

Tears flow at meeting on 'Magdalens'

THE HURT and anger felt by the relatives of 133 former residents of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, Iligh Park, Drumcondra, at their exhumation and cremation was voiced at an emotional meeting in the Ormond Hotel last night.

The cremation and burial of the women at Glasnevin Cemetery on Saturday was described as obscene and in total conflict with what the women or their families would have wanted.

Ms Margo Kelly said a number of relatives had arrived in Glasnevin after the urns had been placed in the graves. "The sadness and anger we felt to look at those urns is terrible. There is also the terrible sense of broken bonds. These women lacked choice during their lives and it spilled over into their deaths," she said. "Our right to mourn our mothers and our sisters has been denied to us and we are very angry. We see the need for a public funeral. It could have been yesterday. We need to honour these women and need to start healing the wounds," she added.

Other speakers told of their personal experiences. One woman broke down in tears as she described how herself and an aunt had visited Iligh Park when they learned of the plans to exhumate the bodies and arranged a private family funeral for her grandmother who was buried there. "Another said when she traced her mother to Iligh

Park she was told her name had been changed. When she mother died she was not informed and only discovered her death a year later.

Labour TD Joe Costello said the whole city of Dublin should be associated with the funeral as a mark of respect to the women.

A public memorial service will be held at the

By EAMONN HOLMES

Grafton Street entrance St Stephen's Green on Saturday, September 25. A book of condolences will be handed in to the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House afterwards.

The book of condolences will be available outside the GPO, O'Connell Street, between noon and 2pm each day, except Sunday for signatures.

A support group for the relatives of the women is to be formed and the committee is also seeking sponsorship to erect a memorial to the women in a prominent place in Dublin.

In a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Desmond Connell, the committee asked for a public funeral to commemorate the women, that nothing should be built on the site of their former graves and that the church should contribute to the erection of a public memorial to the women in Dublin. The Archbishop has not replied



TEARFUL SCENE . . . one woman organise a fitting memorial to the

Reburial o

By ALISON O'CONNOR
THE exhumation of 133 Magdalens women from a private graveyard in Drumcondra, Dublin, was defended by the Provincial of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity yesterday.

Sr Angela Fahy said she rejected allegations that the Order exhumed the bodies of the "forgotten women to pay off bills, and said cost of the exhumation was more than the value of the land.

The small plot of land, on which a graveyard was located, is worth £9,000 but it cost £45,000 to exhumate the bodies from the graveyard in High Park, Convent, Drumcondra, she said.



Woman in the audience is overcome by emotion at last night's public meeting to defend the Magdalens women. Picture by Brenda Fitzsimons

f convent women defended

"We obviously did not sell that piece of land off to make money and that is the reality," said Sr Angela, speaking on RTE's This Week programme.

She said the graves would have been made inaccessible and secluded by the development planned for the land surrounding it.

The women have been reburied at Glasnevin cemetery where their names will be engraved on each headstone. "They are now open, accessible and public but still very much respecting the privacy of the individual," she said. But Sr Angela rejected any allegation that the women were "treated with anything other than love and compassion".

"There are many things that we should feel sorry for. I think the way of responding was the way at the time. The overriding concern was to show acceptance, compassion and concern for women who had experienced a lot of hurt and rejection by life and society," she said.

However, the methodology and the way of life which involved moving people from their roots would be different today. "With hindsight, it would be very nice to have insight at the time and to have done it differently. But we are people of our time, each generation is," said Sr Angela.

2340