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### Muintir na Tire Seeks Funding for Rural Sociology in 1960s Ireland

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**Abstract:**

Muintir na Tire's role in the emergence of the discipline of Sociology in Ireland is usually acknowledged with reference to the Limerick Rural Survey (1958-64) that it initiated, part-funded and published. In the first half of the 1960s the movement also put proposals to the Irish government and sought US foundation grants for a centre or institute that would operate in the field of rural sociology and form part of Muintir na Tire's organisational structure. Although Taoiseach Sean Lemass was positively disposed towards these initiatives, opposition from the Departments of Agriculture, Education and Finance prevailed against them and Muintir na Tire was ultimately to find itself completely excluded from participation in the state-resourced institutional arrangements for carrying out social/sociological research in Ireland.

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*Introduction*

While the community development initiatives of Muintir na Tire (MNT) have been extensively analysed by Irish sociologists (see, *inter alia*, Varley, Curtin and O'Donohue 1990; Devereux 1991, 1992 and 1993; O'Cearbhaill and Varley 1996; Varley and O'Cearbhaill 2002), the shaping role MNT sought to play in relation to Irish sociology in the late 1950s and early 1960s has to date been overlooked. This paper traces MNT's efforts in this period to establish itself as a key institutional actor in the social science field with substantial government (and other) funding.

*Forging links between MNT and sociology*

MNT's turn towards a sociology almost invariably prefixed by the word 'rural' gathered pace shortly after the death of the movement's founder, Canon John Hayes, in January 1957. During 1958 MNT successfully proposed the Limerick Rural Survey (LRS) to the Department of Agriculture, affiliated to the European Society for Rural Sociology and invited the Society's President, Professor E.W. Hofstee of Wageningen University in Holland, to address its annual Rural Week. Recruited as LRS researcher, Patrick McNabb, spent a training period in Wageningen while the Dutch sociologist with whom he had worked most closely, Jelle Lijfering, subsequently visited Limerick twice to support the fieldwork being carried out there. In 1959 the Reverend Jeremiah Newman, Professor of Sociology at Maynooth and a leading MNT figure, depicted 'the inclusion in the new Agricultural Institute of a department which deals, among other things, with Rural Sociology' as a further positive development:

It means that, for the first time in this country, we have a permanent institution concerned with Rural Sociology ... this new foundation gives us every reason for hoping that Rural Sociology in Ireland has a future and a bright one (Newman 1959: 68-69).

However Newman and his MNT colleagues would shortly revise this positive appraisal, extending a critique of the Agricultural Institute's perceived shortcomings in relation to sociology to another newly minted social science body - the Economic Research Institute (ERI) – and proposing the creation under MNT auspices of a separate institute dedicated to sociological research. The recipient of this proposal was An Taoiseach Sean Lemass to whom MNT addressed a request that he receive a deputation in January 1961:

The subject of Community Development is becoming more and more important every day, and Muintir na Tire being conscious of its role as a community movement is most anxious to play its proper part in the development of the country.<sup>1</sup>

*The January 1961 proposal for a Rural Sociological Research Centre*

The five-page memorandum MNT prepared for the meeting that took place on 25 January addressed a range of disparate concerns – a commemorative postage stamp for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MNT's foundation in 1962, access for MNT to broadcast a programme on the new national television service, the need for social surveys, a Rural Sociological Research Centre, an Emigrant's Welfare Bureau in England and a complaint that 'in the 2 setting up of various Commissions in recent times, the Movement has been overlooked'.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this memorandum the deputation

left with the Taoiseach an extract from *Sociologia Ruralis*. Running to nine pages and entitled “Studies on Rural Sociology in Europe” (publication permitted by FAO branch of UNO), this reported the replies to a questionnaire of the ‘chief sociologists’ of twenty European countries. No material on Ireland was included but MNT had a proposal that might supply the state with both the studies and the chief sociologists that it currently lacked – ‘a research centre on modest lines should be set up... the Government might support it for a trial period of five years at £3,000 per annum’. Such a centre was needed because the universities lacked interest in the subject and the new institutes could not address it adequately:

The Economic Research Institute will carry out social research but it will be research only in the “human elements” which impinge on economics. The Institute of Agriculture will study the “human elements” in so far as they affect agriculture. Both will do useful research work but neither – nor both combined – could produce a School of Irish Sociology because their field must of necessity be limited to economics and agriculture and will scarcely touch upon such vital social forces as culture, the language, recreation and religion. The Institute of Rural Sociology could use the findings of the Institute of Agriculture and the Economic Research Institute, of the State Statisticians and of any other group or individuals dealing with such work. But our Institute would pool all this information, co-relate it and also carry out field work of its own. If social surveys are to be multiplied such an institute would be indispensable.

