

# THE LOST GENERATION

## The Undocumented Irish in New York City in the 1980s

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During the 1980s a wave of Irish immigrants hit the United States bringing life to Irish neighborhoods in cities like New York and stirring ethnic loyalties and action among segments of the Irish-American community. The "New" Irish, as they call themselves, are generally between 18 and 30, single, high school educated and "illegal". They enter the United States as tourists or temporary workers and overstay their visas.

Working in construction, waiting tables or caring for children and the elderly, the New Irish, as this study of the New York community will show, live day to day. They do not or can not plan for the future. Dissatisfied with opportunities in Ireland and without legal status in the United States, they are nomads living in a limbo, unable or unwilling to plant roots or make commitments.

In 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). The main features of the law were amnesty for illegal aliens living in the United States prior to January 1, 1982, and regulations against hiring anyone without proper documentation.<sup>1</sup> Its enactment affected the New Irish, directly and indirectly, on a variety of levels. In a direct way, the law restricted the mobility and employment opportunities of the New Irish. It resulted in tighter immigration controls at the airports and its employer sanctions made it more difficult for some of the immigrants to find work. But an amendment to the law also made available 10,000 non-preference visas, known as Donnelly visas, to immigrants from 36 countries, 40 percent of which were won by the Irish.<sup>2</sup>

Indirectly, IRCA brought attention to the New Irish. It prompted Irish and Irish Americans to organize and lobby for immigration reform and provide legal and social service aid to the immigrants. But with the exception of the Irish Immigration Reform Movement (IIRM), founded by New Irish and with a small core of active members, the New Irish did not solicit the support or attention generated by IRCA. They appear to be an unwilling or at best passive constituency. The reluctance may be attributed to their fear and paranoia as illegal aliens and a consequent desire to maintain a low profile, but other evidence suggests an apathy or disenchantment that has its roots in Ireland.

This paper will examine the New York Irish experience of the 1980s using the New York area community as the model. It will explore events in Ireland and the United States through the decade that affected the current status of this latest group of Irish immigrants, in particular the Irish economy and American immigration policy. The paper will profile the New Irish—who they are, how many there are and how they survive. The objective is to present a group of immigrants caught in a present tense existence in which they bounce between a homeland they feel has abandoned them and an adopted land to which they seem resistant to commit. It is a group whose members have the ambition to leave home in search of better jobs, yet are passive in the face of the political and economic forces determining their futures at home and in the United States.

### Push and Pull

The forces pushing young Irish out of Ireland in the 1980s developed in the 1970s. Towards the end of the 1970s Ireland

had the fastest economic growth rate of any EEC member.<sup>3</sup> Mary Corcoran, an Irish born PhD candidate in sociology at Columbia University who has studied the New Irish in New York, describes the period as "heady days."<sup>4</sup> Emigrants who left Ireland in the fifties and sixties returned. The *Irish Echo*, an ethnic newspaper published in New York, reported on November 13, 1982 that more than 100,000 people went home to Ireland during the seventies.<sup>5</sup> Between 1971 and 1979 the country experienced a sustained net inflow of population unknown in any decade since the Republic gained independence in the 1920s.<sup>6</sup>

The generation raised in the seventies was, according to Mary Corcoran, "to symbolize Ireland's coming of age."<sup>7</sup> Sean Minihaue, 25, a New Irish immigrant and founder of the IIRM, said that his generation was to be the one that did not have to emigrate.<sup>8</sup> Since the nineteenth century emigration had always been the expected route for those unable to survive in the Irish economy, particularly those living on farms in the Western counties of the country. In the seventies the Irish government attempted to expand Ireland's economy with the goal of full employment. But the boom was bought on credit—generous subsidies to foreign manufacturers, government borrowing and an expensive social welfare system caught the country short during the worldwide recession of 1979/1980.<sup>9</sup>

Ireland did not respond quickly to correct its fiscal problems.<sup>10</sup> In December 1981 Ireland faced 11 percent unemployment and 23 percent inflation. Prime Minister Garrett FitzGerald called it "an economic and financial crisis more grave than any that this state has previously faced" and predicted a sharp decrease in the nation's living standards. He was preparing the country for the harsh budget cuts that brought his government down two months later in February 1982. It was the second national election held in Ireland in eight months. Both times FitzGerald's Fine Gael party opposed Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail party.<sup>11</sup> John Kelly, writing in the "Dublin Report" column of the *Irish Echo*, said the candidates and public were ignoring the real issues of unemployment, the economy, inflation and the failing infrastructure. He feared his "Alice in Wonderland" country would not awake to these problems.<sup>12</sup> Haughey's party lost the June 1981 election, but beat FitzGerald in February 1982 because the electorate could not bear the austerity measures FitzGerald and his party sought to cure Ireland's ailing economy.

With inflation down to 17 percent and unemployment at 14 percent and rising, the Irish went to the polls again in November 1982. This time FitzGerald's Fine Gael party was put back in power.<sup>13</sup> Fine Gael remained in power for five more years.<sup>14</sup> Ireland's economy did not recover significantly during this time. Unemployment reached 19 percent and by 1986 emigration was estimated to be 25,000 a year.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1986 Census for Ireland the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated a total net migration from the country of 72,000 between 1981 and 1986. This figure is determined by subtracting the net increase in population from the natural increase in population due to births and deaths.<sup>16</sup> It does not indicate the number of emigrants that continued to return to Ireland through the 1980s.<sup>17</sup>

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** This paper is based on research conducted between September 1988 and March 1989. The topic is a fluid one, one that changes week to week depending on the economy and politics in the US, Ireland, as well as Europe and other emigrant destinations. The author has tried to update facts as much as possible to keep the article current. But the story of the New Irish is an ever evolving one, changing with each plane load of new immigrants that lands at JFK and as the present immigrants learn to make their way in America.

(so actual emigration may be higher) and the CSO does not indicate the destination of the emigrants. It is significant to note that the CSO report showed that out migration grew from 1,000 to 14,000 between 1981/1982 and 1982/1983 and reached 28,000 by 1985/1986.<sup>18</sup> The promise of the seventies was not fulfilled and emigration became the reality of the eighties.

The promise of Irish prosperity in the seventies also had its consequences in the United States. Reduced Irish immigration to America in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act which eliminated the national origins system in favor of family reunification. The objective of the law was to balance the system which had been favorable to Europeans and open the door to more Eastern hemisphere immigrants.<sup>19</sup> The close family ties, i.e. immediate family members, the New Irish needed to qualify for a green card in the eighties did not exist because of prosperity at home and return migration in the seventies. Legal immigration to the United States slowed to an average annual rate of about 1,000 between 1981 and 1985, with a low of 902 in 1981,<sup>20</sup> despite the CSO's report of an increase in emigration from Ireland after 1982.

Contrary to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) numbers on legal immigration and recognizing that most Irish emigrants head for Great Britain,<sup>21</sup> there is evidence that thousands of Irish entered the US in the 1980s and remained illegally as a result of Ireland's economic problems. But because the immigrants are undocumented, the numbers available on them are by definition inaccurate. However, several advocacy groups have produced estimates for the current population of New Irish. In 1987, the Consul General of Ireland reported the number of New Irish to be between 26,000 and 32,000.<sup>22</sup> The Migration and Refugee Service division of the United States Catholic Conference estimated the number to be 44,000 in 1988.<sup>23</sup> The IIRM, *Irish Voice* (the newest of two ethnic newspapers published in New York) and the Bishop's Episcopal Commission in Ireland put the figure at 135,000 to 150,000.<sup>24</sup> The latter are the most frequently cited estimates used by the popular media in stories about the New Irish.<sup>25</sup>

As stated previously the New Irish typically enter the United States as tourists or temporary workers and overstay their visas. The numbers the INS collects on overstays are not reliable. But it does have numbers indicating that traffic to the United States from Ireland increased in the past decade. In 1978, 43,000 Irish residents entered the United States as non-immigrants, 34,000 were tourists. Nine years later, in 1987, 105,000 non-immigrants entered, 81,000 listing "pleasure" as their objective.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, fewer travellers left Ireland during its boom economy than when unemployment stood at 19 percent. More dramatic evidence of America's popularity as a destination was reported in the March 2, 1987 issue of *US News and World Report*—in January of 1987 the US Embassy in Dublin received 250,000 requests for visas.<sup>27</sup> It is doubtful that all these visitors and visa applicants were interested solely in a vacation.

Before the 1986 IRCA the New Irish found work easily without a green card, according to interviews with New Irish and others with contacts in the community. Willing to work "under the table" for no medical or health benefits and with no tax obligations, the Irish were hired eagerly by construction crews, restaurants and families needing domestic service.

