

Bishops' Conference of Scotland



Report to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

28th April 2017

8. The Church's knowledge of and involvement in the migration of children in care from Scotland

- At a local level, were priests/Bishops aware of children in the care of religious Orders being migrated from Scotland. Did the Church have any policy on child migration
- Were priests/Bishops involved in recommending children for migration
- If so, provide full details of that involvement including the places from which they were sent, the places to which they were sent, and, if possible, the names/gender and ages of any children who were sent. Provide details on whether the consent of the child and/or parents was sought and obtained or of any other person with a legal duty of care towards the child
- If priests/Bishops were involved in this practice, why were they involved
- What is the Church's position now on the migration policy that was pursued
- Has the Church had any involvement in responding to requests from former child migrants whether or not the Church had any involvement when the child left Scotland, and if so, provide details of any such involvement including the names of all those involved

Knowledge of Child Migration

There are no papers held by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland on the subject of child migration. As the question seeks information regarding the awareness of Bishops/priests about child migration at "a local level", the dioceses were asked to respond to this question. The report from the Archdiocese of St. Andrews & Edinburgh (Appendix 4) has revealed that the Hierarchy had been involved with a migrations scheme to Australia in the post second world war period. During 1948, at three of the meetings of the Hierarchy (May, June, and October 1948), there was discussion of the scheme that seems to have involved both adult immigrants and also children in care.

In research we have discovered some of the detail of what the Bishops' involvement was in this scheme. The Australian Government were keen to see an increase in migration by people of 'British stock' to post-war Australia⁴⁶. In 1946 The Catholic Bishops in Australia became involved in promoting Catholic migration by relating firstly to Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, and subsequently through the Catholic Council for British Overseas Settlement for Scotland and Northern Ireland of the Catholic Enquiry Office in Edinburgh, which was established in December 1946, involving Scotland and Northern Ireland. As can be seen from the Parliamentary Enquiry Report, the scheme seems to have continued until December 1956 with a few exceptional migrations in 1962 and 1963.

The 1948 minutes of the Hierarchy reveal that the scheme had stalled somewhat, that people were unhappy that their successful applications had not led to their emigration to Australia. This, of course, refers to adults. The papers held at the Scottish Catholic Archives reveal that, of 102 children waiting to emigrate under the Catholic Child Scheme, "about 51" were from Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are no names or any other identifying details in the papers. Mention is made that the number of children interviewed by Brother Conlon from Australia had fallen to 30, "due to the parents' consent not being forthcoming". The papers list a number of "contacts in connection with Adult & Child migration". The Scottish Catholic contacts detailed are: Nazareth House (Lasswade, Aberdeen and Kilmarnock); the Good Shepherd Convent Edinburgh; the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (Glasgow and Edinburgh); 'Clergy (unnamed) in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Fife, etc., etc.'. In addition, other Scottish contacts listed are: Home Department Edinburgh; City Social Services Edinburgh, Glasgow Corporation Welfare Department; and the Church of Scotland Emigration Department.

⁴⁶ <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmhealth/755/8061106.htm>

Detail is given of how the various age groups of young people would be looked after in Australia. For 6-14 year olds: "...some will be in Catholic Children's Homes, others in Convent Boarding schools, and some suitable boys will be placed in farm and trade schools, all of which will be controlled by religious teachers". For 14-19 year olds: the papers detail concern by the Australian bishops that no definite plan is in place, save "co-operating with the Governments to cater for the training and placement of these young people when they reach Australia. It is the intention of the Governments to place Youth groups in training centres throughout the states, where they will receive training for six months or more, at the expense of the Governments, to prepare them for their future careers such as, trades and various types of farming carried on in Australia".

Whilst mention is made of advertising the scheme through parishes and priests, there is no evidence of how, or even if, this was carried out. Apart from the contacts list above, there is no other mention of Scottish clergy in the papers. Their involvement was sought by those administering the scheme on behalf of the Catholic Church in Australia and ultimately by the Australian Government.

It is likely that the impoverished state of post-war Scotland probably gave rise to hopes for a new start and a better life for those who chose to migrate. Similarly the Bishops, in co-operating with the Australian authorities (civil and ecclesiastical), must have seen the chances of a better life for those considering emigration. The 1998 Parliamentary Report into Child Migration details the social-economic situation of Great Britain as always having been a motivation for such migration. The Report also mentions the 'social imperial motivation of populating the Empire with British stock', this can be seen in one of the Reports held at the Scottish Catholic Archives which states: "The Catholic Church, other Churches and recognised organisations in Australia are co-operating with the Australian and British Governments in their Migration Scheme which has for its main object the population of Australia with people of British stock and the creation of a greater England in the Southern Hemisphere". Of course, such language would be intolerable today but seems to have been accepted then.

Some dioceses have indicated below (Appendices 4-11) how they have responded to any contact from former child migrants.