

# BOSTON COLLEGE

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Senator Martin McAleese  
Independent Chairperson  
Inter-Departmental Committee  
*to establish the facts of state involvement with the Magdalen Laundries*  
Montague Court  
Montague Street  
Dublin 2

Dear Martin and Nuala,

Thank you again for meeting with Claire and myself last Thursday. It was a useful exchange of information, and we will make ourselves available if and when you would like to touch base again.

I presume you have received our follow up emails with attachments as discussed— i) the Mary Raftery materials related to the High Park exhumations, ii) images of the Sisters of Mercy Magdalen Graves at Bohermore cemetery, iii) the JFM addendum submission to the IHRC on the relationship between Magdalene laundries and adoption, and (iv) from Claire, the databases with information from various Magdalene graves around the country. Feel free to follow up with any question you may have.

Two additional matters:

1. I wanted to submit new archival evidence of State interaction that I came across on Friday last. The information is contained in a Department of Health File, L 112/21, "MAYO, Returns of Children & Unmarried Mothers in Institutions," Vol. III, Date Closed, 16/10/1956. MHS/INA/0/490144. The file contains bi-annual (six monthly) returns for children and unmarried mother, on two distinct forms for (i) the Mayo County Home and (ii) the Children's Home, Tuam—a mother and baby home accepting pregnant women seeking public assistance from both Co. Galway and Co. Mayo (it was managed by the Sisters of the Bon Secours).

The forms I examined were for children resident at Tuam for the years 1956-1959—the File was marked "Vol. III," suggesting additional files for earlier years and presumably for subsequent years too. Each form had columns with the following headings: Register

2534

Number, Name, Date of Birth, Date of Admission, Age, Sex, and Whereabouts of Parents, Observations by Matron, Observations by Medical Office. Focusing on the column for "Whereabouts of Parents," I came across three children, two males and one female, with the following information provided, "**Mother in Magdalen Home.**" I include an MS Excel spreadsheet with the specifics as described above—I have redacted the children's names, just providing initials, but I presume the Register Number will prove sufficient in following up on these cases. I also attach a few ".pdf" files, again redacted, of the original forms.

As with the information I submitted last week from the Sean Ross Abbey Mother and Baby Home, this latest archival evidence exposes the practice of transferring women in State licensed and Local Government-funded Mother and Baby Homes to "Magdalen Homes." If, as I suspect, these three instances refer to women transferred to the Galway Sisters of Mercy Magdalen Home, then it again confirms the information contained in JFM's "A Narrative of State Interaction with the Magdalene Laundries," pg. 30-31 and Appendix 8.a.iii.

Moreover, the returns completed by Co. Mayo appear on a template document/form printed by the "Department of Local Government and Public Health." Even though the returns I examined were for Co. Mayo, the form used had Co. Galway typed on the original and simply penciled out, i.e., ~~Galway~~. "Mayo" was written in by hand (see examples provided). This suggests that similar returns exist for Co. Galway at the very least, and perhaps for other local authorities reporting the same information to the Department of Local Government on a bi-annual basis. I want to encourage you to request a review of all such forms documenting the practice of sending women from Mother and Baby Homes to "Magdalen Homes."

And, this evidence begs additional questions for the Inter-Departmental Committee. Do similar forms for other counties betray a similar pattern of transferring unmarried mothers of "illegitimate" children from Mother and Baby Homes into "Magdalen Homes"? Can the Committee demonstrate conclusively what was the fate of these three particular mothers? How long did they remain in the "Magdalen Home"? What fate befell these children? Were they adopted? Did these children survive?

I know from other archival research (D/Health A124/18 Replies to Circular P24/48 ...) that the government conducted a survey in 1948 (approximately ten years prior to the information above) of all Local Government and Public Assistance Authorities recording the number of Illegitimate children born in "the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1947" in both County Homes and Mother and Baby Homes. The same survey requested information for the numbers of illegitimate children who died in the same period. According to the returns submitted to the government, 12 of the 22 "illegitimate" children from Co. Mayo born at the Baby Home, Tuam, died within the year. Likewise, 25 of the 49 "illegitimate" children from Co. Galway born at the Baby Home, Tuam for the same period, also died. This information reveals how dangerous an environment the Baby Home, Tuam could be for illegitimate children in

2535

residence. Such disturbing statistics certainly begs the question as to whether these children would have been better off remaining in their mother's care?

2. I know we spoke a number of times about historians/experts the committee should try to speak with, and at our meeting I referenced the late Mary Raftery who I know was willing to meet with you earlier last fall. And, I mentioned that our colleague Dr. Mary McAuliffe conveyed again that Prof. Diarmuid Ferriter at UCD's history department was interested and available to speak with the Committee. And I know that I provided email contact details for Prof. Maria Luddy to Nuala last fall too—Maria Luddy is widely considered the Dean of Irish women's history, a mantle she assumed from Dr. Margaret McCurtain. It is very important from JFM's perspective that the Committee speaks to a range of Irish historians who have worked on the Laundries and related matters.

In conclusion, I will continue to submit material as it comes to my attention. Again, please don't hesitate to contact me if you want to discuss further any of the above.

Sincerely,

Jim Smith (electronic signature)

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[Until June 30, 2012]  
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2536