no schooling myself. But I still have to survive."*

Mrs Cash lost two children, three-and-a-half years ago, in a fire in the caravan. It happened when she was down at the shops. Her husband died the year before. On the bed, in her spotless, shiny caravan, was 11-year-old Sally, who is paralysed from the waist down since an accident two years ago when she was the unfortunate one amongst a whole group of children playing on the road.

Little Sally goes to a special school and is collected and returned daily by bus. It is the main reason why Mrs Cash has to stay in the area. But, as she says:

"They won't let us settle in the one place. They say 'move out'. They are at us the whole time. We go somewhere, 'we'll say, 'We'll camp and settle here for a while'. Next thing you hear there's a bulldozer around you. Next thing is the tractor, and next thing, 'knackers out', and that's it. They chase you, wherever you go. There's no life for travellers..."

With the kids to clean up for school each day, Mrs Cash has no water or sanitation whatever. Would she like a house? *"The first chance I could get, I'd take it... It would be grand now a sup of water and a bit of light coming in the winter time. It'd be grand for the sake of the children, you know?"*

Every family has the same tale to tell, a tale of terrible hardships, deprivation, malnutrition, ill-health, violence, and persecution. What did Mrs Joyce think of the people from Springfield coming up on the march?

"Sure they don't own the place, they've no more authority than what we have... They get a new house and a new car, and they forget that we all came from the Famine, we all come from the one — a tent. Sure at the time of the Famine there was only wattle houses. There's some of the travellers since the Famine times waiting for a house, and they never got anything yet. There was Romanies — they was always travellers, but the biggest half of the travellers came from the Famine, and what did they do but lie agin the ditches and die from the hunger and everything? And then they got tents, and then they went on to wagons... I think it's about time something was done."

She talked of the accusations made against the travellers — 'Some travellers rob'. *"That happens with settled people as well... and sure half of Ireland is living on robbery — the big rich ones."*

PERSECUTED

"You know what I'd love? If they made a few houses for the travellers, 'cause them old chalets, they are no use, and then there's the halting sites for the people that doesn't want a house. And a place that you can throw the dirt. In summer you can burn the dirt. In winter you can't. And the County Council doesn't come to the travellers, like to everyone else, and collect the dirt. This is what I can't get over when they talk about the dirty travellers. Just have a look there," she said, pointing to a pile of pallets the travellers had built into a barricade.

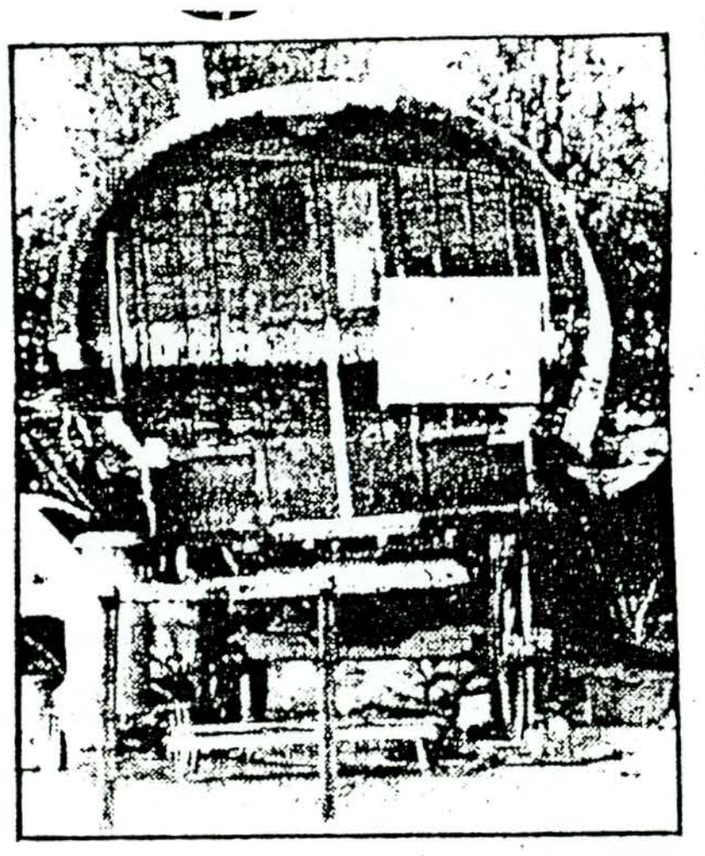
"Travellers wouldn't have things like that... Sure when they know where the travellers are stopping, they come along and they dump the dirt on top of the travellers."

She told us how at the time of the Corporation bin strike, they came along, lorries and lorries of them, and dumped every sort of dirt on them — one night it was needles, syringes, bandages, everything — the children would have been poisoned next morning had she not burnt it that night.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
13B15

And her daughter then told of how they are chased from pillar to post — and despised everywhere, a tale known to every persecuted race and minority group.

"See the travellers go into a shop, they serve them first to get them out quick, and see you go to a picture house... 'Very sorry. Travellers are not allowed in'. You go to a pub, and people keep staring at you... You know what I mean... You are gypsies, nothing but a gypsy."



As Mrs Joyce says, *"Travellers feel very lonesome... feel unwanted ... makes some of them violent. They get fed-up living 'cause they know they are not wanted, and they know their children is going to be the same... the life they have, and the children is going to have the same life... sure they won't let you get the children educated..."*

"It's hard travelling," said Mrs Joyce, *"'Specially in the winter, when you are trying to keep the children warm and dry, and everyone is calling you knackers and tinkers."*

WHY?

So why did 300 people in Tallaght last week march out with steel-capped boots to make good their threat to the travelling people? The local opposition was based on the nameless fear — the root of which is the fear that property will be devalued. It is not that the local authority moves them out, it is that they do nothing to counteract this fear — the fear of a minority, so easily made into the scapegoat for the oppressive conditions of everyone's lives. And persecution of a minority wins out by default if not intent because of the reluctance of others to get involved — to stand by the oppressed. Mrs Joyce said:

"You must be very brave to come on the knackers' side... same as the nuns and priests are no more coming on our side because they can't. If they do, they do be all against them. For someone to come on the wayfarers' side is a very brave thing... You know, anyone, anyone at all, can go out and stand with a big crowd out here in the road... but it takes guts to stand with the poor people."

Commenting on the Tallaght incident Aine Nic Mhurchadha, PRO of Dublin Sinn Fein, said:

"While it is easy to understand peoples' frustration at the living conditions under which travelling people are forced to live, threats such as burning and stoning them out do not solve the problem in any way, and can only be seen as a gross injustice.

"It is the responsibility of the local authorities to provide properly serviced sites for these people and for those who want to retain the travelling way of life all help should be given to foster their culture.

"We oppose this persecution of an already much deprived community."

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 16



Gay Byrne, surrounded by residents and travellers, during his radio show, from Tallaght, this morning.

13.B18

Gay peacemaker in itinerant row

EVENING PRESS
WED. 26 MAY 1982

By Noeleen Dowling

NOISY, HOT AND ANGRY — that was the atmosphere for the Gay Byrne Hour, which was broadcast live from a huge itinerant site in Tallaght this morning.

The show moved out of the udio into the open air to get, producer, John Cadden, said, he views of everyone involved the controversy over the inerant camps which has split allaght, a community of 70,000.

The problem in Tallaght has en well documented for months st, but the recent marches and monstrations by residents ainst the hundreds of itinerant milies who have camped elgally in the area, has raised e temperature even higher.

"We wanted to get as many iews as possible, and perhaps to art people involved talking to ch other about it instead of aying behind the lines that ave been drawn up."

SLIGHT

During the show this morning, was often only the slight gure of Mr. Byrne that kept e factions apart as feelings se.

The site was dotted with old-le horse-drawn caravans, new urious American-style trailers, npers and tents. It was ttered with the wrecks of old rs, many of them used to ld straw and fodder for the merous horses and ponies on e site.

Fires glowed here and there as some of the travellers made tea which was drunk out of old stout and mineral bottles. Greyhounds and mongrels nosed in the rubbish and piles of old rags, broken machinery and scrap on the site.

Before the show got under way, a handful of local residents arrived anxious to put their case. They had little objection to the bona fide travellers, they said. But illegal trading was turning Tallaght into a nightmare.

The itinerant traders were dirty, they left a mess when they moved on, they claimed. The sites had no toilet facilities, the children were allowed to do what they liked and vandalism, housebreaking and car stealing were all increasing as a result, they said.

SHOUT

The itinerants answered that they were only in Tallaght because they had nowhere else to go. They had been there a long time, some of them for four years or more.

"It's our home, too," they said. The sites were untidy because the county council would not collect their rubbish bins for emptying. Their children were as well behaved as any, and went to school.

As Byrne talked to one group of residents, small groups and side meetings broke away from main group as more and more of the 'settled communit arrived, and travellers can from other sites in the area.

Amongst a group of women, anger rose as the itinerants were accused of begging, of littering, of stealing. Soon voices had risen to a shout. The three gardai posted to keep an eye on things kept a wary eye on the group.

One blow wah exchanged, then a garda moved in. "Now, ladies, let's not turn a discussion into a fight. It won't solve anything. It won't make a bit of difference," he said. The women quietened down.

In another group, Mrs. Nan Joyce and her husband, John, both travellers, who were interviewed by Gay Byrne, were tolking to a man from a local estate.

"I think we can solve the problem," he was telling them. They agreed that they would talk further, that he would come back and see the site.

A local woman with a baby in toddler being carried by a travelling woman. They exchanged talk about the children. "That's the tragedy," said the local woman. "The children are all the same. It's the adults who are different."

A moment later, in another group, she was being called "a scruffy bitch" by a travelling woman who had taken amiss some remark she had made.

By the time the show ended, there had been an exchange of views that were frank as well as full. Some words that have probably not been heard on the Gay Byrne Hour before were used.

Gay said that he was pleased that the show had gone the way it had. He had been standing at the centre of a steadily growing crowd, microphone in hand, for over an hour. The anger around him did not seem to worry him.

As he and his team left both sides saw him off. "Any chance of tickets for the Late Late " he was asked. Back on the site, some residents were still talking to some of the itinerants. But now no one was shouting.



Gay Byrne talking to Mr. & Mrs. Joyce in the Belgard Road fiel during the live broadcast of his radio programme last Wednesday 26th of May. The programme came about because of the Itinerant problems in the area.

Irish Traveller Movement Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 19

Is there no room for a proud people in the new Ireland?

THE TRAVELLERS — SUBJECTS OF BOTH ROMANTIC | MYTH AND HOSTILE PROPAGANDA

TRIBUTARIES

by Con Houlihan

EVENING PRESS, TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B20



This picture was taken on the outskirts of Dublin a few days before Christmas. From Sharon Gmelch's Tinkers and Travellers (O'Brien Press).

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

IT was a bitter winter — and the Indians were stealing out of the reservation to beg.

One of them came to an Irish woman's door — and was told: "Go back to your own country."

So the story goes. Perhaps it never happened — but it is true nonetheless.

It symbolises a spiritual sickness which if not exclusively Hibernian is present amongst us in its most virulent form.

In a recent episode of the long-running battle between the self-righteous and the travelling people a band of the untouchables were told to go back to Limerick.

At least there is no scarcity of humour — black or perhaps green though it may be.

At a public (more or less) meeting in South County Dublin a few weeks ago the local parish priest came up with a brilliant solution for the problems caused by the travellers.

He said that as the township grew the travellers would eventually be able to find no idle ground and would have to move on.

His formula may have sounded absurd — but at least it is a little more humane than the 'burn them out' mentality of the so-called action committees that are springing up like Fascist clubs in the Italy of Mussolini's emergence.

You may not believe that the words 'burn them out' have been invoked — you would be wrong.

They were — and by a citizen who is deemed sane.

The travelling people — or the tinkers as they were once called because so many of them were whitesmiths — are possibly the least understood section of an Irish society not noted for its powers of understanding.

Some people invest them with a glamour that is utterly spurious.

Others look on them as the embodiment of almost everything that is undesirable.

Our official bodies — governments and corporation and local councils — more or less ignore them, hoping like the South County priest that they will go away.

And a good many have gone away — at present there are probably more Irish-born travellers in Britain than at home.

But there is a stubborn residue still with us — and official indifference and unofficial 'action' (a nice word for intimidation) are hardly the answer to the difficulties their presence causes.

When they move on — as often they are forced to do — they must eventually attempt to settle somewhere.

And every move leaves them a little more bitter, more prone to make a last stand.

But neither for them nor for their settled opponents is violence likely to bring a lasting settlement.

Who are the travelling people anyway — and why as their numbers decline have they become such a social problem?

One hears wildly romantic explanations of their origin — and the travellers themselves are not loth to encourage the myths.

But it is unlikely that they are the descendants of deposed Gaelic kings or even of strong farmers whom Cromwell put out of their lands.

Nor are they the Irish branch of the Romany tribe — though some of them have Romany blood.

Most are almost certainly the descendants of itinerant whitesmiths and horse-dealers — people who travelled because of the demands of their trade.

Clashes between travellers and settled people are not few — but until this generation they were infrequent and isolated.

Those of us who are older remember a time when the travellers were respected and useful members of society.

Their resting places were then mainly rural.

Families tended to have a centre from which their travels radiated — usually the town where they drew their pensions and social security and children's allowances.

They usually travelled for all but the winter months. Their resting places were usually on the grass margin of the roadside.

The travellers loved their horses as much as their children — and had no qualms about opening a gate rather than let an animal go hungry.

Stolen grass was the main cause of hostility in those happier times — but nobody ever formed an action committee on account of it.

Many settled people were then on the very best of terms with the travellers.

It was well known that if you gave them fair play you got it in return.

They were respected for their skill with metal and with horses.

They were also known for their integrity: Tom Barry said that they were the eyes and ears of his column during his days as a guerilla.

And Major-General Costello has said that he never knew better soldiers.

The courage of both the men and women is legendary — and their losses in both World Wars were out of all proportion to their numbers.

Perhaps all this may not seem very relevant — but its purpose is to indicate that the travelling people are not quite the monsters of 'activist' propaganda.

Some people in this country speak about them in much the same way as did Peter McKay about some of us in the Daily Express last week — "Squalid stupid people with no purpose beyond leading violent brutish lives."

Why has this attitude arisen?

The change is rooted in a complex of causes, almost all of them beyond the control of the travellers.

The coming of plastic diminished the function of the whitesmith — just as it affected the jute-workers of Pakistan.

The spread of the motor car and the tractor reduced the role of the horse.

The dictatorship of the car affected the travellers in another way: roads became wider and grass margins narrower — the old resting places either disappeared or became too dangerous.

The movement towards the conurbation was inevitable.

Now the resting places were stretches of ground temporarily idle as roads were being made and housing estates being laid out.

And conflict with the settled people was almost as inevitable as had been the travellers' change in their mode of life.

It is easy to understand the anger of the people who set about forming 'action committees.'

Most of them have worked hard for what they possess — and do not enjoy seeing a shadow over their promised land.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

3B22

And it is true that the travellers' horses — when they have any — are a nuisance and a danger.

And it is true that their campsites are often so dirty that they are a health hazard.

It is also true that when travelling people attempt to settle they do not always find it easy.

What are they to do? Should they be driven away from the verges of the cities and be compelled to live in remote places?

In the last few years we have seen some interesting suggestions in letters to the newspapers.

One dear lady with what is known as a good address was adamant that they should be contained in a reservation.

The travellers — strange as it may seem — are unlikely to agree with this suggestion.

They wish to live near the cities not only because they can find temporary resting places — but because the raw material of their new trade, scrapping cars, is more likely to be found in such places than in the bogs and the mountains.

Nor is the main charge levelled at them — that they create a health hazard — as grave as it may seem.

Of course they do — but they are hardly this country's biggest offenders.

They may appear to be — because their refuse remains near them and thus its origin can be identified.

Public bodies are infinitely more guilty of pollution — the condition of our lakes and rivers is abominable.

And if you are familiar with the Dublin mountains, you will know that people who no doubt look on themselves as good citizens see no crime in dumping their refuse up there.

And do you really believe that the appalling amount of litter we see daily on our streets is all dropped by the travelling people?

The problem of the travellers' refuse is not too difficult to solve.

It wouldn't cost too much to provide them with the kind of decent campsites that are standard for tourists elsewhere.

That is what most of them desire.

And it is good to know that at least in Tallaght — where in recent weeks the hostility of the settled people has got more publicity — there is a group working towards that end.

They are a kind of anti-activist body — and I know that they are fired by no other motive than plain Christian charity.

There is a truth in all things — and when the dust settles in this conflict, some people who are now very bitter towards the travellers may see them in a clearer light.

Would you care to live in a caravan on the side of a busy road?

And do you blame the travellers if they seek places that are relatively safe?

And why should you condemn them because they are different from settled people?

The changing times have forced them into their present predicament — they are not culprits but victims.

The test of a society is how it treats its less fortunate members — and if the word 'republic' has retained any meaning it should be rooted in that concept.

The travellers themselves are genuine republicans. You see it in their attitude towards the elders of the tribe — it reminds you of the Parisians.

And all they ask from us is fair play.

I think I know them well enough to be confident that they would give fair play in return.

But I sometimes wonder if they would be acceptable to some people no matter how well they behaved.

We look on the English as class-ridden. But are they more so than ourselves?

I know that all this may seem like arm-chair liberalism.

Inevitably in all such arguments you will be asked how would you react if the problem came to your own door.

All I can say is that for a good part of my life we had the Coffeys and the O'Briens and the Sheridans as regular neighbours.

And they were good people to have on your side.

Irish Traveling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

3B23

Itinerant Problem

Traveller's March on the Dail

THIRTY TALLAGHT travellers and their supporters marched from Stephen's Green to Dail Eireann on Thursday, June 3rd, and handed in a letter to the Taoiseach calling for proper halts, amenities and education for their children.

About fifteen counter demonstrators, representatives of Tallaght Community Council, also called to the Dail, asking in a petition for serviced halting sites spread equally across the whole of Dublin.

Meanwhile, that afternoon, a Dublin County Council meeting was held to vote on a proposal to provide halt accomodation for 242 travelling families in the Dublin area.

The proposal included provision for twenty halt sites at Fortunestown and Killinarden, Tallaght. After long and heated debate, the Council postponed a vote on the proposal pending negotiation with residents in the region of the proposed sites.

In the course of the meeting, an amendment was handed to the Chairman, proposed by Cllr. Mervyn Taylor (Lab) and seconded by Cllr. Chris Flood (F.F), suggesting that the Fortunestown site be agreed and that another ten-unit sites be built somewhere in the Mid-County area other than Tallaght.

The proposed amendment was not dealt with at the meeting, but will be on the agenda for the next ordinary Dublin County Council session.

The date for such a meeting has not yet been set, but with the A.G.M. scheduled for July and a break the tradition for August, it is possible that the amendment will not come up for consideration until September.

After the meeting , Cllr. Flood explained his reasons for seconding the amendment: 'Two sites of twenty for Tallaght was unacceptable to me. I felt that Tallaght was being overburdened with responsibility. However, we have to play our part, and I feel that ths amendment might have got some measure of support'.

feel that this amendment had had requests from residents in Killinarden to vote against the proposal but that this had not influenced his decision. There were a number of calls at the meeting for the traveller problem to be dealt with in the Dail as a national problem.

Cllr. Flood also feels that. the problem is not just confined to Tallaght, he warns: 'Unless something is done immediately, not only will there be further marches in Dublin, but a serious outbreak of violence'.

He said that Tallaght was the area he knew best, and that such violence could conceivably happen here. 'If it does, it will mark us for a long time to come'. he said.



A message for the public representatives from some travellers at their protest march to Dail Eireann and the D.C.C. offices in O'Connell St. on June 3rd.



This young travelling girl was really enjoying her ice-cream when our photographer snapped her at the march by itinerants and their support group to the Dail and County Council Offices on June 3rd.

Irish Travelling People : a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 24

EVENING PRESS, SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 1982

ITINERANTS IN DUBLIN NEGLECTED

OPPOSITION from the settled community was the main stumbling block to the eventual integration of the travelling people, Mr. Victor Bewley of the Itinerant Settlement Committee said today.

Referring to the illegal encampments of itinerants in the suburbs of Dublin, he stressed that only the provision of proper facilities would solve the problem.

Speaking at the annual conference of the National Council for Travelling People, he said that there was no lack of money for the task but strong vocal opposition from the settled communities has effectively perpetuated the problems associated with itinerants.

Mr. Bewley underlined that the Dublin area fell behind other counties when it came to providing facilities for their travelling population. Less than a half of Dublin's travelling population was catered for as against upwards of 60 per cent in other counties.

There still remain 1,100 families on the roadside without anywhere to legally stay and living without any form of proper water and sanitation facilities. "These are not strangers from another country but Irish people being denied their rights in their own country," Mr. Bewley added.

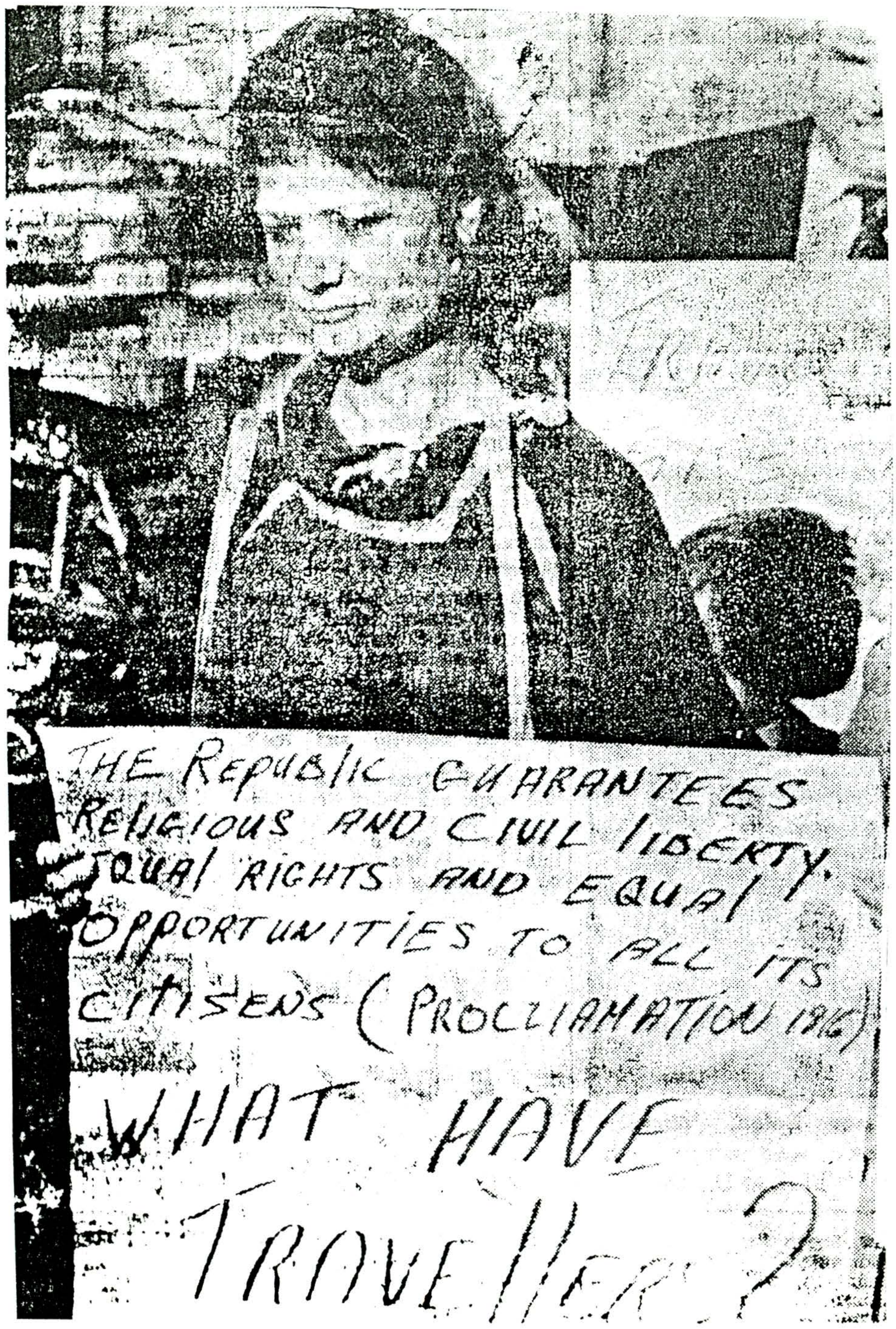


Watching the protest march from the door o her caravan on the Old Blessington Road, thi young travelling child didn't seem to under stand what was happening.

Irish Travelling People
Compiled by Aileen T'Amie, University of Ulster

13 B25

SEASON OF PROTEST



Pictures taken during two of this week's protests outside Leinster House in Dublin. Ann Joyce, taking part in the protest organised by the Travellers' Rights Committee. Picture by Austin Finn.

1982

Itinerants at Dail

TRAVELLING people found a permanent site for today — outside the gates of Dail Eireann.

They picketed the first sitting of the new Dail as part of a protest for a "better deal" for itinerants.

"Travellers are a severely disadvantaged section of Irish society," said Mr. Seamus Leonard of the Committee for the Rights of Travellers.

They say the Government must "lead the way" by recognising travellers as "a special people with special needs" and adopt policies to suit these.

The committee complains that Dublin County Council is unwilling to deal with the problem.

The travellers want a special Government department set up to help them make the transition from outcasts to full Irish citizens.

They say that 100 per cent grants are available from the EEC to implement such policies.

"The Way Forward for Irish society would be an empty heartless document if travellers were to remain in their present humiliating circumstances," said Mr. Leonard of the travellers' organisation today.

Irish Travelling People Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University of Ulster

13 B 26

Itinerants in march on Dail for 'fair deal in housing'

By LIAM RYAN

AN ORGANISED band of itinerants marched on the Dail yesterday as they intensified campaign for a fair deal in in housing and education.

Lunchtime crowds strolling in the sunshine, stopped to watch the itinerants who were parading in an orderly way from St. Stephen's Green to Leinster House, chanting, "We want homes now."

They carried placards declaring: "We have travelled enough" and "It's up to you, Charlie . . . "

It was the latest episode in the controversy raging over the proposal to set up halting sites for the travelling people in Tallaght and other areas of Dublin.

After handing in a petition for the Minister for the Environment, Mr. Burke, the itinerants were to be followed a few minutes later by a small marching group of members of Tallaght Community Council who are demanding that their area alone not be singled out for the settlement of itinerants.

There was no friction between the two groups and at one stage it was almost agreed that both join forces in marching on the Dail.

Subsequently, both groups walked through the city centre to protest outside the O'Connell St. offices of Dublin Co. Council as the councillors inside were in heated debate over the growing controversy.

Despite three hours of discussion and a high level of tolerance shown by the chairman, Mr. Sean Barrett, TD., the meeting was postponed without coming to full agreement on a plan aimed at solving the crisis of accommodating 394 itinerant families in various parts of Dublin.

There were objections by some councillors to a specified number of halting sites being allocated to their areas, and the meeting was adjourned so that council officials could have disussions with residents' associations and other interested parties in these particular areas.

The Parish Priest of Tallaght, Rev. Vincent Travers, speaking on behalf of the itinerants before they set out on their march told the Irish Indpendent: "This is surely something that has never happened before — travelling people making a public stand for themselves, and in a very respectable and responsible way.

"They have left their campsites to come into the heart of Dublin and make their case in public. It must be the first time that this has happened in the case of the travelling people."

Father Travers said: "All they are looking for are better living conditions and education for their children . . . what the ordinary citizen enjoys — and they have a right to that.

"I would like to see both the settled and itinerant communities sitting down for talks along with Government offiials to get a speedy solution to the problem."

An itinerant mother, Mrs. Anne Joyce, who has 11 children, said: "If the authorities had started doing something about our problems some years ago, we would not have this situation today. Some people think we are wild animals, but all we are looking for is a home and education for the kids. We want somewhere to put down our roots."

Mr. Michael Raymond, chairman, Tallaght Community Council, said: "We have actually met with the itinerants and have come to an agreement with them that a limited number of their families should be allowed settle in Tallaght. We feel that other parts of Dublin should accept their fair share of itinerant settlements."

Dail picket to support itinerants

Groups of travellers and settled people will picket Dail Eireann from 2 p.m. tomorrow, in support of itinerants. The demonstration will coincide with a protest march by Tallaght residents.

The decision to picket in support of the itinerants was made last night at a meeting of the Committee for the Rights of Travellers, who are all residents of Tallaght.

They will be calling for the Government to provide permanent halting sites for travellers.

Itinerant groups march on Dail

OPPOSING factions in the Tallaght itinerants dispute marched to Dail Eireann yesterday in support of their different positions.

About 50 itinerants and their supporters marched from St. Stephen's Green down to the Dail where a letter for the Taoiseach was handed in calling for proper halts, amenities, and education for their children.

Mrs. Ann Joyce, one of the travellers, said they needed the same consideration as that given to the settled community. They were asking for no more than their basic rights.

Fifteen representatives of the Tallaght Community Council also went to the Dail where they handed in a petition asking for serviced halting sites spread equally across all areas of Dublin.

1982

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13 B 27

Nan Joyce: You can't smell sweet on the road



ABOVE: Nan Joyce in her caravan. Right: with sons Patrick (11) and Richard (7). Picture: Douglas E. Duggan.

THE TRAVELLERS' NEW VOICE

HOLDS OUT LITTLE HOPE

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B28

By GINNIE KINNEALY

NAN JOYCE showed all the poise and self-confidence of a model as she walked along the path through the rose garden at St. Mary's Priory, Tallaght, to meet us.

Head held high, a slow serene walk on four-inch heels, a simple elegant brown dress, perfectly coiffed hair and an immaculate little pale rust hand-bag — these are hardly the marks of the average travelling woman. But Nan is not average. In the settled community just as much as among the travellers, she would stand out for her self-confidence, her intelligence, her good sense and her vivid way of speaking.

It is just a few months since Nan emerged as a leader in the travelling community of South-West Dublin. It was the Gay Byrne interview in which she first really showed her metal — articulate, forthright, determined to get a fair deal and a fair hearing for her people.

Since then Nan has been on two protest marches — the latest one last weekend, when she led the procession in her son's pony-trap. And, with the Tallaght parish priest, Fr. Vincent Travers, she has been in to the Dublin County Council session at which the cause of the travelling people was discussed.

But despite all the activity, Nan is far from being on the crest of the wave. The slough of despond would be more like it.

Discrimination

"I don't have much hope any more that we'll be given what we're asking for," she says, even though we only want the same rights and facilities as the settled community. I was really shocked at that council meeting to see how we're regarded by the reupresentatives of the settled community. To them, we're not human beings at all, we're just a burden on the community.

"And there are no votes for the politicians in helping us. You could almost see them looking over their shoulders counting the votes on either side. But we can't be expected to lift ourselves out of the mud by our own boot-straps. In olden days they used to blame the Protestant landlords for the fate of the travelling people. But there are no Protestant landlords left now; it's just the Irish discriminating against the Irish."

Nan was born 40 years ago in Tipperary into the travelling family of the Donoghues, and spent most of her early years with the travellers around Belfast, though there were trips to England and Scotland as well, which she says "gave us a great education, although we hardly went to school".

Her father was a horse-dealer and also, says Nan, a great scholar. "He knew Latin and Irish and English, and he did his best to teach us children to read and write. He died when I was ten, though, so I mostly learned myself to read — from the names over the shops and that. But my mother always kept us at least an hour every night over our catechism and our ABC.

"Life was much harder for us when he died. I remember that often enough my mother would come back to the camp after a hard day's hawking and would just be getting some food cooked for us when the police would come along and pour water over the fire and move us on. We children would be all crying with hunger and fright and she'd have to get everything together in the dark and move us off to find another bit of roadside where we could stay for a day or two.

'Full of hurt'

"That sort of treatment over a period makes some people just give up. They turn to drink to try to forget the poor opinion every one has of them, to forget that they're outcasts —and who would blame them?

They're so full of hurt that the settled people could never make it up to them."

Nan has too much spirit to allow this sort of defeatism to take over her life, however.

For the past 20 years, since she married, she and her husband John have travelled not only around Ireland, but round England and Scotland, too, dealing and telling fortunes, and raising 11 children, the youngest of whom, Elaine, is now five years old. But they have always kept coming back to Dublin, where John belongs, and now they hope to settle down here.

For the past couple of years, they have been around the Clondalkin and Tallaght area, where they have the younger children in school, moving to their present site at the corner of the Belgard Road around a year ago. Now they are afraid that they may be turned off this site, too, which could mean yet another upheaval in the children's education.

"Already my young John is causing problems with school. He refuses point blank to go to the Tallaght school, although they're very good to the travelling children there. He insists on going back to his old teacher in Neilstown, and goes over on the bus with the workmen every morning. The children have just settled in here now and I want to stay here for their sake."

Prison camps

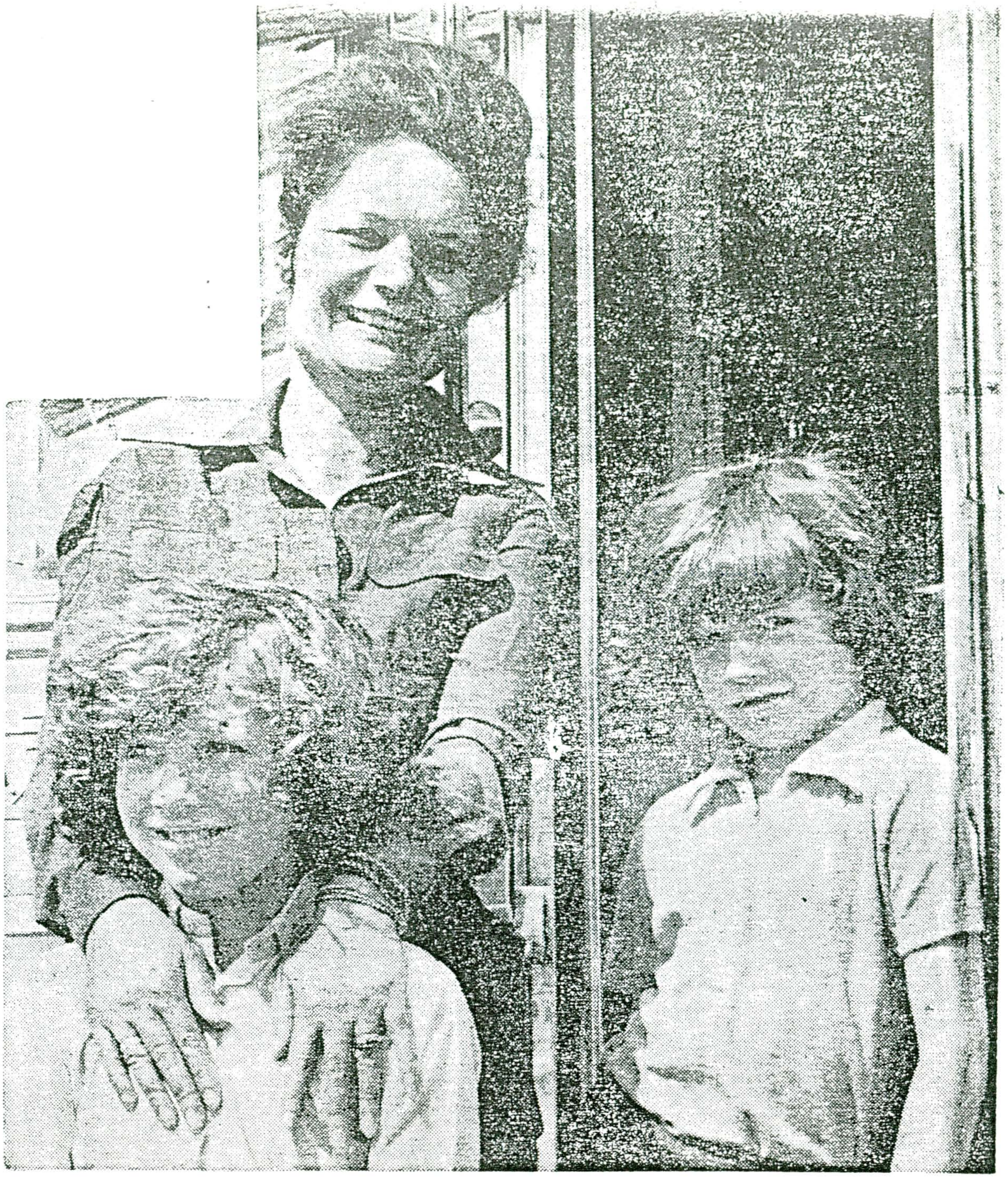
The site is not exactly an enviable location, however. There is one water outlet at the corner of the field for the 13 caravans there, and no toilet facilities at all. The travellers cannot get corporation dustmen to call at the site, and have tried in vain to arrange for a skip in which they could put their rubbish for occasional collection.

"It would drive you mad trying to keep a family clean under these conditions," says Nan. "I'd like to see any woman from the settled community try it. In the winter they are playing in the mud and wet all the time they're not at school, and they're in and out of hospital with flu and pneumonia all winter. The refuse problem on the site is dreadful. Every morning I go out and pick up all the papers and bits of trash lying around, and in no time they're blown all over the place again."

What Nan wants for her own family and for other travellers is a series of good sites built around the periphery of Dublin with bungalows, pre-school and perhaps primary school facilities, and the possibility of keeping a caravan or letting it go.

"We're not ready, most of us, for total integration with the settled community, so it

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Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
13 B29



would be best to have houses for us all together for a generation or two," Nan says. "But they have to be decent houses — not those pokey, ugly little tigins on sites that look like prison camps. We deserve better than that. What travelling child could bring a school pal back to a place like Labre Park in Ballyfermot?"

Self-confidence

Only decent treatment for the travellers, says Nan, can stop the complaints the settled community have about them. It takes a superhuman effort to be clean and sweet-smelling if you live on the roadside; and if society considers you good-for-nothing you may eventually be beaten into accepting that opinion of yourself.

Begging is now more or less a thing of the past, she believes. Neither she nor her daughters would dream of doing it. Who wants to have doors banged in their face, And she gets angry, too, when people assume that all travellers are thieves.

"I was in the supermarket in Tallaght the other day and a woman just after me in the queue seemed very agitated and hurried, so I let her go ahead of me. She thanked me fervently — because she'd left the house unlocked and was afraid the tinkers would be stealing everything in the place, she told me!

"If she had been a younger woman I would have told her off, but as she was on oldish lady I felt she couldn't really be blamed. And she'd have been so embarrassed to be told that I was a travelling woman myself."

Not all Nan's travelling family and friends can pass as suburban Dubliners, however, and life is made hard for them in their area. Most of the pubs refuse them — hence the itinerant habit of drinking in the open air — and many shops ask them to leave.

But at least the parish priest in Tallaght is doing all he can to help. The itinerants have been adopted as the parish's "Third World Project", and the training centre sponsored in conjunction with AnCO will hopefully be followed by a new junior school especially for the post-primary travelling children next year. With showers installed at the training centre, sympathetic teachers and staff, and instruction in home cooking for both boys and girls as well as the metalwork, woodwork and sewing, the young travellers have found a new pride and self-confidence.

"It just shows how well we can all do, if we're only given half a chance," says Nan Joyce.

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Compiled by Aileen Ahearn, University Of Ulster

13 B 30

SEAN MONCRIEFF EXPLAINS THE COUNTY COUNCIL PLAN TO SETTLE ITINERANT FAMILIES AROUND DUBLIN.

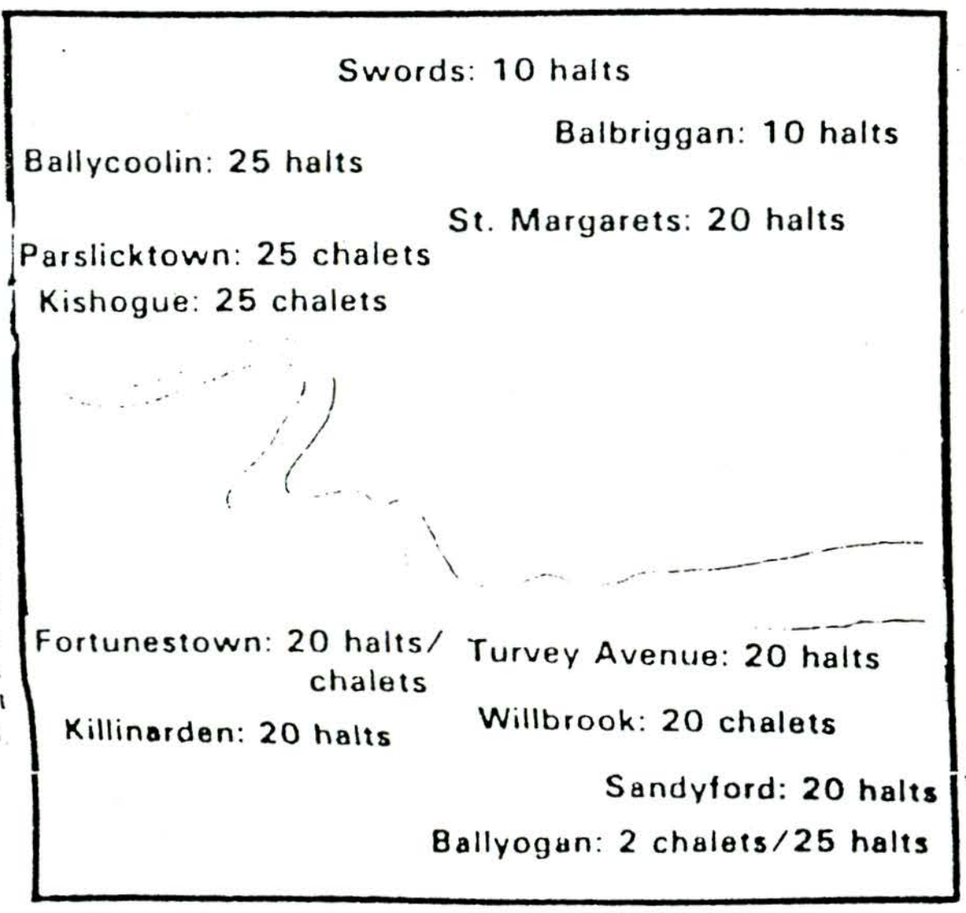
WHERE DO THEY GO?

ALTHOUGH THERE has been much controversy surrounding it, many people are not altogether sure of what exactly is in the County Council plan for the re-settlement of itinerant families around Dublin County.

The following is a brief resume of the plan, which *NewsWest* hopes will clarify the issue more for people concerned with the problem.

At a meeting of the County Council on March 30, 1981, it was decided to authorise a report which would deal with the acquisition of halting sites for itinerant families which are deemed to be in need.

The Council arginally decided that any such proposed halting site would not hold any more than ten families, but due to the size of the problem in both the Mid and West county areas, the respective commit tees for both these areas proposed that this limitation be lifted and this was agreed



• The distribution of halting sites around the city.

242 sites

After a review of the Council's resources, it was estimated that the number of viable settlement sites that could be prepared within a reasonable amount of time, would be 242 North County Dublin would take 60, West Dublin, 95, Mid County Dublin, 67, while South Dublin would get only 20 halting sites. (See map above)

The halting sites would consist of individual, hard standing bays, each with it's own water and toilet facilities, public lighting, goalpost entrance, waste disposal skip, 24-hour caretaking, phone and educational facilities, and grazing facilities if possible

Handpicked

Families for these sites would be hand-picked.