The popularity of Irish nannies can be traced in the classified pages of the *Irish Echo*. The exercise also supports evidence of the increase in Irish arrivals to America through the 1980s. On January 13, 1981, the *Echo* had just one page of classifieds with two listings seeking childcare and three for domestic agencies.<sup>28</sup> In the December 18, 1982 issue 22 help wanted ads for baby-

sitters appeared in two and a half pages of classifieds, along with six domestic agency ads and four ads for immigration attorneys.<sup>29</sup> Three years later in the October 12, 1985 issue (one year before IRCA was passed) three and half pages of classifieds, with 80 listings seeking childcare including one for a family in Dallas, Texas and another for a family in Chelsea, Vermont, ran. At least twelve boxed ads for domestic agencies were in the same issue.<sup>30</sup> The November 2, 1985 issue contained four and 3/4 pages of classifieds with 14 listings for lawyers, seven of which were identified as immigration specialists.<sup>31</sup> This growth indicates that the *Echo* was recognized as a paper read by immigrants and persons looking for work as child care providers and that either the supply and/or demand for both was increasing. But as the paper's reputation as such spread, it is possible that not all its readers were Irish. For example, one family placed an ad in the *Echo* in 1986 and received more than 100 responses, including one from a Jamaican woman whom then eventually hired.<sup>32</sup> So, while more Irish women were probably seeking nannie positions through the *Echo* it would appear that other women from different ethnic backgrounds were as well.

Salaries for nannies vary. The au pairs interviewed for this paper received from \$125 to \$250 per week for up to two children. Some had access to a car during the day and on some week nights. All had room and board, except telephone bills. Many had outside cleaning jobs as well, receiving about \$40 for a one family house requiring two to four hours of work.

The men typically make more money. One informant said he made up to \$800 per week painting. A survey of 200 New Irish conducted by the *Irish Voice* in November 1987 showed that most men earn \$400 to \$500 per week, and 30 percent earn \$500 to \$750 per week. Seventy-seven percent of the men worked in construction. The women in the survey earned significantly less—40 percent between \$300 and \$400, while 35 percent earned less than \$300. The majority, 54 percent, of the women listed their jobs as child or elderly care.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the good wages, particularly for the men, and the bad economic news from home, few of the New Irish made an effort to obtain a green card prior to 1986. James Farrell\*, former immigrant liaison at the Irish Consulate in New York, said that pre-1986 there was no impetus for the green card. Among other reasons, he said the Irish were fearful of lawyers and did not want to pay the legal fees involved in processing the application.<sup>34</sup> Rates for green card applications at the time ranged from \$1,600 to \$3,000.<sup>35</sup> According to another consulate official, before IRCA the community rumor was that the employer sanction provision in the bill would not go through.

The New Irish were not concerned about the bill's passage. Since most arrived after 1982 and were therefore ineligible for amnesty, many believed the bill would not affect them.

But the lack of interest in a green card also indicates a real ambivalence about staying in America. The waiting period for a green card before IRCA was about 18 months to two years. Application required commitment to a sponsor and the country that the Irish seemed unwilling to make. Even with the absence of restrictions and attorney fees offered by the Donnelly visa lottery, only 22 percent of those surveyed by the *Irish Voice* applied for the visa.<sup>36</sup>

Two years after the introduction of the Donnelly visa, Congress approved the Berman visa. Among the emigrants interviewed for this paper, the Berman generated lukewarm reaction. "I guess it would be a good thing to have," was a typical response. The Berman is a non-preference visa offered as a result of November 1988 legislation and named for Representative Howard Berman (D-CA).

\*Mr. Farrell was transferred back to Dublin in July 1989.

It was offered to citizens in 162 countries. Unlike the Donnelly visa, applicants could apply only once, between March 1 and 31, 1989 and will be selected randomly. Twenty thousand visas will be distributed over two years—10,000 in fiscal 1990, beginning October 1989 and 10,000 in fiscal 1991, beginning October 1990.<sup>37</sup>

Mary Corcoran lived in the New Irish community in Queens in 1987/1988. She found that few in the community considered their future to be in America. Most insisted they wanted to raise their families in Ireland,<sup>38</sup> which may explain their reluctance to apply for a green card. The informants interviewed for this paper consider the green card a convenience, allowing them easier access to and from the country, without the stress of answering INS questions about their intent for entering the United States. But for some it also meant relinquishing a tax free income. To them a green card represented a cut in pay. Mary Corcoran also cites negative attitudes towards taxes among the population she studied. Corcoran observed that "early aversion to excessive taxation [in Ireland] develops into a pattern of tax evasion in the host country." The attitude is fueled, she said, by the "transitory nature of their lives"—most do not know where they will be in five years.<sup>39</sup>

The New Irish ambivalence to America begs larger questions about their goals and their reasons for emigrating. In terms of goals, the immigrants in Mary Corcoran's population, as do those of this paper's and 42 percent of those in the *Irish Voice* survey, entertain the dream of returning to Ireland.<sup>40</sup> But by leaving they forfeit the opportunity to build a foundation for that future at home. Ireland has no absentee ballot so the emigrants lose their voice in government. And by failing to make a commitment to the United States they are abandoning by default the opportunity to build a life in America. Without legal status the New Irish can not participate in the American dream their immigrant predecessors sought to achieve. They can not vote. They could not (until recently)<sup>41</sup> open bank accounts. And it is difficult for them to buy homes or pursue the professional careers for which many are qualified. Ironically, though, the longer the New Irish stay in America the harder it becomes for them to leave. After two or more years they form friendships, sometimes families, build contacts and a lifestyle that they may not want to leave. And, as emigration empties the villages of Ireland, home is not the place it was when the emigrants first left. Returning to Ireland is often not as rewarding as the dream. One young man from Cavan who has been travelling between the two countries since 1985 said:

What's the point [of going home]? It's changed. You go back looking for people and then you realize they're probably living only 100 miles away from you here. You start looking for them. They're in New York, they're in London, they're in Canada. They're all gone.<sup>42</sup>

As illegal aliens the New Irish can never fully participate in American mainstream society. The longer they wait to decide their future the more apparent their isolation becomes and presumably the frustration and disenchantment that propelled them to move in the first place.

In *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*, Kerby Miller described a culture of exile existent among Irish immigrants up to 1921. He argued that the immigrants felt forced out of Ireland, that they were unwilling emigrants and that this attitude contributed to problems and homesickness in America.<sup>43</sup> Observers today blame a poor self image for the Irish willingness to emigrate. In an editorial in *Irish America Magazine* entitled, "Where's the Sunshine," editor Niall O'Dowd wrote of the danger of "the defeatist mentality of Irish people" and compared it to the negative attitude present in the United States during

President Jimmy Carter's era of "national malaise." He described a "pervasive wallowing in paralysis" that had taken control of Ireland.<sup>44</sup>

Animator Don Bluth provides a more disturbing example of Irish self image in the 1980s. Bluth left Disney Studios in the United States and opened Sullivan Bluth animation studios in Dublin, in the process creating 300 jobs. While impressed with the quality of his Irish staff, in an article in the November 8, 1988 *Irish Times* [Dublin], Bluth expressed dismay "at the poor self image many people have here [Ireland] and why it is so many young people assume the natural thing to do is leave." Even for those working at Sullivan Bluth, the article claimed that once the trainees acquired their skill, they assume they should go abroad to pursue ultimate success.<sup>45</sup>

Mary Corcoran's population left Ireland because they "rejected the welfare system" and were stifled in an environment (economic and cultural) that did not support individual "initiative or creativity." She quotes one emigrant who described Ireland as "a cultural strait-

**IMMIGRATING  
U S A**

**A  
GUIDE FOR IRISH  
IMMIGRANTS**

**Project Irish Outreach  
Catholic Charities  
Archdiocese of New York**

Project Irish Outreach was established by Monsignor James J. Murray, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, in 1987 under the leadership of His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York, to meet the specific needs of tens of thousands of young Irish who had recently migrated to the New York area. In 1989 it published this booklet to help answer some of the most frequently asked questions about emigration and living and working in New York.

jacket; people who take the initiative at home are either laughed at or scorned."<sup>46</sup>

Ireland in the 1980s has the youngest population of all EEC countries. Forty-six percent of the people are under 25.<sup>47</sup> Beginning in the early part of the decade the economy could not provide the jobs for which young people leaving high school and college were seeking or trained to fill. One young man with skills as an electrical engineer said, "They're [Irish government] educating the population to emigrate."

Taxes in Ireland rose through the decade on personal income and consumer goods. One young man who left Ireland in 1985 claimed that he was taxed at a rate of 72.5 percent, with a tax free allowance of 96 pounds. His weekly gross income was 140 pounds. The first 96 pounds was untaxed, but the remainder, including any overtime, was taxed at 72.5 percent. His regular net take home pay was 104 pounds. Twenty hours of overtime netted him an additional 27 pounds.<sup>49</sup>

On February 27, 1983, the *New York Times* reported that value added tax (VAT) on luxury items was increased from 30 to 35 percent and from 18 to 33 percent on essentials. The increase sent many shoppers into Northern Ireland for bargains. A gallon of gas cost \$3.02 versus \$2.27 across the border, televisions in Dublin cost \$540 versus \$310 in Newry, Northern Ireland, and liquor was 50 percent higher in the Republic than in Northern Ireland.<sup>50</sup>

The New Irish are part of a generation raised on the expectations of expanding industrialization and participation in the EEC only to graduate and enter an economy saddled with debt and what they perceived as limited opportunity.

