



INQUIRING INTO PAST ABUSES
IN IRELAND
DR. CAROL BALLANTINE





“No nuns broke into our homes to kidnap our children. We gave them up to what we convinced ourselves was the nuns’ care.”

- Enda Kenny, following interim report of Commission of Investigation on Tuam burials

From the Commission of Investigation report: Exec Sum, p. 1

Ireland was a cold harsh environment for many, probably the majority, of its residents during the earlier half of the period under remit. It was especially cold and harsh for women. All women suffered serious discrimination. Women who gave birth outside marriage were subject to particularly harsh treatment. Responsibility for that harsh treatment rests mainly with the fathers of their children and their own immediate families. It was supported by, contributed to, and condoned by, the institutions of the State and the Churches. However, it must be acknowledged that the institutions under investigation provided a refuge - a harsh refuge in some cases - when the families provided no refuge at all.

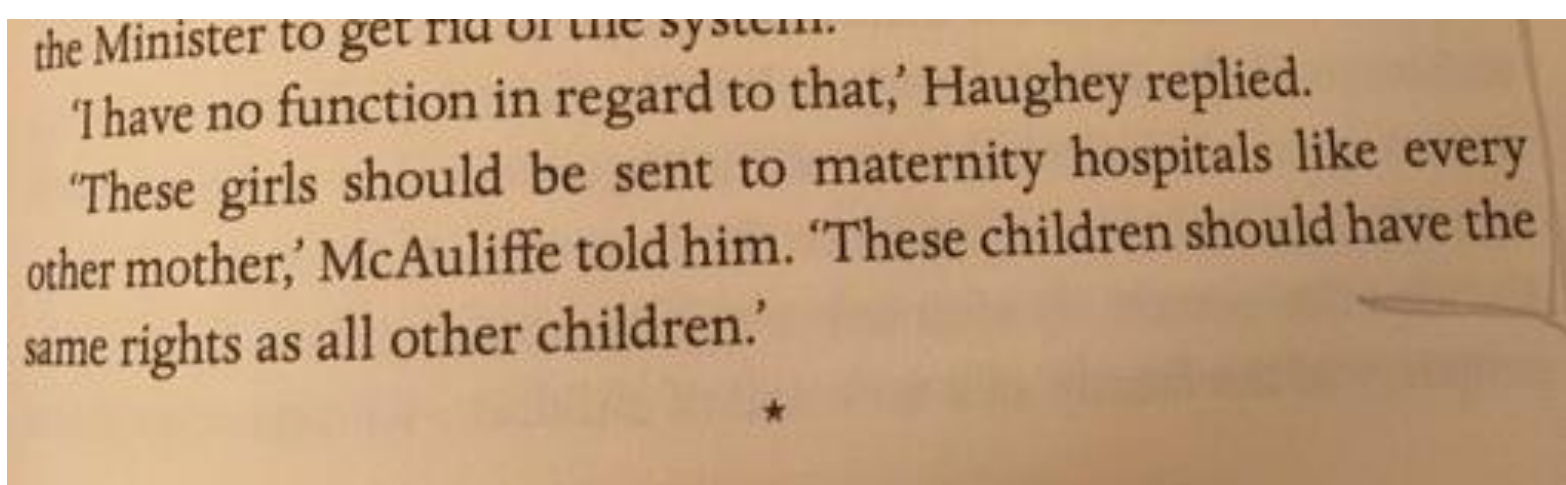
BUT HARSH TREATMENT + STIGMA WAS DEBATED AND OPPOSED:

1964 Adoption Act: the Oireachtas debates whether Local Authority inspectors can be informed of the addresses of adopted children, in order to follow up and confirm good placements.

Minister for Justice Charles Haughey: “Why place on record that a child is illegitimate when we are trying to ensure this fact never be disclosed?”

From Republic of Shame, Caelainn Hogan, 2019

Labour senator Timothy McAuliffe:



the Minister to get rid of the system.
'I have no function in regard to that,' Haughey replied.
'These girls should be sent to maternity hospitals like every
other mother,' McAuliffe told him. 'These children should have the
same rights as all other children.'

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From Republic of Shame, Caelainn Hogan, 2019



1974: Illegitimate Children Bill sponsored by Senators Michael D. Higgins, John Horgan and Mary Robinson

Senator Augustine Martin argues that women will blackmail family men into payments for their illegitimate children

1974: Adoption act amendments: Minister for Justice Patrick Cooney argues that ‘adoption is better for the illegitimate baby than to be cared for by its mother’.

Mary Robinson opposes this. She seeks constitutional protection for single mothers and their babies as a family.

BEYOND WHERE ARE THE MEN — WHAT ARE THE SYSTEMS?

- Ask questions about power and control, about interests, about choices.
- Listen respectfully to survivors and treat their testimony as evidence, on a par with other types of evidence. Address trauma deliberately.
- Consider lasting impacts of a culture of violence. Intergenerational harms. Continued power imbalances. Embedded norms.
- Use human rights as the starting point for investigation. Draw on international human rights treaties.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

<http://clannproject.org/commission-report/>

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H3bUYPczjQgGv0z30L31o0zOh46ibkqiPs8P0y32q2Y/edit>



THANK YOU

Carol Ballantine

T: @CarolBallantine

E: carolballantine@gmail.com