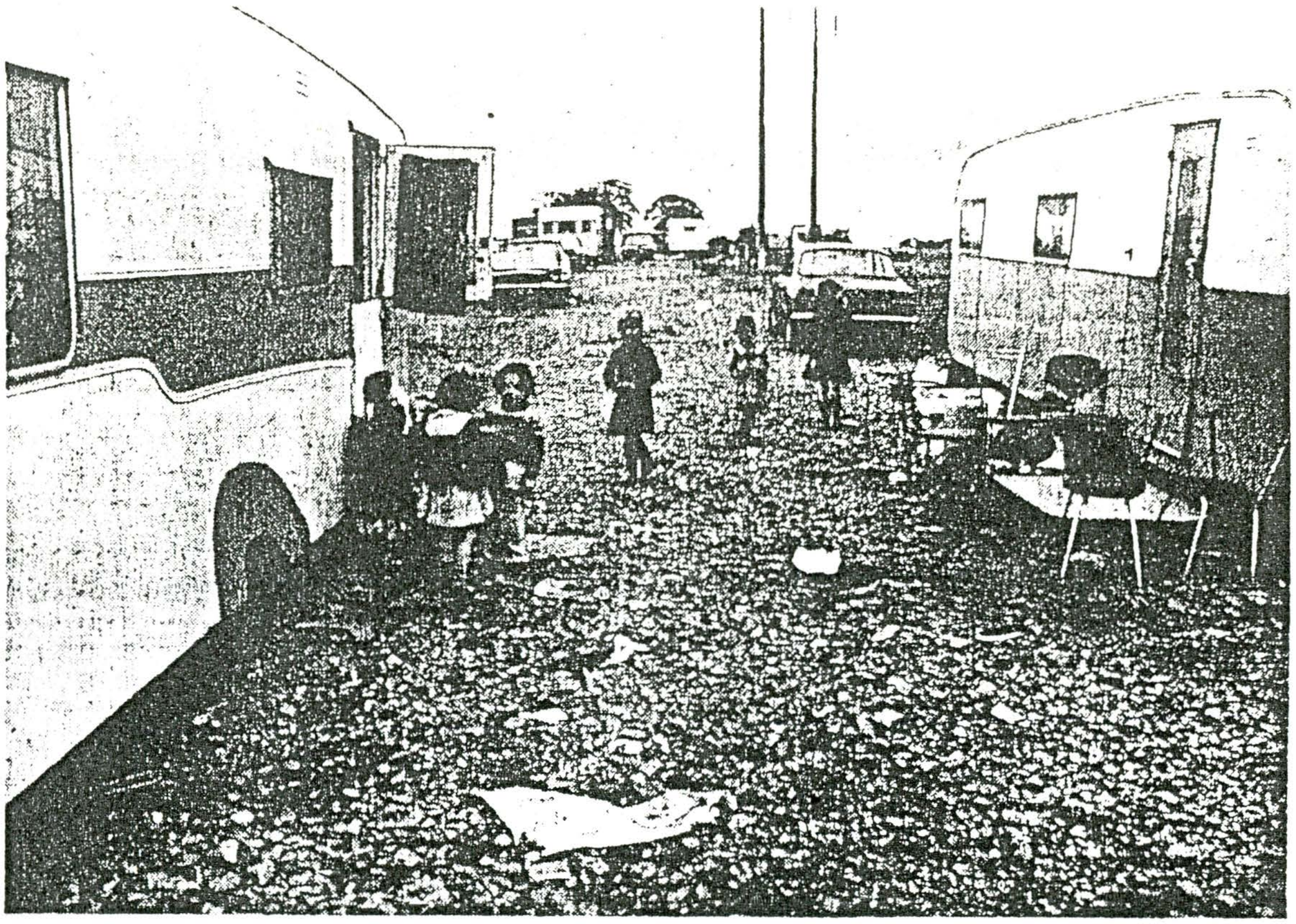
No recognisable results came out of this report for over a year, when at a meeting of the Council on May 6, 1982, it was proposed that another report be prepared.

This was presented to Councillors on June 3, while outside, both itinerants and residents from Tallaght protested over insufficient facilities for travellers throughout Dublin

The Council failed to agree on the proposals, mainly because some councillors felt that their areas already had enough halting sites.

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13 B31



● The report stresses that the education of itinerant children should be protected.

There is some element of truth in this, as the report shows, most of the areas proposed to get new halting sites, have some already.

Insufficient

The new report also showed that the plan was insufficient to deal with the maount of itinerant families on the raod. A survey by them showed that there were 394 families parked illegally on May 1st, while the Council plan only provides for 242 fam-ilies.

Of these families, 44 are full-time traders, and so presumably don't need help, as they are probably only using Dublin as a trading base, 202 of the families do some part-time trading, nine are employed, while 139 are living on social welfare alone.

The Council estimates that this makes up about 3,200 people, of which 2000 are children or young unmarried teenagers.

To balance the discrepancy, it was also proposed that the Council offer housing to some selected families.

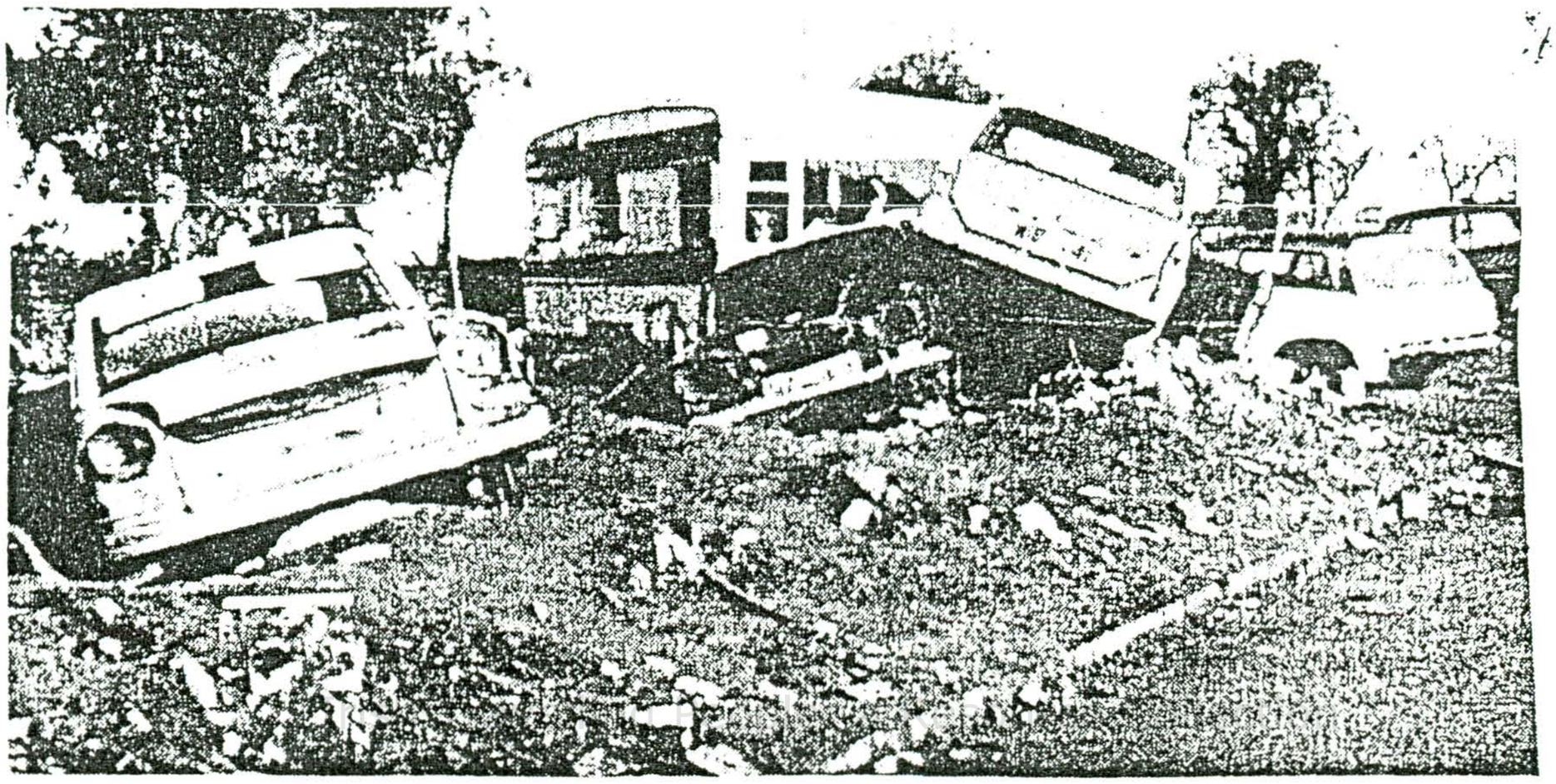
Committees

The report proposes that the halting sites would be run by local committees, made up of representatives from the travellers on the site, the County Council, Educ-ational Authorities, the Eastern Health Board and the Gardai

Another suggestion is that special environmental work squads be employed to clean up existing unauthorised sites, and more specifically remove scrap cars.

Despite it's detail and the year of preparation gone into it, this plan has still not been finalised

That is now up to local residents, the County Council, and the travellers themselves.



● A special work squad to remove scrap cars is one of the report's suggestions.

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13 B 32

TRAVELLER PROVISIONS 'INADEQUATE'

THE Committee for the Rights of Itinerants have dismissed this weeks Council move to provide six sites for Travellers as "totally inadequate."

By Maggie O'Kane

The programme for the settlement of Travelling People was partially passed by a special meeting of the County Council, while the Council's Officials working on the plan warned the Councillors that if they did not accept the programme in full they would be jeopardising the ground work already laid by the Council.

Nevertheless, Deputy Liam Barrett who cast the casting vote said that it is better than nothing and it was important that some decision by taken.

Mrs. Nan Joyce, a 42-year-old grandmother of 12, was at last weeks meeting representing the Travellers. "It's the first time I've ever been at a meeting where the Travellers were discussed and I felt like I was trying to sell cattle with foot and mouth disease the way people were talking about us. I never knew we were seen as such a burden," she said. "One Councillor actually said, "Every area must take its share of the burden."

I feel very depressed listening to what they have to say."

The results of yesterdays meeting means that six sites have been given the go-ahead. The three sites in the Tallaght area will be sites for 10 families at Fortunestown in Tallaght and negotiations are underway for a further ten sites at Killinarden.

A further £100,000 has been promised to improve the existing halting site on the Belgard Road. The Council has also given an undertaking to clean up the Fonthill Road between Clondalkin and Lucan.

Dan O'Sullivan the Council official dealing with the intinerant problem warned councillors before they voted on the programme that if it was not passed in full they wold be making things more difficult for the Council.

Deputy Liam Lawlor dismissed Mr. O'Sullivan submission.

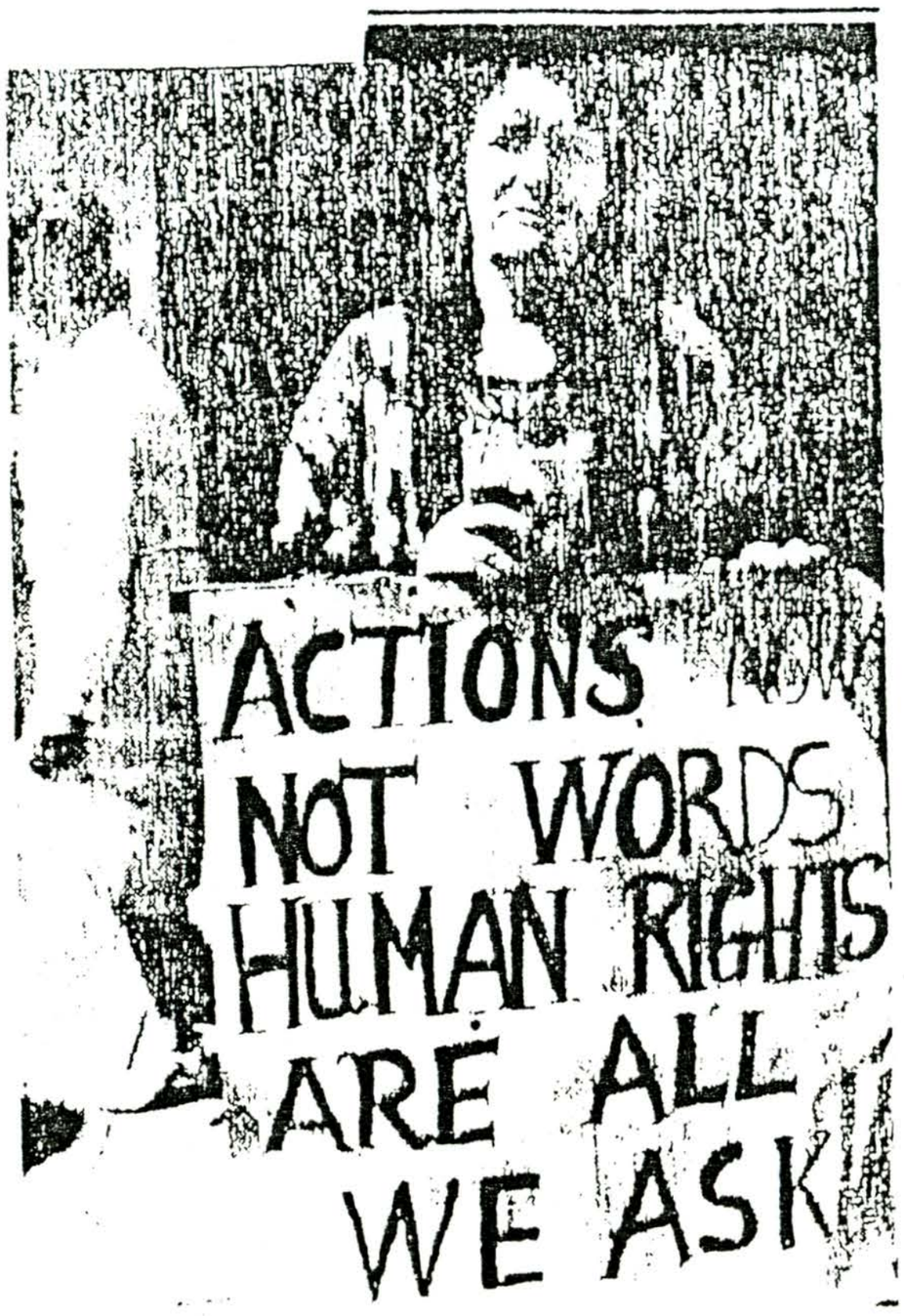
"It would be unrealistic to go ahead with the full report," claimed Deputy Lawlor. "You can't just go ahead with 12 sites if six of them are opposed by local residents. It's just not practical, but I feel that people are becoming more aware of their social responsibility and will agree to the sites," he said.

Nan Joyce said that she felt some members of the Council understood the needs of the Travellers, but others did not seem to realise that they were dealing with real people.

"I've been living in Tallaght for five years," she said, "and all I want at this stage is somewhere to settle down with my family in peace."

"I want my children to go to school and learn something I never got a chance to do until I was over 40," she added.

Wednesday, July 7, 1982



● A travelling woman makes her point outside the Council offices

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Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 33

'It's apartheid' says itinerant

By JOSEPH POWER,
Our Religious Affairs Correspondent

AN ITINERANT has told the International Development and Justice Conference in Galway, that the Catholic bishops and the Government must respond to the apartheid affecting the travelling people of Ireland.

Ireland's best known traveller, Nan Joyce, was speaking at the tenth anniversary Trocaire Seminar in University College, Galway, when she told the 350 overseas representatives from 22 countries, that the reality is that the Irish travelling people are the Third World people of Ireland.

The Irish travellers, she claimed, faced problems similar to those for which Trocaire were aiding people in the Third World. These included unjust treatment and lack of legal rights; lack of access to housing, or to serviced and approved sites, to water supply and sanitation.

Moreover, she said, the Irish travellers had inadequate health care, were subjected to the controversial birth drug, Depo-Provera, had little access to education, poor job opportunities and few future life chances.

As the oldest ethnic minority group in the country, the travellers, said Nan Joyce, faced living conditions in which they were treated as a blight on the image of Ireland. This was a contradiction to people's Christian beliefs. They were a marginal group, numbering 2,432 families, who occupied the last rung on the Irish social class ladder.

She complained that travellers were being used as the ultimate "whipping dog" and were looked down upon because they were poor, illiterate and had a malignant, negative, self image resulting from years of oppression and harrassment.

Mrs. Joyce, who stood in Dublin West in the last General Election, claimed that as with most poor marginalised people, travellers remained locked within the culture of silence, aloof, reticent and kept to themselves. They tended only to hit the headlines when they caused trouble or were accused of stealing, or when a tiny minority of their children were seen begging or glue sniffing on O'Connell Bridge in Dublin.

She called on Trocaire — the Catholic Bishops' Agency for development in the Third World — to use some of its resources in raising awareness and solidarity among travellers and in educating the Irish people to the fact that their attitude to and treatment of the travelling people, was the same attitude of racism and apartheid which they condemned in other countries.

Travellers, stressed Mrs. Joyce, are not just statistics. "We are people with faces, names and voices—men, women and children who experience all the joys and sorrows, anguish and hopes, disappointments and aspirations like any other people."

Moreover, she added, travellers were truly Irish people who had been moulded by the same history and bore the same names as the honourable in the land, yet they were relegated to a second classness and treated in a manner that was most unjust.

"I believe the time is here when Irish people must consider what they owe the travellers rather than what they give grudingly. End the shame and drudgery of being constantly moved on, the ridicule hatred and evil that afflicts my people," she pleaded.

She said that the time had now come for the Irish bishops and the Government to respond to the plight of the travellers and to insist that they be given the same rights as members of the settled community.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13B34

End plight of travellers bishops urged

By T. P. O'MAHONY

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS were urged yesterday by Nan Joyce, who stood as a candidate for the itinerants in the last election, to take action to end the "injustices suffered by the travelling people."

Speaking at the Trocaire 10th anniversary international seminar in Galway, Ms. Joyce said that the travelling people are the "Third World" people of this country.

It's time, she said that Trocaire—the Irish Catholic agency for world development — used some of the £33 million collected over the past decade to help the travelling people.

She called on Trocaire to help end "the shame and drudgery of being constantly moved on. the ridicule, hatred and evil that afflicts my people."

Ms. Joyce said the travelling people were not just statistics. "We are people with faces, names and voices. We are men, women an dchildren who experience all the joys and sorrows, anguish and hopes, disappointments and aspirations, like any other people".

"I believe the time is here, when Irish people must consider what they owe the trabellers, rather than what they give grudgingly".

She told the seminar that in common with other Third World people, the problems facing Irish travellers were unjust treatment and lack of legal rights, lack of access to housing, inadequate health care provisions, little access to education and poor job opportunities.

She also said some travelling people had been subjected to the controversial birth control drug "Depo-Provera".

The trevelling people were a marginal group numbering 2,432 families. They occupied the last rung on the Irish social class ladder.

"Throughout the island, they are used as the ultimate whipping dog. They are looked down upon: they are poor; illiterate; and have a negative self image, resulting from years of oppression and harassment."

"As with most poor marginalised people, they remain locked within the culture of silence, and they tend only to hit the headlines when they cause trouble, or are accused of stealing, or when a tiny minority of their children are seen begging, or glue sniffing on O'Connell Bridge."

She said the time had come for the Irish bishops and the Government to respond to the harassment and apartheid affecting the traveling people of Ireland.

Trocaire should use some of its resources in raising awareness and solidarity among travellers, and in educating the Irish people to the fact that their attitude to and treatment of the travelling people "is the same attitude of racism, and apartheid, that they condemn in other countries."

The seminar is also discussing the controversial question of the role of bishops and priests in socio-political affairs, particularly in liberation movements.

For two days now the delegates have listened to the experiences of churchmen who have been in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Brazil, Chile and South Africa, places where the Church plays a major socio-political role.

The Vatican has expressed its unease and displeasure at such action by the priests and Archbishop Hurley of Durban—whose parents came from Skibbereen, told the seminar that clerics should not be involved in the actual exercise of power.

But they must, as he stressed, concern themselves with politics

Archbishop Hurley also spoke of the evils of apartheid. The South African bishops fully supported the opposition of the black community to international rugby tours and other sporting links, he said.

Cardinal O Fiaich asked the Archbishop about the advisability of Irish sportsmen and women going to South Africa or maintaining sporting links with it.

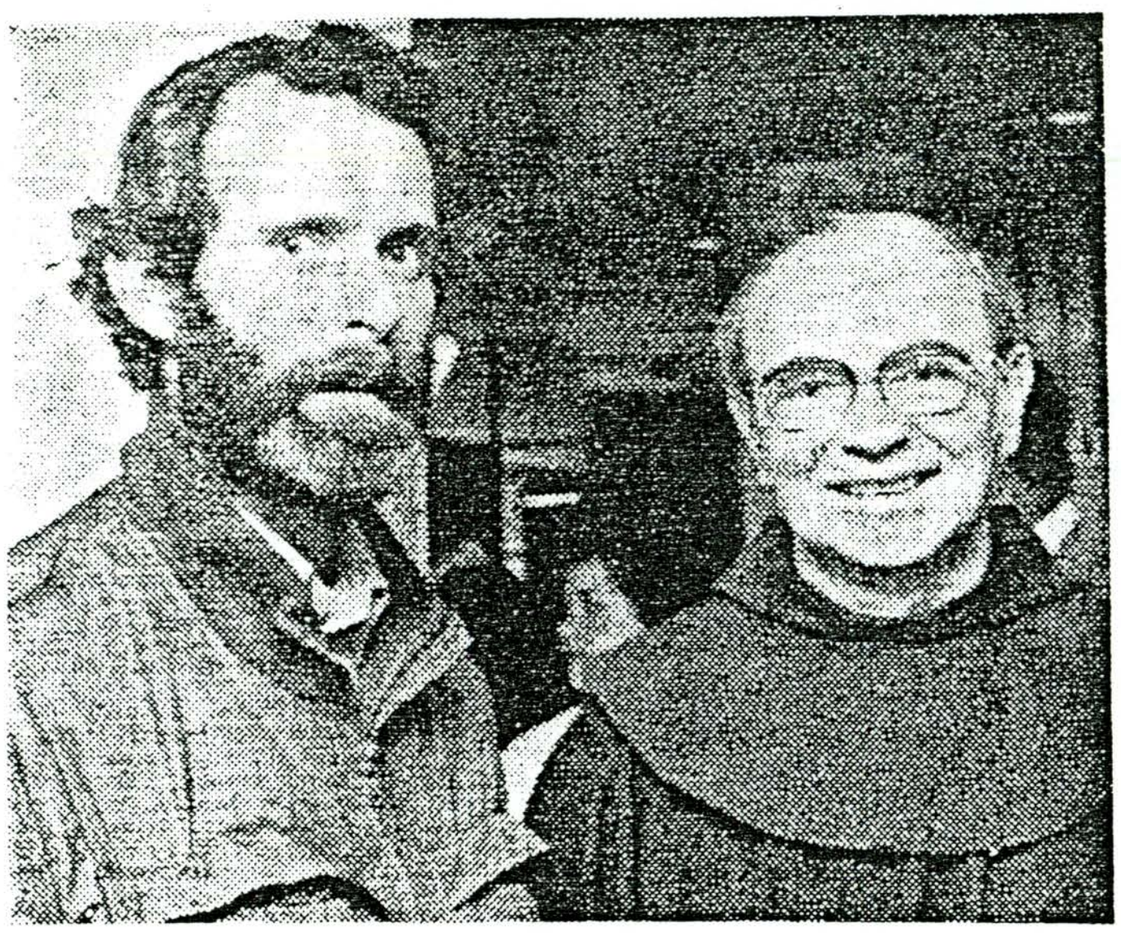
Archbishop Hurley said that the South African bishops recognised that opposition to these tours was the only effective form of protest which the black community had, since trade boycotts had failed.

Cardinal O Fiaich said he was asking the question in view of his own statement issued two years ago urging the IRFU not to send an Irish rugby team to South Africa.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University of Ulster

13 B35

Can priests and politics be allowed to mix?



Fr. Brendan Forde, OFM, who was expelled recently from Chile, and Fr. Frank Doyle, OFM, at the Trocaire conference in Galway.

BY IRISH PRESS RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT T. P. O'MAHONY

THE CONTROVERSIAL question of the role of bishops and priests in socio-political affairs and particularly in liberation movements was a central issue at the International Seminar in Galway which took place over the last three days to mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of Trocaire.

In the Irish context it may not be immediately evident wh ythis matter should be controversial at all, though in our struggle for independence, and again today in Northern Ireland, the presence of "political clerics"—or perhaps, "politicised clerics" is a familiar phenomenon.

If the 350 delegates from 22 countries at the Galway seminar were not particularly conscious of this before, and of all that is implies, they certainly were at the end of the sessions held in UCG.

For three days they listened to the experience of churchmen who have literally been in the firing line in places like Nicaragua, El Salvador, Brazil, Chile and South Africa, where revolutionary fervour is both very real and very potent.

The situation in these very troubled areas is such that no church wishing to bear authentic witness to the gospel of Christ can allow itself the jubious luxury of neutrality. Fence-sitting is not where the church is at in Central and South America, or in South Africa.

Not everyone is happy with this, least of all the Vatican, which has expressed its unease and displeasure in a variety of ways. Even Pope John Paul II has sounded warnings, as we saw very graphically when he upbraided Father Ernesto Cardinale, the Minister for Culture in the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Perhaps Father Cardinale did overstep the mark. Perhaps Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban — whose parents came from Skibbereen — is right when he says clerics should

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University of Ulster

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not be involved in the actual exercise of power. But they must, as he also stressed, concern themselves with politics because in the end politics determine the quality of life in any society and the extent to which justice prevails therein.

In other words—and this is what Torcaire is helping all of us in Ireland to understand in a new way—Christians cannot be indifferent when confronted with injustice, poverty, deprivation or the violation of human rights.

Christians cannot stand aside, or pretend to be neutral. To do that is to deny one of the essential messages of the gospel. The cost of not standing aside can, of course, be very high indeed, as in the case of the assassination of Archbishop Romero in El Salvador, or in the deaths of ordinary Christians in Guatala or the Argentine. Their only crime is that they wanted what we in this part of the world take for granted — freedom, respect, dignity and the basic rights which make human fulfilment possible.

Trocaire — more than any other agency in this country ecclesiastic or secular—is helping us to understand the plight of these people. More than that, it is helping these people themselves to do something about the appalling conditions in which they are compelled to live.

For this Trocaire is to be commended, as are the Irish bishops who set it up in 1973 as their official agency for world development. And the Irish people have expressed their appreciation of the work of Trocaire by contributing £3.5 million this year, despite the recession.

Where there is some doubt —as Nan Joyce, who stood as a candidate in the last general election on behalf of the travelling people, emphasised in an emotional and unexpected contribution at the Galway seminar is in Trocaire's relationship to social and political realities here at home.

The kernel of the problem can be put in the form of a question — can we as Irish Christians address ourselves with credibility to the problems of the Third World if we appear to be doing little or nothing about various forms of injustice on our own doorstep?

The continued existence of poverty here at home, the second class status of some of our citizens, not least the travelling people as Nan Joyce stressed, the matter of the status of women and their rights inside the outside the church — these are just some of the areas in which doubts arise and in which questions can and must legitimately be asked.

In attacking Trocaire, Nan Joyce may have chosen the wrong target, though by implication she was criticising the Irish bishops and successive Irish governments. Yet in a way that no one at the Galway seminar could have anticipated, she gave an entirely fresh perspective to the debates. It is now up to the Irish church to make an appropriate response.



At the conference . . . Donald Woods, the former South African newspaper editor, whose stand against apartheid forced him into exile.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 38

TROUBLE AGAIN?

NewsWest JULY 21, 1982

WHILE A small band of travellers this week staged the first in a series of "human rights marches" to Dail Eireann, chairman of the Tallaght Action Group, Ritchie O'Reilly claimed that itinerants are "pushing the issue with us and with the County Council".

Mr. O'Reilly claimed to *NewsWest* that many of the travellers who moved during the first anti-itinerant marches in Tallaght have now come back.

The Tallaght by-pass, which only a few weeks ago was almost devoid of caravans, is now slowly filling up with them again, Mr. O'Reilly said, while many of them have re-camped on the site for the proposed Tallaght Town Centre.

He pointed out that if the ...tre is given the go-...ead next week, that this would "solve the prob-lem" of the travellers on that field, as they would have to move on as soon as work begins.

Itinerants are also ...mped on the site for the ...posed hospital for ...llaght, Mr. O'Reilly ...nted out. "And what we ...ed there is a hospital, not itinerants", he added.

Mr. O'Reilly said that the move back to Tallaght ...represented a major

By Maggie O'Kane & Sean Moncrieff

gesture to Dublin County Council that the itinerant population still have nowhere to go. Moving back to Tallaght would only put more pressure on Councillors to get the problem solved.

But Mr. O'Reilly warned that "they better not expect us to fight their case for them. They should do it themselves".



● Mrs. Nan Joyce addressing the crowd outside the Dail.

Calling the itinerant settlement problem "a national issue", he called on Minister for the Environment Ray Burke "not just to sit back" and said that his group would be seeking a meeting with the Minister.

As yet though, the Tallaght Action Group have no definite plans. They will formulate their next move after the oral hearing on the Tallaght Town Centre next Monday.

Meanwhile, a spokes-person for the travellers who marched to Dail Eireann last Sunday, 42 year old Nan Joyce, told the crowd that they were going to fight for their rights.

Too Long

"We've been pushed around for too long," claimed grandmother of 12, Mrs. Joyce. "The time has come for us to put our foot down."

The travellers are demanding permanent halting sites with proper sanitation and access to schools and shopping facilities.

Nan Joyce dismissed the Council's plan to provide halting sites at selected sites around the county as "useless." You can't expect people to live in the middle of nowhere with no shops or schools around. We've got to shop and send our kids to school as well."

The Travellers have called on the Catholic Church to come out in support of their demands. Father Adrian Eastwood, who has been appointed special curate dealing with travellers, agrees that the church has not actually come out with a policy statement on itinerants but they have done much in the area of education and general care.

Michael Maughan, a traveller living in Tallaght, is highly critical of itinerants' treatment by local councillors: "They are not interested in really dealing with the situation, he claimed.

"They know they could lose votes if they agree to have us settled, because it is unpopular to support the "knackers".

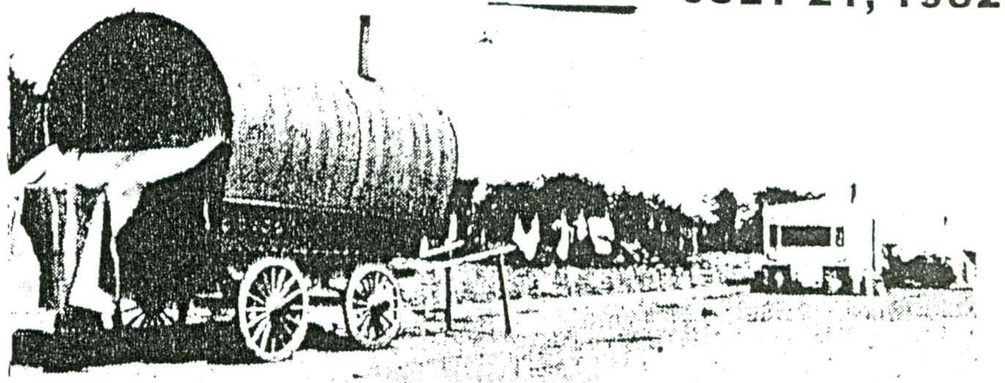
Last Saturday's march from the Rotunda Hospital to the Dail had a disappointing turn out but Nan Joyce is confident that the situation will improve.

"Travellers are reluctant to get out and march because at this stage they don't expect anything from the settled community."

Michael Maughan accused the settled community of treating itinerants like the blacks in South Africa.

"They won't allow us into their pubs or community centres," he said. "At least when the blacks were told to get out of the pubs they were given their own to go to."

Brendan Mathews, who lives in St. Brendans Road, Clondalkin, is one of the settled community who have come out in support of the itinerants: "I believe that these people do not have their basic human rights and that's why I have come out in support of them," he said. "People complain that they make a mess of the place but there isn't even a bin collection on sites and we saw just how big a mess settled people were capable of making when we had the bin strike."



● The Tallaght By-pass: slowly filling up with caravans again.
(Plc: Lyn Atherton)



● Travellers march on the Dail demanding "basic human rights".
(Plc: Alan Lund)

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Irish Political Documents, a Research Collection, Queen's University Belfast, University Of Ulster

A Woman In Search Of Change!

NAN JOYCE is a tall, elegant woman with fine black hair which she sweeps in a bun for photographs and meetings. And it's a thing she's had to do a lot of lately.

Seven years ago she emerged as the first ever spokesperson for Itinerants after an appearance on the Late Late Show. Now she is spearheading a Travellers Rights campaign for permanent halting sites and housing for travellers.

By Maggie O'Kane

She is 42 years old, has 11 children and 12 grandchildren and has spent most of her life travelling through Ireland, England and Scotland.

Nan was born in Belfast in 1940. Her father died in police custody when she was 11, while her mother was subsequently sentenced to nine months in Armagh prison for theft.

For those nine months through the winter of 1951, Nan and her nine year old brother John travelled through the North with their eight brothers and sisters, the youngest born just two days after their fathers death.

They begged, hawked clothes pegs and stole if anyone asked any questions — "Da is with the horses and me Ma's gone to the shops" — and nobody bothered them.

Nan married her husband John at 16 after meeting him at the Fairgreen in Derry. Of their eleven children, ten were born in hospital while her second child, Kathleen, was delivered in a room in Glasgow where they were living.

Nowadays she lives in a shining chrome caravan. Calf skins cover the chairs and there is a carpeted floor. We had arrived unexpectedly: "go on in", she calls from the bus where the rest of the family live. There are no locks. "There's no stealing on the site I've always left the door open." Yes, she knows that travellers have a reputation for thieving but it is a small number that have been responsible. "If your next door neighbour steals something they don't brand you as a thief as well. All the travellers are tarnished with the one brush as far as the settled people are concerned."

The Joyce's 17-year-old daughter wanders around outside. She is overweight, her hair is badly dyed and she looks depressed. She has suffered from epileptic fits since she was a child when the family camped near a battery dump and all Nan's children contacted lead poisoning. She's interested in doing an AnCO course, can't read and doesn't want to get married. It's not much fun being the only girl on camp.

Facilities

There are around 50 caravans on the Belgard Road site where the Joyces are parked. It is not an official site. The travellers simply moved onto it. So of course there are no proper sanitary facilities there. One pump in the centre serves the needs of all families while using the lavatory entails a long trek across the field to the bushes.

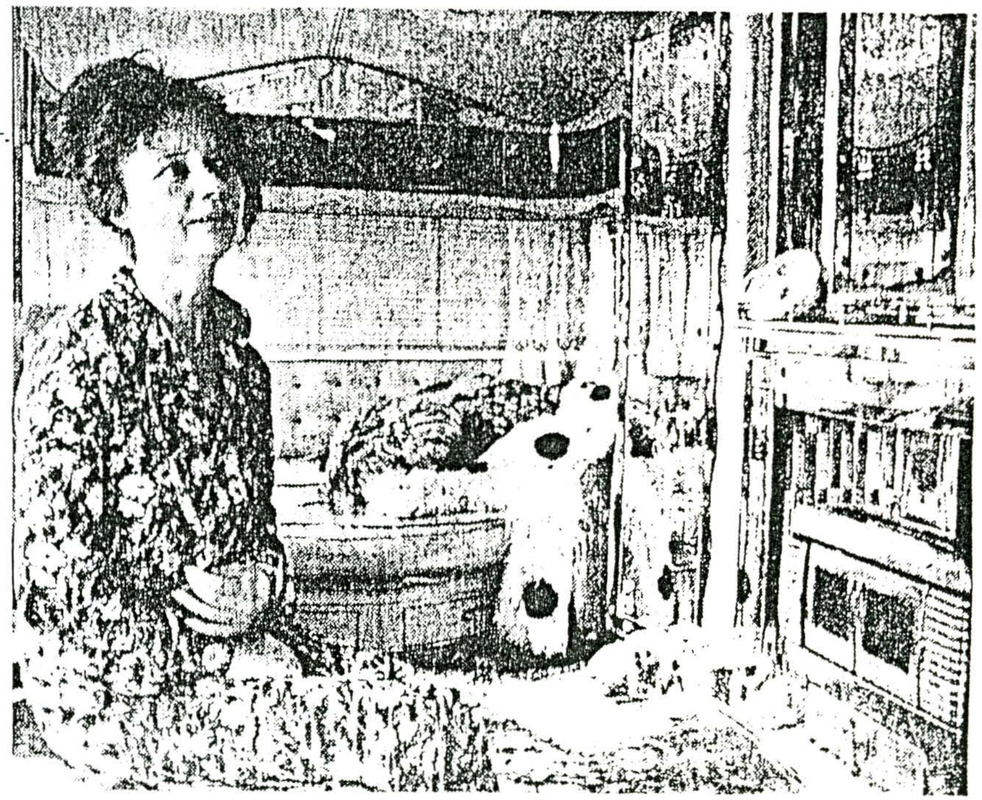
Nan feels that much of the community spirit among the travellers has gone: "People keep very much to themselves nowadays," she says. "When I was growing up we used to have a communal fire with three or four women cooking for everyone. I think the television has helped to change all that."

The Joyces are a Dublin family and spent a year living in Cara Park, Finglas, where around forty families have been housed in wooden chalets. "It was very depressing living there," said Nan, "you can hear every word through the walls and we were all living on top of one another with no privacy. At least here the caravans are set apart from one another."

What does she say to the members of the settled community who claim they've all got fancy caravans and they're living off the fat of the land? "This is my home and it's a nice caravan. Is that a crime? People have houses and cars and we have a caravan that we bought 10 years ago in England. Are we living in luxury?

The traditionally large itinerant family have come about by chance rather than choice. "There were no contraceptives around when I married so I didn't use them myself. But if any woman decides she wants to keep her family down then it makes sense."

Ideally Nan wants to see proper halting sites for itinerants with the chance of houses eventually. "We all want our children to get an education and there's no chance of that if we are always being shifted around," she says.



● Nan Joyce in her caravan on the Belgard Road, Tallaght.

She admires people like Victor Bewley who has set up various committees to try and provide for the needs of travelling people.

But she wonders, what can they really offer? "They haven't lived on the side of the road, don't understand why a traveller can't just move into a house after spending a life time on the road. They need travellers on their committees if they are to do any good.

"We don't want pity or handouts. I'm a traveller and I'm proud of it."

13 B40

Irish Traveller Movement Resource Centre
Copied by Aileen Lane, University College Cork

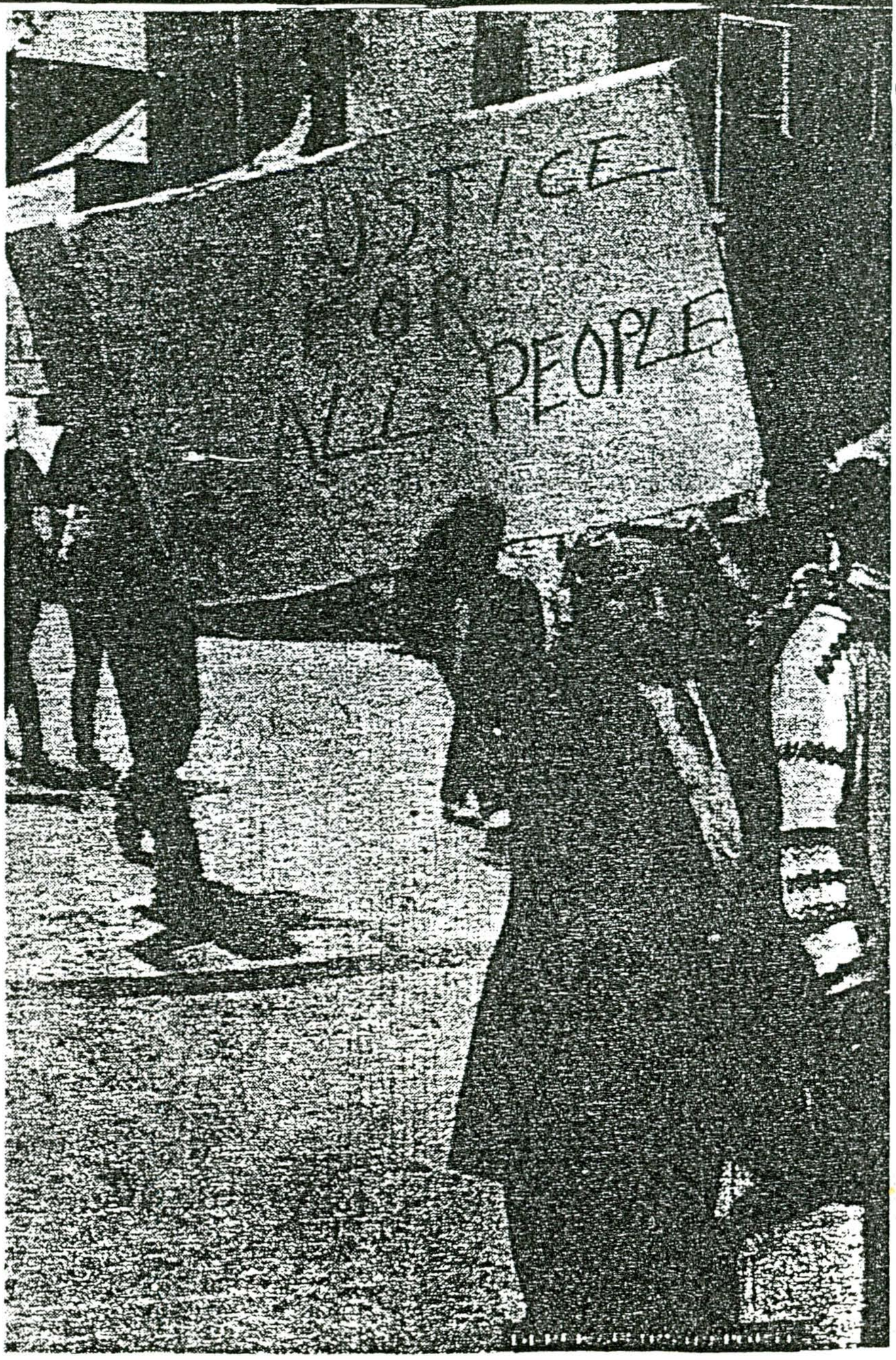
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travelling women p.5

no amendment! p.3





Mary Rountree

women and the law

news, reviews, events.....

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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Travelling

women

Continuing the series of articles on travelling women, we have an article by PATRICIA McCARTHY who works with travellers and an interview with CHRISSIE WARD, a travelling women who lives with her husband and thirteen children on a campsite on the northside.



Travelling people are a tiny percentage of the total Irish population. In fact they constitute only 0.3% of the total population. They are a despised, persecuted minority.

There are major cultural differences between travellers and the rest of the population, many of them the result of generations of isolation and poverty. Some of them arise directly out of the economic base of traveller society which revolves around the need for mobility.

Traveller society is organised into a number of clans who in turn occupy different positions in the economic hierarchy. The clan system has a profound effect on the position of women in traveller society, the vast majority of traveller marriages still being match-made. These arranged marriages are often made to form alliances between clans or to prevent "outside" clans marrying into the clan. However, more and more young men and women are now demanding to choose their own partners, thereby causing internal "problems" with the social system.

Marriage

Travellers marry very young by comparison with the settled population — as young as 16 or 17 for women and 18 or 19 for men. They have a very high fertility rate and fertility is highly valued, as a result even the most forward looking couples will not consider any form of contraception until they have had at least two children.

Families of ten and twelve are common. Travelling women can expect to be pregnant almost every year they are married, and to suffer a number of miscarriages, difficult births and a great deal of sickness in their children. There are no statistics on travellers health but people close to the travelling community are struck by the numbers of children with some form of handicap, ranging from deafness to mental handicap. Close cousin marriage is common and this has been given as a reason for the apparently high level of handicap, but on a more practical level it is obvious that traveller children do not receive anything like the medical attention or preventative screening that settled children do.

Traveller men at present are extremely

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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chauvinistic although on many practical levels it is not a straightforward male dominated society (more of that some other time). Women expect very little of the men in terms of support in relation to child bearing or house (caravan) keeping generally. All traveller women have an economic role as well as their role as wives and mothers. In some cases, they are the families main bread winner. Traveller men see the women very much in property terms which becomes very evident when a woman tries to break out of a violent or unsatisfactory relationship. More and more traveller women are using the Womens Aid refuge to escape violence but few of them succeed in making a total break with their husbands no matter how violent they are. The reasons for this are that a traveller women is at risk from travellers generally when she leaves her husband unless her family take her back and have enough men in the clan to enforce her decision. Or sometimes she moves into a relationship with another man which can sometimes bring ostracisation, but not inevitably and not always. The majority of traveller relationships are not violent ones, but where there is violence, the woman is in a much worse situation than her settled sister.