Some in the emigrant population seem to feel betrayed or ignored by the government. When asked who's to blame for the current emigration problem, 59 percent of the undocumented surveyed by the *Irish Voice* accused past and present Irish governments.<sup>51</sup> JJ Sexton of the Economic and Social Research Institute of Ireland claimed that in the 1984-1985 Census period emigration acted as a safety valve, allowing the government to claim stabilized unemployment when in fact job seekers went abroad to find work.<sup>52</sup> And prior to 1986 the New Irish in America apparently received little support from their national embassies. Monsignor James J. Murray, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, recalled an interview on US television in which the Irish Consul General in New York during the FitzGerald administration, James Flavin, said that those who were currently coming to New York came of their own free will and knew what they were doing. The Dublin government's stand-offish attitude at the time appeared to Monsignor Murray to have filtered down to the consulate staff.<sup>53</sup>

The scenario is complicated by the generation's "world" awareness and sophistication. Previous emigrant generations did not have the exposure to television and technology that seventies and eighties youth have had. International communication has literally carried America, as well as the rest of the world, into Irish living rooms, contributing to the restlessness and dissatisfaction of many New Irish. The lure of jobs and money abroad is more than they can resist. But like the immigrants in Miller's study, the New Irish also feel they are being pushed out of Ireland. In the 1980s the prods are high taxes, poor jobs and career opportunities, and a cultural and economic environment that does not encourage ambition.

### The New Irish—Who Are They?

The New Irish are young and educated. The majority are believed to be under 30 years old<sup>54</sup> and most probably have at least a high school education. According to Sexton's study almost twice

as many high school graduates as university graduates emigrated upon finishing school from 1980 through 1986. He found that the number of university graduates who gained employment in Ireland fell from 84 percent in 1980 to 64 percent in 1986. In the same period unemployment among the group rose from 7½ percent to 19 percent, and those emigrating to find work rose from less than 9 percent to over 17 percent. Among high school graduates the rate of employment fell from 87.5 percent in 1980 to 62.5 percent in 1986. Unemployment figures for this group peaked at 39.2 percent in 1986. By 1986 the number of those emigrating to find work increased to 5.7 percent from a low of 1.1 percent in 1982.<sup>55</sup>

But even these numbers do not accurately reflect the New Irish in America. Sexton also reported that high school graduates typically wait a few years before leaving. They are, after all, younger and perhaps less mature than their university counterparts and therefore less likely to move to another country upon finishing school.<sup>56</sup> It should also be repeated that the United States is not the first destination of choice for Irish emigrants. The majority go to Great Britain.

In its Population and Labour Force Projection Report, the CSO predicted continued net migration through 2021, with estimates as high as 35,000 between 1986 and 1991.\* The group with the highest projected numbers of migrants was the 20-24 year old age group.<sup>57</sup> This is consistent with the present population of New Irish, most of whom are believed to be in their twenties.

Padraig Yeates, a columnist with the *Irish Times* who wrote a series of articles about the New Irish in America, said in a November 1988 interview that "we export our social problems to Great Britain and our success stories to the United States."<sup>58</sup> He felt that it takes much more planning for an emigrant to leave Ireland for the United States than for Britain. The emigrant needs money for the ticket abroad, as well as the financial base on which to live until he finds work. The emigrant must also have at least the promise of employment or contacts or relatives in the United States that will lead to a job. In comparison, emigrating to England is not that big a commitment or risk. It is close, it is familiar and there are no passport restrictions. If things do not work out it is easy to get back home. The Irish, he said, are also automatically eligible for public assistance including housing and health insurance when they enter Great Britain. According to Yeates, the emigrants to England probably have lower levels of skill, education and ambition than those in America.

The New Irish are a very insular community. The informants for this paper have few American friends. They find American ignorance of Ireland insulting. Often they're asked if their homes have running water or electricity. Or if the farm houses still use outhouses.<sup>59</sup> The *Irish Voice* survey indicated that 80 percent of the respondents knew mostly illegals in this country and 60 percent knew mostly Irish.<sup>60</sup> As undocumented aliens, the New Irish are reluctant to move beyond their own immediate circle for fear of being discovered or reported to the INS. One young woman went with friends to see the Phil Donahue Show, but she insisted on sitting in the rear of the audience so that Donahue would not call on her. She worried throughout the show that she would be noticed and turned in.

The New Irish often begin their networks at home. The emigrants interviewed arrived with pre-arranged jobs or a contact that could find them work. One young woman from Northern Ireland responded to a placement agency's ad in her local newspaper.<sup>61</sup> Another woman answered a classified ad from a family in New Jersey. She contacted the family. They corresponded, her prospective employer talked to the woman's mother by phone and she boarded a plane to New York.<sup>62</sup> Another young woman's job was

arranged by a hometown friend. She met her employer for the first time when she got off the plane at JFK. All she had was a picture the man's wife had sent her. As she climbed in the man's car, she realized, "It could have been anyone. I just got in the car. I hated the job the minute I got in the car. . . . I went to bed that night and cried. I was in a complete stranger's house. I didn't know anybody. . . . I was just numb."<sup>63</sup>

Contact with other young Irish is very important for emigrants especially the new ones. Typically they meet in local pubs in Queens, the Bronx or the suburbs. The contact extends their social network but also keeps them up to date on job opportunities, news from home and information about INS and legislative activity that could affect them. One young woman said that when she first arrived in the United States in 1985, she lived in a New Jersey suburb working as a live-in nanny and met regularly with other au pairs in a local bar. "The first thing we talked about was 'how much money do you make?'"<sup>64</sup> Sharing the information gave the young women the information and confidence they needed to negotiate with their employers or change jobs. Nannies, particularly the live-ins, are easy targets for exploitation. One young woman lived with a family one year and a half and was unhappy. She had been giving her employer money every week to pay for an immigration lawyer. When she resigned her position and asked for her money, the woman denied having ever received it.<sup>65</sup>

Those Irish not working as live-ins share apartments with other New Irish in Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn and the suburbs.

One of the biggest fears the illegals face and indeed one of the risks of working illegally is illness or injury. Most of the New Irish have no insurance and no resources to pay the doctor or hospital fees that can accumulate rapidly in an emergency. The emigrants come from a country where every citizen received free medical and dental care, so the high fees are a shock. In some instances the New Irish are eligible for Medicaid and John Cardinal O'Connor has instructed all New York Archdiocesan hospitals to treat the New Irish regardless of their status.<sup>66</sup> Mayor Koch also announced in an October 15, 1985 memo that all city services including health and medical facilities were open to all undocumented aliens.<sup>67</sup>

But the New Irish are afraid of exposure. Often what happens in the case of illness or accident is that the friends of the victim organize a fundraiser, dance or simple collection to help pay the bills. It is not unusual to see an ad in the *Voice* or a poster in the bar at Gaelic Park in the Bronx for a benefit dance.

As mentioned previously, the bar is a common meeting ground for the New Irish. The *Voice* and *Echo* are filled with ads for bars in Queens, the Bronx, New Jersey and Long Island that cater to the young emigrants. The bars serve an important social function, but also represent a place where jobs can be found and pay checks cashed. Because the New Irish are undocumented it has been difficult for them to open checking or savings accounts. Some of the au pairs give money to their employers to bank for them, others send money home to be deposited in banks there.

The bars also serve as tangible links to home. Some carry Irish sporting events live on satellite television. Gibbons Point Still in Woodside is packed on Sunday nights because all the local Irish papers are delivered there directly from Kennedy Airport each week.

But for all its popularity, the bar scene can be a limiting and unhealthy outlet for the New Irish. Excessive drinking is reportedly a problem, perhaps due to the longer business hours (pubs

close at 11 p.m. in Ireland) and the emigrants' extra cash. But according to the *New Irish*, few other options are available.

The Gaelic Athletic Association sponsors Irish sporting events at Gaelic Park in the Bronx, but the season only lasts from April to October. Attendance and the number of participating teams has grown since the seventies, when emigration was at its lowest. The games draw Irish from all age groups—young singles and families. Before the presence of so many New Irish in New York, Terry Connaughton, GAA president, said the teams used to recruit athletes from Ireland with the promise of work. While that is no longer the case, the park is still recognized as a place where young men looking for work can make contacts.<sup>68</sup>

In an effort to expand their social and recreational outlets, some of the New Irish in parishes such as St. John's and St. Brendan's in the Bronx have created youth groups. The groups are still fairly new but have met with some success. Activities have included a ski trip, a dance at Gaelic Park which attracted 500 guests and weekly sports nights at the parish halls where the New Irish play basketball or volley ball.<sup>69</sup>

Although many complain of homesickness, communication between America and Ireland is so easy that the emigrants say they often know what's going on at home before their family does and vice versa. In addition to the newspapers and the continuing flow of new arrivals from Ireland, economical phone rates between the United States and Ireland make it possible to keep in fairly frequent contact with friends and family. In 1982 a five minute phone call over New York Bell lines cost a minimum of \$4.29.<sup>70</sup> By 1989 a five minute call made over ATandT International lines was down to \$3.88 during economy hours.<sup>71</sup> ATandT reported that in 1988, 5.1 million calls were made to Ireland, an increase of 3.4 million since 1982. This does not include Sprint or MCI overseas calls.<sup>72</sup>

But for all its convenience, the improved technology of the last 20 or 30 years—communication as well as transportation<sup>73</sup>—may complicate or perhaps contribute to the New Irish ambivalence towards America. The regular contact with Ireland and the relatively short travel time between the two countries make home a not so distant reality for the New Irish. Combined with their out-of-status position in American society, these easy links may inhibit the assimilation that might otherwise occur and enable the New Irish to decide between committing to the United States as legal immigrants or returning home.

