

Raymond Hill

From: Maeve O'Rourke [maeveorourke@gmail.com]
Sent: 04 April 2012 10:29
To: Raymond Hill
Subject: Fwd: Stanislaus Kennedy Book
Attachments: But Where Can I Go.pdf

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From: James Smith <james.smith.2@bc.edu>
Date: 4 April 2012 10:23
Subject: Stanislaus Kennedy Book
To: "martin.mcaleese@oireachtas.ie" <martin.mcaleese@oireachtas.ie>, "Nuala.NiMhuircheartaigh@dfa.ie" <Nuala.NiMhuircheartaigh@dfa.ie>
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Dear Senator McAleese and Nuala,

I know I have forwarded a lot of material in the past few days, and at the risk of becoming a nuisance I am forwarding one more (and I should warn perhaps that I have been in the National Archives yesterday and will be again today, so will have more material to send too). Again, I mean such submissions to be helpful but if they cease to be, please let me know.

About three weeks ago a senior historian at NUI-Galway brought to my attention an early publication by Sister Stanislaus Kennedy (RSC), entitled, *But Where Can I Go: Homeless Women In Dublin* (Arlen House, 1985). There is a copy in the National Library, call number Ir 3991 k 16.

Published in 1985, the book offers a sociological study of homelessness in Dublin based on questionnaires completed by women and staff in 15 "Hostels" on the 1 December 1983 (and contact with Staff at those hostels between 1 December 1983 and 1 February 1984).

As you will see from the sections I copied for you (.pdf attached--but it might be worth looking at the complete book), the organizations participating include the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, and more specifically St. Mary's Home [Donnybrook], High Park and Sean McDermott Street (pg. 9-10). All three institutions appear throughout the book under the misnomer "Long-Term Hostels" founded in "the nineteenth-century."

I have copied and am asking that you read Chapter 5 "The Hostels" and Chapter 9 "Women in Long Term Hostels." You will note that the terms "Magdalene Laundry" and "Magdalene Asylum" are nowhere to be seen, including in another chapter entitled "Historical Perspective" that offers an overview of social provision for homelessness from early Christian times through the formation of the Republic.

There is much more that can be said about this book, but I want to leave you to form your own opinions. I think it is helpful that this publication is from 1985 because it enables you to see how the Religious Congregations themselves are representing their history of involvement with Magdalene institutions prior to the current climate of investigation, indeed prior to the late 1990s culture of scandal. The fact that the key identifying terms appears nowhere in the book's 218 pages tells its own tale.

However, pages 125-28 incorporate testimony from a number of women living in the "three nineteenth-century long-term hostels." These women did not complete questionnaires as the author explains (top pg. 124), rather they participated in group discussions which are reproduced in this chapter. The testimony is compelling. It underscores the fact that these "hostels" were indeed Magdalene institutions. It details the conditions in the past, and how conditions have changed over time. And, despite the book's best efforts to edit out references to the Magdalene, the testimony contains three references to the manner in which women in these institutions were stigmatized by members of the public when they first ventured out in public, "Ah God help them, would you look at the poor Mags," "The poor Mags," "Look at Mag" (pg. 126).

Finally, the testimony contains a number of references to State interaction -- some women receive old-age pensions but don't control access to the payments, there is reference to a weekly "grant" from the Government for women not yet of pensionable age, etc.

As I mentioned in my last email to Nuala, we would welcome the opportunity for another informal meeting to discuss recent submissions (Tue or Wed, April 17 or 18th?). We would also really appreciate the opportunity to share some of our concerns that stem from the Stanislaus Kennedy book and again reiterate the absolute necessity that the Inter-Departmental Committee (and indeed the Ministerial track of the Government investigation) consult with a broad range of academic scholars, especially historians.

Sincere thanks as always,

Jim

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