Disadvantages and needs

Eighty per cent of travelling women are illiterate which cuts them off from not only the many progressive influences around them, but also from the day to day practical things such as information on diet, health care, safety etc. Sex education is non-existent and this an area surrounded by myth and half-truths. Despite these enormous disadvantages travelling women cope with conditions that few, if any, settled women could. They raise 10 to 12 chldren in 16 ft caravans, they perform the role of breakwinner when necessary, they act as the ambassadors of the traveller society to the settled community and they are the progressive force within traveller society that hopefully will enable them to reap all the benefits of settled society while retaining all that is best in their own culture.

Travellers generally need sites where they can park their caravans, sites with water, electricity and hard standing for those families that want it. Traveller children should have immediate access to education, health care and the right to continue their lifestyle with dignity. Traveller women who are victims of family violence need protection and probably special facilities as they need a great deal more support than even settled battered wives do. A programme of sex education and health education and support in using contraception is immediately needed. Traveller women need the support of their settled sisters in the struggle for equal rights, decent living conditions and the right to remain different if they choose to.

Irish society has little tolerance of 'deviance' whether it is in the form of being gay, non-catholic, black or a traveller. Minority rights must be defended. The rights of travellers are under attack in suburban Dublin at present as a result of hatred and prejudice. The women and chldren suffer most from these enforced evictions. They must be defended and the people who attack them exposed for what they are — intolerant, facist minded bigots.

• **Patrica MacCarthy**

'The only place we're not refused, is the hospital, the church and the graveyard'

As we arrived on the campsite, Chrissie was talking to an official. There is no water tap on the site, she was hoping to get him to do something about it. But, as she said later, he is the sort of man you can't get through to the brain.

Never give him breakfast in bed

Well, travelling women, the women don't have so much 'women's lib' you know. She herself had to fight hard for hers. She had to get over the fear. She left her husband several times to assert herself and to make sure she got half of the pay-packet. She talks to the other women sometimes about it. She says the older women are afraid and a bit settled in their ways but for the younger women things are changing, she tells them never to start off by giving their husbands breakfast in bed. The younger women are more ameniable to the use of contraceptives and she thinks in the future that they will have less children. The men are changing too. They demand their rights but the women are changing them.

Match-making too is beginning to be a thing of the past. This she puts down to the influence of television. Television is their main contact with the outside world, they see how the other half lives.

Hospitals — a dream, a hotel

Water is precious when its hard to get. There is no tap on the site. There used to be one down the road, but somebody cut it down. Now would you believe that? It takes two or three hours to get water, begging it off the people who live in the estate across the road or like Chrissie, getting it off her sister who lives in one of the chalets. Then it's a matter of keeping your eye on it all day in case someone knocks it or takes it.

The water is for drinking and cleaning, cleaning the kids, their bottles and their bedclothes. Travelling kids have very bad bed-wetting problems, because their kidneys ae affected from living in damp conditions. Chrissie had seven children wetting at the same time. She'd take off the sheets and blankets and wash them every day, but you never get the mattresses dry. And the smell, it hits you as you walk in the door of a caravan where children are sleeping.

Many travellers have kidney trouble all their lives, if not, it is bronchitis or rheumatism or arthritis. Chrissie has arthritis since she was nineteen, her eldest daughter is eighteen, she has it as well.

Unlike Chrissie, some of the women don't bother about their own appearance. They haven't the time, the energy or often not enough water. They seldom go anywhere anyway and even if they do, they'll more than likely be refused. When they are in hospitals, giving birth, is the only rest they get, they look forward to it. Being served meals in bed, having no work to do, Chrissie describes it as being like a dream, a hotel.

I'm not a knacker, I'm a traveller

We talk about settled people. She is very conscious and angry about the attitude of settled people to travellers.

'Settled people don't think we're human, I often examined myself and I don't know why.' She herself is seldom refused entry to shops or pubs because she dresses so well that most people don't realise that she is a traveller. But one rebuff she remembers clearly.

'I was pregnant and all day I had this craving for ice-orange — a stupid travelling craze for ice-orange when we don't have a fridge! I persuaded my husband to take me to the pub in the evening after the children were settled. They didn't serve women in the front bar so we went upstairs. The barman blocked us at the door, said he couldn't serve us. If I hadn't me husband, I'd have been brought to the station! But instead I said to him, 'do I smell, or am I different from your own wife or is it because I'm a knacker? Well, I'm not a knacker, I'm a traveller'.

He never told her but kept refusing to serve them.

'I was deep hurt, deep down inside, and I felt so denied, so denied because I didn't hit him with me handbag. I wanted to be up in court to let people know.'

She laughs then and tells us that the baby she was carrying at the time was 'born with his tongue hanging out, and that's fact.'

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Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
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Maybe I shouldn't say this but if the government opened its heart, just a little pick

Chrissie sees very little hope in the attitude of the authorities to travelling people.

'I sat looking at the moon out through that window the other night and I thought if the government owned it, they'd never give us a share in it. And do you know if they owned the night and the day, it would be the dark they'd give us. And if they owned the seasons, they'd give us winter.'

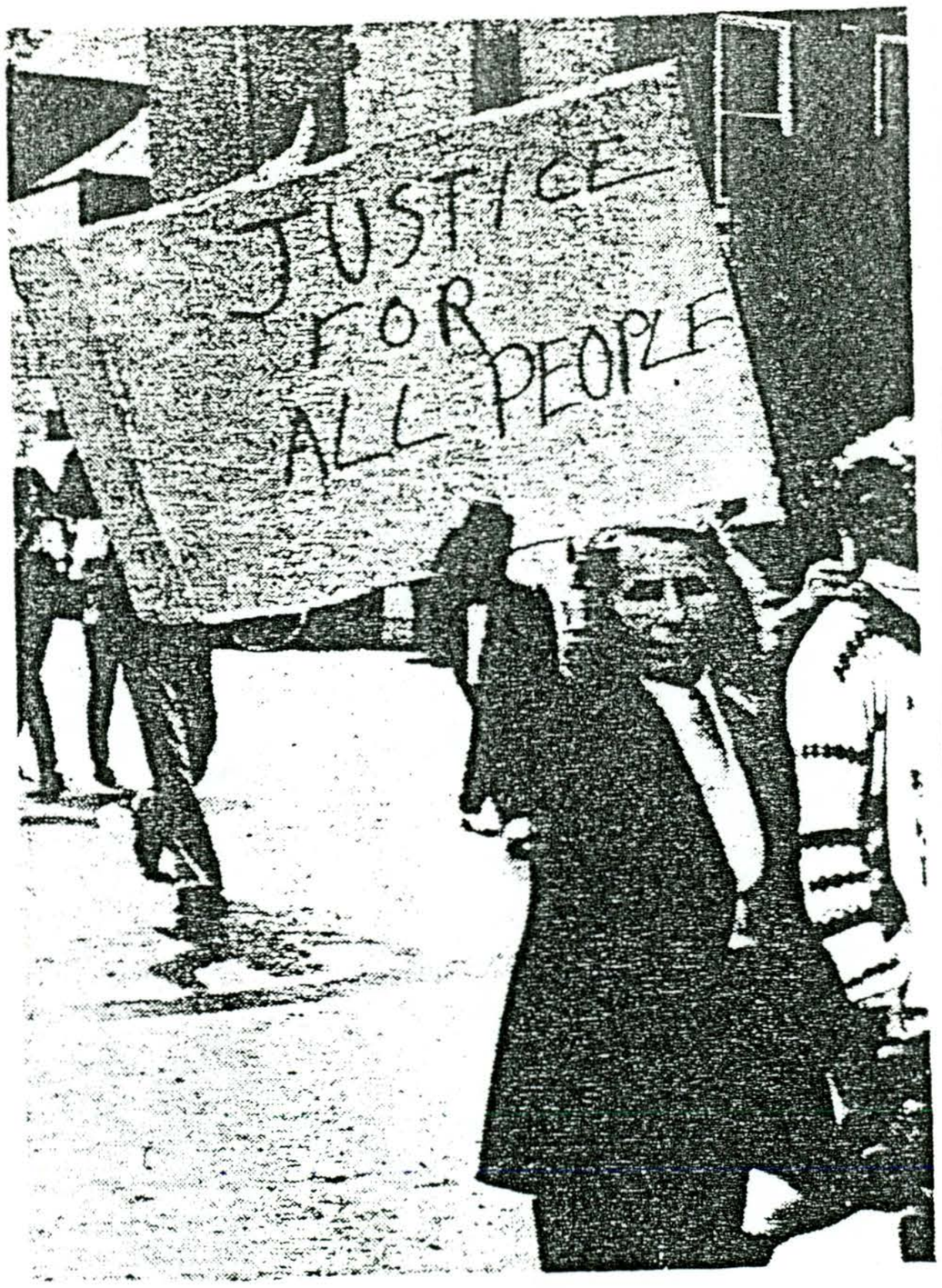
She knows this and so do the young people, and they won't take it for much longer. 'They are wild because they're blocked out from everywhere and they want to spite back. The television tells them they're getting cut out.' If the situation continues 'there will be resolution, there will be war'.

Travelling people are lost for something and don't know what it is

Chrissie and all travellers want recognised sites where they have some basic amenities like water and a washhouse. She'd like to see small schools on the sites where they'll teach useful crafts to her children. Especially the girls, because they find it harder to get jobs.

Instead of being forced to settle, Chrissie wants to be free to travel because 'travelling is in her blood', She wants to learn to write so that she can write a book about the travelling life, about the experiences she has had and the stories she has heard. She wants it to be a history of her people, like 'Roots' on T.V. She thinks it would be something that would give them pride, a sense of identity.

● **Caroline Butler**



Since this interview, a proposal to provide twelve halting sites for travellers in Co Dublin has been rejected by the Council. During the debate, Councillor Hickey (F.G.) suggested that travellers should be issued with identity cards and should not be allowed to travel beyond a three mile radius of their sites.

Wimmin Collective would like to express its disgust with the outcome of the vote and with the obvious bigotry expressed by the councillors who voted against the proposal. We urge all those who believe in the principle of self-determination for oppressed peoples to support the forthcoming protests organised by the travellers.

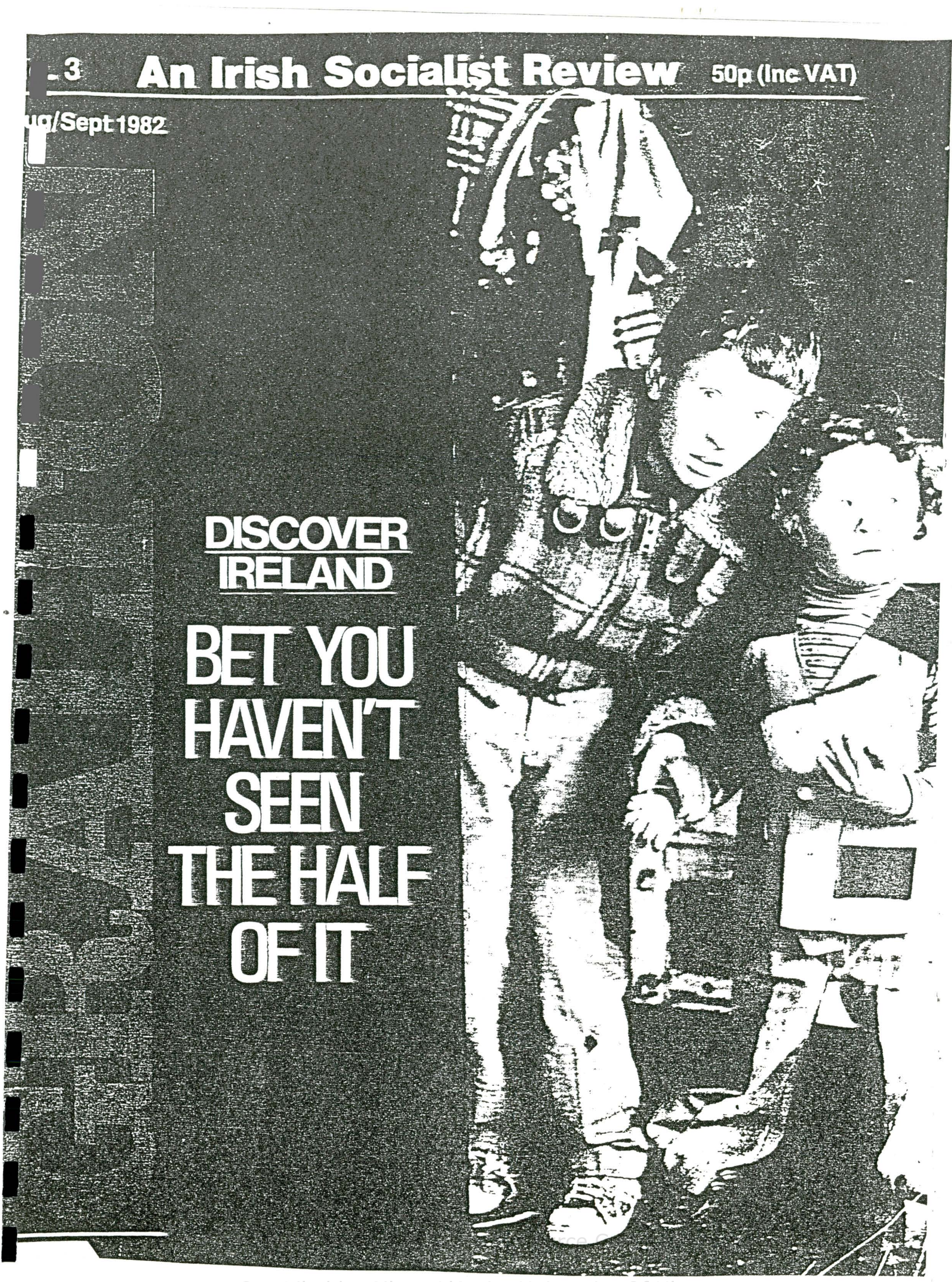
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13 B45

Travellers

Bigotry, tokenism and fighting back



This article was written by a Dublin social worker who has worked with travellers for a number of years.

Travellers constitute a tiny proportion of the total Irish population — approximately 0.1%. Ethnically, they are Irish people but culturally they constitute a seperate minority. Several other European countries have indigenous traveller populations: Holland, Sweden, Czechoslovakia and England for example. The origins of all these groups are confused but there is a concensus that many of them came from land wars, famines and rural dispossession. In most other European countries there are also groups of Romany gypsies who are a seperate race of people but have intermarried to some extent with native travellers. There are only a very small number of Romany families in Ireland.

Nobody has done any conclusive research on the origins of Irish travellers, mainly due to the lack of historical data. Travellers themselves have no definite folklore on the matter although individual clans can trace their ancestry back over many generations. However, their secret language, Shelto or Gamon, which is still widely understood amonst them though not so widely spoken anymore, does give some clues about their origins. It is not a full language, more a defensive code, and consists mainly of reversed gaelic words, indicating that it originated at a time when Ireland was Irish speaking.

Socially, the most striking feature of travellers as a group are; their early marriage age, large numbers of children (averaging twice that of the settled population), high infant mortality rate and very low levels of literacy. Their nomadic lifestyle sets them apart from the settled population and contributes greatly to the degree of social isolation that they experience. On a cultural level, travellers do not share many of the norms and values of the settled population. The economic base of their society is founded on the need to be mobile, to adapt constantly to economic situations and opportunities. The society is based on the clan as the economic unit. Hence the practice of match-making is designed to reinforce the economic unit of the clan, although more and more young travellers are now insisting on choosing their own partners.

In many ways, travellers can be seen as a throwback to peasant society but this is too simplistic an analysis for a group of people who have survived as a distinct cultural entity for hundreds of years and who have counterparts in several European countries. Today, travellers face the need to adapt to a settled society that is increasingly intolerant of them and of their lifestyle.

In the last fifteen years, large numbers of travellers have moved to the urban areas especially Dublin, just as the settled population has. One third of the traveller population now live in the Greater Dublin area where they are inevitably caught up in the vicious competition for land. They need places to stay but increasingly they are pushed into the newer suburbs where there are still tracts of open space left. Here they have congregated in large numbers resulting in open confrontation between them and the residents of the "new towns" of Tallaght and Clondalkin.

How will the travellers react to this situation? How have events been allowed to drift to such an extent that travellers are now being hounded from one camping ground to another without any sort of adequate provision being made for them?

First, let's take a look at political organisation amongst the travellers themselves. Over the past 15 to 20 years,

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their cause has been "taken up" by bodies such as the *National Committee for Travelling People* (formerly the *National Itinerant Settlement Committee)* which excessively consists of people "acting on their behalf". This group came into existence largely as a result of the *Report Of the Commission On Itinerancy 1961,* which documentated their dreadful living conditions and isolation.

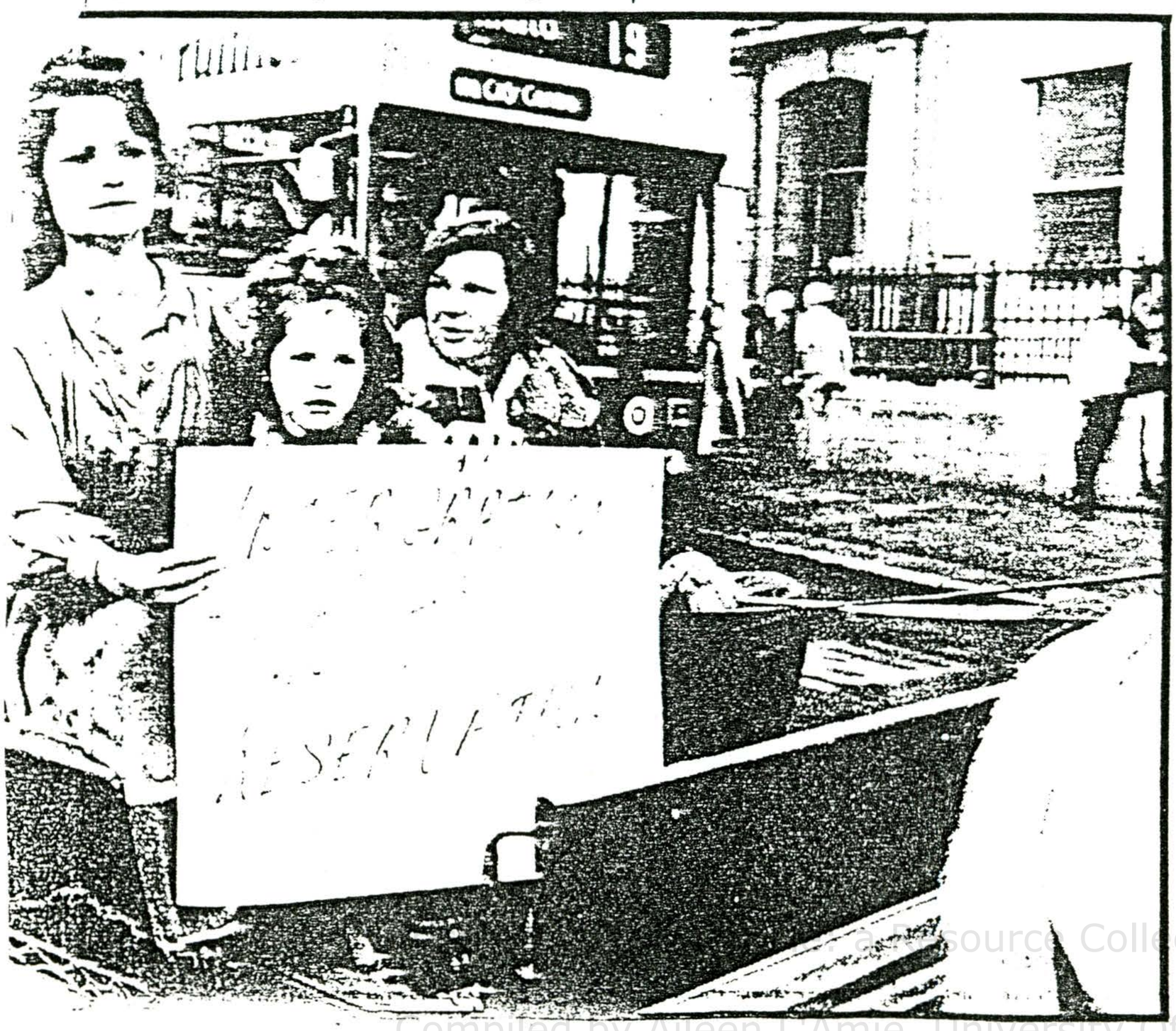
But previous to the establishment of the *National Itinerant Settlement Committee,* there had been an attempt by an English gypsy, Grattan Paxan, living in Dublin's Cherry Orchard, to organise the travellers autonomously to resist evictions and to campaign for properly serviced sites and schooling. This attempt was partially successful, but was undermined by the setting up of the Committee and the return of Grattan Paxan to England. Autonomous organisation amongst Irish travellers then virtually ceased up until the very recent past.

The *Gypsy Council* in England, however, has had several Irish travellers among its organisers — there are still five times as many Irish travellers in England as there are in Ireland. The *Gypsy Council* is affiliated to the international *Romano Congresso,* which has fought, amongst other things, for compensation from the German state for the millions of gypsies murdered by the Nazis.

In the past five years, travellers have begun to participate in the meetings of the new *National Committee For Travelling People* but there is still a strong element of tokenism in their involvement. The Dublin Committee has refused to take a militant stand on the various issues that efect the travelling population: the constant evictions and harassment, the lack of properly serviced sites, the blatant discrimination aginast them as a group, their children's lack of access to education etc.

One group, the *Association Of Teachers Of Travelling People* (ATTP), has filed a case against the Irish government in Strasbourg for its failure to uphold the human rights of travellers. But this case will not be heard for some time yet and any results that may flow from it are several years away.

As a group, the travellers won their most decisive victory three years ago as a result of a High Court action by a traveller woman, Roselle McDonald. She took Dublin County Council to court as a result of being evicted by them from one roadside camp to another on several occasions. She won a decision, later upheld by the Supreme Court, that a Local Authority cannot evict travellers from a roadside without providing a reasonable alternative. However, travellers have found that Local Authorities can, and do, find ways to indirectly evict them — leaving them without the "protection" of the courts. Overall though, it has had the effect of preventing the constant "moving on" in the Dublin area that had been so much a feature of traveller's lives.





Two traveller children inside a Tigin in Finglas.

The recent attempt by a group of residents to physically force the travellers out of Tallaght has provided the impetus for new defensive organisation among travellers. On two occasions, the so-called "Tallaght Action Group" marched in their hundreds on the travellers camps with the straightforward intention of physically intimidating the travellers into leaving the area.

Appaled by the fascist nature of this attack, a small group of Tallaght people organised themselves to oppose such actions and to defend the travellers. This *Committee For The Rights Of Travelling People* opposed the thugs with placards and pickets and gradually began to draw in the travellers themselves to defend the campsites — a big step in itself as the travellers had vivid memories of being stoned, their caravans smashed up, their children frightened and their property destroyed. All this happened nine months ago in Loughlinstown, County Dublin.

Since these events in Tallaght, travellers have now marched through Dublin three times and picketed the offices of Dublin County Council when a plan for sites throughout the Country was being discussed. They are joining in the meetings of the Travellers Rights Committee in large numbers and, for the first time, travellers from all over the country are expressing solidarity and joining the marches and pickets.

The vast majority of travellers want

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 47

properly-serviced halting sites where they can have water, toilets, tarmac, electricity and the opportunity to send their kids to school. Most of them want to retain their identity as travellers, but to do so in decent conditions. A small number want standard housing and assimilation with the settled population. Some would settle for small group housing for travellers only to enable them to adjust to the demands of settled living.

None of this is beyond the capacity of the state to provide immediately. Local Authorities get 100% recoupment from the Dept. of Local Government for provision of these facilities. But local councillors use travellers as a political football — even descending to the level of seeking popularity with their constituents by leading marches of thugs against the travellers as one Fianna Fail councillor, Damian Murray, did in Tallaght. Meanwhile, their public utterances on the subject generally range from bigoted prejudice to outright racism.

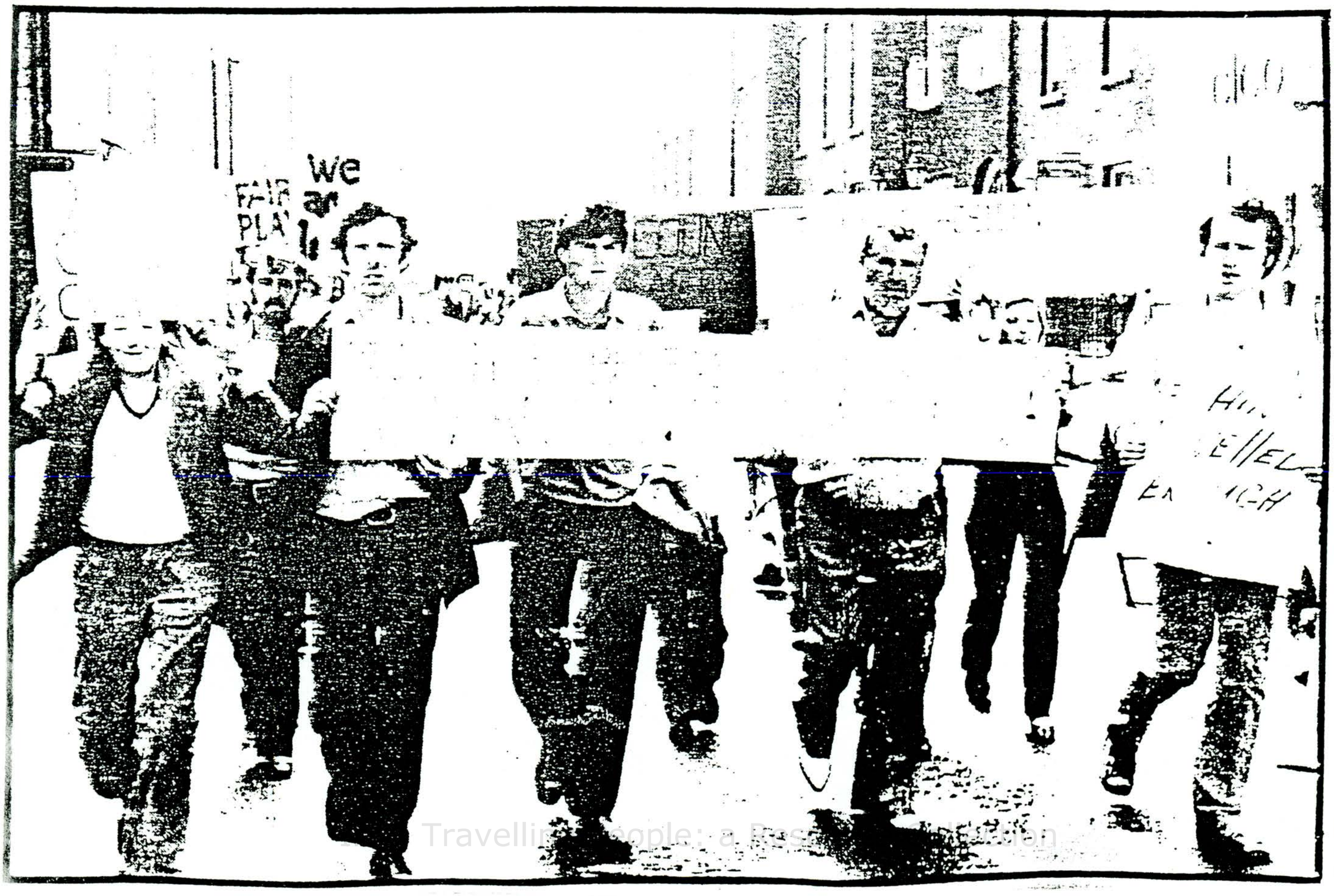
But then, the attitude of many of the settled population is quite often racist as well. In a recent interview, a traveller woman, Chrissie Ward, describing her feelings on being refused in a pub because she was a traveller; "I felt dirty, I asked him to look at me, to tell me if there was something different about me, was there a smell? I went home and looked at myself in the mirror for a long time. I could not see the difference." The sense of discrimination and injustice goes very deep in the traveller population, but there is also an overiding sense of fear. They have all personally experienced racist attitudes and actions ranging from being refused water to outright physical attack.

The settled population find many aspects of the traveller's lifestyle objectionable: the dirt on the sites, the belief (false) that travellers are all involved in some kind of crime or another. Irish people generally are highly intolerant of minorities be they blacks, gays or travellers. Travellers are perhaps the most vulnerable because they are highly visible, illiterate, unaware of their rights, unused to organisation and only beginning to fight back themselves. They need the support of sections of the settled population who have muscle but who are also prepared to allow the travellers to make the decisions about their own lives.

A group of social workers and travellers, the *Social Action Group*, recently formulated alternative policy proposals for travellers in the Dublin area. Copies have been sent to all relevant government bodies, politicians and union organisations. The basis of these proposals is that the government nationally should take responsibility for policy and provision for travellers, overiding local councils who fail to provide sites and ensuring that travellers are consulted on all decisions. It also contains proposals on child care facilities for the traveller children at risk in Dublin city centre — the so-called "glue children". The proposals are supported by the *Travellers Rights Committee*.

Some practical ways in which people could help are: Tenants or Residents group that feel there is a "problem" in their area should contact the Travellers Rights Committee and ask for a speaker to talk to them about their experience in Tallaght; local authority workers told to evict travellers should contact their unions and help get a union position passed opposing evictions without proper alternative sites. Teachers should invite local travellers into the schools to talk about their lifestyle and problems. The demand for properly serviced sites should be taken up in the unions generally and in tenants and community groups. Bigoted prejudice should be confronted.

You can contact the Committee For The Rights Of Travelling People at 701 Virginia Heights, Tallaght, Co. Dublin. Tel. 570195 and the Social Action Group at 168 Castle Avenue, Dublin 3. Tel. 331314.



Travelling People: a Bibliography
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

NOVEMBER 1982

THE GENERAL ELECTION

THE 24th DAIL

NOVEMBER 15, 1982 C

ELECTION



Mrs Nan Joyce, who is a candidate for the travelling people in Dublin South-West in the general election. — (Photograph: Paddy Whelan)

Irish Traveller Movement Research Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
13 B 49

A voice for the travelling people

By Elgy Gillespie

THIS weekend Mrs Nan Joyce, mother of 11 and grandmother of 12, made history by becoming the first traveller to hand in her nomination papers at the Sheriff's office.

"I think myself I'll be doing well if I get just a few votes," said Nan. After all, her own people can't vote for her — only a handful of travellers are registered, and they are hopelessly out of touch politically.

Nor is Tallaght a good bet for a travellers' candidate. On May 6th last several hundred local residents, and three politicians, menaced local travellers, accusing them of rape.

Nan Joyce is standing in Dublin South-East on a purely humanitarian ticket. Nobody, not even Nan's committee colleagues, self-professed amateurs at this game, thinks she has an earthly.

Like most travellers, she married young (at 16) had little schooling (3 months in Lancashire and some in the Falls Road) and is now a very youthful 41. The Joyces live on the Belgard Road where Nan's husband, John, has a huge, glittering trailer.

On Wednewday she is going to hold a press conference in front of her trailer about what she wants, not just for travellers but for settled women and poor settled children as well. On Thursday she will tour all the official council sites for travellers, those lonely and unsightly spots nobody else wants. Dunsink Lane is beside a toxic waste dump, she says, and Labre Park is in a forest of electric pylons while Avila Park will not be there for long, since a new highway is to be built there.

Nan loathes the image of the travellers as being drunk and destructive, but says nobody ever asks why they behave badly or asks what they themselves want. As a result, nobody knows.

"I grew up with a lot of pain and suffering. I was born in Tipperary but I've never seen it since. We'll only be a short while in this world and I want to do something and not to be just passing through. "She'd like the next lot of kinds to have it better than she did.

"I can remember being moved on in winter just a couple of hours after having Elizabeth. And I've heard women on sites, maybe sick women, being moved on by the guards in bad weather, praying to God to take them out of this world. And I've had lot of experience about battered wives. I can speak about these things."

For a start, she says, the Guards should get some kind of social training in Templemore instead of just being used to clean up the Council's dirty work.

Travellers' champion sets out basic aims

I.T. 82 nov

By Elgy Gillespie

IN the muddy field where she and her family live in the corner of the Belgard Road, Mrs Nan Joyce gave her first press conference as an independent candidate for Dublin South-West yesterday. Standing for the rights of the travelling people, Mrs Joyce will campaign on this issue alone and today she is touring the official sites and unofficial sites for travellers on the Malahide Road, Avila Park and Dunsink Lane with journalists to show them the living conditions of her people.

Mrs Joyce's backers are the Committee for the Rights of Travellers, a group of people who include a teacher, a social worker and a night porter. All are from the Tallaght area and came together in protest at the events of last May when local residents led by three politicians marched against local travellers on the Belgard Road site. One of their leaders was Mr Richie O'Reilly who is now running as a Community candidate. But as the committee are voluntary and have little in the way of funds, aside from £100 donated them by an ESB Officers' Association and which they are spending on posters and calendars, they are limiting their campaign to pamphlets.

"I'm just going to put my leaflet into peoples' doors and ask them to think about what I say," said Mrs Joyce.

Her main demand is for a Government Minister to open a Department that will look after and co-ordinate the efforts of the umpteen travellers' welfare committees in existence.

Full Irish citizenship is another of her demands, with the civil and human rights due them under the Constitution. She also wants full consultation with the travellers on any welfare scheme and the option for them to retain their full cultural identity: in other words, to settle if they want to, or to keep moving if they want to, without the use of force against them either way.

These last two demands were upheld by the Council of Europe in a resolution passed in October, 1981. They were the culmination of a whole series of resolutions dating back to 1969 in which the role of the authorities towards what they call in Strasbourg, "the nomadic people," is defined. Together with various other demands, such as international identity papers, a solidarity fund and an information centre for all European travelling people, this resolution was passed last year.

But although another local traveller, Mrs Rose MacDonald (who had previously taken a case to the Supreme Court) had her decision upheld in Strasbourg as a result, nothing has been heard about the resolution since, complains Mrs Joyce. She believes that more travellers will be registered for this election than ever before, however.

IRISH TIMES

NOVEMBER 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen O'Carroll, University Of Ulster

13B50

Irish Independent, Thursday, November 18, 1982



Election '82

Nan Joyce, Independent candidate in Dubin South West, who is the first travelling person to contest an election, is pictured on the site at Belgard Road, Tallaght, where she lives in a mobile home.
—Picture by Liam Mulcahy

Nan is going a strange road

By TRACEY HOGAN

NAN JOYCE has spent most of her 41 years rearing a family of 11 children on some of the dirtiest God-forsaken "camping sites" in the country. Hardship and bloody-minded bigotry are no strangers to the first traveller to contest a general election.

Sitting in the family caravan on a muddy site beside the Old Blessington Road in Tallaght, Nan Joyce looks a little nervous. The press conference has just started and reporters' questions come fast and thick.

After years of depending on other people to do the fighting, Nan knows she has been given a golden opportunity to highlight the plight of her community, and she cannot afford to fail.

"The idea of travellers standing up for themselves has never been heard of before," Nan tells the press conference. "I hope that my standing in the election will give encouragement to other travelling people."

Much of her campaign manifesto is based on a judgment given by Chief Justice O'Higgins in a 1980 court case. "Nothing is solved merely by moving such families from place to place. By doing so, not only is the problem perpetrated, but the claims and rights of the children to any possibility of education and a settled life and future are ignored," he said.

VOTE No. 1

ANN

JOYCE

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13B51

TRAVELLERS RIGHTS

ELECTION 82

Voice of the Dublin travellers

Name: Ann (Nan) Joyce
Address: Belgard Road
Age: 41
Marital Status: Married with 11 children and 12 grandchildren.

Nan Joyce is a traveller who feels poor people in both the settled and the travelling community need a genuine voice in the Dail.

She made history this week by being the first traveller ever to hand in nomination papers to the Sheriff's office.

"We are not the only people who live below the poverty line," she told *Newsday*. "Many poor people in the settled community live in conditions nearly as bad as ours and have to hide it to save face."



● Nan Joyce

Although Nan is mostly self-educated, she is very concerned with proper educational facilities for every child and with proper medical care and housing for young families.

She herself does not expect to be elected, as the people who are most likely to vote for her, the travelling people, are almost entirely unregistered.

"This election will be good experience for next time round and people will know me better then," she adds. "These poor people are angry because they are being denied the right to have a decent standard of living," she says.

"The rich politicians mean well," she explains, "but they don't know what it's like to work with battered wives or neglected children. I do. I've seen peoples pain and I want to speak out for them."

Ann Joyce

Ann Joyce is standing in the Irish general election as a travellers' candidate. She is campaigning solely on the rights of travellers. She told me that all the travelling women in Dublin are behind her. She is demanding on behalf of the travelling people basic facilities such as water and toilets on their sites. They also want a Minister made responsible for travellers' needs.

They also want to be able to decide *where* the sites are situated. 'Not big sites out on a lonely road. They should be small sites and we should be consulted'.

She says she wishes settled women realise they had a lot in common with travelling women and that they suffer the same things. 'Travelling women also suffer the hurt of desertion, wife beating, alcholism and the pressure of modern society'.

Ann Joyce says she is proud to be a traveller but finds it hard to be proud of Ireland while her people are treated as outcasts to be hidden away in lonely places and not accepted as Irish citiziens with full human and civil rights.

She said on the *Women Today* readio programme on RTE (the national broadcasting station) that 'We're not going to wait any longer. We live in filth. I know settled women suffer but not like travelling women. We're chased like hunted animals. We're always the last in the queue. How can we be clean when we've no *way* of being clean.'

Ann Joyce is the first ever traveller to stand as a candidate in an Irish election. Roisín Boyd

Messages of support and donations for the campaign to Committee for the Rights of Travellers c/o Tony and Maria Hackett 701 Virginia Heights Tallaght County Dublin.

Spare Rib 9

Irish Travelling People's Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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IN THE SCRIPTS



Nan Joyce (Ind, Dublin South West)

Miss Sile de Valera (FF, Clare) said the entire criminal legal system should be reviewed as a matter of priority. Such a review should not prevent intermediate measures. The placing of a legal onus on parents to take "reasonable care" to prevent their children committing criminal offences should be examined as a possible way of dealing with the problem of juvenile crime, she said.

"Other measures which might be considered could consist of restricting the use of the Probation Act as regards dismissing cases. It is ridiculous that persistent offenders can get off time and time again by virtue of that Act."

Mr Michael Noonan (FG, Limerick East) said his party rejected suggestions that fees should be introduced for post-primary education. Fine Gael would press ahead with reform of the school curriculum and in particular the second-level examinations system.

Mrs Nuala Fennell, (FG, Dublin South) said there was grave concern among the parents about the proposed axeing of the primary school medical examination scheme; it was the only medical examination many children received, and resulted in the detection of numerous congenital and other disorders at a stage when treatment could be effective.

Mrs Nan Joyce (Independent, Dublin South West) said there were 440 families living by the roadside in Dublin alone. "That means risking people looking at you as you go the toilet in a field or in the ditch, because there is nowhere else to go. It means begging a local garage for water to wash in. Have you ever tried to stay clean and smell good when you couldn't even get water? It means mounds of rubbish piling up — the same rubbish as you have, only the binman doesn't collect ours. We don't seem to have that basic right."

She said she was standing in the election because no politician in Ireland had every really explained the travellers' side of the story.

Mr Micheal O'Donnell (Independent, Louth) said there should be a scheme of realistic grants to encourage those buying or building their own homes. Current grants bore no relation to the original scheme introduced by Mr Neil Blaney in 1966 in which the total amount in grants per house was a maximum of £900 — then equivalent to the cost of materials. The equivalent grant today would be £8,000, he said.

Mr Paddy Gallagher, (WP, Waterford) said a national bank giro system should be set up in conjunction with the proposed Bord Poist. The basis already existed in the network of post offices. A giro service would provide the State, for the first time, with a major banking facility, publicly-owned and operated solely in the national interest.

Mr Bernard McGlinchey, (FF, Donegal North West) said that if Fine Gael were to achieve power, there would be a collaborationist Government back in Dublin. "At



Nan's newest campaign!

THREE unexpected newcomers are now in the race for the Dublin South-West election.

Representing the local travelling people, well-known civil rights campaigner Nan Joyce is to run, while Ritchie O'Reilly and Noel Murphy are two community candidates.

Mrs Joyce told *Newsday* that she does not expect to be elected but only to make the point of "full equal rights" for the travelling population.

The Community candidates are more confident, claiming that they expect to win one seat between them. Both Mr Murphy and O'Reilly are executive members of the Tallaght Community Council and the Tallaght Action Group which organised the anti-itinerant marches of earlier this year.

But both men wish to play down the 'anti-itinerant' aspect of their campaign, claiming that there are many other pressing local issues, while travelling people are a "national problem."

Although they say they will not refuse support from any quarter, it is unlikely they will receive any backing from the Tallaght Community Council, who would prefer to remain apolitical

Inside this week's *Newsday*, we have full coverage of the election, including profiles of all the candidates and the constituencies.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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Ann Joyce, standing in this constituency, for the rights of Travellers.

TALLAGH ECHO

19TH NOVEMBER 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 54

TALLAGHT ECHO, 19th November 1982

Nan Joyce - Making History For The Travellers

By Richard Gallagher

'You have to be a traveller to know the problems of travellers - the sufferings, the hardship, the pain'. So says Nan Joyce, 42 year old mother of 11 and grandmother of 12, who has made history by being the first member of the itinerant community ever to be nominated for election to Dail Eireann.

It is almost a cliche now to say that Nan is an 'articulate' itinerant. She has appeared on the Late Late Show; has led protest marches to highlight travellers' problems; and was a prominent spokesperson earlier this year when her people in Tallaght were under pressure from some of the settled community.

But hardly anybody - and least of all Nan - is going to pretend that she is educated in the conventional sense. She had about three years in primary school; and any claim she makes to insight or wisdom is likely to rest on her wide travels, her 25 years of child-rearing and the variety of her experiences in a lifetime on the road.

Yet there are some things unusual about Nan Joyce. Firstly, she does not look like a traveller, though she will thank no-one for saying it. But whereas the typical woman of her class is blonde, large-boned and unmistakably weather-beaten, Nan is svelte, dark and youthful.

Elegant

And secondly, though her voice and accent clearly indicate her background, much of her speech is elegant almost to the point of being poetic. Such as when she says: 'We'll always have our tradition and way of life; I'll always want to be a traveller', or 'It's an awful thing - you sit down and observe your own children - you know they are never going to have a chance - and sometimes you feel like crying'.

Perhaps this is a thing common to the travellers - the neat and economical turn of phrase. Whatever the case, Nan seems to possess it to a special degree.

Although she has little formal education Nan claims to be acutely aware of the problems of society, particularly women's problems. She is saddened, she says, that women in the settled community don't recognise this common bond, and ignore the fact that travelling women experience the hurt of desertion, wife-beating, alcholism just as their settled sisters do.

She also talks of the fear that is installed in settled children by such warnings as 'Don't go near the knackers' or 'The knackers will get you'. This prejudice sticks in their minds for life, says Nan Joyce, so that they never get to know the travellers as people - and the fear and ignorance eventually turns to hatred.

Outcasts

Her philosophy is summed up in a press release explaining her candidacy, which she published this week: 'Nan Joyce is proud to be a Traveller and that her family goes back many generations in Ireland, but finds it hard to be proud of Ireland while her people are treated as outcasts to be hidden away in lonely places and not accepted as Irish citizens with full Human and Civil Rights'.

'Nan Joyce is a founder member of The Committee for the Rights of Travellers who believe that her selection by it's members to fight this election will encourage more Travellers to join the Committee, where they can speak up for their rights, and demand that the Government take action to improve Health, Education, Housing, Sites and other facilities for Travellers and begin a programme of Education for the settled people that will improve their understanding and knowledge of Travellers as a special people in Irish society'.

Tony Hackett, Nan's election agent and a member of the Committee, said this week that they had been gratified by the public response to Nan's going forward. They have had many welcome offers of help in the campaign and it had become clear that many people in Tallaght were not 'anti-Traveller'.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen O'Arcy, University of Ulster

13 B 55

SOME REAL ISSUES RAISED

BY KEVIN BURKE

THE MAIN Free State political rties are offering little choice to the oters in next Wednesday's general lection, there is still a good selection f independents who are taking the opportunity to raise important issues at xcal level.

The one candidate who has this angle of xcal community affairs developed *par excellence* is, of course, Tony Gregory himself, in Dublin Central, who is certain now to e deservedly in contest for the poll-topping osition rather than for one of the lower eats.

But there are others who will be very conent to put their message across, without oming in contention for a seat, and they will e looking for as many number ones as possible rom those who feel their particular issue is ne which warrants a sharp reminder to the stablished politicians.