Kerby Miller discussed the homesickness of post-Famine emigrants calling it a "consequence and a contributing cause" of difficulties faced abroad.<sup>74</sup> Miller attributed the poor post-Famine adjustment to America to the emigrants' "unpreparedness for urban-industrial society."<sup>75</sup> Today emigrants do not face the same magnitude of culture shock as earlier emigrant populations. They complain about city living and the lack of fresh air and grass, but most function and adapt to city living.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, however, the technology that probably prepared them or at least introduced them to American society may be keeping them at arm's length from total commitment to it.

### The New Irish and Irish Americans

The relationship between the New Irish and the Irish-American population is complex. According to the 1980 Census about 40 million Americans claim Irish ancestry.<sup>77</sup> In cities like New York, Boston and Chicago the Irish are a familiar ethnic group, well represented in politics, the Roman Catholic Church and business. The Irish presence and heritage in these cities have surely contributed to the acceptance of the new emigrants within the communities and neighborhoods where they have settled.

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<sup>63</sup>In the 12 months prior to April 1989, 46,000 people left Ireland, that is 14,000 more than the previous year and the highest in the decade according to the CSO. *Irish Voice*, 9 September 1989, p. 3.



## THE LOST GENERATION (Continued from page 29)

However, in New York at least, a tenseness exists between the new emigrants and some members of the Irish-American community.<sup>78</sup> Among the fifties emigrants the New Irish are considered by some to be arrogant and pushy. The young emigrants are criticized for not attending the county association meetings, of being ashamed of their culture and showing political apathy. A letter to the editor in the September 1987 issue of *Irish America Magazine* lamented the poor behavior of recent emigrants who abused the hospitality of Irish Americans and documented Irish immigrants.<sup>79</sup> Two months later another reader shared a similar story about cousins from Ireland who ran up phone bills, watched television instead of going to job interviews arranged by the family and were finally "deported" by their hosts. "... I thought that our family had been the only ones duped by the young Irish lads and lassies," the second reader confessed.<sup>80</sup> One young woman who emigrated from County Cavan in the early eighties and works as a waitress in New York, said in an interview that she would not help any more people from home. She said:

If you don't find them jobs for \$400 a week they think you haven't done anything. It's possible to do well in America but you have to work for it.<sup>81</sup>

An officer of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) said that many members of the fraternal organization do not understand why the New Irish can not 'pull themselves up by the bootstraps' and make it like they did. When Princess Diana of Great Britain visited New York in February 1989 an Irish American wrote to the *Voice* complaining of the absence of the New Irish at a demonstration protesting the Princess' visit:

Are they so selfish and uncaring as to not be concerned about British oppression and terror in the six counties? ... The young Irish of today are complacent and apathetic, both in Ireland and when they emigrate here. Why should I, an American, be concerned about their plight and their status, when they will not take a few hours of their time to demonstrate in support of their brothers and sisters in the six counties? Why should I care about them and about Ireland, when they seem not to care themselves?"

An officer of the Gaelic Athletic Association, a fifties emigrant, said there's definitely "a difference there," (between the two groups) but he could not be more specific.

On March 10, 1989, the Irish-American Business Coalition hosted a reception in honor of Rep. Brian Donnelly at the South Street Seaport in New York. An open invitation was extended to all Donnelly visa recipients to attend the party and thank the Congressman.<sup>83</sup> Few New Irish responded to the invitation. The IIRM was represented by Don Martin, an Irish-American, who is political coordinator for the group.<sup>84</sup> The sponsors of the event were disappointed. The \$75 admission price may have kept some emigrants away, but as one IABC member pointed out, the price was far less than the legal fees accrued in the normal visa application process.

Some of these conflicts are generational, typified by the 'why can't they do it like I did it' criticism. Others are cultural. The New Irish are different from older immigrants. They are probably better educated and more sophisticated or worldly than their predecessors upon entering America. In that respect, they may expect more and be content with less. They certainly seem to have been raised to expect more, professionally and financially, than previous generations. But the real difference is status. The New Irish are "illegal," which

prevents them from participating in America's "formal" economy and enjoying its opportunities as did earlier immigrants. Their experience in America, therefore, is different, and their behavior reflects it. They depend on other undocumented Irish and have learned to survive outside mainstream society.

The tension among the Irish may also be related to perspective. An editorial by Patricia Harty in *Irish America Magazine* complained of the disadvantages suffered by the New Irish as a result of American immigration policy. She urged reform, citing America's heritage as a land of immigrant dreamers, and asked that today's immigrant Irish not be ignored.

It's time to look to the present, [to young Irish immigrants taking menial jobs] because they don't have a piece of paper that measures two inches across. ... And they don't have the right to dream.<sup>85</sup>

A reader responded to the editorial with the argument that the presence of Irish "illegals" in America is Ireland's problem, not the United States'.

I think that sometimes the second or third generation Irish have more feeling for Ireland than native Irish. She didn't once mention the real reason why so many Irish have to emigrate—the English. ... Why can't [the New Irish] pool their knowledge and build up Ireland instead of the US? If things keep going the way they are, it won't be long before there is no Ireland.<sup>86</sup>

The exchange points out basic disparities between the priorities of the New Irish and those of some Irish Americans. Between 1980 and 1986 the issues of emigration, the undocumented Irish and immigration reform received little if any coverage in the *Irish Echo*, the major ethnic newspaper in New York at the time. Events in Northern Ireland dominated the headlines. The *Echo* still covers the "North" closely, but since IRCA the immigration debate and events related to the New Irish have shared the front pages. The change is due in part to the introduction of the *Irish Voice* in December 1987. Both papers now compete for the New Irish reader. The *Voice* aggressively supports the New Irish. It has strongly pursued the editorial promise of its premier issue to be "forthright in its attempts to win for the estimated 135,000 Irish illegals, their proper places as full members of this society."<sup>87</sup>

Significantly, the New Irish are not as concerned with events in Northern Ireland as some Irish Americans seem to be. Their primary interest is the Irish economy and their ability to get good paying jobs. Fr. Martin Keveny, an Irish priest living among the New Irish in the Bronx as part of the Irish Outreach project, said people in Ireland are also more preoccupied by the economy. When Cardinal O'Connor was greeted and praised in the Republic of Ireland for his "mission of peace" trip in July 1988, according to Fr. Keveny, the Irish people honored the Cardinal for his concern and efforts on behalf of the young Irish emigrants living in New York. Irish Americans praised the trip for the attention it brought to the problems in Northern Ireland.<sup>88</sup>

Consider the response to the letter criticizing the absence of New Irish protest to Princess Diana's visit:

The majority of young immigrants came here to work, not to become political activists. We were forced to emigrate because the Irish government failed to provide jobs.<sup>89</sup> Stone [the critic] might think it some golden rule that once here [United States] we [New Irish] are all obliged to turn into raving Provos [supporters of the Irish Republican Army].<sup>90</sup>

Though they share the same ancestral heritage, the New Irish are in many ways foreign to the established Irish-American com-

munity in New York. But in 1986, IRCA mobilized segments of the New Irish and Irish-American population and brought them together on the issue of immigration reform. Yet while working towards a common goal, the two groups still clashed, often following parallel, rather than intersecting, paths.

### The Response to IRCA

Within the Irish community among the first to respond to the impact of IRCA were the New Irish themselves. In 1987 at a meeting of the County Cork Association the issue of immigration reform was raised and a committee appointed to investigate just what the national immigration committee of the AOH was doing. The committee included May O'Driscoll, who later became the first woman president of the Cork Association, Pat Hurley and Sean Minihane, both New Irish immigrants, and Father Matthew Fitzgerald, a parish priest on Long Island. Dissatisfied with what was happening (or not happening) they created Irish Immigration Reform Movement (IIRM). The first meeting was held on May 20, 1987. Six committees cover crucial areas of concern at each meeting—the New Irish Action Group, the Irish American Action Group, the Irish Government Action Group, the Fundraising Action Group, the Public Relations Action Group and the National Report. The movement grew nationally and now claims more than seventeen chapters across the country and about 4-5,000 members. Membership fee is ten dollars annually. The New York group meets monthly, at various locations in Queens, the Bronx and Brooklyn.<sup>91</sup>

The two most vocal and visible representatives of the group are Sean Minihane, national chairperson and Pat Hurley, chair of the Irish Government Action Group. These men, both in their mid-twenties, have been very effective in gaining national attention for the plight of the New Irish. The strategy of the group has been to bring the New Irish out of the "shadows," despite the risk of exposing their undocumented status. It reasoned that without a vote in the US and with no political voice in Ireland the New Irish could do very little about their situation by remaining silent. The IIRM appeal therefore to those with power—the Irish American voter and Congress.

IIRM style and conduct have met with criticism from the Irish-American community who charge that the group is too brash and aggressive and should strive more for the politics of coalition. Critics suggest that it antagonizes other ethnic groups, as well as established Irish American groups, and Irish and US government leaders, and would do better to join forces with them, rather than alienate them.<sup>92</sup> In its 1988 list of superlatives, the *Irish Voice* called the IIRM the best and worst group of the year.<sup>93</sup>

After just two years, the group has met with representatives of the Irish government, won approval for grants totalling \$89,000 from the city and state of New York, sent Pat Hurley to speak at the AOH convention in Cleveland in July of 1988, hired a Washington lobbyist to press for immigration reform on behalf of the New Irish, testified at the September 1988 House subcommittee hearings on immigration reform, sent a delegation to Washington to personally meet with members of the immigration subcommittees in both Houses to press their case during the September hearings, appeared in national media such as *The New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek* and *Irish America Magazine*, and marched in the 1989 St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York.<sup>94</sup> The New York chapter also operates a hotline every Tuesday and Thursday night from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. from its Woodside office to counsel and advise the New Irish. Every month its members receive an agenda for the next meeting as well as news

releases and updates on immigration bills and issues of importance to the emigrant community. For example, the March 1989 mailing included an application for the Berman visa with instructions for completing and mailing the form properly.

The IIRM has been very successful in a very short period of time. Part of that success has been its access to established power bases in New York. It is part of the Irish Immigration Working Committee which is an informal group that meets at the Irish Consulate to exchange information and review problems. The other members of the group include representatives from Catholic Charities, the Irish American Business Coalition, the Irish American Labor Coalition and the AOH. The IIRM representatives have direct contact with the leaders of the city's major community, business and religious institutions, many of whom claim Irish ancestry. They have been able to articulate the problems of the New Irish dramatically enough to create interest and action. Their appeal is an emotional one, stressing not only the hardships faced by the New Irish but the heritage of the Irish in this country. An IIRM press release states:

The Irish people have made a significant contribution to the development of this great nation. The IIRM seeks to obtain legal status for today's immigrants so that they may continue the Irish contribution.



In his written testimony before the House subcommittee on immigration on September 19, 1988, Don Martin of the IIRM, played on the representatives' patriotism to press for immigration reform on behalf of the Irish. Referring to the fact that the average annual immigration from Ireland since 1965 has been about 800 per year, he said:

That number is less by 120 the number of Irishmen who died storming Marye's Heights in Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862, in defense of this union.<sup>95</sup>

Apparently the approach has merit. Gerry Quinn, founder of the Irish American Business Coalition (IABC), said his impetus for creating the coalition was a feeling that some white collar professionals were feeling somewhat removed from their ancestry, but were nonetheless interested in Irish American causes. He felt immigration was an issue people like himself could embrace.<sup>96</sup> Msgr. James Murray, himself the son of Irish born parents, said his efforts on behalf of the New Irish were in part a "payback" to the Irish for what they have contributed to the country.<sup>97</sup>

The 'problem' with the IIRM may be their impatience to get things done and their inexperience in American politics. The January 30, 1988 issue of the *Voice* reported on a rather stormy session the IIRM held with Irish Junior Minister Frank Fahey in the United States on a fact finding mission regarding the conditions of the Irish "illegals." The IIRM was upset at the Irish government's rejection of a proposal for \$500,000<sup>98</sup> to fund and staff an office in New York to attend to the needs of the undocumented, despite its financial support for an emigrant center in London. Apparently members of the IIRM were critical of Fahey to the Irish press. Fahey claimed the criticisms were not true, and that the group's approach could backfire in its efforts to pass legislation. The same article referred to remarks made by Rep. Brian Donnelly on the methods of the IIRM.<sup>99</sup> Ironically he is the legislator responsible for the 1986 visa package that was ultimately so favorable to the Irish.

The quick and easy success of the IIRM has given its leaders confidence. They perhaps have felt they don't need anyone to tell them what to do. As newcomers to the American political and legislative system, they have made a strong impact on the immigration debate in Congress. Some may perceive their attitude as cocky, but keeping quiet accomplished nothing for them. Perhaps age and visibility will mellow the group.

As of October 1, 1989, a full-time paid staff member was appointed thanks to the money provided by the city and state. A fund-raising ball held October 20, 1989 attracted 600 guests.<sup>100</sup> The IIRM recognizes that it must continue working with and nurturing its ties with the Irish-American community, as well as its outreach to the New Irish, to complete the mission of its founders successfully. It has gained the attention and respect of the establishment. Its challenge is to maintain its enthusiasm and exploit the political contacts and experience it has earned to achieve its goals.

One of the major goals of the IIRM has been immigration reform, specifically amnesty for the Irish undocumented presently in the country and an increase in the number of non-preference visas made available to Ireland each year<sup>101</sup>. Despite intensive lobbying efforts by the IIRM and a number of other Irish American and Irish government sources, no major reform legislation was passed by the 100th Congress which closed in October 1988. However a visa bill, guided by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Alan Simpson (R-WY), and Representatives Donnelly and Peter Rodino (D-NY), was passed which extended the Donnelly visa program for another two years and made available an additional 30,000 visas. Only those who applied for the visas in January 1987 were eligible. The *Voice* estimated that 9,000 Irish were among the first 15,000 on the list for the extension. The bill also provided for the 20,000 Berman visas detailed earlier in this paper for those countries that did not qualify for 25 percent of the annual quota of preference visas.<sup>102</sup>

According to Gerry Quinn, founder of the IABC, the Irish government was very active in the effort to pass legislation in 1988 through its embassy in Washington. Indeed, since 1987 the Irish government has been more responsive to the needs of the New Irish community, generally through its consulate offices. This is due in no small part to the change in government in February 1987 and the election of Charles Haughey as Taoiseach. Haughey has very strong ties in the United States and to the Catholic Church in New York, which will be discussed later in this paper.

On September 24, 1987, Deputy Prime Minister Brian Lenihan appointed James Farrell as New Immigrant Liaison Officer for the New York office,<sup>103</sup> a new post. Farrell had been assigned to New York in 1985 as the liaison with the Irish-American community.<sup>104</sup>

In the new post he dealt exclusively with the problems of the New Irish. He kept in close touch with the Irish community. He regularly attended IIRM meetings, was seen on Sunday afternoons at Gaelic Park, and appeared at Irish functions and gatherings throughout the city. Consul hours were extended to include three hours on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to improve community access. Farrell, in his thirties, was well suited for the new position. He had been in New York a number of years so was familiar with city life and was young enough that he could relate to the experiences and problems that pushed the New Irish out of Ireland. He was well respected in the Irish community and maintained his ties with the Irish American leadership in the city via the Immigration Working Committee.

The Irish Immigration Working Committee in New York is a very significant networking body. It brings together representatives of the New Irish and established Irish American community. Gerry Quinn's group joined the Committee in the Spring of 1988.

The IABC is about two years old and has a small membership drawn from professionals in the securities industry and business world. Quinn, an attorney with the Securities Industry Association, lives in Woodside and comes in contact with the New Irish on a daily basis. IABC contacts in Washington keep the coalition informed of action on immigration legislation and the position of legislators who are critical to its passage. That information is passed on to the Working Committee in an effort to gather information that will sway or reinforce the position of key lawmakers.<sup>105</sup>

The Irish American Labor Coalition joined the Committee at its creation. It is also known under its original name, the American Labor Committee for Human Rights in Northern Ireland. The group organized in the early eighties in response to the MacBride Principles campaign<sup>106</sup> and at the height of the hunger strike protests in Northern Ireland.<sup>107</sup> The committee is a network of about 100 people representing longshoremen, the AFL-CIO, the teamsters and other unions that meets formally about four or five times a year. It is represented on the Working Committee by Joe Jamison of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) who was appointed by the late John Lawe, international president of the TWU, to provide a viewpoint for labor on Irish immigration efforts.<sup>108</sup>

The AOH is represented by Jack Irwin, national chairperson of the AOH immigration committee. Irwin has been active on the immigration issue. In October 1988 he addressed the IIRM at the Towerview Ballroom in Queens. He read to them the resolution unanimously adopted at the AOH national convention in July 1988:

... We, the AOH, will actively pursue and assist the Irish Immigration Reform Movement in pursuing immigration reform which would lead to an independent immigrant visa category and to corrective legislation which would legalize the undocumented Irish and which would correct the injustices of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

The AOH has strengthened its position on immigration reform since the 1984 convention resolution calling for "fair and equitable immigration from all countries in Europe."<sup>109</sup> This change may have begun in 1986 when newly elected national president Nick Murphy appointed himself chairman of the immigration committee to draw attention to the problems of the undocumented.<sup>110</sup>

On a local level the various divisions and county organizations are responsible for their own activity regarding the New Irish and immigration reform. The Bronx County organization sponsors a counseling session for the New Irish one night a week at the Bedford Shamrock Club. Attorneys are present to advise on matters





Men active in the IIRM include (left to right) Sean Minihane, Sean Benson, Patrick Hurley, and John Dillon. [New York Times/Vic DeLucia photo, March 1988]

related to status and visa application procedures.<sup>111</sup> In the summer of 1988 the division presidents of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey each received a form letter to be distributed to the membership, encouraging members to write to their local legislators to vote for the Legal Immigration Amendments of 1988. The letter included an outline for the suggested correspondence, and was signed by the national president Mike Coogan and Jack Irwin.