TRAVELLER

Perhaps the most welcome development omes from one of the most deprived groups f people and gives a clear indication of their letermination to, at long last, fight for their ights in an organised fashion.

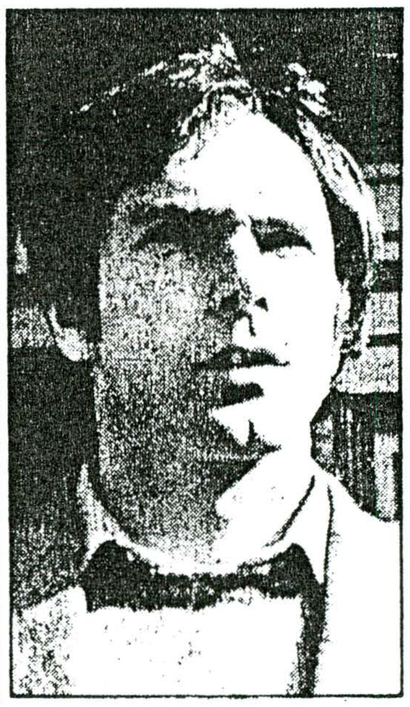
Nan Joyce, a 41-year-old mother of 11 rom Tallaght, is going forward in the Dublin South-West constituency. She is unique in eing the first traveller to stand in an Irish election.

She is supported in her campaign by the Committee for the Rights of Travellers, which was formed earlier this year and consists of both travellers and members of the settled community. She will be very much dependent on the latter as a source of votes, given that very few travellers are registered on the electoral roll.

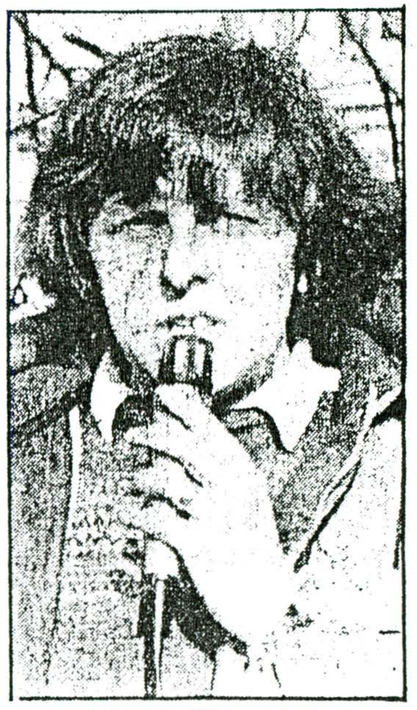
Nevertheless, her intervention will be of nterest particularly



● NAN JOYCE



● TONY GREGORY



● BERNADETTE McALISKEY

hysteria earlier this year were successfully opposed by a combination of travellers and local residents.

FISHERMEN

Also campaigning on an issue recently in the news are two candidates in south coast constituencies who can be sure of a good-size protest vote.

Joe O'Shea in Kerry South and John L. O'Sullivan in Cork South-West are both standing to highlight the sell-out of Irish fisheries.

O'Shea is one of the five fishermen who were held in Mountjoy last month for herring-fishing. Their campaigns are also pointing to the on-shore benefits in employment in processing industries which would result from a properly planned approach to fishing.

Among independents in the Dublin constituency, who include a number campaigning on unemployment, are some now regular vironmentalist candidate, is attempting to win back the seat he held briefly between June 1981 and February 1982 in Dublin North-East. He could be one 'watchdog' which has had its day.

FEMINIST

In Dublin South-East, the campaigning feminist Liz Noonan enters her third contest and will be aiming this time for another increase in her vote, if only as a result of staying-power.

In Louth, journalist Aine Ni Ghidhir of Boyneside Radio seeks to highlight the claims of independent radio stations and meets the seasoned electoral disc-jockey Frank Godfrey, who is also Drogheda-based.

In the north of that same constituency the independent councillor Michael O'Donnell will be looking to pick up the nationalist vote there. He was prominent in the successful

With the nationalist vote well tied up in his constituency, Neil Blaney in Donegal North-East seems certain to take his usual seat on the first count.

And on the broader anti-imperialist front, the IRSP are putting up just one candidate in this election, Jim Lane in Cork South-Central.

They have apparently swung back from a boycott attitude in the recent Northern elections to a policy of seat-taking in the Southern ones. However, the question is purely hypothetical and Lane will no doubt settle for an increase in the 550 he got in the North-Central constituency in February.

McALISKEY

The most prominent candidate of this anti-imperialist area is Bernadette McAliskey who returns to contest the Dublin North-Central constituency of Charles Haughey.

Many of her supporters were rather disappointed with the 2,085 first preferences she got in February, which left her out of contention for a seat. But having established a base in the area she has expressed confidence that she will improve her position this time having, as promised, returned to the contest.

LANGUAGE

Issues being raised without being the focal point of any particular candidate include the Irish language.

Eighteen major Irish language and cultural organisations, including Conradh na Gaeilge, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann and the GAA, have urged their members to vote only for candidates who will initiate positive measures which will get to grips with the crisis facing the Irish language.

SECTION 31

And Sinn Fein has continued to urge its members and supporters to lobby all election candidates on the blatant political censorship

13 B 56

Irish Freedom Press: a Republican Collection
Compiled by Aled Davies and Gerry Lawless

Upholding poor's basic human rights

By MAGGIE O'KANE

SHE's A tall elegant woman, with fine black hair that she sweeps back into a bun for photographs and meetings, a thing Nan Joyce has had to do a lot lately.

Nan is a 41-year-old itinerant with 11 children and 12 grandchildren. She is running for a Dail seat and knows she hasn't a hope.

"I don't expect to get elected. I'm standing for basic human rights for the poor, whether they are travellers or not doesn't matter," she says.

Seven years ago she emerged as the voice of the travelling people after an appearance on the Late Late Show. She's lobbied TDs; led marches and driven to the gates of the Dail in a horse and cart.

Her chances of polling well are slim. Many of the itinerants in Dublin South West, where she's standing, are not registered to vote. Local opposition is strong and came to a head last May with a series of vociferous "knackers out" marches fronted by the Tallaght Action Group and three local politicians.

The Joyces live well by itinerant standards. The kids and cooking are confined to the family's single decker bus while Nan, her husband, John, and two of the younger children share a shiney chrome caravan.

The camp, a large field off the Belgard Road in Tallaght, is f of scattered caravans displaying election posters, while two men stand at the entrance to the site handing out leaflets to passers-by.



NAN JOYCE

Nan w born in Tipperary, the elde en children. She spent most of her youth travelling through Ireland, England and Scotland until her father died when she was 11. Shortly after, her mother was sentenced to nine months in Armagh prison for theft.

For those nine months through the winter of 1951, Nan and her nine-year-old brother, John, travelled through the North with their eight brothers and sisters, the youngest born just two days after her father's death.

They begged, hawked clothes pegs and stole. If anyone asked any questions—"Da's with the horses and me ma is gone to the shops" — and nobody bothered them.

Nan met her husband, John, at the fair green in Derry and married him at 16. She had her second daughter, Kathleen, in a room in Glasgow where they were living, and just hours after the birth of her 17-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, at a camp in Strabane, she and her family were moved on by the police.

There are forty families on the Belgard Road site where the Joyces are parked. It's not an official site, but the travellers have been coming to Tallaght for years. There are no proper sanitary facilities and the entire camp is serviced by one tap.

Nan claims that while most of the families on the site would wish to move into a council house, they won't go alone. "You can't shove a family into a settled community where they are isolated from the people they have travelled with all their lives. It just won't work. The only answer is to settle two or three families together."

Despite the need for travelling families to stick together, the community spirit among travellers is slowly ebbing away. "When I was a child, we had a communal fire with three or four women cooking for the whole camp. But that's all changed. People are keeping more to themselves nowadays. I think the television has done a lot of harm in that way," says Nan.

Before they moved to Tallaght, the Joyces spent almost a year in an official camping site at Avila Park in Finglas. There were forty families living in Avila in wooden chalets. "I couldn't stand it there. Travellers are used to space but we were all living on top of one another in Avila. You could hear every word through the walls. At least on a site, there is more privacy."

Nan is intolerant of criticism that the travellers have fancy caravans and live off the fat of the land. "This is my home and it's a nice caravan. Is that a crime? People have houses and cars—we have a caravan that we bought in England ten years ago. Some people aren't satisfied unless you're living on the side of the road."

NOVEMBER 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 57

Voice of the Dublin travellers

Name: Ann (Nan) Joyce
Address: Belgard Road
Age: 41
Marital Status: Married with 11 children and 12 grandchildren.

Nan Joyce is a traveller who feels poor people in both the settled and the travelling community need a genuine voice in the Dail.

She made history this week by being the first traveller ever to hand in nomination papers to the Sheriff's office.

"We are not the only people who live below the poverty line," she told *Newsday*. "Many poor people in the settled community live in conditions nearly as bad as ours and have to hide to save face."



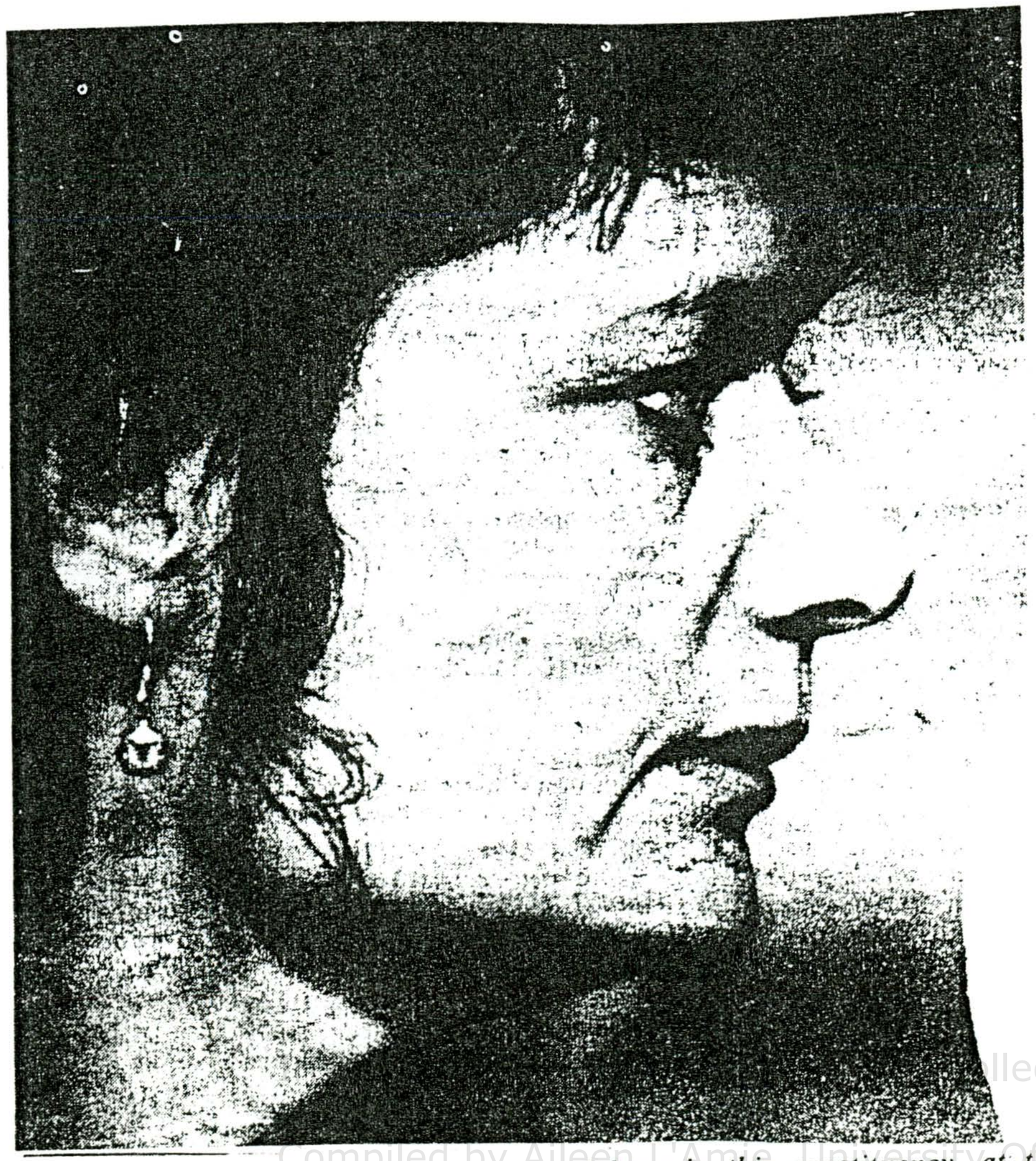
● Nan Joyce

Although Nan is mostly self-educated, she is very concerned with proper educational facilities for every child and with proper medical care and housing for young families.

She herself does not expect to be elected, as the people who are most likely to vote for her, the travelling people, are almost entirely unregistered.

"This election will be good experience for next time round and people will know me better then," she adds. "These poor people are angry because they are being denied the right to have a decent standard of living," she says.

"The rich politicians mean well," she explains, "but they don't know what it's like to work with battered wives or neglected children. I do. I've seen peoples pain and I want to speak out for them."



Ann Joyce, one of the two women candidates in this constituency, at the "Women in the Home" meeting.

LOCAL NEWS

NOVEMBER
1982

Compiled by Aileen T'Ame, University Of Ulster

13 B 5K

Women-In-The-Home

Are womens issues in the background of this election

Tuesday evening's meeting in the Dominican Priory between Tallaght Women-In-The-Home and some of the General Election candidates lost its way somewhat in general issues rather than concentrating on the specific aims of the group.

Whereas the policy objectives of this housewives' organisation are mainly concerned with tax and social welfare discrimination against women in the home, Tuesday's discussion included such diverse topics as rezoning and the improvement of public parks.

Not that these issues were not shown to affect the housewife indirectly; but many of the candidates had obviously been dealing with them regularly at the doors and they were trotting out the answers with some ease. It seemed a pity that WITH lost the opportunity to spell out its own aims more fully and hammer the question of dental and opticial benefits, for example.

Dignity

The meeting was chaired by Norah [illegible] Gilligan, Founder/Member of WITH, and attended by members of the organisation from Tallaght, Clondalkin and elsewhere. Sitting among the candidates at the top of the room was travellers' representative, Nan Joyce, attending her first meeting in a political capacity. Speaking quietly and with dignity, she expressed delight at being invited. 'It's like a fairy tale come true', she said.

Almost from the start the meeting veered off course, with Richie O'Reilly scoring off the elected representatives for their broken promises, and then mounting his favourite hobby-horse, the itinerant problem.

It was hardly gallant with Nan sitting beside him; but when Nan spoke in defence of the travellers she was quietly impressive.

'You wanted to put us on top of the mountain', she told Richie, 'But we are part of your history'.

Honour

Pat Rabbitte (WP) put the discussion back on course: 'For all the position of honour women are supposed to have in our society, we don't treat our women in the home very well'.

Pat does himself no harm when he opens his mouth. His arguments are lucid, his delivery dynamic. But he does go on a bit; and eventually the 'lady chairman', as he called her, had to stop him.

But he was back in the fray when someone suggested that women should not go out to work while there are men unemployed. And he is not afraid to hotly disagree with some of the ladies.

Sean Walsh (FF), unable to attend, had sent a young protege who delivered an ineffective speech about Deputy Harney's meetings with the Minister Woods on optical and dental benefits.

Mervyn Taylor (Lab) had not previously heard of WITH; but his demand for a comprehensive National Health service, independent of stamps or contributions, was right on the ball. As was his call for a free Legal Aid service worthy of the name.

Larry McMahon (FG), looking a little harassed, as he has been all this week, had to leave early.

'It's a great pity we couldn't have had this meeting in a week when there was no election', he told the ladies. They must be still trying to figure that one out.

'There's the country's biggest rezoner gone out the door' protested Noel Murphy (Community candidate), 'and you let him get away'.

Michael O'Leary (FG) invoked his new and immortal phrase: 'The Forgotten City'.

'We see Tallaght as a city', he said, 'and as a Forgotten City'.

The place was a vast conurbation, he said, which a lot of people were trying to humanize through their own voluntary efforts.

Michael would have gone on is such ringing phrases; but the larynx, overworked for days, gave up the unequal struggle and his voice died away in a croak. Who knows how many votes of female sympathy that may have won him?

The meeting had drifted to general topics again and it ended thus. The politicians had not been too severely tested. But WITH were happy enough for having introduced themselves, and are probably hoping for better things in the future.

Irish Travelling People's Resource Collection
Compiled by Pavee Point University Of Ulster

13359

These 581 votes mean something

DEAR EDITOR

MAY I, on behalf of Mrs. Ann Joyce the Travellers Rights candidate in the recent election, thank all those 581 voters in Dublin South West who gave their first preference vote in support of human and civil rights for Travellers.

As was stated throughout her campaign Mrs. Joyce ran solely on the issue of full Irish Citzenship for Travellers and to highlight the principle aim of the Committee for the Rights of Travellers which is to have a Government Department or Minister appointed to oversee the development of Travellers as full citizens in their own country.

The very respectable 648 votes which she achived before elimination prove that there are a sizeable number of decent, fair minded people in Dublin South West who believe that the incoming government should take seriously the just and reasonable demands of Ann Joyce and this committee on behalf of Travellers.

The fragmented and semi-charitable approach to Travellers' problems over the years has failed because (a) the Travellers were not directly consulted as to what their needs were (b) local authorities and voluntary committees were unable or unwilling to overcome local prejudice in relation to the placement of sites and housing Travellers. (c) no ultimate Authority existed to implement the many reports and reviews which have been compiled on the needs of Travellers or to educate the Settled community towards the need to accept Travellers as a disadvantaged section of Irish Society.



MRS. JOYCE . . . human rights.

Mr. Ann Joyce and The Committee for the Rights of Travellers have sought by marches, pickets and media coverage to influence the government of the day to directly intervene in what is a national disgrace and rescue an ethnic cultural group within Irish society from the degrading and sub human conditions in which they live.

Charity has robbed the Traveller of his dignity and lack of governmen leadership has allowed prejudice to become institutionalised to the point where they are regarded as the undeserving poor.

The appointment of a government minister or department would ensure the co-ordination of all the agencies at present involved in a combined effort to tackle the problems of health, education, sites, housing and poverty of spirit which afflicts the Traveller and put an end to the wasteful, fragmented and dependence orientated schemes which have patently failed.

We would like to thank all who helped in the election campaign by working or donating money or material as well as the press, television and "Tally men" of Labour, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail who helped in the strange world of the count centre.

—SEAMUS LEONARD, P.R.O.

Committee for the
Rights of Travellers
c/o Tony Hackett,
701 Virginia Heights,
Tallaght

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13B60

election

NOVEMBER 1982 '82

Dublin South West

4 SEATS

Electorate 54,745. Spoiled Votes 243. Valid Poll 37,656. Quota 7,532.

FIRST COUNT

*M. Taylor (Lab.)	7,814
*S. Walsh (F.F.)	6,465
*M. O'Leary (F.G.)	5,682
*M. Harney (F.F.)	4,619
*L. McMahon (F.G.)	3,991
C. Brennan (F.G.)	2,929
R. Conroy (F.F.)	2,673
P. Rabbitte (W.P.)	2,365
A. Joyce (Ind.)	381
R. O'Reilly (Ind.)	297
N. Murphy (Ind.)	240

M. Taylor elected. **Murphy** eliminated.

First preferences—F.F. 36.53 p.c.; F.G. 33.47 p.c.; Lab. 20.75 p.c. W.P. 6.28 p.c.; Others 2.97 p.c.

SECOND COUNT

Distribution of Murphy's votes:

Walsh (7)	6,472
O'Leary (8)	5,690
Harney (10)	4,629
McMahon (17)	4,008
Brennan (6)	2,935
Conroy (1)	2,674
Rabbitte (24)	2,589
Joyce (16)	597
O'Reilly (149)	446

O'Reilly eliminated.

THIRD COUNT

Distribution of O'Reilly's votes:

W[illegible] (55)	6,527
O'Leary (35)	5,725
Harney (27)	4,[illegible]
McMahon (33)	4,041
Brennan (41)	2,976
Conroy (20)	2,694
Rabbitte (132)	2,5[illegible]1
Joyce (51)	648

Joyce eliminated.

Well worth it — Mrs Joyce

By Paul Murray

MRS Nan Joyce, the traveller and mother of 11 children, who stood in the Dublin South/West constituency, said her first preferences of nearly 600 indicated that there were a lot of fair-minded people about.

Mrs Joyce, who lives in an area in Tallaght where there has been some opposition to travelling families, said many of her votes seemed to come from women.

She herself could not vote because she was not registered. This applied to most of the travellers because of their unsettled life. None of the political parties made any effort to get them registered either.

During her campaign leaflets were distributed to about 12,000 homes. These leaflets indicated what it was like to be a traveller and the poor health, accommodation and education experienced by them.

She knew she would lose her deposit but the exercise had been worth it as an education for the settled community.

Mrs Joyce said she thought she might have got more preferences but that many people were keen to have a majority Government returned and did not want, in their view, to waste a vote.

Mrs Joyce, the first traveller to stand in an Irish general election, was born in Tipperary and was campaigning solely on the issue of travellers' rights. She got as many first preferences as two community candidates together.

Irish Travelling People: a Pleasure Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University College Cork

13B61



Nan Joyce with members of the women's centre in Dame Street, Dublin.

Mrs. Joyce set to fight on

By ANN BYRNE

IRISH BISHOPS will collect money for foreign countries, but will not do anything about the travellers living in fields of muck or battered women with no where to go, proclaimed Mrs. Nan Joyce, mother, traveller and failed candidate in the last general election, when she spoke last night in the women's centre, Dame Street, Dublin.

She had equally harsh words for Irish politicians, taking the view that as most of them are rich, middle class and backed by big business, they are not interested in minorities like the travellers.

In Nan's own words: "At every meeting of the County Council or Corporation, where the question of settling the travellers comes up, they end up talking about how well-off we are, with big flashy caravans and vans.

Despite her disillusionment with politicians, she is determined to enter politics and is already planning to take a seat in the local elections.

Her main role would be to defend the travelling people in the County Council chambers, where they are regularly attacked as dirty and troublesome, and as tax dodgers.

Nan, who did not even have a vote in the general election, can't have mail delivered to her, a telephone installed or her rubbish collected, because as far as the authorities are concerned, she has no address.

Since the election, when she polled 581 first preference votes, she has been working with the Travellers' Committee in Tallaght trying to make the travellers themselves aware that they must fight for their rights and shake off the apathy caused by years of being shunted from place to place.

Already many of the travellers have become interested, especially the women, and Nan hopes that there will be several traveller candidates in the local elections.

She disagrees that more women in the Dail would automatically be better for women and minority groups.

"What was Sile de Valera doing in the Dail? I reason she got a Dail because her grandfath Eamon de Valera. Wh she know about the p of having young chil trying to feed a fam hardly any money?"

Nan would like ... union and ... public critical of the ... to visit the site ... in Tallaght.

The ... where ... and ... All the kids ... gastroenteritis ... during the winter.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

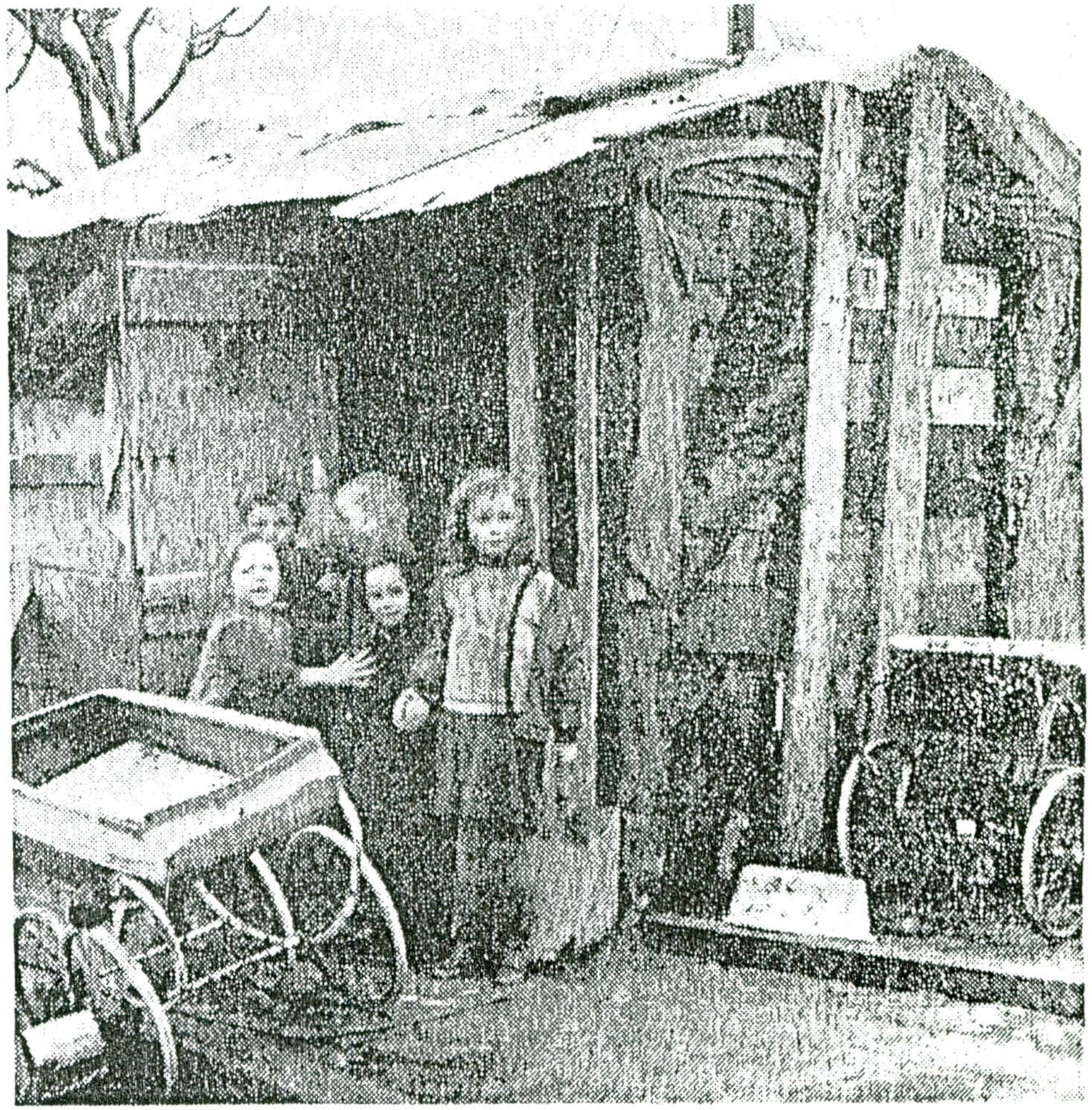
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 62

THE TRAVELLING PEOPLE — 1



Real tinkers were clean; they washed in rivers and their horses and caravans trotted from farm to town ...



... or so it seems to the so-called settled people, many of whom feel under threat from the tinkers of today, whose trade is gone and whose numbers are increasing.

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
13 B63

An ugly side of Irish life

PAUL MURRAY, in the first of three articles looking at the position of the itinerant community in our society, examines what progress has been made towards a solution in recent years.

YOU MAY remember it well. We were all indignant that people objected to a woman living in her own home, that a small working-class community had turned on the innocent. And so Rahoonery became a byword for an ugly side of Irish life.

The woman of course was an itinerant, a word regarded by everyone, except the people it labelled, as ideal. This was, of course, before the travellers came along, a name all sections seem to like, except those who hanker after the days of the real tinker.

Real tinkers were clean: they washed in rivers and their horses and caravans trotted from farm to farm and town to town. Saucepans were mended, potatoes picked and the women chatted with lonely housewives.

Or such is how it seems to the so-called settled people, many of whom feel under threat from the tinker of today, the traveller, whose trade is gone, whose numbers are increasing and who like the rest of Ireland is for some reason attracted towards Dublin.

The good Christian, or liberal, does not, of course, refer to the "problem of travellers"; the language is usually correct and it remains so until the horses, the tents and the scrap are at a community's door-step, particularly a middle-class one. Then all classes are united in their opposition, if not in their way of expressing it.

And it is not as if the subject lacked for study. There was a Commission on Itinerancy in 1963 and now on somebody's shelf sits a report which should guide the Government's dealings with the country's 2,200 travelling families.

It will be interesting reading for the incoming Ministers for the Environment and Health for it talks of travellers as having human, legal and Constitutional rights. There are also few kind words for local authorities.

Indeed, the Government is being told to force local authorities to provide for travellers, and their expected population increase, from about 15,000 people two years ago to 21,000 in four years.

More about the report later, because even before the Ministers dip into its 150 pages there is the embarrassment of Europe looming. Travelling families in the Bray area have looked to the European Commission of Human Rights for help in achieving their rights. Not contraception, not homosexuality, but cause to blush all the same.

The European charter says people are entitled to a decent home and family life and the local council, in the view of applicants, wins few awards.

Recent Irish court decisions have stated that suitable alternative accommodation must be provided before a family is moved off a site.

A forced move, for example, could endanger a child's education, particularly if he has been successful at a local school.

Some of the Bray travelling families have been offered accommodation in the meantime, but others are on the side of the road and are hoping for success in Europe based on precedents in cases brought by gypsies and displaced persons in the post-second World War period.

And while the trumpets are sounding in Europe, there is also a new hope at home in the person of Ann Joyce, mother of 11, grandmother, and in the words of her recent election literature, "Irish citizen."

Her "victory" has been obvious. Michael O'Leary's accomplishment in Dublin South West, albeit to chants of "left to right, overnight," has hardly the same significance as Mrs Joyce's 600 first and many later preferences.

For the votes came from the local authority houses within a horse's trot of her caravan in a muddy field on Tallaght's Belgard Road, And support came from the women, many of them previously viciously opposed to the build-up in traveller presence in the area.

Her message is compelling, but there is understanding for the fears of the settled community which she believes needs to be educated. Travellers, she says, are human beings who should be consulted and Irish people "should remember what they owe to the travellers, rather than give grudgingly."

In other words, travellers have rights and this is expressed in the name of the organisation for the Rights of Travellers which, much to Dubliners' surprise, marched through the city.

The Dublin County Council was lobbied to provide sites — of which more later — and the angry opposition to travellers in Tallaght and other areas had met its match.

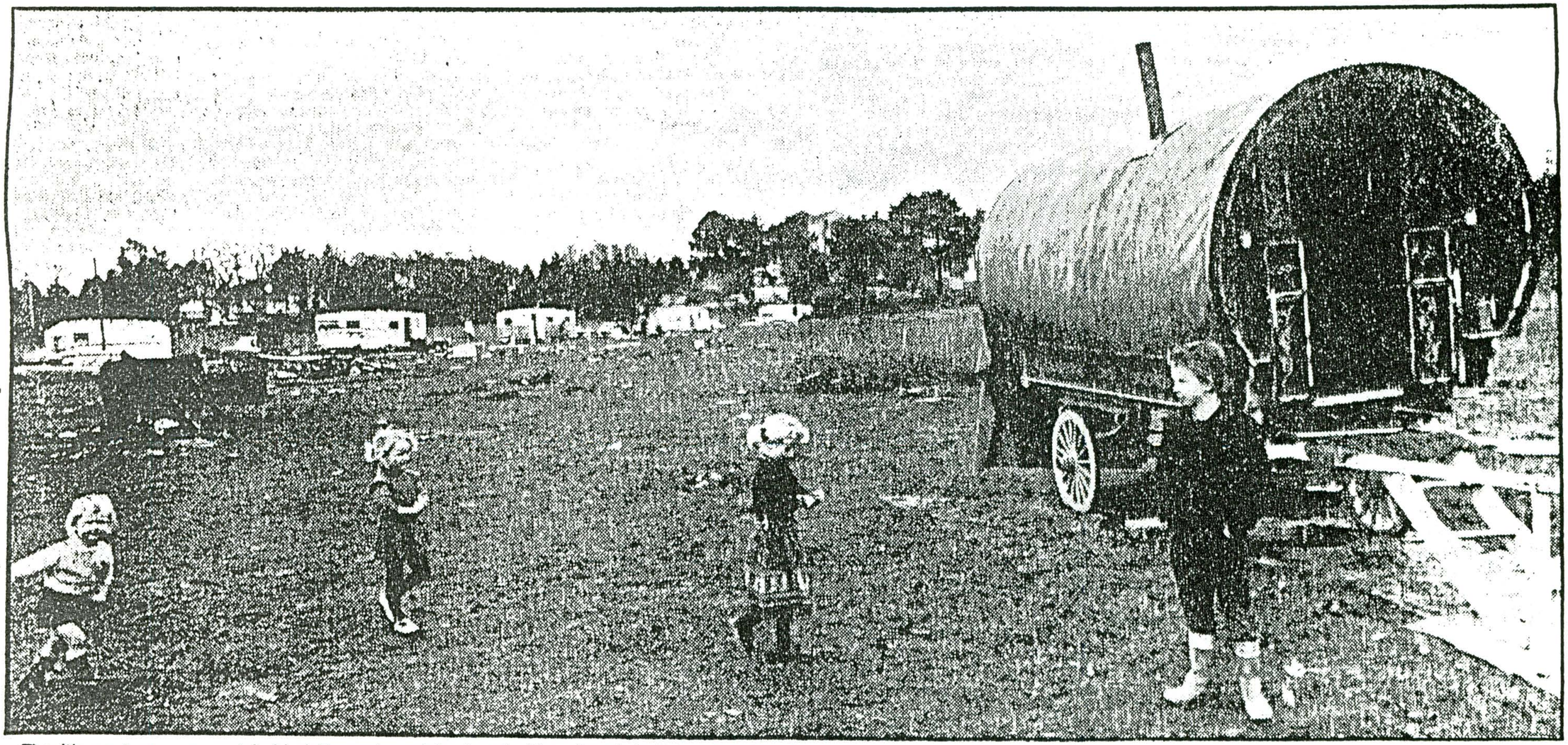
(More tomorrow)

13364

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

PICTURE: PAT LANGAN



The itinerant encampment behind Foxrock parish church. The church building is at back of photograph, partly obscured by trees.

13 B 65

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

IRISH TIMES TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER 1982

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

Gentility and squalor side by side

The Sunday collections at Foxrock parish church may be silent ones, writes PAUL MURRAY, but behind the church building there are eight itinerant families living in appalling conditions.

THE SITE is filthy, there are shoes, clothes, pieces of scrap iron, wire, paper and varying mush dotted around eight caravans holding as many families. There is one cold water pipe, which can't be turned off, and no toilets.

And this is Foxrock, the zenith of addresses, home of the wealthy, or at least the comfortable. And it's behind the parish church where by definition Sunday collections are silent.

One traveller says the settled people "leave us alone" and if someone would bring in a lorry he and the other travellers would help clean up. Most of the dirt was put there by others.

He "would not go to a house, because my kids are wild, but I would go to a site," if the caravans were spaced out more.

His friend, with three children, had just moved into the field having previously lived in a house at Sandyford and later at Tallaght. But the key was being returned the following day. He hated living in a house because "after six all you have is the man on the television."

He is also aware of his rights, that "they cannot get us out unless they provide a suitable place," a sentiment which is no doubt being studied by Dublin County Council on the basis of a legal opinion recently given on the situation. He would like to live on a proper site, and he mentions the need for privacy, for space for the trailer and caravan.

But the settled people have a different perspective. Some have had difficulty selling. The field is an open toilet. They feel planning and other regulations are being broken. Do they (travellers) represent a sovereign body, can they do what they like?" asks one.

"No one seems to be able or willing to do anything," is the exasperated view, despite a hearing on the issues in the Dail, meetings and letters to the press.

The developer is seeking planning permission for the site, the residents are reasonably happy, with some reservations, about his proposals for houses, but a court case against the travellers is not being considered, apparently for lack of money.

Meanwhile filthy living conditions and genteel living go on side by side with the Foxrock residents showing a restraint in their opposition to the travellers which in the early days was hardly evident in Tallaght.

Indeed, there is a view in the county council that communities such as Foxrock are better able to accept travelling families, provided there are modern facilities and careful arrangements. It has been rightly asked — why should poorer people only be expected to welcome travellers?

Why should a new and badly-planned area such as Tallaght, which needs facilities and which houses people starting their married lives, sometimes with many difficulties, be obliged to take the lead in social experiments?

It is with this in mind that the county council has been looking around for land in other areas and has been willing to buy such land, apparently with full capital cost from central Government.

The councillor who recently left a residents meeting in tears after a barracking over council plans for sites is likely therefore to be joined by others. And election canvass cards have been handed back with the words "give them to the knackers."

The council's overall programme has, however, been considerably diluted from that intended by officials, who do not of course have to face an electorate. Councillors do, and even some of the most socially-conscious succumbed to constituency pressures. This despite the warnings from the former chairman, Mr Barry Desmond.

The dimensions of what he calls the "crisis" were outlined in a letter to this paper. There are 394 families on unauthorised sites, three times more than in 1979, there are 50 marriages yearly, and half of the children are illiterate.

Mr Desmond said there was clear evidence of growing tension, intimidation, threats of violence and confrontation, and he warned of the difficulties which would be faced by travellers and the likelihood of grave local hostility.

After deferrals, discussions and feed back, or more accurately pressure from local residents, the current programme envisages about six halting sites for travellers with the possibility of another six and no more than ten families in each. Council officials will also be suggesting locations for more sites next month.

The council is pleased, however, with the dramatic improvement in the number of travellers in standard housing. Last week I met one man who has been living on the side of the road with his wife and family.

He was ecstatic at the possibility of moving into a new house after Christmas. The roadside was "no place" for the children and he would fit in quite comfortably. There was "no real travelling now," he said, all you were doing was being shoved from place to place.

He had been living in a field, invited in by a man in a big car who was building, but who needed an excuse not to provide facilities. And what better excuse than camping itinerants? In such ways at least can the settled community and the traveller co-operate.

The builder's generosity soon turned sour, however. The land was needed and one court order later it was back to the roadside and nights with cars whizzing by within 20 feet of the caravan.

(More tomorrow)

13 B 66

IRISH TIMES TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster



children of travellers need to be tough to survive

Rats, no toilets, mud, fear and cold

PAUL MURRAY concludes his series by talking to Mrs Ann Joyce, who is fighting to better the conditions of her own people

MRS Elizabeth Kavanagh things only got worse since the marches opposition to the travellers. Jeans been stolen from her line, horses eaten the roses, and caravans spread further down the Tallaght ss.

says this is a common feeling, and s treasurer of the Tallaght District nts' Association, but others, including nn Joyce, the Dail candidate, say the rs of travellers are the same.

h the muck of winter they have come out of the fields onto the road, from they had retreated in fear when some nts marched in protest at their ice.

v, according to a voluntary social r, there is only a "healed wound" in nships. Mrs Joyce says people in ht now are educated about travellers he tells her children to claim their ge when they are in school.

People who had always been told to "keep away from the knackers" were now coming round to talk to her. All the travelling people had noticed that they were treated better in the shops.

Mrs Joyce would not like, however, to go into a house, unless it was beside a number of houses also accommodating travellers. She does not agree that travellers should be put straight from the roadside into a house, although travellers do differ.

It is forgotten, she says, that, travellers have likes and dislikes and they should be consulted on what they need and want. The younger people are now getting a great chance, she says,but it is hard to keep them clean where there is only one water source, no toilets and continuous mud.

Keeping warm

Travellers, she says, are as much Irish people as those in the settled community. One part of her family had been travelling for hundreds of years.

Some travellers might look well off, but the conditions they lived in are often terrible. Her caravan, and the adjoining bus are very hard to keep warm, and rats ran about outside.

The bus could be like an ice-box because of all the windows and it had been difficult bringing up the older girls in such close conditions.

She spoke of the days when the Joyce caravan was towed from one site before falling to pieces. Her children had to be split up, some staying near the airport, the others at Blanchardstown.

Her main strength in coping with such a life is willpower, however, and it had to be remembered she says, that many travellers just "give up". Her committee intends to put pride back into the travellers' community, to end a situation where three times more traveller infants die in the first month of life than the national average, and

IRISH TIMES WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER 1982

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 67

PICTURE: PADDY WHELAN



Mrs Ann Joyce, candidate for the travelling people in the recent General Election: travellers should be consulted on their needs and wants.

where only 400 of 2,500 travellering children of school age attend school regularly in Dublin.

She also recognises the work which has been done for travellers by, for example, the National Committee for Travelling People: the achievements such as Trudder House, day centres in Dublin, training courses and schooling.

Responsibilities

Many hopes, however are placed in the reaction of the new Government to the pending report of the Review Body on Travelling People.

It stresses the need for travellers to be helped to obtain their rights; it criticises some local authority staff for harassing travellers, and wants local authorities to be compelled to live up to their responsibilities.

It also believes that travellers have often been denied their rights to standard housing and wants the local authorities to encourage them to get on the housing list.

The report also recommends a wide range of other provisions and stresses that research has shown that the alcoholism rate among travellers is no higher than among the rest of the community, and that, given facilities, travellers are by their nature clean.

There is also no justification for begging, says the report, and it suggests that the normal legal requirements to attend school should be enforced on all travelling children.

Such is the thrust of a report which might have enormous implications for the travellers, and the settled community, if its provisions are implemented. Then the community as a whole will have gone a little further towards eliminating the view that the travellers would be better off utilising "the space between here and Cork."

Concluded.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13B68

A LIFETIME ON THE ROAD



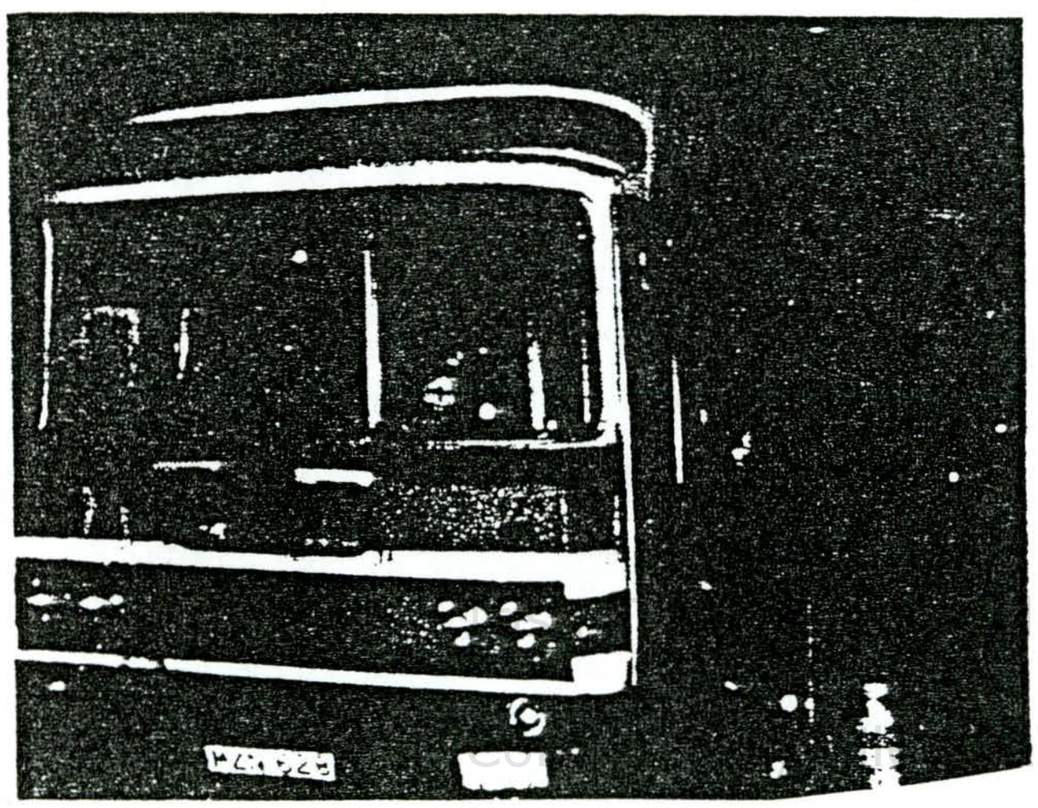
"I'm tired of running and of being hunted down," said the quiet spoken Ann Joyce as she reflected on a lifetime spent on the road. That was a sentiment that became a conviction during the traveller's ugly confrontation with a group of angry Tallaght residents in May of last year. Rather than witness her own children face the prospect of harassment and rejection for the rest of their life, Mrs. Joyce gallantly made a stand. Despite frenzied attempts intimidation and their own relative isolation, she had had "enough of being shifted about".

After having been evicted from another site, Mrs. Joyce along with a number of travelling families, occupied a site close to Tallaght. What appeared to a section of the Tallaght community a provocatory act was nothing but the culmination of a determined policy to deprive the travelling people of their rights. For many years now they have been prevented from gaining access to their tra-ditional halting sites. Of late no matter where they settle they are invariably forced to vacate the site.

The travelling people originated during the upheavals produced by the Famine, when thousands of families, unable to maintain their livelihood on the land, left their farms, many emigrated, others did not. The latter sought to eke out an existence through seasonal work and also as journeymen, notably as tinsmiths, hence the name 'tinkers'. But encroaching farm mechanisation and industrialisation diminished their economic value to the settled community and consequently they became increasingly dependent upon begging



JOHN BRENNAN
(our intrepid reporter)



Alienated and despised by the settled community they were collectively characterised as parasitic "Knackers". Such virulent prejudice prevented them from obtaining ordinary employment, instead they were frequently reduced to selling spare car parts and comtimes contraband. It is a situation they are now finding increasingly intolerable.

Co... Archive: a Resource Collection
...'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B69

At the moment Ann Joyce is sharing a muddy, rat infested field with five families. They have no sanitary or waste-disposal facilities and live in cramped conditions which is a cause of anxiety among the travellers. The caravans they live in provide inadequate protection against the cold and damp winter, with the consequence that they are continually afflicted by chest infections. Mrs. Joyce points out however that her conditions are relatively better than many families.

There are perhaps 20,000 or more travelers living in Ireland. Through their own efforts they have collected statistics about their general conditions. These statistics indicate that the health of the travelers is very much inferior to that enjoyed by the settled community; a greater proportion of the traveling children weigh less that 5 1/2 pounds at birth than those of the settled community; still births are up to three times the national rate. Also infrequent meals have meant that the growth and development of these children has been stunted by nutritional deficiency, and are incessantly afflicted by disease.

Furthermore, constant eviction has meant that the schooling of these children is intermittent. They calculate that only 400 out of the 2,500 traveling children in the Dublin region attend school regularly. They have pointed out too that the constant harassment and cramped living conditions not only handicap their attainment ability but also produces children seriously afflicted by anxiety.



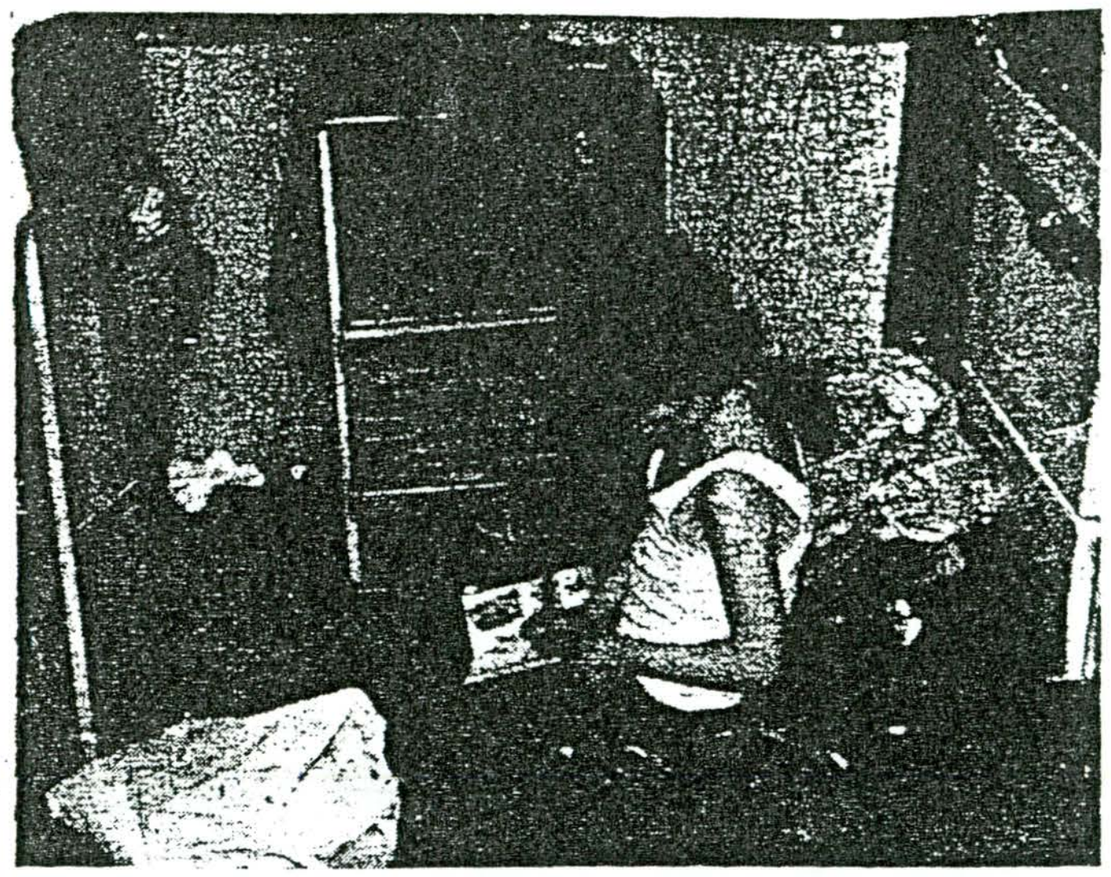


Public perception of the travelling people is based on innate prejudice, developed through years of mistrust and ignorance. A common complaint is that tinkers are dirty. Yet how can they maintain normal standards of cleanliness without access to basic water and sanitation facilities? Local residents often complain of an increase in crime when travelling people move into a nearby site. Ann Joyce admits that they do have their drunkards, their delinquents, their lawbreakers, but she insists the vast majority of the travelling people are honest, law abiding citizens simply looking for a basic standard of living. Every community has its misfits--in this respect the travellers are no different. Even the very terminology used about them connotes a prejudice--"Knackers", or even the official title of "itinerants", have a de-humanizing effect over a long period, making us forget that real people are involved behind the news-

Irish Travelling People's Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

A major result of the confrontation in Tallaght was the setting up of the Committee for the Rights of Travellers.

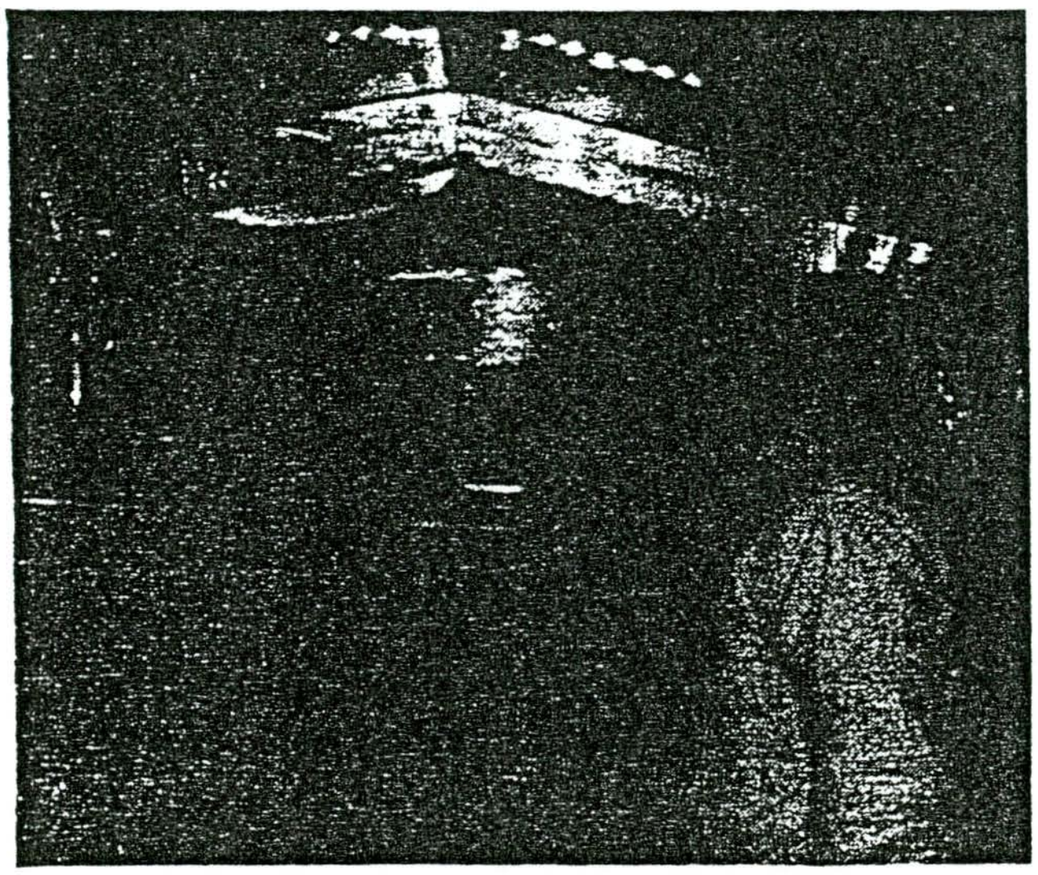
It is composed of members of the travelling community and of the settled community. Their major aim is to lobby the government to set up a special ministerial position to oversee the development and welfare of the travellers. Any previous attempts at dealing with the problem was done without any consultation of the people most directly concerned, the travellers. Thus the housing of individual families in estates solely occupied by the settled community have inevitably ended in disaster. They have consistently asked to be housed in groups where they can retain their sense of identity while gradually assimilating with the surrounding community. Gener- ations of mutual mistrust cannot be broken down over night.

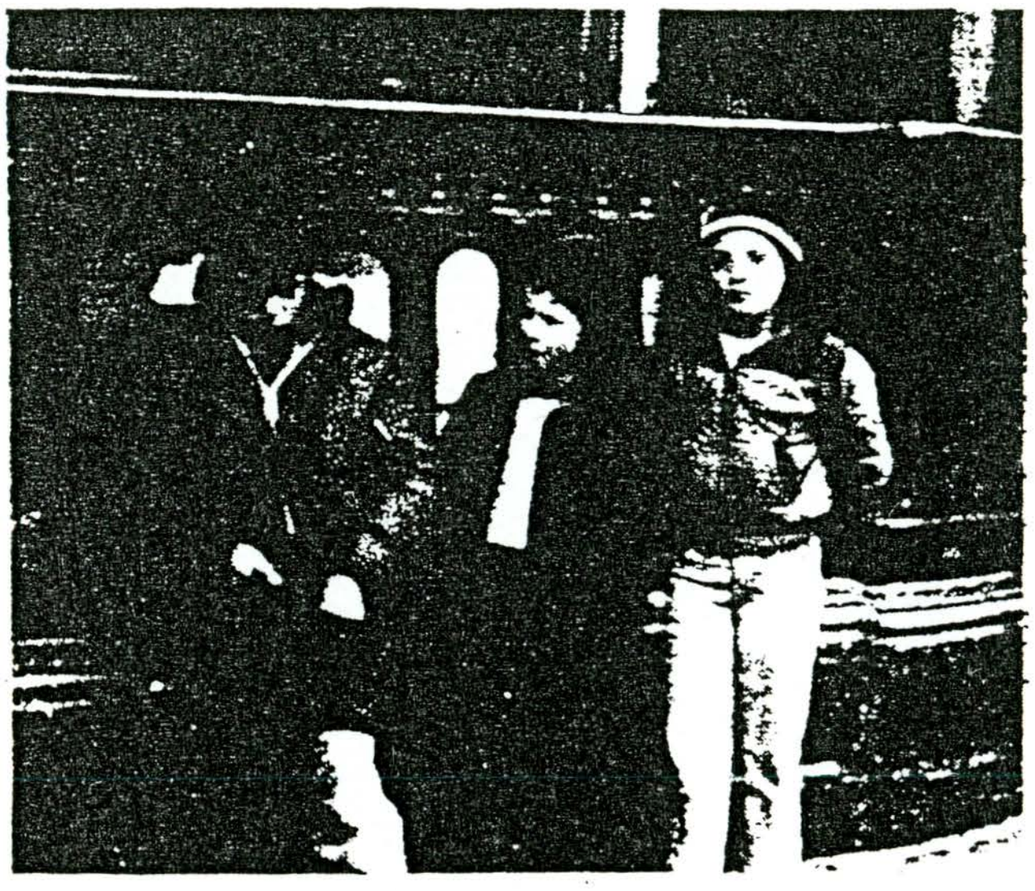


On the national front the problems of the travelling people have generally been ignored by our elected representatives exception of Eithne Fitzgerald, Mervyn Taylor, and Barry Desmond.

More ominously the Church has done little to alleviate the plight of the travelling people. Apart from the odd strong-willed member of the clergy, and of course the ever-present Sister Stanislaus, the wall of silence has been rigidly maintained. Meanwhile the bishops proudly announce that the Church collection for the poor of South America has greatly increased due to the generosity of the flock. One wonders if the travelling people lived in the shanty towns of Brazil, there would

SEE ABOVE





Looming behind the whole problem lies the dismal policy of neglect and avoidance manfested by those who should have been concerned. The travellers' encounters with local politicians have been disillusioning. Standing up for the people with no political lobby meant sacrificing votes, and that by the standards of parish pump policies was not playing the game. Indeed, some local politicians have displayed a positively hostile attitude. On that eventful evening in May the angry mob was led by a local T.D. and two County Councillers.

TRAVELLING PEOPLE

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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Presently the situation in Tallaght as Ann Joyce insists, has much improved. Her very successful election campaign campaign generated much needed publicity, which in turn led to a much greater understanding by the local residents of the problems faced by the travellers. An ever growing level of cooperation now exists between the two communities, which is unprecedented.

Indeed the people of Tallaght seem to be showing the way forward. As Mrs. Joyce emphasised many times, its a matter of breaking down barriers of ignorance, of getting to know the travelling people as people and not merely non-descript "itinerants".

It is indeed ironic that in a year where one and a half million pounds will be spent on altering meaningless legal jargon to supposedly protect the lives of the unborn, there are those already born living in the most appalling and abject conditions. Apparently the State is content to vindicate the rights of the unborn while neglecting the most basic needs of those already bown. Much as one can [illegible] Church

or the State, responsibility lies ultimately with us, as the general community. Our very silence has condoned what has happened. Ann Joyce has made a stand. We should and must support her.

John Brennan and Derek Egan



"WE SEE NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'ITINERANTS' AND 'ORDINARY PEOPLE' EXCEPT, ORDINARY PEOPLE DON'T BEG."
- A Garda Spokesman



Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

1982

13 B72

Irish Gypsy: Native as Shamrock, Hated as Plague



By JON NORDHEIMER
Special to The New York Times

DUBLIN — There are various nomadic subcultures in Europe, and whether they are called gypsies, squatters or caravan dwellers it is doubtful that many live as miserably as the social outcasts of Ireland known as the Travelers.

They used to be called the Tinkers ("Be good now or I'll give you away to the Tinkers," was a household threat to bad children) or they were scorned as "knackers," a chilling term associated with a dumping ground for dead horses.

In simpler days they traveled the country in horse-drawn wooden wagons shaped like barrels, hawking pots and pans, offering to repair such items and asking for handouts at the back doors of farmhouses.

Over the years they have converted to cars and mobile homes and trailers. Some have even settled in public housing. And now, like others in Ireland who have no economic future in the countryside, many more are being drawn to Dublin. But the settled communities still revile them as "knackers" and shun them for their different ways.

80% Considered Illiterate

In 1961, when a census found 1,198 Traveler families in the republic, only 160 of the children were in schools. Today, the number of families has more than doubled to 2,500, with about 3,500 children, or about one in three, in some form of primary education. Yet more than 80 percent of the Traveler population is still considered illiterate.

The bigotry that surrounds their lives is all the more remarkable because, in contrast to other European gypsy cultures, they are distinguished from "the settled people" only through their nomadic way of life. They have none of the racial, ethnic, religious or language characteristics that usually mark minority groups in a society for rejection. They are as Irish as a shamrock.

But the rejection is such that from time to time settled communities have turned on Traveler camps with violence and run them out of town, pushing the problem to the next county.

Modern Mysteries

In the past decade some public housing was made available, and more than 1,000 Traveler families were sheltered. But many were uncomfortable in a flat with four walls, and they said their new neighbors shunned them because they did not know how to use the plumbing. Appliances like washing machines were a mystery to them. After giving it a try for a few months, many moved out.

In the Dublin area they may suddenly appear one day on a side of a road or in a green field, a clutter of children and trash taking root on a back road or on the outskirts of a new suburb. It is estimated that 400 families with 2,500 members, most of them children under 16, live on unauthorized public sites in the area, up from 130 families just three years ago.

Alienated and Totally Segregated

"The conditions they live in are horrendous," said Thomas Lyman, a social worker with the Dublin County council who assists Travelers camped near Tallaght, southwest of the city. "They live primitively and are segregated totally from the rest of the community. The barriers are such that the whole concept of society and its rules and regulations is totally alien to them."

There is a new attitude among the Travelers, however, that organized action, so contrary to their loner folkways, is the key to improving their lives.

If there was a turning point, it took place one day last year when 600 angry settled residents of Tallaght marched on Belgard Road to force Traveler families off an encampment that was quickly blighting the area with junked cars, garbage, rat infestations and what the protesters said was a rising local crime rate. But the Travelers refused to be frightened off.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
13 B 73

"We Won't Be Made to Run Again"

"We wouldn't shift for them this time," said Ann Joyce, 41 years old, whose family for generations has been raised on the road. "For the first time in my memory we wouldn't let the settled people walk over us. We've been running from them all our life, and have hid from them in lonely places, but we won't be made to run again."

Poverty and 11 children and 12 grandchildren have taken their toll on Ann Joyce; her face is creased with weariness as she tells what life is like for a family that does not have running water, a telephone or even an address.

Her "home" is three vehicles: a trailer fixed with chrome decorations on the outside and mirrored walls inside; a second, smaller trailer on two wheels, and a full-sized bus stripped of its seats and split into a sleeping compartment and a dining room where food is cooked on a coal stove.

Water is carried to the site in 50-gallon milk cans. The field is used as a latrine. Surrounding the camp are dozens of abandoned cars that her husband, John, a large man with the flattened nose of a boxer, cannibalizes for scrap.

In the summer, the rubbish can be burned, but for most of the year a fine rain falls on the camp and the garbage piles up and the rats come. The ground turns into a sticky goo that sucks at the shoes of the children who play among the refuse or by open fires that constantly burn to provide some warmth.

"The children have colds and gastroenteritis all winter and they're always sick and coughing," Mrs. Joyce said. "Their beds are damp and their clothes never dry. The settled people call us dirty and have no idea what it's like to try to wash three children from one dish of cold water, or what it's like to walk through the stick and the muck to go to the bathroom behind a ditch in the middle of the night with the rats."

With the help of some local people whose anger at the Travelers turned to criticism for Government officials who seem unresponsive to both sides, a committee was formed to seek improvements for the group.

Mrs. Joyce, encouraged by her new allies, even stood for election last November for the Irish Parliament from Tallaght on a platform of rights for the Travelers. "We are human beings," her campaign pamphlet read in part. "People seem to forget this in their treatment of us."

She took 571 first-preference votes in her losing cause. But even some settled residents along Belgard Road said that was not a bad start along the political road for a nonperson without an address or an education who lives in a bus parked in a junkyard with a sign on its front, below a grimy windshield, reading "Gaelic Tours."



The New York Times / Jon Nordheimer

Ann Joyce, above, and her children at a Traveler camp in Tallaght, on the outskirts of Dublin, where they live in an old bus and two trailers. "We won't be made to run again," she said.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 74

Ireland's not-so-quaint tinkers

are seeking a better life

New York Times

DUBLIN — There are various nomadic subcultures in Europe, and whether they are called gypsies, squatters or caravan dwellers it is doubtful that many live as miserably as the social outcasts of Ireland known as the Travellers.

They used to be called the Tinkers ("Be good now or I'll give you away to the Tinkers," was a household threat to bad children) or they were scorned as "knackers," a term associated with slaughtering horses.

In simpler days they travelled the country in horse-drawn wooden wagons shaped like barrels, hawking pots and pans, offering to repair such items and asking for handouts at the back doors of farmhouses.

Over the years they have converted to cars and mobile homes and trailers. Some have even settled in public housing. And now, like others in Ireland who have no economic future in the countryside, many more are being drawn to Dublin. But the settled communities still revile them as "knackers" and shun them for their different ways.



Irish Travelling

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 75

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Irish as shamrock

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But the rejection is such that from time to time settled communities have turned on Traveller camps with violence and run them out of town, pushing the problem to the next county.

In the past decade some public housing was made available, and more than 1,000 Traveller families were sheltered. But many were uncomfortable in a flat with four walls, and they said their new neighbors shunned them because they did not know how to use the plumbing. Appliances like washing machines were a mystery to them. After giving it a try for a few months, many moved out.

Their arrival in the Dublin area is most often unannounced. They may suddenly appear one day on a side of a road or in a green field, a clutter of children and trash taking root on a back road or on the outskirts of a new suburb.

It is estimated that 400 Traveller families with 2,500 members, most of them children under 16, live on unauthorized public sites in the Dublin area, up from 130 families just three years ago.

"The conditions they live in are horrendous," said Thomas Lyman, a social worker with the Dublin County council who assists Travellers camped in the vicinity of Tallaght, southwest of the city. "They live primitively and are segregated totally from the rest of the community. The barriers are such that the whole concept of society and its rules and regulations is totally alien to them."

Victor Bewley, a Dublin restaurant owner whose Quaker convictions led him into work to help the Travellers years ago, said, "Some progress has been made compared to the past" but "there's still a lot left to be done."

New attitude

One significant change is a new attitude among the Travellers that organized action, so contrary to their loner instincts, is the key to improving their lives.

If there was a turning point, it took place one day last year when 600 angry settled residents of Tallaght marched on Belgard Road to force Traveller families off an encampment that was quickly blighting the area with junked cars, garbage, rat infestations and what the protesters said was a rising local crime rate.

Police officers moved in to protect the battered collection of mud-splattered trailers and campers, and the Travellers refused to be frightened off.

"We wouldn't shift for them this time," said Ann Joyce, 41, whose family for generations has been raised on the road. "For the first time in my memory we wouldn't let the settled people walk over us. We've been running from them all our life, and have hid from them in lonely places, but we won't be made to run again."

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THE GAZETTE MONTREAL,
WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 1983 p1. 1-2
13B76

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster



Travelling people at Clondalkin camping site, from left, Jim McDonagh, Martin Maughan and Mrs. Bridget McDonagh talking to Independent reported Tracey Hogan last night, about the raid on their campsite by local residents and some of the cars which were overturned during the raid.

Cars burned as residents raid itinerant camp

By TRACEY HOGAN

MORE than a dozen abandoned cars were overturned and set on fire when angry residents descended on a Clondalkin itinerant camp last night.

Garda cars from three stations were called in after up to 100 residents from housing estates in the Bawnogue area of Clondalkin poured into the camp, on the new Nangor link road.

The itinerant families, living by the roadside, claimed they had been given 15 minutes to leave the area and described last night how the mob set fire to the cars, which were all unserviceable and used for spare parts, before Gardai arrived and stopped the confrontation.

Inspector Brendan Quinn, of Clondalkin Gardai, said he believed local people were responsible for the attack which took place shortly after 8.30 p.m. All night Garda protection was provided for the itinerants.

Early today, Mr. Seamus Leonard, of the Committee for the Rights of Travellers, claimed that two petrol bombs had been used in the attack, and that the families now feared for their lives.

"These self-appointed people had absolutely no right to attack the families. The Supreme Court has ruled that no local authority can move travellers until alternative accommodation has been offered," he said.

Mrs. Bridget McDonagh (68) was in her caravan with husband, James (70), when the vigilante mob struck. "I've been in Clondalkin for the past 20 years, and I never thought something like this could happen," she said.

Mrs. McDonagh added: "They gave us fifteen minutes to get out of here. Then they started burning all the cars. We were just terrified." Another traveller, Mr. Joe Ryan (31), said he was chased across a field by two club-carrying men.

Inspector Quinn confirmed that there was "verbal exchanges" between the two groups, but said that no one was injured during the fracas. "I'd say the local people were just letting off steam. We've had complaints before about itinerants' wandering horses and we've tried to raise the matter with the County Council and the Corporation."

Most of the families have been living in the area for years, and have children attending the local schools. Local people have been lobbying for some time to have the itinerants moved on, and have made representations to the public representatives, but without much success.

One married couple, who did not wished to be named, told the Irish Independent that residents from at least four housing estates took part in the incident. They were angry over a recent spate of robberies, including the theft of clothes from back garden lines.

The overturned and burnt out cars were spread out the full length of the stretch of road linking the new and old Nangor Road, in the heart of the Bawnogue estate.

Inspector Quinn said he didn't think the local residents organisation had any connection with last night's attack. "They do not condone this kind of stuff," he said.

Despite official claims that no one was injured in the raid, Mr. Leonard claimed one woman was slapped across the face.

One of the itinerants to face the angry mob was Mary O'Donoghue of the Dublin Committee for the Travelling people.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

20 APRIL 1983

13 B77

To be charged after night of terror

By GERRY O'HARE

RESIDENTS of a housing estate in Clondalkin, who were involved in an attack on an itinerant camp site last night, will be prosecuted, a Garda spokesman said today.

Frightened itinerants at the camp site on Alpine Road, said that they would seek support from other itinerant families in Dublin if local resides did not dissociate themselves from threats of further attacks was not denounced by the residents.

All was quiet this morning at the campsite after last night's disturbance which saw eight cars bein set on fire and several other cars upturned on the roadway by angry residents complaining that they have been inundated with a spate of robberies b ythe itinerants.

Only the arrival of gardai last night prevented a more serious situation developing. Angry residents said that for the past few months children on their way to school had to pass by the itinerant site and had suffered abuse and in some cases physical attacks.

This claim was denied by Mary O'Donoghue, spokesperson for the itinerants. Mrs. O'Donoghue, mother of nine children aged from 13 months to 14 years, said that there were about 30 children on the site and they all attended a nearby school.

"The children are away from here early in the morning and in some cases before the local residents' children go to school," she said.

Residents from the three Cherrywood, and Melrose, said that in recent months a spate of robberies had increased considerably and that they had no doubts whatsoever that the robberies, including thefts from clotheslines, were the work of the itinerants.

Another resident said that they had lobbied their county councillors and TDs to have the unsightly wrecked cars moved back from the road and for the itinerants to be moved to another site. But residents claim that there had been no moves.

This resulted in several of the local residents' associations coming together to attempt to resolve the ongoing dispute which was also seriously devaluing the price of their homes.

Last night over 150 of the residents approached the itinerants and asked them to move. Mrs. O'Donoghue claimed that they were given 30 minutes to leave the area.

"When we refused, several of the men who had come prepared with petrol cans and rags started burning the cars and overturning others, including two cars which were usable."

At one stage eight cars were on fire and three of them blew up causing panic especially among the children of the itinerants.

Gardai at Clondalkin said that an inspector was heading the investigations into last night's trouble. "We do have names and addresses of some of the residents involved and we will be interviewing them shortly."

Another garda who was at the scene last night said that it would be unfair to blame the itinerants for the housebreaking and burglaries in the area. "There are criminals in this area that live nearby and who are certainly not itinerants."

20 APRIL 1983

Irish Travelling People's Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13B78

ITINERANTS GOVT. FACES EURO PROBE

THE IRISH Government faces an embarrassing probe by the Commission of Human Rights into the treatment of itinerants in this country.

By JOHN WALSHE

It has until May 19th to answer questions arising out of various articles of the Convention on Human Rights.

It is understood that the questions relate to Article Eight, dealing with the protection of family life, Article 14, dealing with discrimination and Article Two of the first protocol relating to children's education.

If the answers are not satisfactory then the Government faces the even more humiliating prospect of being put in the dock by the European Court of Human Rights.

The "Travellers versus Ireland" case has its origins in a dispute at Bray, Co. Wicklow, two and a half years ago when a group of families were evicted, with no place to go.

The Urban District Council took the families to the District Court; the families lost their case there and later lost an appeal to the High Court.

With the Association of Teachers of the Travelling People as second plaintiffs, they then agreed to go to Strasbourg.

They argued that the education of their children was rendered impossible by their being constantly moved on and that there was an obligation on the authorities to provide alternative sites.

The Commission receives many complaints during the year and the fact that it has seen fit to ask the Government to answer questions related to this case is regarded as something of a victory for the travellers.

When asked to comment last night, the chairman of the Association of Teachers, Sr. Colette Dwyer, said they regretted having to take this action, but there was no other way.

She said that members of the present Government — particularly the Minister for Health, Mr. Barry Desmond — were very sympathetic to the treatment of travellers and had shown political courage.

Sr. Colette, who is the national co-ordinator for the education of travellers, said they had exhausted their Strasbourg case fund and were appealing for financial help.

SUNDAY INDEPENDENT

MAY 1 1983

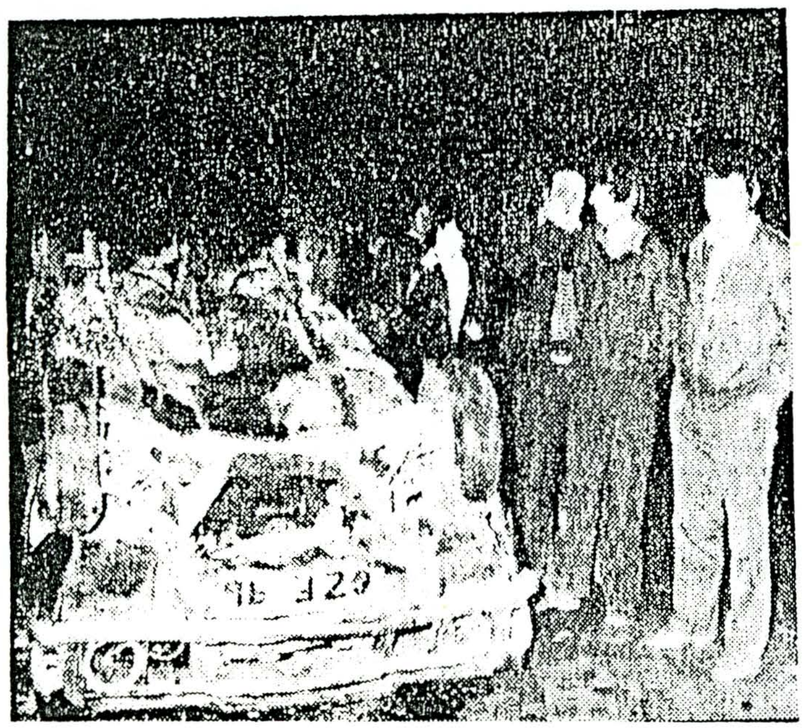
Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13B79

Vol. LII. No. 95 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 1983 The Truth in the News

FAMILIES FLEE AS BURNING CARS EXPLODE



● One of the cars wrecked and overturned during last night's confrontation.

Terror at itinerant site

By GERRY O'HARE

RESIDENTS of a housing estate in Clondalkin last night ordered over 20 families of itinerants to vacate their camping site and, when the itinerants refused, they set fire to several dismantled cars beside the caravans, forcing families, many with young children, to flee for their safety.

Over 100 residents from houses in Alpine Road, Cherrywood, and the Melrose estate, approached the itinerant families about 7.30 p.m. last night. They gave them a 30-minute ultimatum to pack up and leave. When the itinerants refused, many of the men in the crowd soaked rags with petrol. They then went among many of the cars setting them alight.

At one stage there were at least eight cars on fire and at least three of them blew up, causing panic, especially among the children of the itinerants, who ran screaming with terror away from the scene.

A lone garda on a motorcycle arrived at approximately 8.16 and was spotted by the group of residents, who moved away. Later about 20 gardai and a dog handler arrived. For some time both sides hurled abuse at one another, with claims and counter claims of further violence.

Among the itinerants was Mary O'Donaghue, vice-chairman of the Travelling People. Mrs. O'Donaghue described the scenes last night as worse than the violence used in the North of Ireland.

"What sort of people are they that would do this," she said. "Young children here are terrified. One woman had a five-month old baby in her caravan and had to grab her and run from these so-called respectable people," she said.

Several of the residents, who claimed to be officials of the different associations in the area, deplored the violence and said that a few of their residents "had got carried away with anger."

The officials, all who refused to give their names, said that [illegible] were robbing [illegible] thieves.

area and several approaches to the Dublin County Council to have the itinerants removed had met with no success.

One official said that they had decided to take action themselves as many of them had had the price of their houses devalued, in some cases by over £6,000, because of the close proximity of the itinerants. Later, Mr. Tony Hackett, chairman of the Committee for the Rights of Travelling People, and Mr. Seamus Leonard, PRO for the committee arrived and, after consultation with the itinerants, calm was restored. Gardai however were remaining at the scene in case of any further trouble.

13 B&C 08

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

IRISH PRESS, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 1983

Itinerant on charge of jewel theft

A 41-year-old itinerant woman Mrs. Nan Joyce, who stood as a candidate in the last General Election in the cause of travelling people appeared in the Dublin District Court yesterday, charged with stealing almost £3,500 worth of ewellery last July.

Mrs. Joyce, from Belgard Campsite, Tallaght, denies stealing the assorted gold and silver jewellery, valued at £3,455, the property of Mr. Richard Meagle, from "Kingstown House", St. Margaret's, Co. Dublin, between July 25 and 26 last year.

The defendant is also pleading not guilty to receiving a gold bangle, valued at £120 between June 25 last, and June 6 of this year.

Det. Garda Bernard Sheeran, of Crumlin garda station, gave evidence of arresting Mrs. Joyce yesterday in the caravan where she lives with her husband and 11 children. Her husband is unemployed, the detective said, although he owns five cars.

Mrs. Joyce denied this and told the court "four of the cars are only for scrap".

The detective added that only £120 worth of the stolen property had been recovered.

Asked by Justice O hUadhaigh if she wanted free legal aid, Mrs. Joyce refused and said: "I don't want anything for free — I'm well able to speak for myself."

"I know you are." the Justice replied, "I've seen you on the television.

Mrs. Joyce was remanded on her own bail of £50 until Tuesday next.

Itinerant candidate accused of theft

A 42 years old itinerant, Mrs. Ann Joyce, who had stood as a candidate in the last General Election in the cause of travelling people appeared in the Dublin District Court yesterday charged with stealing jewellery valued at £3,500.

Joyce, of Belgard Caravan Site, Tallaght, denied stealing £3,455 worth of gold and silver jewellery from Kingstown House, St. Margarets, Co. Dublin, the property of Richard Meagle, between July 25 and 26 last year.

Garda Bernard Sheeran from Crumlin Garda Station, told the court that he arrested Joyce this morning at the camp site where she lived with her husband and eleven children. The husband was unemployed but he owned five cars. Mrs. Joyce interjected to say that the cars were only scrap.

When asked by Justice O'hUadhaigh if she wished to have free legal aid, Joyce declined saying, "I don't want anything for free. I am well able to speak for myself."

Justice O'hUadhaigh: "I know you are, I saw you on television."

Joyce was remanded on bail of £50 until June 14.

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The justice remanded her on bail of £50 until June 14.

8TH JUNE 1983

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

Evening Herald, Tuesday, June 7, 1983

13 B81

Accused of stealing jewellery

A 42-YEAR-OLD itinerant, **Mrs. Ann Joyce,** a candidate in the last general election in the cause of travelling people, appeared before the Dublin District Court yesterday, charged with stealing jewellery valued at £3,500.

Mrs. Joyce, Belgard Caravan Site, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, denied stealing the gold and silver jewellery from Kingstown House, St. Margaret's, Co. Dublin, the property of **Richard Meagle,** between July 25 and 26 last year.

Garda Bernard Sheeran, Crumlin Garda Station, told the court that he arrested Mrs. Joyce yesterday morning at the camp site where she lived with her husband and 11 children. The husband was unemployed but owned five cars.

She was remanded on bail of £50 until June 14.

Irish Independent,

Wednesday, June 8, 1983

Candidate on theft charge

Mrs Ann Joyce, the 42-year-old traveller who stood as a candidate in the last election, appeared in the Dublin District Court last Wednesday charged with stealing jewellery worth £3,500.

Mrs Joyce denied stealing the gold and silver jewellery from Kingstown House, St Margaret's, Co Dublin, the property of Richard Meagle, between July 25 and 26 last year.

A Garda from Crumlin Station told the court that he had arrested Mrs Joyce at her home that morning. He said that he husband of the accused owned five cars, but Mrs Joyce replied that four of the cars were used for scrap.

The itinerant spokesperson declined free legal aid saying that she "was well able to speak for herself". She was remanded on bail of £50 until June 14.

Irish Independent, Wednesday, June 15, 1983

Itinerant woman remanded on bail

NAN JOYCE, a 41-year-old itinerant woman, who stood as an independent candidate in the last General Election, is denying a charge of receiving a gold bangle, valued at £120, between July 25, 1982 and June 6 of this year.

She appeared at Dublin District Court yesterday.

A charge against Mrs. Joyce, of Belgard Camp Site, Tallaght, of stealing £3,455 worth of jewellery from a Co. Dublin house last July has been dropped.

In court yesterday, the defendant's solicitor, Mr. Garret Sheehan, told Justice O hUadaigh that the accused—a mother of eleven — was electing to be tried by a judge and jury.

He said: "My client instructs me that she is innocent of the charge against her. She wants her trial over as soon as possible as this case has caused her a lot of distress so far".

Detective Garda Bernard Sheeran, of Crumlin Garda Station, yesterday requested a five week remand in the case to allow him prepare the Book of Evidence.

The defendant's solicitor, however, objected to such a long remand, pointing out that there would not be much evidence produced in the case as there was only a civilian and two garda witnesses to be called.

Justice O hUadaigh remanded Joyce on her own bail of £50 to July 12.

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Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University of Ulster

13882.

Charge of stealing against Nan Joyce dropped

A charge against Mrs. Nan Joyce, of stealing £3,500 worth of jewellery from a Co. Dublin house last July has been dropped.

But Mrs. Joyce is on remand on a charge of receiving a gold bangle, valued at £120, between July 25 1982 and June 6 of this year.

Mrs. Joyce, from Belgard camp site, an unsuccessful candidate in the last general election, in the cause of travelling people, is denying the charge of receiving the gold bangle.

When she first appeared in Dublin District Court on Tuesday, June 7, she had also denied the charge of stealing assorted gold and silver jewellery, valued at £3,455, from Mr. Richard Meagle, of Kingstown house, St. Margarets, Co. Dublin.

In court on Tuesday June 14, Mrs. Joyce's solicitor, Mr. Garrett Sheehan, told Justice O'hUadhaigh that the accused - mother of eleven - was electing to be tried before a judge and jury on the receiving charge.

He said: "My client instructs me that she is innocent of the charge against her. She wants her trial over as soon as possible, as this case has caused her a lot of distress so far."

Detective Garda Bernard Sheeran of Crumlin Garda Station requested a five-week remand in the case, in order to allow him prepare the Book of Evidence.

However, Mrs. Joyce's solicitor objected to such a long remand, pointing out there would not be much evidence produced in the case, as there was only one civilian and two garda witnesses to be called.

Justice O'hUadaigh remanded Mrs. Joyce on her own bail of £50 until July 12 nex:

Charge against Joyce dropped

A CHARGE against a 41-year-old itinerant woman, Mrs. Nan Joyce, a candidate in the last general election, of stealing almost £3,500 worth of jewellery from a Co. Dublin house last July, has been dropped, Dublin District Court heard yesterday.

Mrs. Joyce, a mother of 11 from Belgard Camp Site, Tallaght, is denying another charge of receiving a gold bangle, valued at £120, between July 25 last and June 6 of this year.

When she first appeared before the court last Tuesday, she had also denied a charge of stealing assorted gold and silver jewellery, valued at £3,455, the property of Mr. Richard Meagle, from Kingstown House, St. Margarets, Co. Dublin, between July 25 and 26 last year.

Defendant's solicitor, Mr. Garrett Sheehan, told Justice O hUadhaigh yesterday that his client was electing to be tried before a judge and jury on the receiving charge.

Det.-Gda. Bernard Sheeran, of Crumlin Garda Station, yesterday requested a five-week remand in the case in order to allow him time to prepare a book of evidence.

Justice O hUadhaigh remanded Mrs. Joyce on her own bail of £50 until July 12 next.

THE IRISH PRESS WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15,

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13 B 83

NAN CLEARED OF £3,000 GEMS THEFT

A charge against a 41-year-old nerant woman, Mrs. Nan Joyce, candidate in the last general ection, of stealing almost ,500 worth of jewellery from a). Dublin house last July, has een dropped, Dublin District ourt heard today.

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Defendant's solicitor, Mr. Garrett Sheehan, told Justice O hUadhaigh today that his client was electing to be tried before a judge and jury on the receiving charge.

He continued: "My client instructs me that she is innocent of the charge against her. She wants her trial over as quickly as possible as this case has caused her a lot of distress so far."

Det.-Gda. Bernard Sheeran, of Crumlin Garda Station, today requested a five-week remand in the case in order to allow him time to prepare a book of evidence.

owever, the defendant's solicitor objected to such a long remand, pointing out that there would not be much evidence produced in the case, as there was only one civilian witness and two garda witnesses to be called.

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13 B 84

IRISH SOCIAL WORKER Vol 3. 1001.

After the review body

January/February/Ma 1984

By RUTH BARRINGTON

IT IS nearly a year since the Review Body on Travellers completed its report and submitted it to the Government. Anyone who has driven along the Tallaght by-pass recently, or observed the increasing number of families camping on the fringes of most of our towns might be pardoned for wondering if the Review Body was a wasted exercise.

If the recommendations have not yet been translated into practice, they have stimulated an unprecedented degree of examination by Government of policy towards Travellers. On receipt of the Report, the Minister for Health, Barry Desmond, announced the establishment of a Task Force consisting of the Ministers of State at the Department of the Environment, Health, Finance, Education, Labour and Justice. Rhuadhri Quinn, the Minister of State at the Department of the Environment was chairman until his promotion to Minister early this year when his place was filled by Fergus O'Brien. The terms of reference of the Task Force are to:-

(1) ensure urgent consideration by the relevant Departments and public authorities of the recommendations of the Review Body,

(2) identify and implement those recommendations which are capable of implementation in the current financial situation,

(3) examine whether responsibility for the selection of sites should be determined at national level.

The third instruction surprised members of the Review Body since their Report strongly recommended that the selection of sites should be seen as part of housing function of local authorities, under the supervision of the Department of the Environment. The Report specifically rejected the options of imposing a statutory responsibility on a central body to provide accommodation for Travellers because the Review Body was satisfied that housing legislation provided the Minister of the Environment with sufficient powers to ensure that a programme was carried out.. (1) - The problem is that up to now accommodation for Travellers has not been considered as part of the normal housing responsibilities of local authorities and the Department has not penalised those which failed to accommodate Travellers. The one additional piece of legislation recommended by the Review Body was to place a responsibility on local authorities to provide serviced sites, a responsibility which they do not have at present. (2)

The Taoiseach, in his speech to the Fine Gael Ard Fheis in October last confirmed that the Government were thinking of a central body to provide accomodation for travellers. Referring to the Report on Travellers he said that;

'...a Government Review Body composed of six Ministers of State has been established to get urgent action on as many as possible of these recommendations. I believe - and I know that the Tainaiste, Dick Spring, shares my view - that this should lead to an early transfer of responsibilities for settlement policy from local authorities to a body which will not be subject to local pressures.' (3)

One of the key issues which the Task Force will have to decide is whether the merits of transferring responsibility for the accommodation of Travellers to a single body outweigh the advantages of leaving responsibility with local authorities, using existing housing legislation and strenthening departmental supervision. A single body is administratively convenient; it can look at the spectrum of Travellers' needs and could cut through red tape quicker then local authorities. Its weakness is that it might be even more susceptible to local pressure than local authorities. An 'outside' agency imposing a controversial decision on a local community is likely to meet united opposition, while a local authority may be able to balance one interest against another.