Perhaps the most visible force on behalf of the New Irish in New York City has been the Catholic Church, specifically the Archdiocese of New York. Headed by Cardinal O'Connor, it includes the boroughs of Manhattan, Staten Island and the Bronx, as well as seven counties north of the city. The Diocese of Brooklyn oversees Brooklyn and Queens.

The Church works with the New Irish primarily through its Catholic Charities organization. The executive director, Msgr. James Murray, said its Project Irish Outreach was created in response to IRCA. According to Msgr. Murray,<sup>112</sup> in February 1987 following the IRCA enactment, he met with Adrian Flannelly, a popular Irish American radio personality, and James Hallisey, a New York attorney with close ties to Charles Haughey in Ireland. They were worried about the Irish who would fall through the cracks in the new legislation—those not eligible for amnesty and those who would not receive Donnelly visas. Hallisey learned from his sources in Ireland that Haughey, preparing for a national election, wanted the Church in New York to make a statement about the Irish immigrants in the wake of the legislation. On February 12, Msgr. Murray issued a statement in New York claiming that the Church would do everything it could for those who qualified for amnesty and the new visas, as well as others otherwise disadvantaged by their status.

Haughey went on to win the election and Msgr. Murray drafted a proposal for an outreach program that would cater directly to the social service needs of the New Irish, including the assignment of at least two Irish priests to live in the New Irish community. The proposal, dated August 1987, was actually completed in

May/June of 1987. PSAs introducing Project Irish Outreach aired in July 1987 on the Adrian Flannelly Show. Murray travelled to Ireland with Hallisey in late June/early July and met with Prime Minister Haughey's representatives to see what could be done for the New Irish by the Irish government. He also met with representatives of the Bishop's Episcopal Commission to discuss the possibility of assigning Irish priests to work among the New Irish in New York and the presentation of such a proposal to the annual Bishops meeting in Maynooth in November.

The monsignor returned to Ireland in September to meet once more with the Bishops Commission and with Charles Haughey. Later that month during a visit to New York, Deputy Prime Minister Brian Lenihan announced the creation of the special liaison office and the Immigration Working Committee in New York. It was also in September that Project Irish Outreach officially opened its doors at the Catholic Charities headquarters on First Avenue in Manhattan. It was and is directed by Trish O'Callaghan, a native Irish woman and former producer for the Adrian Flannelly Show, and is staffed by a social worker from Ireland named Clare Barnwell and a secretary.<sup>113</sup> The Project is primarily a counselling and referral service for the New Irish who call or visit its offices. According to Ms. O'Callaghan, 59 percent of the calls received in 1988 were related to legal problems, 18 percent to medical problems, 13 percent to employment and 10 percent to a variety of other issues such as homelessness or daycare. The calls were split pretty evenly between men and women.<sup>114</sup>

Monsignor Murray travelled again to Ireland in October to meet with some individual bishops and members of religious communities that might recommend candidates for chaplains. He also met again with Prime Minister Haughey. In November the Bishops Commission met with Msgr. Murray in Maynooth and voted to send at least two priests to New York. In February 1988 the first chaplain arrived. Three priests and one nun are currently living among the Irish in the Bronx. Both the Newark and Boston Archdioceses have reviewed the New York outreach program for consideration in their parishes. On March 2 Bishop Francis Mugavero

of Brooklyn announced the creation of an Irish Apostolate Office in St. Teresa's parish, Woodside, Queens. It will be under the direction of the Diocese's Catholic Migration and Refugee Office and will deal specifically with the needs of the New Irish in Brooklyn and Queens.<sup>115</sup>

Among the other services the chaplains perform, they are a reminder of home for the New Irish. Typically the chaplains make contact with the New Irish where they gather—in bars, at Gaelic Park, at church, in their apartments. According to one of the chaplains, the New Irish do not initiate contact. Usually it is the clergy who seek out the New Irish. For example, they visit apartment buildings in their neighborhoods and ask where the New Irish are living. Then they greet the emigrants in their apartments at the end of the workday. The chaplains' goal is as much friendship as ministry—to reassure the New Irish that the Church has not abandoned them.<sup>116</sup>

During the Berman application period, the chaplains were among the leaders organizing the effort to encourage and assist the Irish applying for the Berman visa. Parish centers were open and photographers and typewriters made available for the applicants.<sup>117</sup> Schedules for the parish and other processing centers, as well as sample applications, appeared in both ethnic papers.<sup>118</sup>

The Irish-American response to IRCA seemed to be generated by ethnic obligation and loyalty as much as concern for the New Irish. With the exception of the IIRM and Catholic Charities, the other groups discussed have little contact or interaction with the New Irish population. The interest created by the emigrants does not stem from just personal compassion for their welfare. The New Irish are not after all, destitute, diseased or indigent. They are disadvantaged, as are other immigrant groups, by the 1965 immigration law. They do not need charity, they need green cards. What they seem to inspire is a sense of ethnic pride and action among Irish Americans whose ethnic identity may not be as weak as some historians have suggested.<sup>119</sup> These Irish Americans, often second or third generation, have the power and leadership positions in the public and private sector to be effective advocates for the New Irish.

Dr. Maureen Murphy, dean of students at Hofstra University and member of the American Conference for Irish Studies, was discussing the New Irish situation with other Irish Americans (including former New York Governor Hugh Carey) at a dinner party in the Fall of 1987. As a result of the conversation she formulated a program to encourage and advise New Irish to seek higher education. She has discussed her program at a meeting of the IIRM and in the *Irish Voice*.<sup>120</sup> She represents those Irish-Americans who use their professional influence and capability to act on their own ethnic interests and awareness.

Perhaps the Irish-American response to the undocumented Irish is the reaction of successful, assimilated second and third generation ethnics comfortable with their Americanism who want to know and do more about their heritage. Timothy Meagher discusses this behavior among Irish Americans in Worcester in the late 1800s in "Irish All the Time: Ethnic Consciousness Among the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880-1905."<sup>121</sup> For those, like Gerry Quinn, involved in the New Irish issue, the immigrants may be filling a void that would have otherwise been filled by traditional fraternal organizations at another point in time.

## Conclusion

People are waiting all the time to see if [the Irish economy] gets better.<sup>122</sup>

The New Irish are playing a waiting game. They are stalled between what they remember romantically as the friendly, peaceful lifestyle of their youth in Ireland and the opportunity, money and personal independence available in the United States. Unwilling

or prevented from committing to either, they choose to live day to day, allowing the passage of time and the actions of others to determine their futures for them.

Are they the spoiled children of a pampering Irish society, unwilling to make the hard financial sacrifices needed to restore Ireland's economic health? Or are they the victims of a failed fiscal policy, whose political leaders would rather ignore them? While the evidence suggests that the New Irish resent paying taxes, most enter the United States looking for work, having rejected life on the dole in Ireland. If they are victims at all, the seducers are the communication and transportation systems which make it easy for the New Irish to keep close to home.

Maybe the emigrants are the pioneers of an international labor force—the forerunners of global commuters who work part of the year in America and live the rest of the time in Ireland, not unlike the migrant farm workers who cross the Mexican border each year to harvest American crops. But for the present the New Irish are trapped by their transience. They are building no future for themselves. They live in a limbo unable to satisfy their ambitions in Ireland and without the status to really exploit the opportunities presented for their skills and education in the United States.

The undocumented status of the New Irish acts as a barrier between the emigrants and full integration in American society. It not only stifles job mobility and growth, it inhibits the development of personal contacts and relationships outside the undocumented population. Fear of exposure prevents the New Irish from being as candid or friendly as they otherwise might be. That paranoia makes them more dependent on each other, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of isolation.

As a result, the New Irish do not seem to have integrated well with Irish Americans or documented Irish immigrants. Status aside, real differences in ideology, politics and culture are apparent between the new emigrants and the established Irish American community. The limited intercourse between the two groups does little towards the understanding or resolution of the differences.

In spite of this friction, the presence of the New Irish has been a catalyst for renewed ethnicity, stirring healthy but dormant identities and interests among segments of the Irish American population. After the passage of IRCA in 1986 Irish American leaders in the public and private sector mobilized to aid the New Irish with legal, health, social and educational services, as well as immigration reform. But the response was often as much a reaction to the Irish American's own ethnic identity as it was to the perceived needs of the New Irish. In some ways this promotes the parallel existence of the two groups because the ultimate goals of the work satisfy both groups regardless of the motivation of either.