The Task Force will also have to decide whether there is a need for a body to monitor the implementation of the programme recommended by the Review Body. This issue aroused most disagreement among members of the Review Body, with three members expressing reservations about its desirability. The role envisaged for the body was that it would supervise progress by government Depar-



Meeting housing need

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,nents and local authorities with responsibilities towards Travellers, as well as promoting the rights of Travllers as citizens. The majority of the Review Body envisaged that it would function on the lines of the Employment Equality Agency or the Council for the Status of Women. The creation of a new public body at a time of contraction in the public service is likely to weigh heavily with the Ministers of State when it comes to their recommendations.

Another issue they will have to examine is the employment of social workers. The Review Body did not come down in favour of local authorities or health boards, accepting that as long as housing was the major reason for social work intervention, there were good reasons why local authorities should continue to employ social workers. Where local authorities could not offer social workers an attractive career and working conditions it recommended that an arrangement be made with the health board to provide the service: In the end it must be left to social workers locally to decide what arrangement will be of most benefit to Travellers and the maintainance of professional standards.

The health of Travellers is closely related to the conditions in which they live. The Task Force is unlikely to have any difficulty in endorsing the recommendations of the Review Body. At the end of last year the Department of Health wrote to health boards asking them to give as much attention as possible to Travellers in planning and providing services. A recent study of the health of traveller mothers and children in East Anglia leaves no room for complacency. Of the 250 children under five surveyed, 66 per cent has not received developmental examinations and 90 per cent had not completed courses of immunization against polio, diptheria and tetanus. (4).

One recommendation of the survey which could be tried here is that every Traveller be given a personal or family health record which they would carry with them and which, like the medical card, the birth and marriage certificates, could be produced when necessary.

The delay in reviewing the impact of the 1963 Commission on Itinerancy encouraged the growth of contradictory developments and opinions all claim the authority of the Commission. One not so obvious effect of the Review Body's work is that there is now a general consensus on the nature and size of the problems to be tackled. The report of the Government Task Force is expected soon. Hopefully it will underlind the consensus which has emerged on what needs to be done and commit the Government to implement the main recommendations of the Review Body, especially the five year programme to provide a house for the majority of Travellers who want one and sites for those who wish to continue travelling. The programme will not be cheap - a rough estimate of the cost is £55 million - but if it is not carried out it will condemn an increasing number of Irish citizens to a standard of living unacceptable in any civilised society.

1. Report of the Travelling People Review Body, February 1983 Stationery Office pp 43-44.

2. ibid p 48.

3. Speech by Dr Garrett Fitzgerald, Taoiseach, at the Fine Gael Ard Fheis, 22 October 1983.

4. Reported in The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners, January 1984 p 56.

Services for travellers in county Carlow

COUNTY Carlow has a population of **thirty-one** travelling families who live by the roadside, twelve who occupy standard housing and three travelling families who live in chalets. The roadside families tend to live around the Carlow town area, but there is no fully serviced site available for them with the result that 'moving on' is a constant feature of their lives.

Education:

1978 saw the setting up of special classes in Askea Boys' and Girls' National School to meet the special educational needs of travelling children in the area. Transport to and from school is provided and the children are washed and fed. Their ages range from 4-15 years and the aim of the scheme is to provide the children with the basics in hygiene and education to make it possible for them to eventually take their places in ordinary schools.

There is a pre-school for travellers in St. Catherine's Social Services Centre and most of those attending come from families who have been housed.

Older Children:

Training for 28 adolescents is provided in St. Catherine's Workshop, Cox's Lane Carlow. The training courses last for one year and include areas such as woodwork, metal and copper work, literacy, for boys and crafts, needlework and upholstery for the girls. The cost of these training schemes is borne partly by AnCO who pay the trainees wages, and the V.E.C. who pay the teachers.

On the social side, there is a Youth Club for teenagers aged 12-15. It is run by volunteers and was established in November 1983. Travelling women wishing to improve household skills can join the Women's Club which meets once a week and aims to provide a social outlet for the women as well.

These various schemes, aimed specifically at travellers, are generally representative of the services available for travellers throughout other counties.



How it can be

Irish Travelling People: a
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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Irish Travellers

TRAVELLERS constitute a tiny percentage of the total Irish population - approximately 0.1%. Ethnically, they are Irish people, but culturally they constitute a separate minority. Several other European countries have indigenous traveller populations:- Holland, Sweden, Czechoslavakia and England for example. The origins of these groups is confused, but there is a consensus that many of them come from land wars, famines and rural dispersions. In most other European countries there are also groups of Romany gypsies who are a separate race of people, but who have intermarried with native travellers. There are only a very small number of Romany families in Ireland.

Nobody has done any conclusive research on the origins of Irish travellers mainly due to the lack of historical data. Travellers themselves have no definite folklore on the matter, although individual clans can trace their ancestry back over many generations. However, their secret language, Shets or Gomman, which is still widely understood amongst them, though not so widely spoken anymore, does give some clues about their origin. It is not a full language, more a defensive code and consists mainly of reversed gaelic words, indicating that it originated at a time when Ireland was Irish speaking.

Socially, the most striking features of travellers as a group are: their early marriage age, large number of children (averaging twice that of the rest of the population), high infant mortality rate - three times the rate of the rest of the population, and very low levels of literacy. Their nomadic lifestyle sets them apart and contributes greatly to the degree of social isolation they experience. On a cultural level, travellers do not share many of the mores and values of the settled population. The economic base of their society is founded in the need to be mobile to adapt constantly to economic situations and opportunities. The society is based on the clan as the economic unit. Hence, the practice of match-making is designed to reinforce the economic unit of the clan, although more and more young travellers are now insisting on choosing their own partners.



There are 381 travelling children out of a pool of 2,500 who receive education on a regular basis.

In many ways, travellers can be seen as a throwback to peasant society, but this is too simplistic an analysis for a group of people who have survived as a distinct cultural entity for hundreds of years and who have counterparts in several European countries. Their material culture, i.e. the objects that are part of their lives, are very different from ours. This can have all kinds of effects. Peopls who live in 16ft caravans with 8 or 10 other people find it very difficult to cope with the sheer amount of space in houses, for example, and often continue to live in one or two rooms and to complain that the house is much colder than the trailer was, something housing officials find unbelievable. Travellers' children asked to mainipulate the objects of the settled world in I.Q. tests for example, will tend to do badly, but are capable of manipulating the objects of their world, animals, cars, vans, metals of all kinds, etc., in a way that no settled child could. The obsession with privacy which is very much part of Western European culture, is absent from traveller society which is very much a rural, person-orientated culture. Traveller society is pre-literate and the literacy rate is

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,iproving at a painfully slow rate for reasons that will be discussed later on in this article. This means that they are effectively cut off from a whole range of educating influences, and it also creates enormous practical difficulties for them.

In the last fifteen years, large numbers of travellers have moved to the urban areas especially Dublin, just as the settled population has. One third of the traveller population now live in the greater Dublin area where they are inevitably caught up in the vicious competion for land. They need places to stay, but increasingly land-use patterns have forced them into the newer suburbs where there are still tracts of open space left. Here they have gathered in large numbers resulting in open confrontations between them and the residents of the 'new towns' of Tallaght and Clondalkin. There are now over 400 families on the raodside in County Dublin. How has this situation been allowed to drift to such an extent that travellers are now being hounded from one camping ground to another without any adequate provision being made for them?

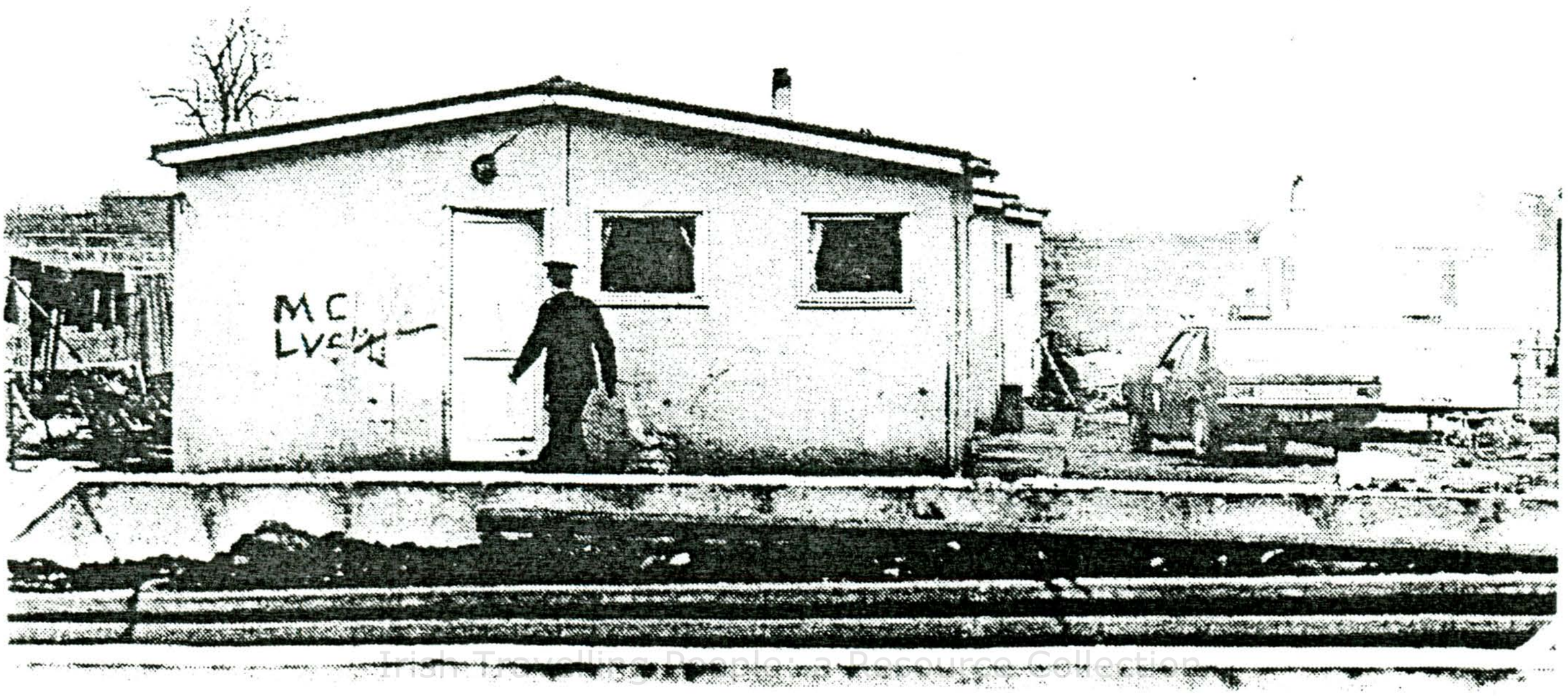
Local authorities have the statutory obligation to provide accommodation for travellers and they have quite simply failed to provide anything like adequate facilities, especially in the Dublin area.

The vast majority of travellers want properly serviced halting sites where they can have water, toilets, tarmac, electricity and the opportunity to send their children to school. Most of them want to retain their separate identity, but to do so in decent conditions. A small number want standard housing and association with the settled populations. Some would settle for small group housing schemes for travellers only.

None of this is beyond the capacity of the State to provide now. Local authorities get 100% recoupment from the Department of the Environment for provision of these facilities. The Department in turn gets recoupment from the E.E.C. But local counsellors refuse to pass plans for sites because they are afraid of losing votes. Meanwhile their public utterances on the subject generally range from bigoted prejudice to outright racism. There are a few honourable exceptions among councellors, but they are very much in a minority.

Travellers have started to have recourse to the courts in an effort to get local authorities to fulfil their duties. As a group, they won their most decisive victory three years ago as a result of a High Court action by a traveller woman Rosella McDonald. She took Dublin County Council to court as a result of being evicted by them from one roadside camp to another on several occasions. She won a decision, later upheld by the Supreme Court, that a local authority cannot evict travellers without providing them with a reasonable alternative. However, travellers have found though this decision has had the effect of preventing the constant "moving on" that has been so much a feature of travellers lives. More recently, families camped on the Tallaght by-pass used the Supreme Court decisions to get an injunction against Dublin County Council, preventing them from opening the by-pass until they provide them with a reasonable alternative.

Traveller society is now in the throes of cultural change and as always happens in such situations some families cope better than others. Some have the economic resources to move from traditional trades into scrap, carpets, spare parts, etc. Others do not and find it impossible to cope with the pressures of urban living. The latter group of families can be helped to some extent by social case-work. All travellers need the basic facilities for decent modern living and they now also need cultural choices. At present they have no realistic choices. Less than half the children of school age ever get to school in Dublin, mainly due to the lack of sites, but also because some principals and managers simply refuse to take them. Totally uneducated, travellers have no cultural choices. Travellers need to be consulted on an on-going basis about their needs and preferences and they should be party to policy making that effects them. In a national context, travellers and their needs are a tiny problem. There seems to be very little political will to solve it. We must hope that a more aggressive stance on the travellers part, which is now evident, can push the politicians to take action before yet another winter arrives with all the misery it brings to travellers on the roadside.



Home visit

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A Settled Person's View of Travelling People

By Gari McKeown. B.Soc.

"TRAVELLING PEOPLE" - the phrase evokes many different responses among the members of the settled community. Sadly, the most usual response is that of anger, resentment, contempt and often ultimately violence.

I am a married woman, a mother of four young children and a member of the settled community, living in what would be described as a middle-class area, and from this perspective I am going to try and set down my own personal attitudes towards, and experiences of travelling people throughout my life here in Dublin.

I grew up in suburban Dublin in the fifties and sixties, and I have been trying to cast my mind back to childhood memories of the travelling people or tinkers, as we used to call them in those days without any offence being taken and none intended. My memories are curiously few until I realised that in those days there were relatively few travelling people found in and around the cities. They preferred instead the wide-open spaces of the countryside where they were freer to move around and engage in their traditional skills of tinsmith, horse-trader or farm-worker.

So they did not figure very largely in my early life although I do remember the occasional caller to our front door looking for old clothes for which they would give my mother in return some delph, or glass tumblers, or some toys for us children. They were not really begging but rather trading. Sometimes we had calls from very young travellers who would burst into song before you could get the door properly open, or other times it would be a young tin whistle virtuoso raring to entertain you in return for a few coppers or a prayer!

My memories of the travellers tend to be all in this mould, very good-natured, a bit of mutual dealing to our mutual satisfaction, sometimes an unexpected entertainment to brighten up a gloomy day, and then they were on their way, to where we did not know for we rarely saw them once they left the road. There was plenty of open space for the travellers to set up their camps in those days and their presence in an area didn't seem to spark off the kind of reaction we hear of today.

My experience of travelling people in recent years is in stark contrast to these earlier memories. It is now apparent that the reactions of the settled community towards the travellers has shifted from mild annoyance at their erratic life-style, to one of outright rejection of them as a social group. They are now ostracised, isolated and treated with absolute contempt by the settled community - ourselves.

In the past I had never been personally involved with travellers' problems so most of my information was gleaned from the newspapers or T.V. The trouble with relying on the media is that one tends to hear only of problematic situations, such as we heard of recently in Clondalkin, or a few years back when trouble flared up in Galway. One is then left with the impression that there exists only troublesome travellers and unfeeling settled people. In the past few months I have become involved in some small way with travellers and I realise that is not in fact the case.

About six years ago I moved into my present house in the southside of Dublin. I was not very long in the area when the travellers also moved in, setting up camp in a vacant site nearby. They were there for some time when my neighbours began to complain, justifiably I have to say, about the litter, the insanitary conditions, the wild dogs and all the other complaints which are so well documented in relation to illegal camping sites of travellers. One day a neighbour called to tell me that they had arranged to have the travellers moved on that morning. As there was a green patch opposite our houses, they feared that the travellers might head down in our direction, so I was asked if I would join with the other neighbours in using my car to block off the entrance to our cul-de-sac.

I knew clearly that such behavour towards the travelling people was wrong, bullying and unhelpful in that it only moved the problem on to someone else's patch. I explained my feelings and they were graciously accepted! This was the first time I had actually committed myself to arguing the cause of the travellers!

Later that morning I was driving past the camping site and what I saw gave me a curious feeling of "déja vu". On the roadside were groups of my neighbours chatting earnestly with members of the Gardai, and inside the camp were groups of travellers, mostly women and children - the menfolk seemed to have made themselves scarce - looking grim and apprehensive and not a little frightened. It reminded me vividly of the pictures in my school history books depicting the evictions in rural Ireland in the last century. I felt physically sick.

Later, on reflection I saw that the problem had arrived on my own front



Sunny smiles from two Dublin travelling women.

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Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
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doorstep and had to be confronted. That my sympathies lay with the travellers was clear enough to me but this was not enough. I would have to do something more concrete than 'feel' sympathetic. Not quite sure where to turn, it suddenly occured to me that I should contact my local T.D.s and County Councillors. I rang up all my local representatives and told them of the situation and of my disquiet about this kind of treatment of the travelling people. I asked them what they were doing about the problem and what they had accomplished to date. Each one made the same comment! Opposition from the local settled community made it very difficult and often downright impossible to accomplish anything.

I had now taken the first tentative steps in becoming involved with the problems of travelers. Time passed. The travellers were indeed "moved on" and no doubt on and on again after that. In the meantime I had become friendly with several women from a camp-site further afield. They used to call to me regularly and I asked them to tell me all about life on the site and the difficulties of bringing up their children in these most primitive of conditions. The one thing they repeated over and over again was the importance which they attached to their children being educated. They believed firmly that this was their only hope of a better future, but regular schooling was well nigh an impossibility in their present circumstances. One of the women told me of her frustration. She was in an area which was catered for by the "Youngline Bus" which collects travelling children from campsites and brings them to school, but the conditions on her site were so bad in wet weather that her children couldn't even get the short distance from their trailer to the bus without wading through oozing mud. These mothers were themselves illiterate and so could not help their children with school work. It seemed clear to me that better education would enable travellers to make a more valid contribution to society as travellers and help lessen their sense of isolation and ostracisation.

My experience has persuaded me that I must learn as much about the travellers way of life as I possibly can, become familiar with their fears, their hopes, their ideas of solutions to their many problems, and then find out what has actually been done and is in the process of being done at both official level and by voluntary support groups, to meet their needs.

Thus I feel strongly that we as settled members of the community should be busy, seeing what we can do, in whatever small way, to try to make travellers feel less alienated.

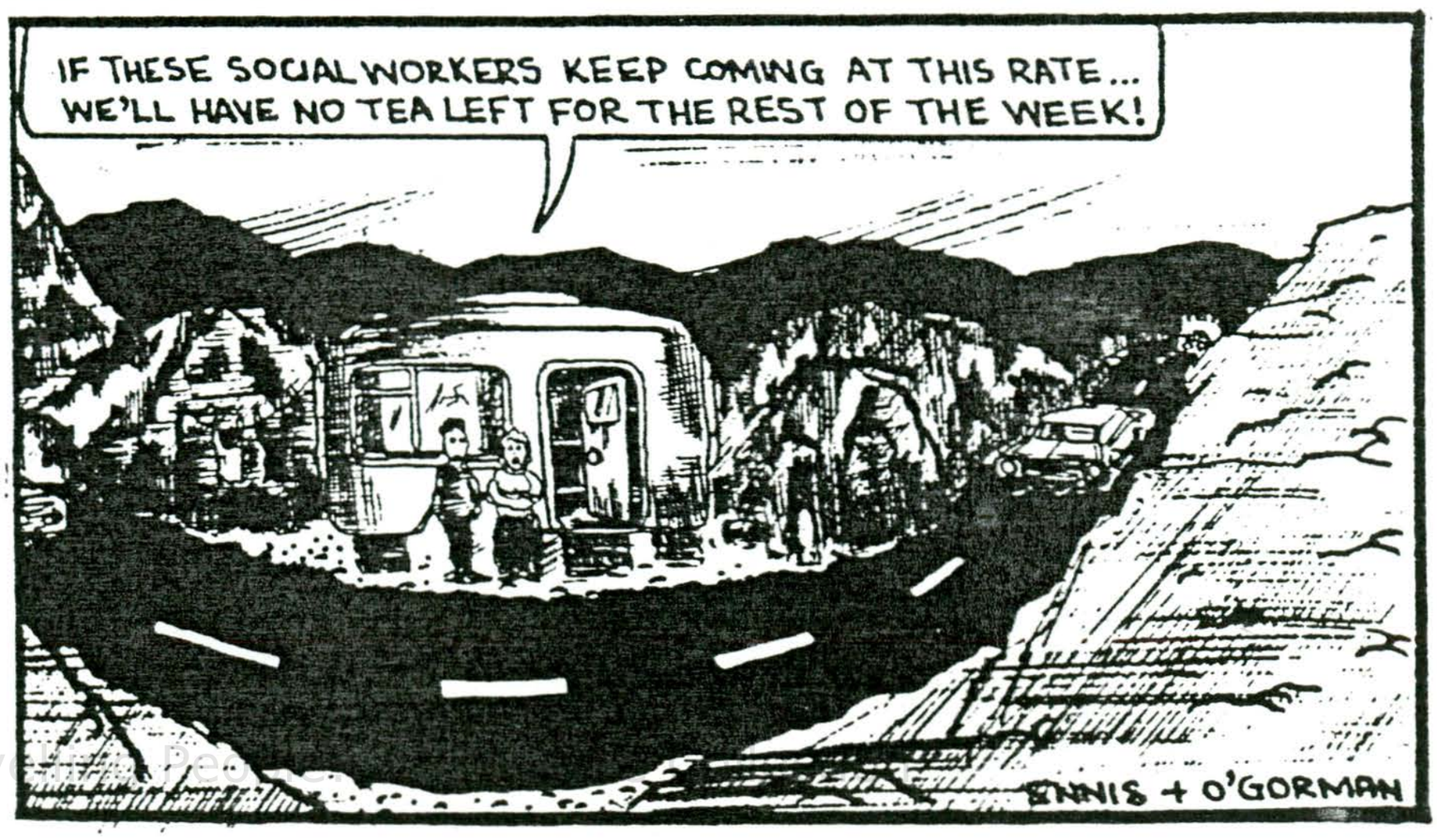
I have to date had meetings with Mr. Victor Bewley, a most compassionate but realistic man who is a mine of information on travellers; I have visited the school for travellers - St Ciaran's - in Bray, Co. Wicklow; where I saw for myself just how regular schooling can benefit travelling children. Several weeks ago I called into the parish for travellers in Exchange Street where a group of priests, nuns and lay people look after the spiritual needs of travellers and very much more besides. The day of my visit coincided with a sort of informal meeting they have there once a week, when social-workers, youth workers, public health nurses, religious and many others call in to meet and exchange news of the travelling community over a cup of coffee. On that particular day talk was all about the traveller Mary O'Donohoe, who had been one of the people recently chosen to receive a "People of the Year award". Everybody was terribly pleased about it and very proud of Mary, who they said, was a very courageous person and able spokeswomen for the travellers.

One other interesting contact I have had with travellers, was my visit to Kilboggett village in Cabinettly a small settlement of four lovely bungalows built specially by the local authorities for travellers who wished to settle in regular housing. It is a shining example of what could be done in many cities and towns throughout the country. It is small in size, the houses are neat and tidy, rubbish is collected in a large skip in a fenced-off area, and looking at the houses from the outside it was clear that great pride and care had been taken by the owners in making them look their very best. The only thing that I felt might be lacking was contact with the settled people nearby. Victor Bewley had mentioned to me the difficulties travellers can have when they first move into a house. Such simple matters as measuring up for curtains, fitting a lightbulb, putting out dustbins regularly, can all be a bit puzzling at first and it is in these small but crucial ways that we, each one of us in the settled community can help travellers integrate in to a settled way of life.

My plan now is to talk to as many of my friends and neighbours as I can about what I have found out about travellers. Many of them, like myself, have very little concrete information and many of their hard-line views are based on misinformation or half-truths. It is surprising how rapdily people change their views and become sympathetic when they learn the real facts behind the newspaper stories. Several people who work with travellers have offered to come out to my area and talk to groups, however small initially, about the travelling people and their way of life and I hope to get these organised early in 1984. If there are enough interested people we might eventually be able to form a travellers' support committee. We shall see! Alongside all of this I intend to continue lobbying my local representatives, both in the Dail and on the county council to make them aware of my views on their policies towards travellers.

Travellers are our fellow-human beings, our fellow Christians and our fellow countrymen and women. Stretching out the hand of friendship and brotherhood is, I feel not an optional extra but a fundamental obligation which we cannot postpone or deny any longer.

GARI MCKEOWN.



Irish Traveller Project
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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Books

Reviewed By MAURA CREGAN

Th Subversive Family by Ferdinand Mount (Counterpoint paperback, £2.95 stg). This is most stimulating and readable book now available in paperback (first published 1982) which reassesses the social history of the family and convincingly undermines many beliefs widely held today e.g. that child care is a modern innovation, that in earlier societies children were treated as expendable objects. The history of divorce is also examined and the author argues that the family has been the desired instrument of subordination and control by the leaders of the major revolutionary movements, be they Marx and Engels or the Church Fathers, feudal lords or feminist writers. To survive, the family has had to rely on extraordinary, shocking and sometimes comic subversive activities. Mark Mount examines the anti-family bias of our most influential ideologies which are marked by an urge to get away from the family - "religion, history, economics - all have been commandeered to prove that family life is unnatural, unnecessary or bad for us."

Also published in paperback last year by CARE was **Families and Children by Charles Mollan (IR £2.50)** and important reading for social workers. Despite the unfortunately tiny print the discussion document grapples with the depressing reality of some aspects of modern society and the effects of the recession on the quality of life and future of our young children in Ireland and examines the situation and needs, present and future, of our 0-6 year olds. Aspects covered are tomorrow's world, the formative years, money matters, family size and spacing, provisions for the 0-6s, and preparation for parenthood. There is a wealth of interesting references to studies and findings on child care from other countries, and there is also a fresh emphasis on the need for support by the parents of young children.

Administrative structures are examined and more decentralisation recommended. The document declares itself to be based on a "whole new philosophy" calling for "a respect for children as full human beings, or being more political, as full citizens of the State." Since Ireland has the largest population of under 25s in Europe and some of the leanest resources, Dr Mollan's findings and recommendations are vital pointers to, and portents of the urgency with which we must try to reform the inefficiencies in our systems for dealing with young people.

Possibly an interesting accompaniment to Dr Mollan's book will be **The Social Life of Britain's Five-Year-Olds,** a report of the Child Health and Education Study by A.F. Osborn, N.R. Butler and A.C. Morris (Routledge and Kegan Paul, £17.95 stg, May 1984). The study follows the first five years of life of the 13, 135 children born during the week of 5th April 1970. It is concerned with the structures within which children's lives are organised, and with the extent and nature of social inequality. The researchers pursue the question of what gives one child a better life-chance than another; they examine the effects of environmental factors, regional differences, the inequalities between the sexes and between majority and minority groups, and of the many different and subtle forms of family life.

Prejudice and Pride edited by Bruce Galloway (Routledge & Kegan Paul, Stg. £5.95, January 1984) is a chronicle of legal and social discrimination against gays in modern Britain, written both for the gay community and for heterosexuals involved in political and social action, in teaching and in social work. Contributors look at how discrimination operates throughout society - in laws and public institutions, the police force and the church, in the media and the medical profession and in everyday gay experience at home, at school, at work and on the streets.

The book is lively, has some cartoon drawings and is quite humorous in parts. This will be a worthwhile book for Irish readers since the subject, despite being in our midst, does not get much of an airing here as yet.

Sex and the Social Worker (Community Care Practice Handbooks, £3.25 stg, Heinemann Educational Books). This book with its eye-catching title is not a self-help personal handbook, but a guide to social workers who 'may find themselves involved with any aspect of their clients' sexuality - physical, emotional or moral". It makes suggestions about responding more confidently to the sexuality of young people, challenges social workers to consider the effects of residential care on the sex lives of residents, invites them to think positively about the sexual needs of handicapped people and asks for more enlightened responses to sexual abuse, especially labelling of 'victims' and 'offenders' and makes a plea for more professional and human ways of enquiring into allegations of abuse in residential establishments.

Child Abuse and Neglect - The International Journal (available through Pergamon Press, Headintgon Hill Hall Oxford OT3 OBWI England. Published quarterly, annual subscription US$130.00). This journal sets out to provide an international, multidisciplinary forum on the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse. Contributors are mainly from the professions involved but concerned lay individual and child orientated organisations are encouraged to participate. Material to be covered includes original theoretical and empirical contributions, review articles describing the current situation in specific areas and discussion of previously published papers.

The latest issue of **The Crane Bag - The Forum Issue** (Vol. 7 No. 2, price approx. IR £3.75) attempts to provide an analysis of contemporary Irish culture which the editors hope will complement the work of the Forum for a New Ireland. Articles from a wide range of contributors are under four sections: Education, Religion, Arts, and Psychology. The latter carries an interview with the ever alert and position sounding Anthony Clare on 'Psychiatry and Irish Culture' in which he calls for wider education of and communication between "experts" in different fields and comments upon the Canadian Professor Hector Warnes's study on 'Cultural Factors in Irish Psychiatry' in which Professor Clare felt Warnes was adopting a moral position in suggesting the Irish are less mature than those in the U.S. He refers to our evasive way of communicating with each other and the question of self-denigration which he says "often binds us together, and never allows people to take themselves too seriously and to take a step away from or above everyone else." In regard to the rapid change taking place in Ireland which "makes it much more alive to the distrubances of life', Professor Clare worries "that Ireland won't have enough time to establish for itself

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Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen Ennis, University Of Ulster

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What's all this about registration

THE Department of Health invited us to negotiations on Registration. We must now decide whether or not we wish to be included in the proposed legislation. This decision will be made at the 1984 A.G.M. in March. Will you have a say in this issue that affects you and your future? Are you concerned about the development of social Work in Ireland?

This is a historic development. If you are a member of the Irish Association of Social Workers you can voice your opinions and vote at the A.G.M. (if you are not - join and vote). Either way your views will be given full consideration. This is a social work issue and we are most anxious to hear from all social workers.

1982 - The Department of Health issued outline proposals for Statutory Registration to eleven professional associations.

1982 - The General Meeting, convened to decide on these proposals, rejected them and mandated the committee to negotiate alternate proposals.

1983 - Revised proposals were issued by the Department of Health.

1983 - The A.G.M. welcomed the revisions as important but minor, and rejected the overall package. The committee was mandated to continue negotiations.

1983 - Negotiations were intensive and productive leading to more substantial alterations in keeping with our opinions and those of the ten other professions involved.

The eleven professions and S.W.E.C.C. have met on numerous occasions and formulated positions of total agreement on numerous critical issues.

1984 - Revised proposals from the Department of Health.

Position as of now:

Most, **but not all**, professional issues are to be controlled by the Social Work Board. The Co-ordinating Committee is composed of the Chairman of each Board plus an independent politically appointed Chairman. Its role is mostly, **but not exclusively**, administrative.

The core issues are:-

1) The power of the Board.
2) The control of the Board; who exercises the power.
3) The criteria for registration.
4) The forms of registration.
5) The recognition of institutions, courses and qualifications.
6) Control of finance.
7) The restriction of use of the unadorned title of 'Social Worker' and analogous terms e.g. Housing Welfare Officer.
8) The fitness to practise committee.
9) The powers of the Co-ordinating Committee.
10) The control of this Committee.
11) Legislation must include all social workers.

We will be seeking further discussions with the Department of Health on these issues before the A.G.M. in March.

Then the decision is up to you - you decide by your vote. You must decide in March whether or not to exercise that vote. We will give you full details in advance. You decide.

Frank Goodwin,
Convenor Registration
Sub-Committee I.A.S.W.

Poetry



Nan Joyce

The Wild Beauty

The wild beauty, wild country,
in summer to stroll.
Through wild land that no hand has touched.
To find a wild stream of silver,
to watch it run,
to see the bottom so clear,
to put your hand into the river and lift
the stones in your hand.
Then to put it back in the same place
to sit down on the bank and put your feet into the stream.
To feel the soft water on your feet.
To watch the butterflies of all different colours
like small angels.
Then the little birds drinking from the stream
to listen to them talking to one another that we
cannot understand.
To forget everything in life and be a wild thing for a while
As a bird with no worries.
Just to have no worries for a while
to feel for a while that we are in heaven
to feel that God is near.
It could be like this forever.

River

River you have been there for hundreds of years
and you have never stopped running for all those years
you were wild and free.
Just like the Travelling People.
For all those years you brought beauty to the Earth,
but now you are sorrowful for you have stopped running,
for now you are being used for a dump.
In you are bean tins Beaney and Barney and Fairy Liquid,
Aerosols, Pepsi Cola, Kleenex, Clinic shampoo.
The people who loved beauty have all gone.
We get our plates and cups clean with Fairy Liquid
and we get our hair clean with Clinic Shampoo
But we pollute our beautiful rivers with
what is left

...Contd. from page 12

an alternative structure." He regards a degree of scepticism, discussion and self-reflection as important and also an acceptance that "the Irish are just evolving their own peculiar way of existence, no better or worse than anyone else - just different."

Another article 'Freud and Ireland' by Barre Fitzpatrick also refers to various Irish "characteristics", particularly the tendency to defer to authority and become subservient to either the past or the future. In a somewhat ponderous statement he finds Freud's concepts of imagination and super-ego useful in coping with problems indigenous to being Irish in Ireland and in taking the most constructive benefit from the climate of uncertainty currently prevailing.

Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

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Twenty years of Social Work

By MERVYN ENNIS Social Worker E.H.B.

AT 8.00p.m. on February 21st, 1964, a group of itinerants picketed the Dominican Convent Hall, Eccles Street, where a symposium on social work and welfare was being held. Their placards demanded "Justice for Travellers." The picket was part of a campaign by the Itinerant Action Committee, which the itinerants had formed to lobby for places to camp and to urge the implementation of the Commission on Itinerancy Recommendations, which had been published the previous August, 1963.

The following critical evaluation, moulded by ten years of involvement in the delivery of Social Work, Community Work, child care and youth work services to the travelling people in the Dublin area, might give some indication as to what their answers might be.

The Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, August 1983

THE Commission on Itinerancy was set up by Charles Haughey, then Minister for Justice, in 1960. Its report published in August 1963, is easily the most widely circulated book on travellers and hence, for the past twenty years, has influenced policy in relation to travelling people. Lots could be said about the report, but within the confines of this article, suffice it to say that the **Commission got it wrong** on a number of vital issues. Since our perception of a subject influences the conception and understanding of it, I will try to touch on a few aspects of the report that have influenced the development of social services and social work with and for travellers in Ireland.

The Commission's terms of reference were as follows:

1. to enquire into the **problem arising from the presence** in the country **of itinerants** in considerable numbers.
2. to examine the economic, educational, health and **social problems inherent in their way of life.**
3. **to consider** what steps might be taken:-
   (a) to provide opportunities **for a better way of life** for itinerants.
   (b) to **promote their absorption** into the general community.
   (c) pending such absorption, **to reduce to a minimum the disadvantages** to **themselves** and to the **community resulting** from **their** itinerant **habits**
   (d) to improve the position generally.
4. to make recommendations.

According to these terms of reference, the Commission's starting point was that **"itinerants" are a problem to the community.** Their way of life was unacceptable, inherently riddled with problems. A better way of life and "the only real solution" lay in their absorption into the general community through housing. Absorption into the general community was to be the most frequent and urgently repeated recommendation of the Commission.

Absorption did not reflect the wishes, particular needs or aspirations of the travelling people. Travellers wanted THEN as NOW proper parking ground, legalised and approved with proper facilities. These halting places would replace those traditional camping sites that were increasingly being taken over by both public and private developers, unplanned urban and suburban sprawls.

The thinking and recommendations of the 1963 report were beautifully condensed in its simplistic form by Nuala Fennel in a letter to the papers in 1970; "They must **be taught to live like everyone else,** how **to wash** and **dress** their children, how **to shop, cook** and **budget.** This is the only way they can have sufficient outward respect to be accepted in a residential area. Feelings run high when it comes to housing itinerants, and this applies to all social levels. No one wants them for neighbours, **but surely it is easier to change a few thousand itinerants to comply than to change the three million."** (1. Times 17.2.'70).

A serious ommission on the part of the commission was their failure to carry out any research on the origins of the Travelling People (P34). The Commisson claimed "it was not essential to the consideration of the Commission's terms of reference, no special study was made of the origins of the itinerant population of this county." It contented itself saying there **appears to be little** in the way of direct historical record, --- **they do not appear** to have any folklore."

I believe that, with these serious flaws, the Commission, consciously or unconsciously succeeded in defining travelling people as an inferior off-shoot of and source of annoyance to the settled population. Travellers, without any research, were depicted as a residue of the dispossessed peasants that survived the various persecutions, plantations, evictions from Ireland's tortuous and tortured history. These dispirited survivors, together with dropouts and general misfits from settled society, then evolved into the tinkers of Ireland. Tinkers were now synonymous with thieves, tramps, rogues, robbers, misfits, inadequates, who needed to be "rehabilitated," a word still used by the Department of the Environment to this day.

Mr. John Reilly, a Labour Party member of Ballina (Co. Mayo) Urban Council suggested at a meeting of the council that itinerants should be sterilised and sent to the aran Islands.

"I don't give a sugar for making this statement. for they are outcasts", declared Mr. Reilly, when the Council was discussing its by-laws to have itinerants removed from the roadside at Kilmore. (Michael Finlan, Irish Times).

What the Commission failed to recognise is that travellers comprise, **a separate ethnic group, with its own culture, language, values, norms, models, structures.** The travelling people, like our other national minorities are not culturally inferior to, but different from the majority population, and must be accepted as such.

I believe that policies based on the false assumptions and ommissions of the Commission have had an expensive financial drain on local authorities. The immediate problems arising from this for Social Workers employed by local authorities to work with travellers are:-

Should they continue implementing the local authorities' policy of cultural "annihilation through integration" and continue to lure travellers into housing?

or

should they ensure that the local authority in taking decisions concerning travelling people, give primary consideration to the wishes and welfare of the 'traveller?

Irish Traveller Movement Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster
13 B 93

When the Commission published its report on Itinerancy in August, 1963, the publicity and speculation surrounding the Commission raised the expectations of the travelling people, who naively believed that winds of change were about to blow. However, the publication of the report made not one iota of difference to them. The travellers were then joined by Gratton Puxon, a 25 year old Englishman of gypsy origin. On visiting Ireland, Grattan was appalled at the poverty, discrimination and overt harassment of the travelling people. He formally organised the Itinerant Action Group, and helped them clarify their aims and objectives.

Proposals for the construction of a network of sites, as well as for the housing and education of travellers had formed the main recommendation of the Commission on Itinerancy Report. The Itinerant Action Group were determined to have these recommendations implemented and were prepared to take a high profile and include direct action and picketing to achieve these fundamental rights. The campaign was limited to a group of travellers, number about 150 men, women and children, occupying about twenty caravans on the South side of Dublin. Support from non-travellers was small, but the results achieved, in terms of publicity, were to be out of all proportion to the limited nature of the campaign.

On December 31st, 1963, a makeshift primary school "St. Christopher's" which had been erected by the travellers themselves on wasteland in Ballyfermot, was opened by Peadar O'Donnell, Irish Author, and left wing republican. New Year's Day, 1964, classes commenced for the 20 - 25 pupils. It remained open for one week. The Evening Press of 07.01.1964 read "After 6.00a.m. assembly in its Keogh Square depot, a Corporation **task force,** two truck loads of Corporation workmen and two tractors moved up to the camp through the darkness escorted by the police". But this attempt to move the travellers was foiled, thanks to the presence of the Press, and T.V., who were on the spot. However, on 08.01.1964, a photo in the Evening Press showed the ruined remains of St. Christopher's School. Two homeless puppies, starving and shivering in the cold, were all that remained of the school or the camping site.

On February 1st, 1964, Dubliners saw the first ever traveller protest parade through the streets of Dublin tc Leinster House. The travellers used their caravans, carts, and horses to highlight their grievance at constant evictions and harassment. A petition was handed into the Dail, asking the Government to accept the Report on Itinerancy. Mr. Joe Donoghue, who had led the group of travellers to the Commission in 1960, was now Chairperson of the Itinerant Action Group. He spelt out the simple (still unmet in 1984) demands of the Travellers; "All we want is a camping site, proper itinerant parking ground legalised and approved with facilities."

The establishment of the Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee in 1965 by Victor Bewley, Fr. Tom Fehily and Lady Wicklow marked a new development in the response to the "problems" of the Travellers. These three dedicated philanthopists, in the face of extreme hostility from many in the settled community, went public, as it were, and proceeded to initiate services for travellers with an emphasis on meeting the needs of the children of the travelling people.

Subsequently, the corporation took over the Social Work services from the Dublin Settlement Committee, to each body's mutual satisfaction - the financial burden of employing trained staff was proving to be unmanageable for the voluntary body and it suited the corporation to take over control of this aspect of the work as they were already responsible for providing accommodation. It is interesting that at no stage did the Eastern Health Board take on the task of providing a comprehensive health and social work service for these families.

In 1974, the three local authorities in the greater Dublin area decided to set up to joint Committee for the settlement of travelling people. Subsequently, they appointed a Co-ordinating Officer for the **settlement** of travelling people, whose role was to co-ordinate the settlement programmes of the three authorities. As a Corporation Official, he was also given the additional function of enforcing the law relating to illegal camping on land owned by the **Corporation,** i.e. **"Evictions."** The conflict between these two goals is obvious, but in 1976, it was to become more marked Evictions around Dublin were constant.

The Supreme Court decision in the McDonald case ended this in 1980. Chief Justice O'Higgins laid down the principle that before a local authority can move travellers off its property, it is obliged to offer them somewhere suitable to their needs as an alternative.

In 1979, Dublin County Council began to employ Social Workers to work with travelling people. This arose out of inter-agency conflict between both authorities over the rise in traveller numbers in the county. Up until the, Dublin County Council had relied on the Corporation for statistical and demographic information on travellers. They now saw the need to monitor the situation themselves and employed two Social Workers. The burgeoing numbers in the county placed the onus on the County Council to provide sites for the ever increasing number arriving in the County from the city and othercounties. The Corporation argued that they had done their duty providing seven sites catering for 168 families (by far the greatest number provided by any Local Authority in the island), where as the County Council provided sites for twelve families (3x4). The County Council reminded the Corporation that only one site exists within the City boundary LABRE, and that all the sites had been planned



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"Itinerants are concerned with nothing but money. They are dirty and unprepared to help themselves. I can't blame people for not wanting to mix with them." Councillor Paddy Hickey, F.F. (Irish Press, 4/6/'82).

and provided by the joint Committee of both Local Authorities. To this day, the arguement continues, with neither side giving way, despite the fact that 420 live by the roadside. The situation became quite bleak for the County Council in 1980, when the Supreme Court laid down the principle that Local Authorities must offer suitable alternative sites to travellers before attempting to move them on. The County Council stopped evicting families, Dublin Corporation failed to follow suit.

CONCLUSION:-

What future for travellers?

What future for social work services?

Presently, four hundred travelling families live on the roadside in Dublin. The problem is a growing one, with about sixty weddings each yéar among the travellers in Dublin. Taking this against the present impasse in the provision of sites and halts, and the failure rate in standard housing, we are likely to see the number of travelling families on the road in the Dublin are double in the next five years. 800 families on the road in Dublin area roadside thirty

years after the itinerant problem was discovered and a Commission set up. 800 families compared to 86 in 1959, whose children will know only want and deprivation.

Accommodation

In Dublin, permanent housing and approved sites have been provided, but present provision does not meet the demands recognised and assessed in the 1963 Government Commission Report, while present demand outweighs the provision by a 2 to 1 margin. Nationally, 1,140 families live by the roadside without water, sanitation or a permanent place to make a home. Meanwhile, for our transient tourist population, we provide 95 officially approved tourist caravan and camping parks, capable of catering for 6,812 static mobile homes and an additional 4,290 touring pitches providing all the modern conveniences. Added to this, there is estimated to be several thousand holiday or second homes which equally remain unused for nine months of the year.

Education

In the field of education, only 381 travelling children, out of a pool of 2,500 under the age of fifteen, receive education on a regular basis. There are 700 places available for the two-and-a-half thousand eligible for school. but there is a 7 to 1 turnover rate in places without accommodation or approved sites.

"Within the context of local government problems, the itinerant problem was a small problem, one capable of almost immediate resolution". (Kevin Boland, Minister for Local Government, at the opening of a 20-tigeen site at Finglas on 5/4/'69).

Health

The incidence of perinatal mortality if three times higher than the national perinatal mortality rate.

In the case of neural tube defects, i.e. spina bifida, hydrocephaslus, and anenceph,alus, the rate in travellers was over four times greater than that of their peers in settled society, suggesting that travellers are at much greater risk of this disabling and indeed often fatal condition.

Shocking as these figures are for severe and fatal illnesses, the rate of admission to hospital for lesser illness is equally high. In March 1983, a survey among eighty-one travelling families in the Tallaght area showed that there were 45 travelling children from these families in Children's Hospitals around Dublin, suffering from a variety of illnesses, ranging from GASTRO ENTERITIS, E.C.U., Chest infections, failure to thrive.

There is a severe rise in heavy drinking among travellers, as is evident from the fact that between October 1982 - March 1983, thirteen adult travellers under the age of 40 have died in alcohol-related incidents. Directly linked to this problem of alcohol abuse is the consequent rise in family violence and an average 70%/80% of the women using Bru Chaoimhin on a regular basis are travellers,



while 50% of the women using Family Aid are travellers.

Even in adult life the disadvantage remains, for while 15% of the adult settled population will live to enjoy a 60 year age range and over, less than 2% of travellers reach this age.

In Dublin the Government washes its hands of the problem, and blanches its record by pointing to the astronomical financial input it puts into manpower. There are over eighty paid workers ensuring the under-development of travelling people in Dublin. Administrative Staff, Clerical Staff, Site Attendants, Overseers, Child Care Workers, Social Workers, a whole caring industry feeds off the problems, yet there is still only 193 travellers accommodated in sites/in housing, 380 attending school. Many of these Workers have the additional responsibility of cushioning their employing body from criticism and protecting them from shouldering their responsibilities as is evident from the Tallaght By Pass case.

There is no programme for Youth Work with Travellers. There is little as regards adequate social work intervention. There is no long term planned help to either the distressed families or stable families. The Travellers have to contend with a fragmented, disjointed service, that in many ways enforces their under-development and locks them within the culture of silence.

Is this the type of Justice they demanded at the Social Welfare Symposium in 1964?

Irish Travelling People: A Resource Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University of Ulster

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Irish Travelling People: a Resource Collection

Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 96

APRIL/MAY/JUNE, 1984

Travelling people -what direction for social work ?

Social workers from Dublin Corporation respond in this article to issues raised in the last edition of 'Irish Social Workers', on the travellers, thus extending the debate. The authors are Terry Madden, Senior Social Worker, Ann Helferty, Youth and Community Worker, Christine Donnelan, Pat Richardson, Betty Lynch and Peter Nolan, Social Workers.

INTRODUCTION

Since the Publication of the Travelling People Review Body Report much attention has been given to the failure of local authorities to provide the necessary accommodation required for the travelling people. In the article "Twenty Years of Social Work", published in the last edition of the ***Irish Social Worker***, some of the responsibility for the failure to provide accommodation is landed at the feet of social workers. Whilst a critical evaluation of the last twenty years of social work is to be welcomed and is indeed long overdue the members of this team of social workers, working full-time with travelling people for over seven years would argue that not enough attention has been paid to the social work process with travelling people. In this article we hope to explore the basis for such a process.

In doing so many accepted features of travellers lifestyle must be opened to critical questioning. The question, for instance, as to whether travellers form a separate culture in Ireland remains unanswered. They do, without doubt, have customs and rituals which are evident in their style of life. These would include customs associated with death, arranged marriages, the roles played by men, women and children within a family, language and certain taboos and sanctions. The role and function of the extended family system retain great importance. It is also important to remember that travelling people are readily identifiable. Separation from the settled community reinforces a sense of prejudice and consolidates a sense of identity amongst travellers.

However, the preoccupation with the preservation of culture poses a series of questions for social workers and those concerned with improving the self esteem of travellers and consequently their quality of life. Recognition of the positive aspects of travellers lifestyle ought not to exclude a critical evaluation of patterns of behaviour that are disruptive and that in themselves reduce travellers sense of self esteem e.g. the role of women.

A MODEL FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The concept of full citizenship is one which we as a team find more operationally useful than either the concepts of "integration" or of "cultural preservation".

Such a concept of citizenship has three advantages

(i) it does not require an answer to the question as to whether travellers constitute a separate culture; it recognises the travellers unique lifestyle but does not allow this unique lifestyle to negate their obligations to the wider society ;

(ii) it implies a minimum requirement in terms of civil rights for travellers ;

(iii) it emphasises the obligations on travellers within society to adhere to its rules and norms. The maxim that rights imply responsbilities is clearly seen in the context of citizenship.

We would argue that such a model provides a more useful base for social work intervention at individual, community, and societal levels. The model can thus be converted readily to a systems theory approach as it recognises that at various times the change - target may be travellers, the community's response to their needs or the political environment.

Such a model, however, reveals a series of problems for social work intervention which ought not to be minimised or ignored. In many areas including the family, accommodation, education, employment and health there are questions in relation to the direction of social work practice that will best allow travellers to achieve fulfillment both at a community and individual level. It is worthwhile to examine these areas in specific detail.

THE FAMILY

The large size of travelling families has had a positive role to play in the network of the travelling people. However, it would seem that this large size of family has led to children adopting adult roles at a very early age. Girls often take on the role of mother surrogate in their early teens. While the role of the travelling woman is changing, she is still very much regarded as a chattel by the husband. She often suffers physical abuse from her husband and may leave the home, with some of the children, for a period of time.

Family size and family planning have become central issues in our society. The extent to which travellers adopt these values will pose internal challenges to traditional roles within the travelling family and, in particular, women's perception of their own role. Women's position in the travelling family is an example of the contradiction between the value of the person and the family. While large family size has a positive aspect it undermines the woman's rights as an individual and reinforces her own sense of oppression.

ACCOMMODATION

In our submission to the Cabinet Task Force dealing with the implementation of the Review Body Report we stressed the crucial importance of adequate accommodation as a key to the delivery of education, health and other services to travelling people.

Irish Travelling People: a Pamphlet Collection
Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

13 B 97

The tiered structure of eventual progression from halting site to chalet site to standard local authority accommodation envisaged by the 1963 Commission is now recognised to be outmoded. Travellers' preferences have made themselves known in the manner in which the sites developed and each of the types of accommodation is now recognised in its own right as an end in itself. In the Dublin area the recognition of this is in the conversion of the chalet sites to group housing schemes begun in Avila Park and continuing in Labre and Holylands.

The three different types of accommodation represent a plurality of options, each of which suit some groups of travellers more than others. There are strong indications that travellers outside Dublin prefer standard housing while there are more diverse preferences in the capital. The varied preferences in the Dublin area are borne out by a recent survey when a total of 332 were questioned about their preferences.

Conventional Housing	Group Housing	Halting Sites
72/332	56/332	176/332

Don't wish to settle	refused to answer
16/332	12/332

It is questionable whether social workers in attempting to facilitate travellers to attain their stated preferences are engaging themselves in a process of cultural annihilation through integration.

Each of the types of accommodation, halting sites, grouped housing scheme, standard housing, have implications for travellers' way of life. Halting sites and grouped housing schemes whilst allowing travellers to retain the extended family system still place obligations on them in terms of relations among themselves or relating to the wider community.

The challenge to the traditional way of life is most clearly stated when travellers opt for standard accommodation. They can sometimes find themselves in a heart-rending bind. Firstly, they feel isolated from friend and family and placed in an environment sometimes hostile and always tense. At these times the sight of family can be a source of relief or a cause of contention.

Many travellers housed by Local Authorities find their house quickly becomes a centre for the congregation of travellers, close family and indeed not so close. In this situation we would argue that the need to live one's life in a manner not incompatible with socially accepted behaviour ought not to be seen as an attack on the extended family, so close to the heart of the traveller's life style, but rather a recognition that the travellers' preferred life style does not imply rights above and beyond those of any citizen.

Travellers, in opting for any one of these types of accommodation available, will face problems of adaptation by their living in close proximity with other travellers or settled people. The entire range of community support systems needs to be moblized by the social worker to enable families to cope with a major change in their life style and environment.

To this point we have looked at issues most directly related to our social work involvment with the travellers. Some of the questions and dilemmas, however, have corollaries in the following service areas: health, education and employment.

HEALTH

There is evidence to show that the health status of travellers is poorer than among the settled community. Life expectancy is low, the infant mortality rate is high. The Health Board, in March 1980 and May 1981, listed the following conditions as being frequent among Travellers:

Respiratory conditions
Gastro-enteritis
Alcohol-related conditions
Skin conditions
Infestations
Dental problems
Speech and hearing defects are also common among the children.

The key to effective mobilisation of preventative solutions must be in the areas of

1. The provision of better accommodation, both in permanent structures or on halting sites.
2. Improved education.
3. Some changes in the life-style of Travellers, e.g. smaller family size, a raising of the average age of marriage, a reduction in the number of marriages between close relatives, reduced tolerance of alcohol abuse etc.

These solutions must pose a challenge to the existing life-style of many travellers.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

In the field of education the argument of separate facilities stems from a desire to meet the special needs of some travellers' children. Such needs relate to their disadvantaged position in society and their inability to participate fully in the formal education system for reasons such as poor accommodation, nomadic life style and large family size. However, while allowing scope for the fostering of a traveller cultural indentity, such a policy reinforces their alienation from the mainstream of society and maintains their marginal position in relation to employment and social opportunities. On the other hand, a policy of integrated education with attention to special needs in a remedial setting offers traveller children greater opportunity to partake more fully in the educational facilities available to all children in the state. Over time however, it must be expected that such a process would pose a threat to present cultural values and modes of behaviour. The central aim, should be to create opportunities that meet different aspirations of travellers and that will allow them to take their full place in society as citizens.

In the area of employment we believe that a culture of dependence on state welfare payments with consequent loss of self-esteem should be avoided by means of a policy

Contd. on page 13

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Contd. from page 10

of active encouragement of employment of travellers. At present travellers provide an effective recycling of many consumer durables. The ill-feeling in the settled community caused by the unsightliness of the sales areas could be avoided by the provision of suitably located trading areas for this business. However, such a development would inevitably have an impact on travellers present life-style.

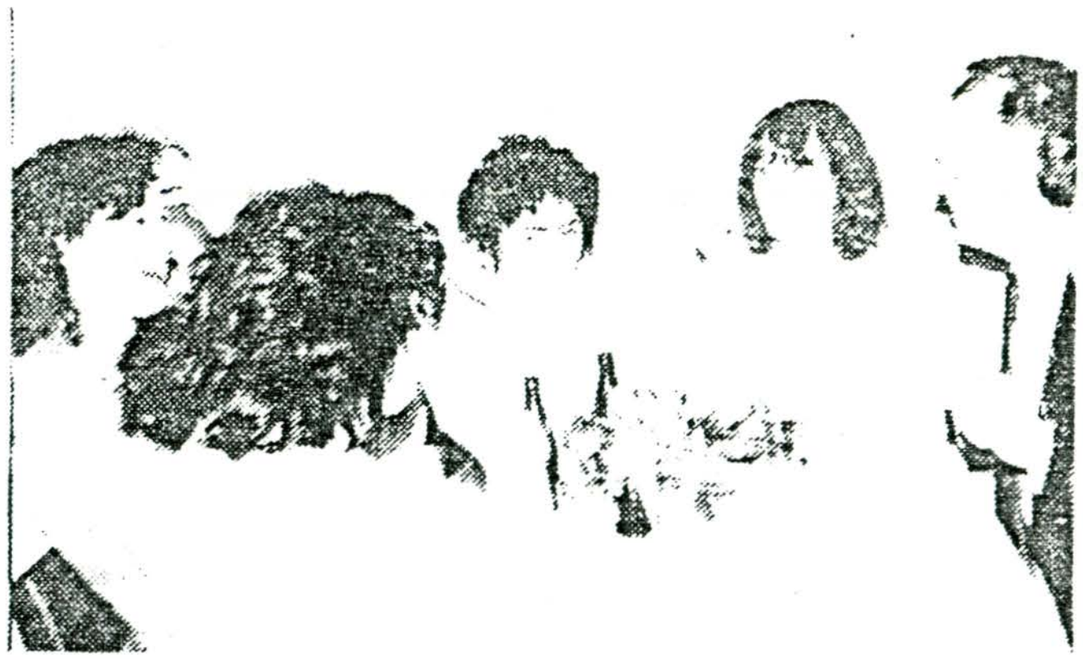
CONCLUSION

None of what has been said in this article is to be taken as a refutation of the basic demand for accommodation which our society has failed to deliver in any consistent manner. There is a failure by many people working in the area to recognise the extent of fear and prejudice between the traveller and the settled community. Until the anomolies in travellers lifestyle to which we have referred are confronted there can be little hope of any open acceptance of travellers by the settled community. The struggle to obtain justice for travellers is a political struggle. Social workers because of their first hand knowledge of the deprivation ought to play a key role in that struggle. Whether it should constitute the essence of social work practice is another matter altogether. Those who argue that there is a black and white struggle for the preservation of a culture on the verge of extinction ought to show caution, lest in their struggle to defend that culture they unwittingly end up supporting aspects of the travellers lifestyle that undermine individual rights and in particular those of women and children.

In this article we hope to have shown that these are areas worthy of equal attention.



Seen here at the I.A.S.W. Annual General Meeting are Aileen Young and Mary Cullen.



Seen here a group of socialising social workers at the A.G.M.



Something to smile at!

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CATHOLIC PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICE - DUBLIN

ATT: NEWS DESK

9.10.85

THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY SAID TODAY (WED) THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE SETTLED COMMUNITY IS A MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE PROVISION OF PROPER ACCOMMODATION FOR TRAVELLERS. THEY SAY THAT COMMUNITY OPPOSITION IS PARTICULARLY STRONG ABOUT PROVIDING SERVICED SITES FOR TRAVELLERS.

IN A STATEMENT ENDORSING THE REPORT, ''THE TRAVELLING PEOPLE'', ISSUED LAST MONTH BY THE CHURCH'S COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE, THE BISHOPS POINT OUT THAT OVER 9000 MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE LIVING ON THE ROADSIDE IN IRELAND, NORTH AND SOUTH.

THEY ASSERT THAT AS A COMMUNITY ''WE DO TREAT TRAVELLERS VERY UNFAIRLY'', THOUGH THEY SAY THAT OPPOSITION OF THE SETTLED COMMUNITY IS OFTEN DUE TO CERTAIN FEATURES IN THE LIFESTYLE OF TRAVELLERS. THEY POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT IF TRAVELLERS DO CREATE RUBBISH HEAPS IN SOME AREAS, THIS WAS BECAUSE THEY DID NOT HAVE DECENT SERVICED SITES OR NORMAL PUBLIC SERVICES.

THEY CALL ON THE SETTLED COMMUNITY TO RESPOND WITH ''COURAGE AND GENEROSITY'' TO THE CHALLENGE POSED BY THE CONTINUED DEPRIVATION OF TRAVELLERS.

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STRAVELLERS FACED ENORMOUS DIFFICULTIES IN RAISING FAMILIES ON THE ROADSIDE. WHERE DECENT FACILITIES HAD BEEN PROVIDED THERE WAS, IN THE MAIN, HARMONIOUS RELATIONS BETWEEN TRAVELLERS AND THE SETTLED COMMUNITY.

THE BISHOPS URGE ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW BODY REPORT OF 1983 REGARDING THE PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION FOR TRAVELLERS. THEY SAY THAT, IN SOME AREAS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THEIR OFFICIALS HAD DONE MUCH TO HELP TRAVELLERS.

THEY THANK ''THE MANY DEDICATED PEOPLE'', ESPECIALLY RELIGIOUS, WHO WORK WITH TRAVELLERS, BUT SAY THAT WITH SO MANY FAMILIES LIVING IN APPALLING CONDITIONS MUCH OF THEIR EFFORT IS NULLIFIED.

THE BISHOPS SEE THE PRIEST AS AN IMPORTANT AGENT FOR IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE SETTLED COMMUNITY AND TRAVELLERS:

''THE PRIESTS' GENTLE INFLUENCE SHOULD HELP THE SETTLED COMMUNITY TO BE MORE UNDERSTANDING AND LESS PREJUDICED ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST''.

ENDS

MMMM

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MICK McCann

The In Dublin Profile



ANNE-MARIE HOURIHANE talks to the man behind Minceir Misli, the travellers' rights group.

Mick McCann is the driving force behind the travellers' rights group, Minceir Misli. Like most political activists he talks about meetings a lot. He has a pageboy number so that he can be contacted quickly if he is not to be found at the group's headquarters in Meath Street. His family has been halved by tragedy. He wears a ring in the shape of a horseshoe on his left hand.

He is the eldest of six brothers who were born in Belfast, Dundalk and Dublin. His family moved around the country and sometimes over to Britain when he was a child.

'You could move around without too much trouble until about ten years ago. Sometimes you'd have farmers threatening to shoot you but a lot of the time we were left. The complaints about us from the settled people weren't always there — they only started when the travellers were put into a situation which was not their fault.'

He blames the county councils and local government generally for the dramatic decline in the number of halting sites for travelling families. As a result, he says, they were forced to band together in order to establish large encampments. 'Travellers don't like ganging together. They're into privacy and staying in their own families. That's one of the reasons that they're so difficult to organise.'

They hate the huge sites they have been forced into, with swarms of people and appalling living conditions. They believe that the large camps are one of the reasons for the ferocious hostility of the settled community. They never had any relationship to speak of with the Gardai, whom they see as a source of constant harrassment and insults. 'They're always the first to say push on, move on and to kick the fire in your face.'

'When I was thirteen I was sent away to Letterfrack for begging. I hate the Brothers. They had boys down there doing men's work — clearing bog, labouring. Young boys doing men's work. You're bound to get arrested because it's against the law to be a traveller. It's against the law to be homeless. Working class people and poor people are oppressed too. Until we unite and politicize ourselves the system will never change, but they resent us most of all. You couldn't call Tallaght a middle-class area but it boiled up more than any other, even more than Galway.

"I was always reading. James Connolly, the history of Ireland and Northern Ireland. I believe that British soldiers should get out of Northern Ireland. Deep down most travellers are republicans — they don't recognise the border. Travellers are very religious. You can't criticize priests, chapel or God or they'll tear you apart. I've tried it with my own parents. To them everything that happens is the will of God. I prefer to go on what I can see and hear. They're very conservative. They think that it's anti-religion to talk about the facts of life, or birth control. They'd only do that if a priest or a religious person encouraged them to do i

Mick and his girlfriend had a child but died. 'A cot death, the doctor told us.' H says that travellers' children have an in'a mortality rate which is four times higher tha that of settled children. A traveller's child ca expect to be hospitalized at least three tim in its first year, with pneumonia, gastro-enteri or any of the number of complaints resultin from the conditions in which they live.

His younger brother Francis was in hospit a lot more often than that. 'He had somethin wrong with his legs. He was an invalid, on three foot ten.' Francis was very close a another brother, Johnny. 'When a travell likes someone he likes him maybe more than settled person would. Whatever happens to th person he likes happens to him. It's the sam to him.'

After a fight with his girlfriend, Johnny g drunk and fell into the Grand Canal. Johnn drowned. Francis was in despair. 'The ne night he pegged himself into the thing at th exact same spot. You hardly ever hear of traveller killing himself.'

Mick and his brother Thomas went t Roscommon to tell their parents. In the en Thomas told them because Mick could no This month, just a year after Johnny an Francis died, a third brother Patrick wa killed in a car accident.

'Minceir Misli is about self-determinatio for travellers, for our own people. It's difficu to get travellers together but if they don organize, in ten or twenty years there'll be n travellers left. We need a tape recorder becau we have a lot of meetings and only a few of know how to write. I know how to write b when you're talking it's hard to concentrate doing writing at the same time.'

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Travellers in these Islands

I The Travellers in Ireland *Victor Bewley*

Little is known about the origin of the Travellers in Ireland. They are not gypsies, although gypsies have travelled in Ireland, but there would not be more than about a dozen families of gypsies living in Ireland at the present time.

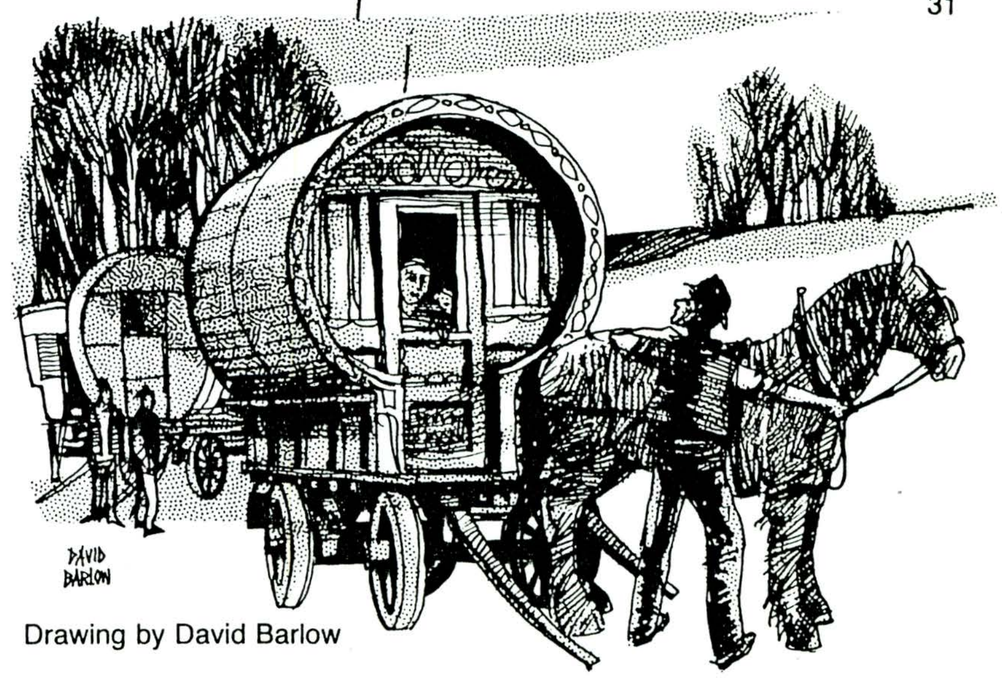
The Travellers all have common Irish names and their language Shelta is derived from Irish. Their existence has been ascribed to many causes. It is said that they are descendants of the remnants of Irish tribes dispossessed in the various plantations. Some are said to be the descendants of the journeying craftsmen and metal workers who travelled the country centuries ago. Others are said to be the descendants of those who were driven to a wandering way of life because of the poverty and distress caused by the famines of the last century, the oppressions of the penal law era and earlier. It is likely that a combination of all these factors to a greater or lesser degree was responsible for the greater number of those now on the road.

In the past they were mainly a rural people. They were horse dealers, travelling salesmen and tinsmiths. Many people today can remember years ago seeing the little flat, brightly painted carts going around the country with rolls of linoleum, etc, for sale. These may still be seen in some places. Many people also will remember the tinsmiths who came round selling and repairing buckets, milk cans and other utensils. This was how they got the name Tinker, from their trade as tinsmiths. This has, however, become a derogatory word and they dislike it. They were a respected people in the past, performing a useful service. They often brought news from one place to another, before the days of wireless and telephones.

As the years went by, times changed. Due to the introduction of machines, horses became less in use, although there are still some horse dealers. The Travelling salesmen are no longer needed in the same way, as so many more people now have cars and are more mobile. The introduction of plastic was largely responsible for making the tinsmiths redundant.

During the 1950s and '60s with their means of livelihood going, like other country people, they began to drift to the cities and towns in order to make a living. They came to the city ill-equipped for city life. Due to their wandering way of life in the past, few had been to school, so most of them were illiterate, only about 10% being able to read and write. When they camped in numbers together in urban areas, their sites soon became dirty, having no water, sanitation or refuse collection. Many had to beg for a living, and this habit, together with their wandering horses all helped to build up opposition to them from the settled community.

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Drawing by David Barlow

In 1960 the government appointed a Commission on Itinerancy to see what was the best way to make provision for these people. The Commission produced its report in 1963. It found that at that time there were 1198 families of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland, over 900 of which, when asked, said that they would like to settle if they could find an alternative means of livelihood. About 600 families were living in the horse-drawn barrel shaped caravans and over 300 were living under canvas. Whatever about the latter dwellings being alright for the best of our summers, they certainly are far from adequate for even the best of our winters, not to mention the worst ones. It was not surprising to find that many Travellers suffered from bronchial troubles and that 12% of the children died before they reached two years of age. About 160 Travelling children were found to be on the rolls of national schools throughout the country, 114 of which were said to be attending sufficiently regularly to make progress.

The Commission made a number of recommendations including that camping sites be made available for the Travellers while they were waiting for houses, or for those who did not want houses. In 1964 the Minister for Local Government asked local authorities to provide such sites, but by 1965 nothing had been done. The reason for this was that every time any local authority proposed to do anything for Travellers, it was so bitterly opposed that the project was abandoned.

Early in 1965 a few people who were concerned that proper provision should be made for Travellers, formed themselves into the Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee. The name was later changed to the Dublin Committee for Travelling People. The main aim of the committee was to try to win the support of public opinion for having camping sites provided by the local authorities. However, many people did not take us seriously and only

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laughed when we said many Travellers wanted to settle, remarking, "when the first bird sings in the spring, they will be off down the road". Most people also did not seem to accept that Travellers were really interested in education.

We found, therefore, that we had to try to do ourselves the various things we wanted to see done, so as to convince people that they were worth doing. One of the first things we did was to start a class for children of Travellers for two hours each afternoon. That was the only time we could get the use of the premises. We collected 16 children by minibus from their roadside camps daily. Shortly after that we were offered the use of a city national school in the evenings and a larger number of children were brought there to classes organised by the headmaster with voluntary help.

The next thing we tried to do was something about living accommodation. We therefore bought six caravans, and placed these on privately owned sites and rented them out to some of the families living in the worst conditions. At one time we were renting out 30 caravans in this way. Gradually other committees began to be formed in different parts of the country and in 1969 these were linked together in the National Council for Travelling People.

We always felt that Traveller involvement was important and consulted with Travellers from the very beginning, although for some time Travellers were slow to act on committees as they found these too boring! Gradually over the years Travellers have become more involved in the activities of the Council and currently there are a number on the executive and two of the three vice-chairmen are Travellers.

Gradually the local authorities became active, the first site being provided by Kildare County Council in 1966. It was a small site for two or three families, but was not in a very suitable location so it was not greatly used, although families have used it intermittently. In 1967 Dublin Corporation provided their first site, for 39 families, and other sites followed in due course, both in Dublin and throughout the country.

In Dublin Travellers are slow to move into houses, partly perhaps because the housing estates are so big that they may feel insecure in moving into them. Throughout the rest of the country the preference seems to be for houses, but sometimes the only choice is a house, if no sites are available.

The position today is that instead of the 1,198 families which were here in 1960, this number has now increased to 2,996. Of these, 1,695 families have been provided for and 1,301 families are still on unofficial roadside camps. Of the 1,695 referred to above 1,317 are in houses and the remainder are on sites. There are a substantial number of Travellers who do not want houses but wish to continue to live in their caravans, but would like somewhere to park these where they know they can remain and where they will have a hard surface, water, sanitation, lighting, and refuse collection.

In a few places group housing has been provided. This could be a group of from four to twelve houses to accommodate extended families for those who wish to live in this way.

Considerable progress has also been made in education. Instead of the 160 children who were attending primary schools in 1960, there are now over 4,000 receiving regular education. Progress into secondary education is slow, but a slowly increasing number are achieving this.

Traveller children tend to lose interest in the normal school curriculum around 12 years of age, so in some areas junior training centres have been provided where the children do literacy and numeracy but also a considerable amount of practical work which is proving successful in holding their interest. The centres cater for the 12–15 year old age group and then there are training centres for the 15–25 age group, which as well as literacy and numeracy seek to teach various skills such as woodwork, metalwork, cooking etc., and help to prepare the young people for going into a job if they so wish. A substantial number are doing so.

In 1980 the government appointed a review body to consider what had been done for Travellers during the last 20 years and how things should develop for the future. They produced their report in 1983. There were three Travellers on the review body. Following the publication of the report, the government appointed a Committee to Monitor the Implementation of Government Policy on Travelling People. There are three Travellers also on this body. It is important that Travellers are involved in the consideration of things that concern them.

Although there are now many more people who know Travellers and have friendly relations with them, there is still widespread prejudice against them. In spite of this, many Travellers are proud of their identity and wish to keep it even though they have changed their way of living in many respects. There are some, however, who feel they have to hide it, if they wish to be accepted. I recall one young man who had got a job as a builder's labourer. He was chatting to me about his work one day and remarked, "Of course I don't tell the fellas where I work that I came off the road." "Why not?", I said, "There's nothing wrong with being on the road." "Ah, but there is," he said, "there's people that think that if you're on the road, if you see something you want, you'll take it, whether it's yours or not." "Yes, I know," I said, "there are people like that on the road, but there are people like that in the settled community also, and in any case all the people on the road aren't like that." "Ah, but," he said "you know that, but other people don't and they just think we're all the same. If the fellas found out, I could give up my job." "Don't do any such thing," I said, "if they find out, you stick to your job and let them see that you are different." It was easy for me to say that, but it would be another thing for him to do it. I could feel the struggle that was going on in that young

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man's life and the injustice that would be done to him if he should fail because of the stigma which is wrongly attached to all of these people.

Victor Bewley is a member of Churchtown Meeting, Dublin.

II The Travellers in England and Wales *Ralph Taylor*

It is estimated that there are at least 30,000 Travellers in England and Wales. The name 'Travellers' is used as a generic term, embracing those who lead a nomadic way of life, whatever their precise ethnic origin.

Some Travellers in Britain would certainly claim direct descent from the Gypsies who journeyed from Northern India starting some thirteen or fourteen hundred years ago. The migration routes passed through the Balkans into Western Europe, with one branch going through North Africa – hence the name 'Gypsy' form 'Egyptian'.

Over the years there has been considerable intermarriage between Gypsies and the indigenous population, and also an influx of Travellers from Ireland. Many English Gypsies draw a clear distinction between themselves and Irish Travellers, dismissing the latter as 'not true Gypsies'. Certainly, there are important cultural differences between English Gypsies and Irish Travellers, but all too often these are used to mask and justify prejudice, discrimination and failure to respect the rights of all Travellers.

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The legal situation is that, under the Caravan Sites Act 1968, local authorities have a reponsibility to provide 'adequate accommodation' for 'Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area'. Gypsies are defined as those leading a nomadic way of life.

That's the good news – the bad news is that the Act also specified that local authorities are not required to provide accommodation for more than fifteen caravans at a time. If they can satisfy the Department of the Environment that they have made such provision, they can obtain 'designation'. This then enables them to evict or exclude any further Travellers from their area.

The Act was hailed as a pioneering piece of legislation, but to date it has been honoured more in the breach than the observance. It is estimated that fewer than half the Traveller families in England and Wales have access to an official site. Despite the availability of government grants, most local authorities have neglected their duty, frequently because of vociferous opposition from local residents and businesses.

This prejudice against Gypsy sites stems to some extent from people's experience of unofficial sites at the roadside and on waste land. It is not surprising that such sites have problems when they lack water, toilets and

rubbish disposal facilities. How long could we maintain our 'civilised' way of life without such amenities, particularly if we were frequently harassed and evicted, often without warning?

The provision of an adequate number of sites with proper facilities and good management is the single most important step which could be taken to improve the Travellers' situation and their relationship with the 'settled' community. However, it should be noted that this does not necessarily imply that Travellers will want permanent residence and will give up their nomadic way of life. One of the criticisms of the Irish policy described in Victor Bewley's article is that it could amount to enforced assimilation limiting the freedom to roam so beloved of Travellers. A proper network of well managed sites throughout the country would enable Travellers to continue their way of life, whilst building better relationships with the 'settled' community. It would also permit improvements in education and health care which are hampered by the essentially short-term nature of unofficial sites, with their constant attendant risks of harassment and eviction.

Travellers attract an incredibly high level of prejudice and discrimination and it seems to me that there is much that Quakers can do to assist in the local situation. They can, for instance:

–ask their local authority whether it has fulfilled its legal responsibility to provide adequate accommodation for Travellers;
–check whether the Education Department makes provision for Traveller children, perhaps through a mobile school, a peripatetic teacher, or special reception classes;
–ask whether the Health Authority has a policy of outreach, perhaps through a mobile clinic or a designated health visitor;
–assist Travellers with form-filling, letter-writing, etc;
–help Travellers in dealing with officialdom – the council, DHSS, police, courts, etc;
–write to the press and contact local radio in support of Travellers if prejudiced or ill-informed comments are published or broadcast.

One of the best ways to organise such work is through a local support group. For seven years I was involved in the Sheffield Gypsy Support Group, which did all the things listed above, establishing a centre offering literacy teaching and welfare rights advice, and managed to persuade the local authorities to establish more sites. (QSRE has published a leaflet – 'Local Support for Travellers' – which is obtainable from Friends House, and gives information about support groups and other organisations.)

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It is important to note, however, that support groups should not attempt to represent the Travellers. That is a role which Travellers themselves should undertake.

There are a number of Traveller organisations, including the National Gypsy

Council, the National Gypsy Education Council and the Romany Guild. However, it is difficult for such bodies to cover the entire country and assist all Travellers in every situation and locality.

Save the Children has played an important role, particularly in the fields of health care and under-fives provision. Some Community Relations Councils have assisted Travellers in fighting discrimination (for instance, exclusion from pubs), but others seem dubious whether Travellers constitute an ethnic minority.

As indicated earlier, this really is not the point. Debates about ethnicity do not resolve the very real problems experienced by Travellers. There is much to be done to assist and support this disadvantaged minority faced with prejudice, discrimination and harassment. Who better than Friends to undertake it?

Ralph Taylor is a member of Streatham Meeting and was formerly active in Sheffield Gypsy Support Group.

Note: Martin Young's *Young Fabian Pamphlet 42* provides an excellent summary of the legal and social situation of Travellers. Obtainable from The Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1H 9BN. Price £1.50.

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QUAKER
J. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY & EDUCATION
Vol. VII No. 3 Autumn/Winter 1985

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COMMITTEES AFFILIATED TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

Carlow Town
Cavan Town
Ennis
Cork City
Mallow
Clonakilty
Midleton
Bandon
Letterkenny
Ballyshannon
Buncrana
Dublin City
South Co. Dublin
Finglas
Coolock
Clondalkin
Tallaght
Galway City
Tuam
Ballinasloe
Loughrea
Athenry
Gort
Killarney
Tralee
Listowel
Castleisland
Athy
Castledermot
Kilkenny
Portlaoise;
Mountmellick
Carrick-on-Shannon
Limerick City
Rathkeale
Abbeyfeale
Longford Town
Drogheda
Dundalk
Ballina
Ballinrobe
Navan
Castleblayney
Tullamore
Roscommon Town
Boyle
Castlerea
Sligo Town
Nenagh
Roscrea
Thurles
Clonmel
Tipperary Town
Athlone
Mullingar
Wexford Town
New Ross
Bray
Kilpedder
Newtownmountkennedy

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National Council for Travelling People



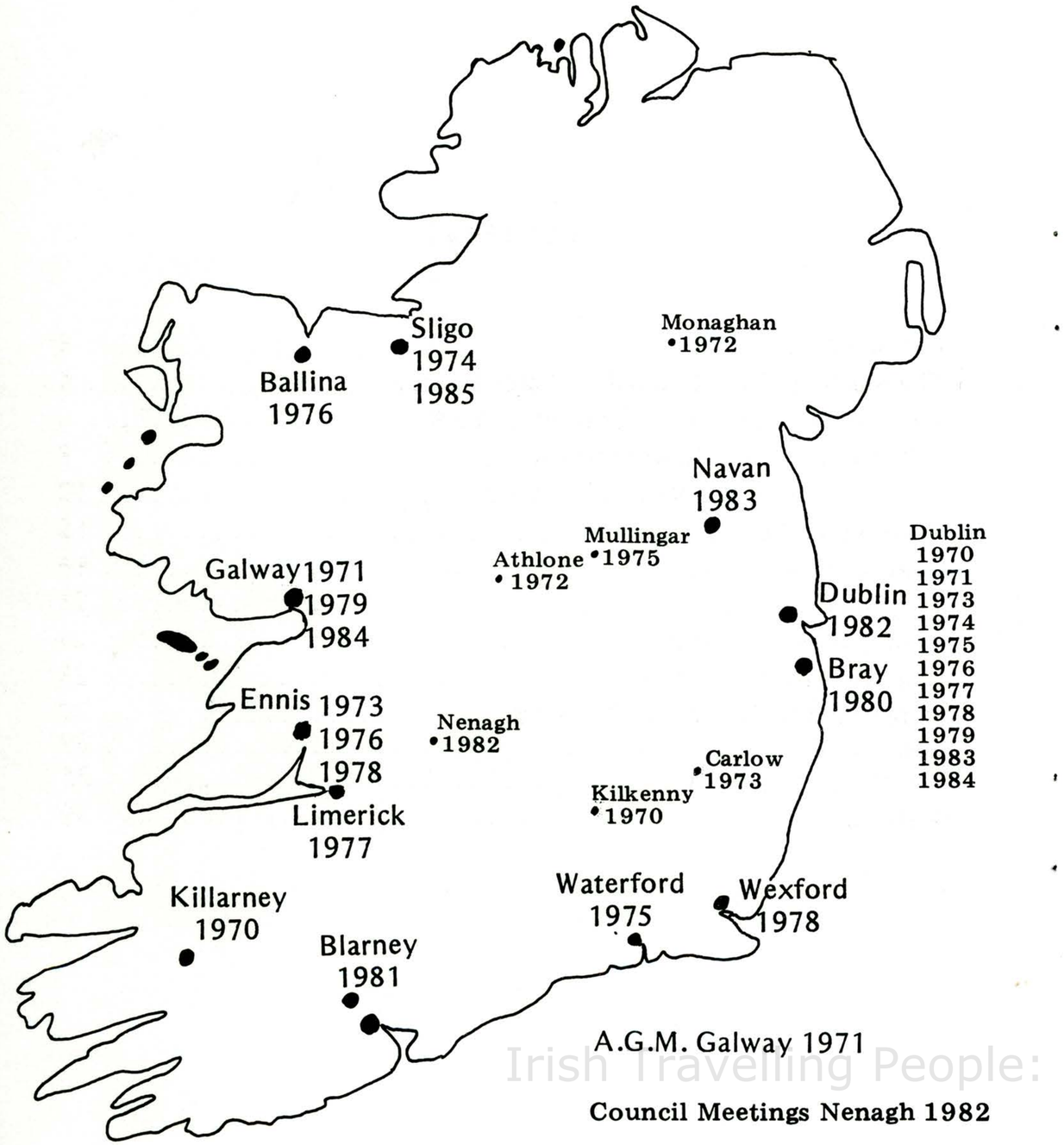
1969-1985

A Short History

by

Hawley Keane
Ennis Committee for the Travelling People

National Council for Travelling People
Conference and Council Meetings
1970 – 1985



A.G.M. Galway 1971

Council Meetings Nenagh 1982

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TRAINING CENTRES



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POSTSCRIPT

In these few pages it has only been possible to mention briefly the work of the National Council, with little reference to the many voluntary committee members, the teachers and the social workers who have carried out the work. It must be remembered, however, that in 60 local committees, in pre-schools, primary schools, special classes, training centres etc., there are hundreds of dedicated members who have given years of devoted service to the cause of the travellers. All of this expertise and involvement, channelled through the National Council and its affiliated associations, A.T.T.P. and N.A.T.C., over the years since 1969, has resulted in solid progress in so many different ways.

This view, however, is not shared by all who are involved in traveller welfare. A small group, of recent origin and unconnected with the National Council, now claims that it should be the only voice speaking for travellers. It purports to be an all-travellers group and, for some reason, sees fit to depreciate the work of the National Council. Its spokesman maintains that all traveller support groups should work through his organisation and not through the Council which, he says, is dominated by settled people.

Such assertions scarcely deserve serious consideration as they show a complete unawareness of what has been happening throughout the country, with respect to traveller accommodation, education, health, training etc., since the National Council came into being. And while the Council has, at no time, claimed to represent all Irish travellers, yet it is sufficiently broadly based to be in touch, through its local committees, with a sizeable proportion of them.

The truth is, of course, that there is room for both kinds of organisation — both the all-traveller, and the mixed (settled and traveller) group. Since we are all working for the same objectives, there would seem to be no reason why we should not welcome each others' existance, and support each other's efforts on behalf of traveller welfare. Certainly the National Council would not wish to denigrate, in any way, the efforts now being made by any new traveller support group.

With regard to the criticism which other groups may level at the Council, I don't think it need bother us unduly. Our backs are broad and we are well used to criticism. Even since the sixties, we have grown used to abuse, ridicule and, at times, personal danger. Other people's attitudes have not deflected us from our purpose in the past, and will not do so today.

The strength of the National Council lies in the courage and perseverance of the local committees. Looking back over our history, let us salute those sturdy individuals who "started it all" and refused to give up the struggle. In spite of all our failures, mistakes and shortcomings, there have been many achievements as well. Our track record is not without honour.

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Compiled by Aileen L'Amie, University Of Ulster

THE MONITORING BODY
(The National Committee to monitor the implementation of Government Policy on Travellers)

In September, 1984 the Government set up a Monitoring Body to monitor the implementation of the Review Body Report. The Monitoring Body consists of six representatives of Govt. Depts which deal with the various needs of travellers – Environment, Education, Labour, Health and Social Welfare – and six members of the Executive of the National Council. Mr. Victor Bewley is chairman.

The Body meets monthly, and the Minister for Health, Barry Desmond, attends the meetings whenever he can. At every meeting, the official from each of the Departments is asked for a progress report on matters which he has been asked to look into at the previous meeting. In the first six months of its existence, the Body has addressed itself to:

* The preparation of anti-discrimination legislation.
* The launching of surveys into the health needs of Travellers.
* The setting up by the Health Boards of co-ordinating committees to address the health needs of travellers.
* The preparation of a Health Education Programme for Travellers.
* The setting up of a Resource Centre for Travellers and those who work with them.
* The speeding up of plans for sites and housing schemes for travellers throughout the country.
* Various other matters relative to the general welfare of Travellers.

The members of the Monitoring Body have found a very positive response to their various requests from the Govt. Depts. involved and in particular from the Dept. of Health and Social Welfare and its Minister, Barry Desmond. Members of the National Council at present acting on the Monitoring Body are Victor Bewley, Chairman, Joyce Sholdice, Sr. Colette Dwyer, Mary Donoghue, Mary Moriarty and Michael McDonagh.

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however was not endorsed by the Council, mainly for financial considerations.

At the AGM in Navan in May 1983 Des Curley, chairman of the Legal sub-committee, reported on progress. On 14 December 1983 the Legal sub-committee met with Chief Supt. McGing, Chief Supt. Giblin, and Inspector Sheridan. Some of the points discussed were:

* Generally speaking relations between the Gardai and the Travelling People have been good in the past but there has been a definite decline in recent years.
* Any crime of a Traveller gets high profile.
* Specific examples from different areas of the country were identified where Travellers had received very harsh treatment from the Gardai or from local residents with the knowledge of the Gardai.

It was agreed that Chief Supt. Giblin would be the person to whom the Legal sub-committee should refer any specific complaints in future.

It was agreed that the Barracks referred to would be issued with specific guidelines on proper procedure. The Garda Commission was invited to attend the AGM in Galway in June 1984.

On 12 January 1984 the theme of the National Council Conference held in Carysfort College was "Travellers and the Law". In his address to the Council Des Curley, LLB raised many important issues which are outlined in the 15th Annual Report of the National Council of 10 June 1984. At the Executive meeting on 20 February 1984 the Legal sub-committee proposed the drafting of a charter for the rights of Travelling People.

The AGM, held in Galway in June, 1984, had as its theme – "The Rights of the Irish Travelling People". The meeting was addressed by Prof. Kevin Boyle, Director of Irish Centre for the Study of Human Rights, U.C.G. and Miss Mary Kelly, Solr. and Lecturer UCG on "Rights of Travellers and International Human Rights Standards" and by Senator Mary Robinson, S.C. on "Rights of Travellers in Irish Law". A draft charter for travelling people was presented by Des. Curley, LLB. Following an Open Forum the draft charter was adopted in principle.