Looking ahead, the Irish economy is showing signs of recovery,<sup>123</sup> how long it lasts and how strong the revival remains to be seen. In 1992 Ireland joins the rest of the European community in the United States of Europe experiment. What impact that will have on the Irish economy or its emigration patterns is uncertain.

In the United States the non-preference visas won by the Irish in the Donnelly and Berman lotteries over the next two years could represent the seed population the Irish need to satisfy the family reunification system of present immigration policy. Hearings in the 101st Congress, now in session, may result in an expanded visa policy. The reform could be favorable for the Irish, particularly if eligibility requirements for a visa are changed to include English language skills and education.

How will the New Irish respond to the challenges ahead? Will they seize an opportunity to settle down and build a life in America or Ireland or Europe? Or will they maintain their migratory existence as legal alien workers and travel between countries, forever in search of their place in the world?

## The Lost Generation, Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Public Law 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359. *CIS/INDEX Legislative Histories*. January-December 1986. 660.
- <sup>2</sup> *Irish Echo*. 10 January 1987. *Irish Voice*. 5 November 1988. 26. The visas, named for Representative Brian Donnelly (D-MA) who introduced the amendment creating them in the final debate on the bill, were distributed over a two-year period in a first-come, first serve lottery with applicants entering as often as they wished. The visas were available to 36 nations considered adversely affected by the 1965 Immigration Act. Irish applicants were the main winners, receiving 4,161 of the final 10,000 awarded.
- <sup>3</sup> *New York Times*. 25 December 1981. D1.
- <sup>4</sup> Mary Corcoran. "Ethnic Boundaries and Legal Barriers: The Labor Market Experience of Undocumented Irish Workers in New York City." April 1988. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> *Irish Echo*. 13 November 1982. 1.
- <sup>6</sup> Brendan Walsh. "Emigration: An Economist's Perspective." 14 August 1988. 2.
- <sup>7</sup> Corcoran. 10.
- <sup>8</sup> Sean Minihihane. Phone interview. 27 December 1988.
- <sup>9</sup> Walsh. 3-6.
- <sup>10</sup> Walsh. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> June 1981 and February 1982 elections are covered in the following *New York Times* articles: 25 December 1981. D1. 2 February 1982. 4. 19 February 1982. 7. Op-ed article by Michael Kallenbach, UN correspondent for Irish Radio and TV in Dublin. 17 February 1982. 23.
- <sup>12</sup> *Irish Echo*. 13 June 1981. 2.
- <sup>13</sup> *New York Times*. 26 November 1982. 8.
- <sup>14</sup> Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail party beat FitzGerald in February 1987.
- <sup>15</sup> *New York Times*. 25 January 1987. IV2. *Irish Echo*. 12 April 1986. 3.
- <sup>16</sup> Central Statistics Office. *Ireland Census 86 Summary Population Report*. November 1987. ix.
- <sup>17</sup> Walsh. 7.
- <sup>18</sup> CSO. *Ireland Census 86 Summary Population Report*. ix.
- <sup>19</sup> Congressional Research Office. *US Immigration Law and Policy 1952-1986*. December 1987. 55-57. See also Mary Corcoran's paper.
- <sup>20</sup> Immigration and Naturalization Service. *1987 Statistical Yearbook*. October 1988. 6.
- <sup>21</sup> According to a report published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in Ireland and reported in the *Irish Voice*, 24-31 December 1988, 4. 70 percent of graduates who emigrate go to Britain, 10.1 percent to North America and 9.8 percent to the Continent.
- <sup>22</sup> See "Statistics on Irish Immigration to US" included in the Irish Consulate's press kit on the New Irish. Available from Anne Barrington, press officer, in the New York office.
- <sup>23</sup> Migration and Refugee Services Staff Report, US Catholic Conference "Undocumented Irish in the US." March 1988.
- <sup>24</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. See IIRM press kit for releases citing population figures. Mary Corcoran refers to the Bishop's report in her paper.
- <sup>25</sup> *Newsweek*. 5 October 1987. 35. *New York Times*. 27 November 1988. 52. *US News and World Report*. 2 March 1987. 15.
- <sup>26</sup> INS. *1987 Statistical Yearbook*. 68.
- <sup>27</sup> *US News and World Report*. 2 March 1987. 15.
- <sup>28</sup> *Irish Echo*. 3 January 1981. 25.
- <sup>29</sup> —. 18 December 1982. (pages not noted.)
- <sup>30</sup> —. 12 October 1985. (pages not noted.)
- <sup>31</sup> —. 2 November 1985. 42-46.
- <sup>32</sup> The family who placed the ad is acquainted with the author.
- <sup>33</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. 1.
- <sup>34</sup> James Farrell interview. 28 September 1988.
- <sup>35</sup> Rates based on discussions with New Irish and immigration attorneys.
- <sup>36</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. 1.
- <sup>37</sup> —. 28 January 1989. 15.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with Mary Corcoran. 11 November 1988.
- <sup>39</sup> Corcoran. 11.
- <sup>40</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. 1.
- <sup>41</sup> The February 1, 1989 IIRM newsletter reports that a "full range of checking/savings services are available" through Emigrant Savings Bank branches located throughout New York City and Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties. The services are available to "all Irish immigrants."
- <sup>42</sup> Interview with Ted. 23 March 1989.
- <sup>43</sup> Kerby Miller. *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*. 514.
- <sup>44</sup> *Irish America Magazine*. January 1987. 4. Editor Niall O'Dowd is also the magazine's publisher. He also publishes the *Irish Voice*.
- <sup>45</sup> *Irish Times* [Dublin]. 8 November 1988. 8.
- <sup>46</sup> Corcoran. 12.
- <sup>47</sup> CSO. *Census 86 Summary Population Report*. vii. Note that the Census reported that Ireland's total population has held steady at about 3.5 million from 1981 to 1986.
- <sup>48</sup> Interview with Tim. 23 March 1989.
- <sup>49</sup> Interview with Ted. 23 March 1989. The exchange rate on 30 April 1985 was \$1.01 to the Irish punt (pound). *New York Times*. 1 May 1985. D20.
- <sup>50</sup> *New York Times*. 27 February 1983. (page not noted).
- <sup>51</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. 1.
- <sup>52</sup> JJ Sexton. "Recent Changes in the Irish Population and in the Pattern of Emigration." Autumn 1987. 34.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview with Msgr. James Murray. 27 January 1989.
- <sup>54</sup> This is the age estimate used by sources at the Irish Consulate and the IIRM.
- <sup>55</sup> Sexton. 37.
- <sup>56</sup> —. 38-39.
- <sup>57</sup> CSO. *Population and Labour Force Projections 1991-2021*. April 1988. 16.
- <sup>58</sup> Interview with Pádraig Yeates. 10 and 11 November 1988.
- <sup>59</sup> Interview with Maeve and Margaret. 1 December 1988.
- <sup>60</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. 1.
- <sup>61</sup> Interview with Sheila. 1 February 1989.
- <sup>62</sup> Interview with Margaret. 1 December 1988.
- <sup>63</sup> Interview with Ellen. 12 October 1988.
- <sup>64</sup> Interview with Maura. 26 October 1988.
- <sup>65</sup> Interview with Maeve. 1 December 1988.
- <sup>66</sup> Office of the Health and Hospital Corporation and Legal Services Staff, Community Action for Legal Services, Inc. *If You Can't Pay Your Hospital Bill—Medicaid or HHC's Fee Settlement Program May Be Able To Help You Out*. December 1987. Interview with Msgr. Murray. 27 January 1989.
- <sup>67</sup> Mayor Edward Koch. "City Policy on Undocumented Aliens."
- <sup>68</sup> Interview with Terry Connaughton. March 1989.
- <sup>69</sup> *Irish Echo*. 11 February 1989. 17. Interview with Father Joseph Delaney. March 1989.
- <sup>70</sup> *Irish Echo*. 6 November 1982. (page not noted).
- <sup>71</sup> Based on a call to ATandT International information operator in March 1989.
- <sup>72</sup> *Irish Voice*. 7 January 1989. 1.
- <sup>73</sup> Flight time between New York City and Dublin is about seven hours and flights leave every evening to Ireland.
- <sup>74</sup> Miller. 514.
- <sup>75</sup> —. —.
- <sup>76</sup> Based on interviews with different New Irish, but Sr. Lucia Brady, a chaplain from County Cavan and part of Irish Outreach, was the most articulate about the transition from rural to urban living. She said what she disliked most about New York was not being able to see the sky or the sun as in the country.
- <sup>77</sup> *Irish Voice*. 3 December 1988. 8.
- <sup>78</sup> There are many "categories" of Irish Americans—documented immigrants from the 1950's (and other years), as well as second, third, etc. generation Irish Americans. This paper will not break down the groups so specifically, but will be as accurate as possible identifying Irish-born and American-born ethnics and their respective attitudes.
- <sup>79</sup> Mary, a documented alien, Bronx, New York. Letter. *Irish American Magazine*. September 1987. 7.
- <sup>80</sup> Mary L. Price, Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin. Letter. *Irish America Magazine*. November 1987. 9.
- <sup>81</sup> Interview with Teresa. November 1988.
- <sup>82</sup> Paul Stone, Floral Park, NY. Letter. *Irish Voice*. 18 February 1989. 9.
- <sup>83</sup> *Irish Voice*. 11 March 1989. The invitation was placed as an ad. It was not published after the event. The paper is on the newsstands the week before its publication date.
- <sup>84</sup> Discussions with Sean Benson, the IIRM's new full-time staff person. Weeks 5 and 12 December 1989.
- <sup>85</sup> *Irish America Magazine*. September 1988. 6.
- <sup>86</sup> Jean Downey Leroy, Enfield, Connecticut. Letter. *Irish America Magazine*. November 1988. 7.
- <sup>87</sup> *Irish Voice*. 5 December 1987. 4.
- <sup>88</sup> Interview with Fr. Martin Keveny. 23 March 1989.
- <sup>89</sup> Pádraig Mac GiollaPhadraig, San Francisco. Letter. *Irish Voice*. 11 March 1989. 11.
- <sup>90</sup> Rose Gitzgibbon, Brooklyn, NY. Letter. *Irish Voice*. 11 March 1989. 11.
- <sup>91</sup> This history is taken from interviews with Pat Hurley (15 October 1988) and Sean Minihihane (27 December 1988) and the press materials distributed by the IIRM. See also *Irish America Magazine*. December 1988. 20-23, 36-37. The cover story was about the "illegal aliens" and featured the IIRM.
- <sup>92</sup> This interpretation is based on discussions with members of the IIRM, IABC, Mary Corcoran and others in the Irish community. See also *Irish Voice*. 30 January 1988. 9. 24-31 December 1988. 40-41. *Irish America Magazine*. December 1988. 20-23, 36-37.