"The Charter of Travellers Rights" was adopted formally by the National Council on 11 November 1984. The Charter was developed under the auspices of the Irish Centre for the Study of Human Rights, Faculty of Law, UCG and was prepared by Des Curley, LLB, Mary Kelly, LLB and Kevin Boyle, LLB, BL. The charter will be formally presented to the Government in the near future.

Des Curley, chairman of the Legal sub-committee and member of the National Executive has been the prime mover in bringing the charter to fruition. He is to be highly commended for his dedicated involvement and effort.

FOREWORD

With the publication of the Report of the Government Commission on Itinerancy in 1963, it might have been reasonably supposed that progress would follow. One of its recommendations was that properly equipped camping sites be provided for Travellers. However, any proposal by a Local Authority to implement this was so bitterly opposed that the project was abandoned. Fortunately for the Travellers, there were some people who refused to accept such decisions.

Over the next five years in various parts of the country small groups of concerned people formed committees in an effort to do something positive about the appalling living conditions of the Travelling People. Inevitably, faced with indifference, isolation, lack of expertise and direction, often subjected to personal abuse and even physical violence, some of those originally involved gave up the unequal struggle and opted out.

However, there were some who refused to give up and realised that only through concerted action could success be achieved. On Wednesday, 5th March, 1969 the Irish Council for Itinerant Settlement (later known as the National Council for Travelling People) came into being. From that historic meeting grew a movement that has resulted in highlighting the plight of the Travelling People and has made notable advances towards a satisfactory solution of the problems affecting the Travellers. Most importantly, in recent years, it has recognised that Traveller involvement at all levels is essential and has provided a forum where Travellers and settled people can work together in achieving these common aims.

Since 1969 the National Council has put all its efforts into coping with the ongoing problems of the Travellers while paying scant attention to its own image. The result is that many people have little awareness or appreciation of the vital role played by the National Council since its foundation. Hopefully, this little booklet will go some way towards setting the record straight.

It is good to know that some of the people who have played a major role in the work of the Council are still actively engaged in furthering its aims and have kindly agreed to share their memories and experiences in these pages.

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THE STARTING OF THE COUNCIL

Victor Bewley

The Report of the Government Commission on Itinerancy was published in 1963. Amongst its recommendations were that properly equipped camping sites be provided for Travellers. However, whenever any Local Authority proposed to do so, it was so bitterly opposed that the project was abandoned.

Early in 1965 my brother and I were visting the families camped opposite to Cherry Orchard Hospital in Dublin. There were 43 of them in atrocious conditions, mostly under canvas or in shacks.

We were in a little shack made out of old packing cases. There was a knock on the door and when it was opened Lady Wicklow and Father Tom Fehily (now Monsignor Fehily) came in. Immediately I had a very strong feeling that this was the moment we had been waiting for and that much depended on it.

I said to Lady Wicklow "We came here today to see conditions for ourselves. We feel that a Committee that would have wide public backing is needed to try to win support for the Local Authorities in providing camping sites for Travellers. You know a lot of people, will you form such a Committee?" "You will have to give me time to think it over" she said.

A week later I wrote to Lady Wicklow and asked her if she and Father Fehily would meet me for a cup of coffee to discuss the position. We did so, and continued to meet once a week for several weeks. We then decided to ask a few people to join us, and we formed The Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee. The name was later changed to The Dublin Committee for Travelling People.

Shortly after that, the Committee was offered six acres of land in the Clondalkin area, for a site for Travellers. We offered it to the County Council but there were protests from all sides and the County Council turned down the offer.

The Committee then applied for Planning Permission to develop the site ourselves. We were turned down. We lodged an appeal which was later heard in the Custom House. The hearing took three days and was well reported in the Press.

INCREASING INVOLVEMENT OF TRAVELLERS

It has always been the aim of the National Council to foster increased involvement of the travellers in the work of the Council at every level. With this in mind the Council recommended that three travellers be appointed to the Travelling People Review Body which was established by the Government in January 1981. They were Mrs Nell McDonagh (Navan), Mr. Michael O'Connor (Dublin) and Mr. Tom Sherlock (Galway) other members nominated by the Council were Mr. Victor Bewley, Sr. Colette Dwyer, Monsignor Fehily, Dr. Michael Flynn, Mr. Eric McGrath, Mrs. Joyce Sholdice and Miss Catherine Vaughan. The Review Body Report was completed in February 1983. It is fully accepted that the experience of the traveller members and their involvement in the discussions over a period of two years made an invaluable contribution to the work of the Review Body.

In 1982 Mrs Mary Donoghue was elected Vice-Chairperson of the National Council. In 1983 the three travellers who had served on the Review Body were co-opted onto the Executive of the National Council. At the 1983 AGM Mrs Mary Moriarty was elected to the Executive and in 1984 was elected Vice-Chairperson. Michael McDonagh was elected to the Executive at the 1984 AGM.

When the Monitoring Body was set up in September, 1984 three travellers were appointed — Mrs. Mary Donoghue, Mrs. Mary Moriarty and Mr. Michael McDonagh.

Teaching:—
Travellers are employed as teachers in three or four Training Centres. They are doing excellent work and are employed by the V.E.C.

A traveller is running her own pre-school for travelling children. She is employed by the Department of Education.

Child-Care Assistants:
An increasing number of young traveller women are employed in this capacity in pre-schools and special classes throughout the country.

LEGAL AFFAIRS

In October, 1982 the Ennis Committee had a meeting with Joyce Sholdice and Paul Donovan to discuss the legal position re intimidation and harassment of travellers in their area. They were advised that the matter be put before the National Council for consideration. In their submission of 26 October 1982 the Committee proposed that the National Council retain the services of a solicitor on a full-time basis who would be fully conversant with the culture of the Travelling People, sincerely interested in their basic human and constitutional rights and prepared to act on their behalf. It was suggested that funding of the project should be the function of all committees. The suggestion

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EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME FOR TRAVELLING PEOPLE

While Training Centres were meeting a vital need in providing training for traveller teenagers it became increasingly clear that further steps were necessary to consolidate the progress being made. This resulted in a programme to provide permanent employment for young boys and girls who have completed courses in the Training Centres. The programme is necessary because:

* The discrimination shown to travellers in our society is reflected in their difficulty finding employment
* The alienation felt by travellers within the place of work has frequently forced them to give up their jobs.
* Young travellers with education and training have to revert to unemployment assistance. This causes them disillusionment and frustration. It is also a waste of the resources already used to develop their skills.

A number of Centres have already set up their own employment units, co-ops, or whatever, where the ex-trainees can find employment on completion of training while they look around for work in the open market. The most ambitious of these schemes is St. Kieran's Enterprise Centre on Sandyford Industrial Estate in Dublin, where nine small factories and workshops have been built to provide ultimately in excess of 60 jobs. Employers leasing one of these units have to undertake, and it is written into their leases, that at least fifty per cent of their work force will be travellers. All of the units are now open, and travellers are working happily in them.

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We were later granted permission to provide the site, but the conditions laid down were such that we felt it was not worth while proceeding.

The Press coverage of the hearing of the Appeal meant that the existence of our Committee became known in many different parts of the country by people who might otherwise never have heard of us. This had the result of a number of letters reaching us from groups of people in many different places who were also interested in the Travellers. We therefore invited all those who wrote to us to come to Dublin for a one day meeting to share thoughts and experiences. We repeated this a number of times and then some of the Committees who were feeling very isolated said "Why don't we form a National Committee to unite all". This was done and the first meeting took place on Wednesday 5th March, 1969 at 2.30 p.m. It was decided to call the body "The Irish Council for Itinerant Settlement" later changed to "The National Council for Travelling People". Each County was invited to appoint a representative to the Council. The function of the Council was to share experiences and to co-ordinate the work.

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care of by the Y.E.A. and consequently five new Centres have opened in the last six months (in Letterkenny, Thurles, Tuam, Clondalkin and Finglas) and three more will be opening in the next few months (in Athlone, Ballinasloe and Ballina).

New Guidelines for the operation of Training Centres have been agreed on by the National Association of Training Centres (NATC), AnCO, the Department of Education, and the Youth Employment Agency, and these will hopefully obviate many of the anomalies and frustrations of the past eight years.

To quote from the Chapter on Training from the review Body Report 1983: "It has become clear over the last six years that just as education provides the most important contribution to the future welfare and happiness of traveller children, so the Training Centres offer the most significant opportunity so far conceived to provide for the social, economic and other aspirations of the traveller community. Ultimately they should enhance the prospects and potential of the young travellers who are going to be the parents of the next generation. If this opportunity is not made available to as many as possible, another generation of young travellers is going to assume the responsibilities of parenthood illiterate, innumerate and without any training in the basic skills necessary for employment."

The Training Centres also offer an excellent opportunity to young travellers to develop leadership skills, and already in one Centre an ex-trainee is being prepared by the present Director to take over the direction of the Centre. In other Centres, travellers sit on Management Committees, act as supervisors in the Centres, and in general are given every opportunity to foster those skills which will, before too long, enable them to assume the leadership of their own community.

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A PERSONAL VIEW

I remember it well — the day the penny dropped — sitting comfortably in my car while outside gale-force winds lashed hailstones against the windscreen.

Suddenly down the street came a horse, running full out, pulling a high flat car on which were huddled a man, a woman and four small children. The man was fully occupied trying to control the animal, while the woman, crouched behind him for shelter, held on for dear life to the frightened children. All were soaked to the skin.

Immediately I felt ashamed, ashamed that people were living like this, bereft of the comforts that I took for granted. Of course, I had seen people like this before, sometimes drinking and fighting in the market-places, being hunted out of town — rejected as of no consequence — but it hadn't registered before. Now the message was loud and clear — get involved — do something about it.

When in November 1967 a small group formed a committee we had no clear idea what to do. Firstly, we went out on the roads to get to know the itinerants as they were then called. What we found was frightening. Twenty-one families living on the country lanes around the town, shivering in rain-soaked tents, sleeping on damp straw, infested by rats. And the children — it was appalling — little kids with the very minimum of clothing, scared, hungry and cold and miserably undernourished.

Following our Survey we issued this appeal to the public:

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

People today are becoming more and more conscious of their social responsibility and in many ways are helping to ease the burden of those unfortunates who are not blessed with the goods things of life. Societies like Gorta, St. Vincent de Paul, Meals on Wheels. etc. are doing trojan voluntary work to alleviate the distress. And in so doing are dependent on the good will and assistance of the general public. However, in the midst of all this good work one section of the community has until recently been forgotten.

All over Ireland, and particularly in the vicinity of the larger towns and cities, human beings are living in abject distress, sometimes hungry, always cold and miserable, completely cut off from the amenities which the normal individual takes for granted. These are the untouchables, the leper colonies of Ireland. They are existing in caravans – if they are lucky – otherwise under canvas, without heating, cooking or toilet facilities and are very often not allowed to remain for any appreciable time in any one spot. Their children have none of the little pleasures which are so important in contact with other children of luckier families. In fact, from birth it is a constant struggle for survival. Is it any wonder that they grow up without any of the social graces and very often with a confirmed distrust towards society?

Like most people, you probably feel that human beings should not be living in conditions often worse than many animals and certainly worse than those of domestic pets – that such a state of affairs is un-Christian and unconstitutional; You perhaps say "Why isn't something being done about it." Unfortunately, to date, while most people have a desire to outlaw misery, they are very often not aware of an appropriate method of so doing.

You will be glad to hear that an opportunity now exists in our town and district to wipe out this cancer which is eating into our inner lives and is a terrible reflection on our sense of justice and charity. An association is now in existence, willing to solve the itinerant problem. This can only be done with your good will and assistance. For too long the solution has been left to the State. The answer lies with the individual conscience.

Please think about this seriously and if you would like to help in wiping out this injustice with all its associated evils, please indicate your wishes on the approriate section of the attached form.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Cumann Duiseachta na h-Inse
March 1968.

The response wasn't exciting so we decided to hold a public meeting. We had heard that in Dublin there was a man who had some experience in dealing with the problem. Shortly afterwards, Victor Bewley came down. His talk, supplemented by his slides, was a great success and helped to win support for our efforts. He advised us on how to proceed and left us with renewed hope and determination. Over the following months, we built up a collection of slides on the local situation and

Aims of the Training Centres:

These are very closely allied to the special educational needs of travellers already listed. The Training Centre tries to assure the young travellers that they are fully accepted and acceptable people; to give them a self-awareness which makes them value and respect themselves; and to build up their lack of self-confidence by developing their latent talents, which are many and various. The experience of success is a new and precious one to a young traveller, and encouragement works like magic. The Training Centre also aims at helping them to socialise and to learn to relate to others with confidence and trust. The programme of the Training Centres includes religious and moral education, and helps to prepare them for life and marriage and parenthood. If our Training Centres were to turn out skilled workers and craftsmen and women, who were, nevertheless, unable to form relationships, to make good husbands and wives and parents, we would indeed have failed our young trainees. So there are Courses in Child Care, in hygiene, in marriage preparation, in budgeting as well as in cookery, dress-making, craft-work, woodwork, metalwork, welding etc.

In recent years the number of Training Centres has increased dramatically. As of now, April 1985, there are 25 Training Centres in operation and two more are scheduled to open in September of this year. There have been some difficulties down through the years but many of these have been ironed out as Sr. Colette points out in the following extracts from her "Fourth Triennial Report, 1984 (pp. 8-9)

Training Centres

"The twelve Training Centres on which I reported in 1984 have now increased to 23, and are catering for nearly 500 young travellers between the ages of 15 and 25. In 1983, following the recommendations of the Review Body report, the Youth Employment Agency became very involved with the Training Centres, and this has been much to their advantage, as the Y.E.A. has a clear understanding of the flexibilities which have to be allowed in the operation of these very special Training Centres. The funding for the payment of the trainees' allowances, and the training grants continues to come through AnCO, and the Department of Education, through the V.E.C., continues to pay teachers and the cost of overheads and educational materials.

One big obstacle to the setting up of badly needed Centres has been overcome with the advent of the Youth Employment Agency, as hitherto it has been almost impossible to get suitable premises for new Centres, as there was no one to pay the rent. This has now been taken

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5. They need to be given the tools of learning — literacy and numeracy. Nearly all the young people in our Training Centres have come to us illiterate and innumerate.

6. They need to be prepared for life — for marriage.

7. They need religious and moral education — for most of them religious education ended after a hasty preparation for the Sacraments.

8. They need to learn skills, trades and crafts if they are ever to be able to earn their own living.

9. They need to be prepared for employment, not only by the acquiring of skills and trades, but by learning punctuality, regularity, reliability etc.

10. Most of all they need the education which will free them to make their own choices about their own futures.

What has been done so far to meet these needs?

The Survey completed by me in January of this year shows 3278 children and teenagers receiving education on a regular basis. 250 children between the ages of 3 and 5 are in special pre-school classes provided by the Dept. of Education or the Dept. of Social Welfare. 740 children are in special classes provided by the Department of Education. 2128 children are attending National Schools regularly. 160 teenagers (out of a possible 2500) are in our existing Training Centres.

The special needs of these children are caused by the enormity of their social and cultural deprivation. The lack of elementary training in their earliest years has led to the necessity for establishing the pre-schools. The instability of their home lives which causes erratic school attendance in so many cases is being compensated for in the special classes. And now we are trying to solve the problem of preparing them for life and for employment by the provision of Training Centres.

But we must never forget that there are still over 50% of travelling children and well over two thousand teenagers who are getting no help at all.

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gave slide-shows to schools and various bodies. Some years later when the going was getting rough and opposition building up in certain areas Victor came down with Fr. Tom Fehily to face a large angry gathering in the Community Centre. His gentle but firm approach had a calming effect on most of the crowd and what had threatened to be a very rough meeting turned out to be quite a useful exercise.

There were times when our small committee felt quite alone and isolated. After affiliation to the National Council we found that this feeling always disappeared when we went to the Annual AGM's. Ideas were shared, different approaches thrashed out, problems were analysed. One came away from the AGM feeling recharged — ready to carry on and try new ways.

Without the National Council it is unlikely that any real progress would have been made. Every year it provided a forum where we could listen to experts in different fields, take part in workshops where committee members from all over the country shared problems and ideas. We heard how difficulties were being met in other places. The feeling of isolation vanished. We were part of a strong vibrant force.

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EARLY DAYS WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

The inaugural meeting of the Council took place in Dublin on 5th June, 1969. Over the next three years Council meetings were held twice yearly in Dublin, Kilkenny, Monaghan and Athlone. AGMs were held in Killarney, Galway and Cork. By the end of 1972 it was apparent that there was not enough information available regarding number of travelling families, accommodation needs, local committees, attitudes of local authorities etc. There was obviously great need to research all aspects of the situation and co-ordinate the work at national level. At the end of 1972 Joyce Sholdice was appointed as National Co-ordinator for settlement.

The Post of National Co-Ordinator 1973-1981

It is difficult to assess the contribution Joyce Sholdice has made to the work of settlement over a period of eight years. Starting from scratch at the beginning of 1973, by the end of the year she had visited travelling families, local committees and Local Authorities all over the Republic and had even made a quick survey of the situation in Northern Ireland, visiting travellers, committees and individual voluntary workers, but not Local Authorities. Her report published at the end of that year — "Progress Report on the Settlement of Itinerant Families in Ireland during the Last Five Years" — is a mine of information and gives a fascinating picture of the situation as it then was. The years that followed are a monument of achievement to a dedicated worker on behalf of the Travelling People.

In 1981 Joyce Sholdice was succeeded by Mrs Margaret Curley of Boyle, Co. Roscommon, a Social Worker and member of Boyle Committee for Travellers.

The Post of National Co-Ordinator 1974-1981

I worked as National Co-ordinator for Settlement for the National Council for eight years. For six years previously, I had been Secretary of our own local Galway Committee, and for several years a member of the National Executive.

After my husband died in 1971, I was thinking of returning to my old job as a teacher; but when, in the winter of 1972, I heard that the

In January, 1979 a five-day Seminar : "The Travelling People — Why Training Centres?" was held in Ennis for teachers in the Training Centres. This was also attended by senior AnCO managers, V.E.C., C.E.O.'s and senior officials of the Dept. of Education. In his address, the then Minister for the Environment, Mr. Sylvester Barrett, said:

> "TRIAL has advanced the itinerants' cause, not only because of its effect on the travelling community itself, but also in its impact on the settled community in the Ennis area. This type of centre helps the itinerant trainees to become self-reliant responsible people."

He added that the establishment of training centres is a necessary part of the process of helping itinerant teenagers to avail of the opportunities offered by society and to contribute in return to the good of society.

Sr. Colette read a paper at the seminar on:

WHY SPECIAL TRAINING CENTRES FOR TRAVELLERS?

Educational Needs of Travelling People

In order to answer the question which is the theme of our Seminar, I would like to suggest that travellers have the following special educational needs, which necessitate the provision of special educational facilities:

1. Acceptance by the settled community — they have suffered from rejection and isolation for so long that they need to be assured that they are accepted. In special classes or Training Centres, this can be done.

2. They need to grow in self-awareness and self-confidence. They are almost totally lacking in this, and in need of maximum encouragement and appreciation.

3. They need to be helped to socialise and to form relationships — with one another first, and then with the members of the settled community represented in school and Training Centre by teachers and voluntary helpers.

4. They need compensatory education — even at two years of age they are deprived, partly because of the size of their families — with a child coming almost annually, travelling mothers just do not have time, apart from anything else, to teach their children to play, let alone to speak.

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of Roscommon, P.R.O. and Sr. Brid Carty, Loughrea, Treasurer. The purpose of the first meeting was for groups to get together, discuss major and minor problems both on a local and National scale and by doing this possibly avoid some of the growing pains experienced by established centres e.g. T.R.I.A.L. in Ennis and St. Kieran's in Bray, Co. Wicklow. At this first Meeting it was decided that our aim should be to gather as much information as we could from each relevant area so that we could prepare a strong case which we would then present to AnCO, The Department of Labour and the Department of Education and possibly the Department of Justice. Hence the need for the 20 year projection plan. It is hoped that both the Association and the Training Centres will be recognised officially by these Departments.

It is generally felt that this type of recognition is essential. Many areas which would like to open a training centre feel discouraged from doing so due to somewhat insurmountable problems. The main problem experienced by all areas is the frustrating search for suitable sites and premises e.g. Sligo are in the unfortunate position that they have purchased a prefab building and have no site to put it on. Even when suitable sites and premises are available, the owners are reluctant either to sell them or let them. This reluctance is often based on ignorance of the situation and fear of the unknown. If the training centres were recognised nationally, we therefore feel that much of the preliminary work could be avoided. At least people might know a little about the work etc.

Since the initiation of the Association we have had three successful meetings. Many important topics have been discussed and ironed out.

Two of these deserve a mention:

(a) All areas are experiencing problems employing the under 16yr olds. There is a dilemma between the school leaving age of 15 yrs. and the required minimum AnCo age of 16 years. It has been expressed during discussion that this is a very important year during any teenager's life, and a year can make or break a character. However, this matter is being taken up at the moment and we hope to reach a satisfactory solution in the near future.

(b) We all feel that co-operation between all the training centres is essential both on the administrative side i.e. the ironing out of common problems during discussion, and on the practical side i.e. the display sale and promotion of one another's products. It is generally felt that the training courses should complement one another rather than work completely in isolation. This can be done quite easily through the National Association."

then Chairman of the National Council, Fr. Tom Fehily, and Secretary Victor Bewley had decided to create the new post of National Co-ordinator, I decided that this would be just the kind of job I would love. I applied and was interviewed by Fr. Tom Fehily, George Bowles and Judge Brian Walsh, and to my delight, I was successful.

When I started work that January of 1983 I don't think I really had a very clear idea of what my duties were. I had been told that I was to travel all over the country and bring back information on the various counties; I was to find out how many traveller families – housed or unhoused – there were in each county; how many committees or individuals were interested or working with them. I was to identify the needs in each area, meet the travellers, committees and local authorities – sometimes the clergy and the gardai – and to build up a filing system of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of relevant contacts. I was to establish lines of communication between these contacts and the National Council. I was to give advice, only when asked!

I remember my feelings of panic when I set out on my first trip that January morning. I had one page of contacts for the whole country, and no contact at all for that first county I chose to visit. There were no committees and no social workers. So for that, and often for others, I had to rely on knocking on doors, at garda barracks, presbyteries and roadside caravans, to give me the information I needed. I was not always welcomed, but usually people were helpful and pleasant.

Needless to say, things became easier as the months went by, and travellers, committees and social workers became my friends. My greatest challenge lay in trying to gain access to, and acceptance by, the Local Authorities. I knew that I had no official status, and that County Managers or other Local Authority officials were under no obligation whatever to see me, let alone discuss the Travellers' situation in their area with me. Their attitude towards me in those early years varied from the incredulous (at my temerity), to the suspicious, to the downright antagonistic. Elected representatives, of course, had no time for me at all, and I had many's the stormy meeting with them.

During my first eight months of travelling I compiled my "Progress Report on the Settlement of Itinerant Families in Ireland during the last Five Years". In this booklet, I systematically went through each county in turn, noting the number of travelling families – housed and unhoused, in their area, the number of committees and social workers, and their locations. I also stated which Local Authorities were sympathetic and which were not; and the overall statistics for the whole country were set out under headings which are still used in the Local Authority annual counts, when they are taken today.

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This "Progress Report" was widely circulated in 1974, and caused quite a stir – especially among the County Managers in areas where I had stated little or no progress was being made. (One County Manager tried to have me sacked and another abused me angrily when next I called to see him). However, over the years, all this began to change and instead of resenting my interference, Local Authority officials began to have friendly and constructive discussions with me. They often asked and accepted my advice, and would follow up my visit with the required action. Greatest compliment of all, of course, was the cup of coffee provided by the more hospitable of them.

After a short time in the job, I had settled down to a fairly steady routine, which went something like this.

1. Monday Morning – set off to visit one, or possibly two, counties during that week.
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of Roscommon, P.R.O. and Sr. Brid Carty, Loughrea, Treasurer. The purpose of the first meeting was for groups to get together, discuss major and minor problems both on a local and National scale and by doing this possibly avoid some of the growing pains experienced by established centres e.g. T.R.I.A.L. in Ennis and St. Kieran's in Bray, Co. Wicklow. At this first Meeting it was decided that our aim should be to gather as much information as we could from each relevant area so that we could prepare a strong case which we would then present to AnCO, The Department of Labour and the Department of Education and possibly the Department of Justice. Hence the need for the 20 year projection plan. It is hoped that both the Association and the Training Centres will be recognised officially by these Departments.

It is generally felt that this type of recognition is essential. Many areas which would like to open a training centre feel discouraged from doing so due to somewhat insurmountable problems. The main problem experienced by all areas is the frustrating search for suitable sites and premises e.g. Sligo are in the unfortunate position that they have purchased a prefab building and have no site to put it on. Even when suitable sites and premises are available, the owners are reluctant either to sell them or let them. This reluctance is often based on ignorance of the situation and fear of the unknown. If the training centres were recognised nationally, we therefore feel that much of the preliminary work could be avoided. At least people might know a little about the work etc.

Since the initiation of the Association we have had three successful meetings. Many important topics have been discussed and ironed out.

Two of these deserve a mention:

(a) All areas are experiencing problems employing the under 16yr olds. There is a dilemma between the school leaving age of 15 yrs. and the required minimum AnCo age of 16 years. It has been expressed during discussion that this is a very important year during any teenager's life, and a year can make or break a character. However, this matter is being taken up at the moment and we hope to reach a satisfactory solution in the near future.

(b) We all feel that co-operation between all the training centres is essential both on the administrative side i.e. the ironing out of common problems during discussion, and on the practical side i.e. the display sale and promotion of one another's products. It is generally felt that the training courses should complement one another rather than work completely in isolation. This can be done quite easily through the National Association."

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then Chairman of the National Council, Fr. Tom Fehily, and Secretary Victor Bewley had decided to create the new post of National Co-ordinator, I decided that this would be just the kind of job I would love. I applied and was interviewed by Fr. Tom Fehily, George Bowles and Judge Brian Walsh, and to my delight, I was successful.

When I started work that January of 1983 I don't think I really had a very clear idea of what my duties were. I had been told that I was to travel all over the country and bring back information on the various counties; I was to find out how many traveller families — housed or unhoused — there were in each county; how many committees or individuals were interested or working with them. I was to identify the needs in each area, meet the travellers, committees and local authorities — sometimes the clergy and the gardai — and to build up a filing system of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of relevant contacts. I was to establish lines of communication between these contacts and the National Council. I was to give advice, only when asked!

I remember my feelings of panic when I set out on my first trip that January morning. I had one page of contacts for the whole country, and no contact at all for that first county I chose to visit. There were no committees and no social workers. So for that, and often for others, I had to rely on knocking on doors, at garda barracks, presbyteries and roadside caravans, to give me the information I needed. I was not always welcomed, but usually people were helpful and pleasant.

Needless to say, things became easier as the months went by, and travellers, committees and social workers became my friends. My greatest challenge lay in trying to gain access to, and acceptance by, the Local Authorities. I knew that I had no official status, and that County Managers or other Local Authority officials were under no obligation whatever to see me, let alone discuss the Travellers' situation in their area with me. Their attitude towards me in those early years varied from the incredulous (at my temerity), to the suspicious, to the downright antagonistic. Elected representatives, of course, had no time for me at all, and I had many's the stormy meeting with them.

During my first eight months of travelling I compiled my "Progress Report on the Settlement of Itinerant Families in Ireland during the last Five Years". In this booklet, I systematically went through each county in turn, noting the number of travelling families — housed and unhoused, in their area, the number of committees and social workers, and their locations. I also stated which Local Authorities were sympathetic and which were not; and the overall statistics for the whole country were set out under headings which are still used in the Local Authority annual counts, when they are taken today.

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This "Progress Report" was widely circulated in 1974, and caused quite a stir – especially among the County Managers in areas where I had stated little or no progress was being made. (One County Manager tried to have me sacked and another abused me angrily when next I called to see him). However, over the years, all this began to change and instead of resenting my interference, Local Authority officials began to have friendly and constructive discussions with me. They often asked and accepted my advice, and would follow up my visit with the required action. Greatest compliment of all, of course, was the cup of coffee provided by the more hospitable of them.

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share problems, and listen to a good speaker giving them some new input into their thinking about the needs of the children and how best they can help to meet them. Teachers of special classes for traveller children, in particular, can feel very isolated if they do not meet with others engaged in the same work, and the A.T.T.P. has given them an opportunity to break out of their isolation.

The A.T.T.P. is at present working with the Dept. of Education on a Primary School Curriculum for traveller children in special classes. Teachers are anxious that the necessary research and survey work should be done as a preliminary to formalising any curriculum. The tremendous needs of traveller children, of which teachers are acutely aware, in terms of development of self-belief, social and coping skills, survival literacy and numeracy (to mention the most basic) must be met within the context of an appropriate vision which will inspire them to identify with the educational setting provided for them, and to go on as far as they can within it.

Visiting Teachers

To date there are five visiting teachers, working in Dublin, Galway, Cork and Limerick. They work with the families, teachers and social workers in the whole area of traveller education. They co-operate with teachers who have traveller children in their classes, sorting out individual problems, visiting families who are not sending their children to school, notifying the relevant authority of specific needs, helping to provide a homework service where necessary, identifying further needs for educational provision in the area, and in general ensuring the successful attendance at school of as many traveller children in their area as possible.

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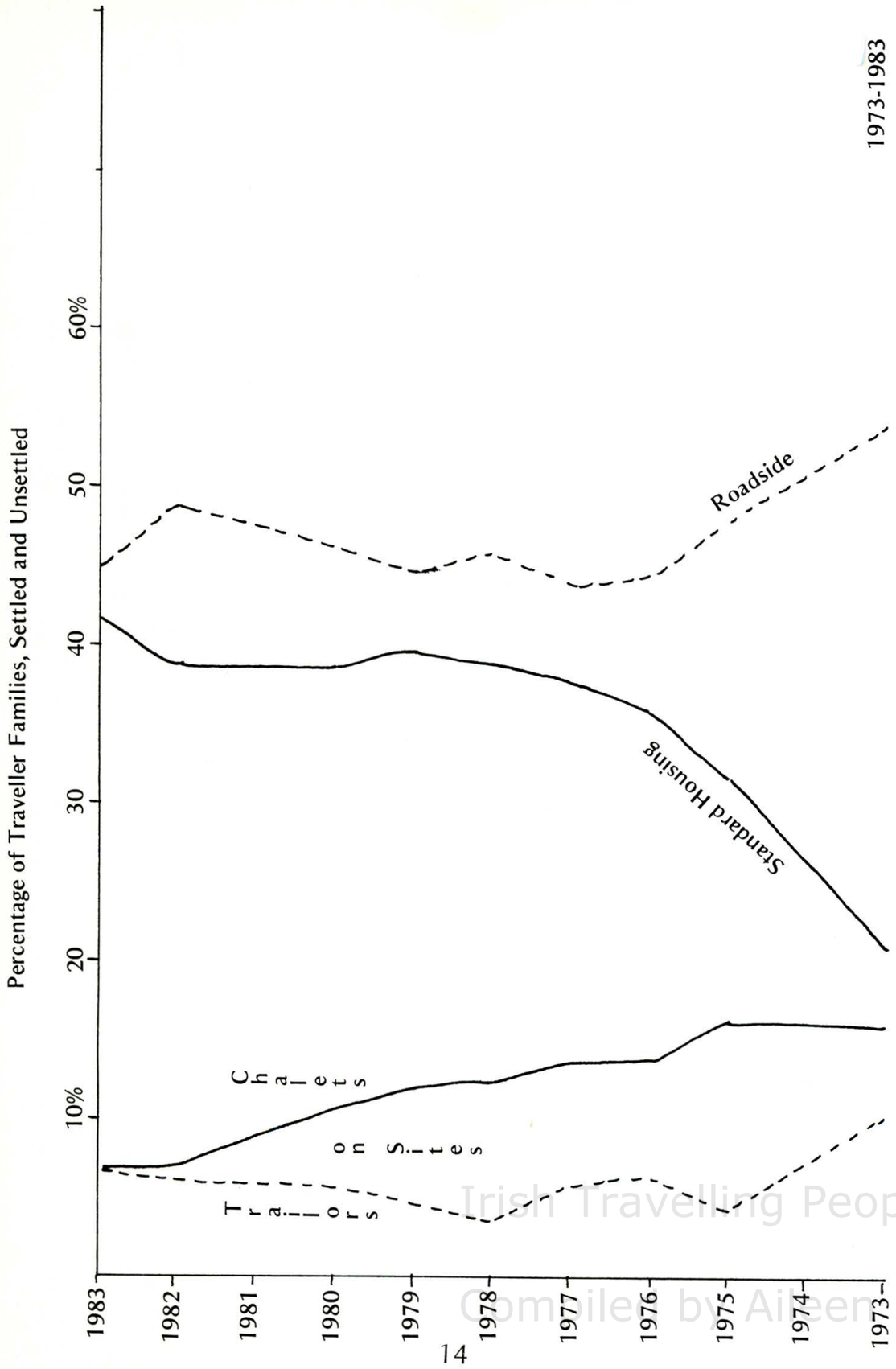
ACCOMMODATION

The position re accommodation still leaves much to be desired. In 1973 there were 788 families on the roadside. By 1983 that number had risen to 1278. In 1983, 302 families were in standard houses. By 1983 the number had risen to 1192. The anomaly is explained by the increase in the number of traveller families from 1466 in 1973, to 2858 by 1983. Percentage wise over the 10 year period families in standard houses increased from 20.6% to 41.7% while road-side families decreased from 53.7% to 44.7% of the total population which had increased by 95%. The various groups show the trend.

A most regrettable feature of housing for travellers is that Local Authorities have not adopted a consistent approach in the matter of allocation of houses. There are still Local Authorities which persist in dealing with the traveller applicants for housing in isolation from the settled population. There is still great need for concerted action on a nationwide basis to provide acceptable fully equipped sites for families awaiting houses, and approved halts, convenient to population centres, for families who still wish to travel. All these matters are receiving the constant attention of the recently formed Monitoring Body (The National Committee to monitor implementation of Government Policy in relation to Travelling People).

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young children out of their sight. So it is always a help to have the pre-school on or near a travellers' site or Group Housing Scheme. This also enables the parents to play an active part in the pre-school experience, and indeed in many cases it has proved a valuable learning experience for them as well as for their children.

Special Classes:
There are well over a hundred special classes for travellers, 47 of them for the under 6 age-group. These classes have been set up in response to demand from parents or teachers who felt the children were not making progress in the large classes of the ordinary National School. A pupil-teacher ratio of 1 to 15 enables the children to get a great deal of individual attention. In many schools where there are special classes the children are part of the ordinary classes, but are withdrawn for extra help by the special teacher.

Junior Training Centres:
The 1983 Review Body Report pointed out that only 10% of traveller children remain on at school at post-primary level, and this is 10% of the 50% who attend school at primary level. There are some 2000 children in the 12-15 age group, and their needs are urgent. Over recent years, the Vocational Education Committees have made considerable efforts to accommodate these children in their ordinary classes, but only very few have stayed long enough to benefit.

In the last two years, two special schools and a number of special classes have been started to provide for these children a curriculum relevant to their needs and a programme of learning skills, practical skills and sport which is sufficiently attractive to make the children want to attend. One of the schools and three of the classes are under the Primary Branch — the rest are all staffed and financed by the V.E.C.

Association of Teachers of the Travelling People
A.T.T.P. was founded in 1972 at the National Council AGM in Cork, and now has a membership of over 300. There are two Seminars a year when the whole Association meets, and Regional Meetings at different times organised by the Regional Representatives. At the Seminars, leading people from the world of Education, child psychology, Dept. of Justice, etc. address the members and there are also Group Meetings for teachers engaged in the various fields of education, pre-school, special classes, junior training centres etc. The teachers find these meetings very beneficial, as they give them the opportunity to exchange views,

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2) Visiting schools, Social Workers, Inspectors — and identifying needs for special facilities of any kind — pre-schools, Special Classes, Special Schools, Junior Training Centres and Training Centres.
3) Working very closely with local committees who are often the people who alert the co-ordinator to special needs in their area.
4) On an official level, dealing with the Dept. of Education, The Vocational Education Authorities, AnCO, the Youth Employment Agency and any other Bodies whose help may be needed in the provision of services
5) Writing Reports on a regular basis.

In the course of her work as National Co-ordinator for Education Sr. Colette has submitted the following reports:—

1975— The Education of Traveller Children
1979— Three Years Later
1981— Seven Years of Progress
1984— Education andTraining for Travellers

These reports should be read and studied in their entirety for a true appreciation of what has been achieved in the sphere of education and training, and what still remains to be done in order that the Travelling People may achieve their full potential.

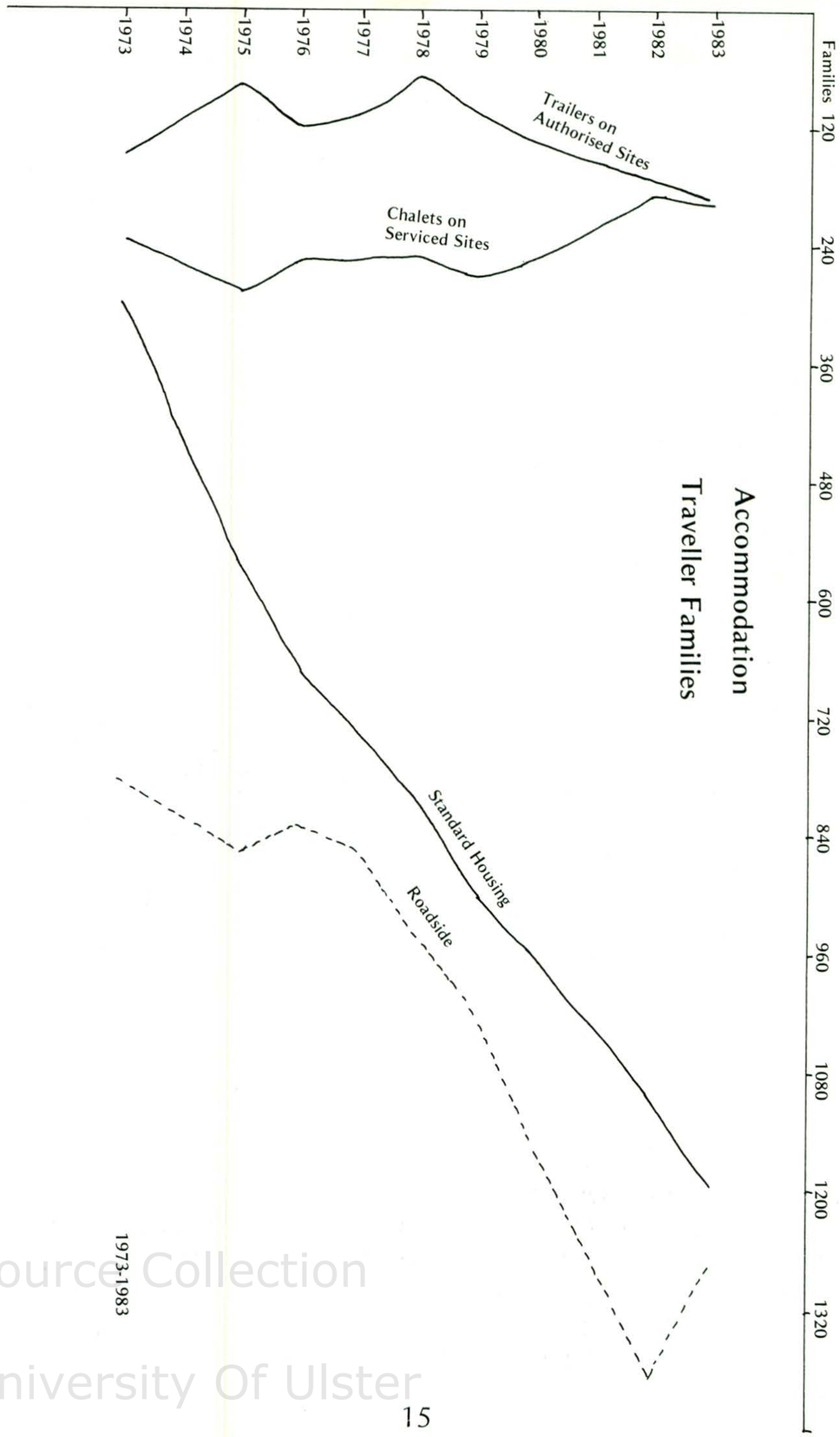
The following extracts from the Reports indicate progress to date:—

Primary Schools

In 1963, there were only 114 traveller children attending school regularly — now there are between 3500 and 4000. However, that represents only just over 50% of the total number of school-age travellers. The number of traveller families has increased from 1198 in 1964 to 2858 in 1983 and we are now talking about between 7000 and 8000 children of school-age.

Pre-Schools:

There are close on 2000 children in the 3-5 age-group and at present fewer than 300 of them are able to attend pre-school. The vast majority of these 2000 children, even if they begin to attend school at junior infant age, remain in need of remedial education for the duration of their school lives, unless they have been prepared for school in a pre-school class. The parents, of course, have a vital role to play in the whole area of pre-school education. In the first place, they have to allow the child to attend. Many traveller mothers are afraid to let such



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EDUCATION FOR TRAVELLERS

In the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy which appeared in August 1963 particular stress was placed on the extreme educational deprivation of the Travelling People. At that time

"(a) Almost all itinerants are completely illiterate (p. 64, para. 1)

(b) From enquiries made by the Department of Education there were in November, 1960, only 160 itinerant children on the school rolls throughout the country, of whom 114 were said to be regular attenders (p. 64, para. 2).

(c) It is clear that almost no itinerant children attend school (p. 64, para 2.)"

Two of the general recommendations were:

"(a) It is urgently necessary, both as a means of providing opportunities for a better way of life and of promoting their absorption into the settled community, to make such arrangements which . . . may be practicable to ensure that as many itinerant children as possible may from now on receive an adequate elementary education (p. 67, para 13)

(b) The progress of the teaching or tuition of these children should be treated as a matter for special concern by the Dept. of Education (p. 67, para 15)"

In 1974 the National Council appointed Sister Colette Dwyer to act as National Co-ordinator for Education, she having been doing this work unofficially for the previous year.

How I Became Involved

One day in September 1967, just a week after my return to Ireland after 30 years working in England in schools of my Order, I found a group of travelling families parked just behind the Holy Child Convent, Killiney, where I was then working. We began to chat, and after a bit I asked them (being appalled at the conditions in which they were living) if there was anything I could do for them. One of the women said to me: "Would you ever be able to teach us to read, Sister?". I told

them that I had been a teacher all my life, and would certainly try to do that, if they would come up to the Convent in the evenings. To my astonishment, that evening a large group of traveller men and women arrived at the Convent door, and we proceeded to the children's dining-room for our first lesson. A few of the community came to help along, and I began by asking the men and women what words they would like to learn to read first. I wanted them all to go away that evening able to recognise one word, even though they would not actually be reading it, so that they would be encouraged by an immediate experience of success. One of the men asked me to tell them what the road-signs said, so we started with STOP — since most of them were driving vans . . . The women didn't drive at that time, so I asked them what they would like, and one of them said they were very 'ashamed' in the Supermarkets at not knowing what was written on the various packets they were buying, and not liking to ask the girl to them. This really brought home to me the terrible deprivation of so many thousand people living on the sides of our roads. The classes continued regularly — parents began to bring their teenagers along — my voluntary teachers increased to 30 to cope with increasing numbers, and the need to teach on a one-to-one basis. Then the little ones began to appear, and I realised that there was no way they could be taught at that hour. I began to look for a premises to start a school, and after many tribulations St. Kieran's School for travelling children was opened in 1968, and has been going strong ever since — with ever-increasing numbers.

In 1973 I began to travel around the country to see what was happening to traveller children in other Counties, and in 1974 I completed the first survey of the educational needs of Ireland's 10,000 travelling children. That year Victor Bewley asked me to be National Co-ordinator for the Education of Travellers, and 2 years later my Order freed me to do the work full-time. It was the best thing that ever happened to me in my life.

Sr. Colette

The main objectives of the work were to identify the educational needs of the Travelling People and to ensure that as many traveller children and young people as possible could avail of educational and training opportunities according to their own needs and aspirations. The work load is onerous in the extreme. It entails:

1) Visiting all 26 counties on a regular basis, getting to know travellers and their needs and seeing families.

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