(Continued on page 56)

company. My mother doesn't drink, but from her own testimony, she loved to dance. At a house party given by a girl from work, she met Joseph Milkovits, my father. He worked in the tax department of Chase Manhattan Bank, and is of German extraction. They met in January of 1962, and married on October 13, 1962. The new couple moved to Ozone Park, Queens, where my father had lived most of his life, and took an apartment on Linden Blvd. and 96th St. This neighborhood was and still remains predominately Italian in ethnic background. My mother commuted into Manhattan to continue her job until December of 1963 when she became pregnant and quit. With a new arrival on the way, Joseph and Monica purchased their own home on 97th St. and 134th Rd. about three blocks from their old apartment. On June 23, 1964, at 10:17 a.m., Joseph Milkovits was born into this world. My mother didn't continue to work after my birth.

Jim and Leila had their first child one month later, on July 31, 1964, a daughter named Deirdre. One year later, on November 12, 1965, their second daughter, Siobhan was born. Jim and Leila moved from their apartment on 237th St. and Van Cortland Pk. East to a larger home on Avenue U. in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. Jim and some friends from work fixed up this house in two years and sold it for a profit. Jim and his family then moved four blocks away to Avenue P and 86th St. and repeated the process and made \$15,000 total on the two houses. Then Jim invested all he owned in 1971 into a very large older home in the Prospect Park section of Brooklyn. The house was in shabby condition, but in three years, it was sold for a \$135,000 profit. The neighborhood had gone through an urban renewal financed by the City of New York, and Jim had caught the windfall. This

windfall was divided two ways, one, a new house in the Belle Harbor section of Queens, N.Y. was purchased. It is the Lynch family's current residence. Second, Jim and John Perez started their own contracting business, the Zerep Construction Company, headquartered on 8th Ave. and 14th St. to this day.

Monica was a housewife after I was born. In 1970, she became pregnant again. On Jan. 14, 1971, she born twins, named Sean and Philip. It was two years after the birth of the twins that Monica decided to work again. This met with significant resistance from my father, but my mother persevered, and juggled the household work, and her new job at H&R Block Income Tax. She has worked there since 1974, and is now processing supervisor of the entire Queens #3 district.

This is the story of the Lynch family history in America. My family weren't immediate post-Famine Irish, they were relatively late visitors to these shores. The time frame 1910-1915 is usually dealt with in the general history of the Irish-America as one of the growing political clout of Irish-Americans and also the end of negative stereotyping of the Irish by the media. It can be said that these prior immigrants paved the road for my ancestors, and made their American experience much easier. No doubt the absence of runners, steerage, "No Irish Need Apply", and the "Stage Irishman" eased their entry into American culture. Was the early Lynch experience (1910-1920) assimilatory? On the overall, I don't think so. The fact that upon arrival, the Lynchs entered stable Irish American communities, helped to preserve ethnicity. This is not to say America did not influence them, or they didn't do American things. However, they retained such a close link with Ireland that two of the five returned there to stay.

#### Footnotes, (Continued from page 53)

<sup>93</sup> *Irish Voice*. 24-31 December 1988. 40-41.

<sup>94</sup> *Irish America Magazine*. December 1988. 20-23, 36-37. *Newsweek*. 5 October 1987. 35. *The New York Times Magazine*. 20 November 1988. 28, 30-34. Grant information based on discussions with Sean Benson of the IIRM the weeks of 5 and 12 December 1989. Pat Hurley's presentation at the AOH convention was discussed in the 15 October 1988 interview. The testimony and activity in Washington DC during the September 1988 hearings was reviewed and discussed with various members of the Irish community, including Don Martin and IIRM members.

<sup>95</sup> Donald Martin. Written testimony on behalf of the IIRM before House Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law Committee. 16 September 1988. Courtesy Don Martin.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Gerry Quinn. 8 February 1989.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Msgr. Murray. 27 January 1989.

<sup>98</sup> According to an editorial in *Irish Voice*, one of the reasons the IIRM had not been granted its funding proposal was their failure to produce the financial statements and records the government requested. The editorial denies any misdeeds, just questions the general financial "tidiness" and management of the group. 11 February 1989. 14. Note that the *Irish Voice* recently reported the Irish government is expected to give \$100,000 (total) to some immigrant groups in the United States, including the IIRM. 7 October 1989.

<sup>99</sup> *Irish Voice*. 30 January 1988. 9.

<sup>100</sup> The ball and staff information is based on discussions with Sean Benson, 5 and 12 December 1989.

<sup>101</sup> These goals were taken from a fact sheet in an IIRM press package and interviews with Sean Minihane and Pat Hurley.

<sup>102</sup> *Irish Voice*. 29 October 1988. 1 and 23.

<sup>103</sup> —. 15 October 1988. 17.

<sup>104</sup> *Irish Echo*. 5 October 1985. 4.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Gerry Quinn. 8 February 1989.

<sup>106</sup> The MacBride Principles are an effort to ensure fair employment practices in Northern Ireland, particularly regarding the hiring of Catholics.

<sup>107</sup> Jailed members of the IRA in Northern Ireland went on hunger strikes in protest of the problems in Northern Ireland. Several of the strikers died, The most famous being Bobby Sands.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Joe Jamison. 1 February 1989.

<sup>109</sup> At the 1984 national convention of the AOH, Thomas Murray, national chairman of the immigration committee, urged all Americans to support Simpson-Mazzolli, an early version of IRCA. The AOH voted unanimous support for the bill. *Irish Echo*. 4 August 1984. 1.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Nick Murphy. 29 January 1989.

<sup>111</sup> —. —.

<sup>112</sup> The sequence of events between February and the end of 1987 are according to Msgr. Murray including his meetings in Ireland.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Trish O'Callaghan. 31 January 1989 and 2 November 1988.

<sup>114</sup> —. 31 January 1989.

<sup>115</sup> *Irish Echo*. 11 March 1989. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Interviews with Fr. Joe Delaney (March 1989), Sr. Lucia Brady (March 1989), Fr. Martin Keveny (19 October 1988 and 23 March 1989) and Msgr. Murray (27 January 1989).

<sup>117</sup> Interviews with Sr. Lucia Brady (March 1989) and Fr. Martin Keveny (23 March 1989).

<sup>118</sup> *Irish Echo*. 18 February 1989. 5. 11 March 1989. 6 and 7. 18 March 1989. 8. *Irish Voice*. 11 February 1989. 9. 18 February 1989. 5. 4 March 1989. 30. 11 March 1989. 22. 25 February 1989. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "There Are Some of Us Left." *Beyond the Melting Pot*. 1963. 251. Lawrence McCaffrey. *Irish Diaspora in America*. 1976. Both authors discuss the demise of Irish ethnic identity.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Dr. Maureen Murphy. 16 November 1988.

<sup>121</sup> Timothy Meagher. "Irish All the Time: Ethnic Consciousness Among the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880-1905." *Journal of Social History*. Winter 1985. 273-290. See 289.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Ted. 23 March 1989.

<sup>123</sup> For a discussion of the stronger economy and the emergence of an entrepreneurial spirit in Ireland see *New York Times*. 15 August 1988. D1. *Irish Echo*. 1 April 1989. 12. Albert Reynolds, TD. "Enterprise—Ireland's Opportunity." *Emigration, Employment and Enterprise*. Ed. Joe Mulholland and Dermot Keogh. Cork and Dublin: Hibernian University Press, 1989. 193-203. (Patrick MacGill Summer School 1988.)