Economics and Agriculture are not sufficient for the task. An Taoiseach is giving a striking example by appealing to patriotism and community spirit, turning from military attack over to social and economic advance. He emphasises the lesson to be learned already from the Limerick Survey – the influence of non-economic causes, e.g. psychology.

Both his position and Community Development suffer from the fact that we have been thinking on conservative lines. We need the sociological study of our problems. Here is Ireland’s position as regards the study of sociology... (See attached article from *Sociologia Ruralis*). Economics and statistics are not sufficient. An Economic Research Institute is insufficient without a Social Research Institute; if we cannot have two, let us not incur the ridicule of the world by thinking that economics includes sociology.

It remained for Muintir na Tire to make a beginning. Many people have been sent abroad in connection with agriculture; they had eyes for what they knew to be “agriculture” and “economics” but their curiosity was not even aroused by complete departments of Rural Sociology in Holland and Norway, and chairs of the subject in Germany, France, Belgium. The naming of the new Economic Research Institute does not suggest any preoccupation with our problems of catching up on sociology. Hence, of course, community development and anything else based on sociology have little hope of being appreciated.

From the Department of the Taoiseach the MNT memorandum was circulated to the departments of Agriculture, Education and Finance for comment. First to respond was the Department of Education which considered that a multidisciplinary university was the proper institutional location for rural sociology, noting that ‘University College, Cork, has, through its Adult Education courses, special experience of rural problems’. Its observations then turned the *Sociologia Ruralis* extract against the MNT proposal:

In most European countries studies and researches in rural sociology are connected with institutes of higher education – either universities or institutes of higher studies, especially institutes of agriculture. This would seem to be a more practical way of catering for the subject than the setting up of a special centre or institute to be conducted by or under the aegis of Muintir na Tire, which is a rather amorphous body, but which could, of course, be of great assistance to whatever institution might be charged with the study of the problem.

Education’s observations went on to flag problems of duplication, actual (as opposed to estimated) running cost, and of a centre being set up on a ‘purely experimental basis’. They concluded that it was not ‘appropriate to even consider the setting up of a centre or institute pending the publication of the Report of the Commission on Higher Education’ (a body to which, it suggested, MNT might wish to make a submission).<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Finance opposed state expenditure on the project. Noting that ‘it is suggested that a School of Irish Sociology would eventually emerge’ it echoed Education by observing that ‘the establishment of such a school would be a matter for the universities and would be beyond the functions and resources of Muintir na Tire’. It raised the issue of duplication with the Agricultural Institute and the ERI before fastening on MNT’s habitual coupling of the Rural with Sociology – ‘even if such a centre could make a useful contribution to the study of sociological problems, its activities would have to be extended to urban as well as rural problems and Muintir na Tire would hardly be the appropriate body to sponsor such a development’.<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Agriculture, like Finance, discerned both institutional duplication and rural limitation problems with the proposal:

It appears that what the Organisation has in mind is the establishment of an institution whose studies would cover not only agricultural and economic aspects of rural sociology (these can be taken care of by the Rural Economy Division of the Agricultural Institute and the new Economic Research Institute respectively) but also aspects related to culture, the language, recreation, religion etc. As the latter fields of study are important to urban as well as rural population, a better case could perhaps be made for the establishment of a Social Research Institute...than for an institute confined to rural sociology.

Its observations also deployed the *Sociologia Ruralis* extract against the MNT proposal observing that the former ‘indicates...that rural sociological problems are generally studied in the context of general sociological investigations or general rural investigations in economics or other fields’ and that ‘until such time as the work of the these two bodies [the Rural Economy Division of the Agricultural Institute and

ERI] has got well under way it would be premature to consider the creation of a separate sociological institute or a separate institute devoted to rural sociology'. Here it added that 'having regard to the assistance and co-operation which Muintir na Tire may expect to receive from the two bodies... it is not considered that the further development of the organisation's work in the sphere of Community Development will in any way be hampered by the absence of a rural sociology research centre'.<sup>5</sup>

Opting to defer a decision on the research centre proposal, the Taoiseach's 20 April response to MNT amalgamated elements of the three elicited departmental documents:

The Taoiseach, having considered the views of the Ministers concerned, is of the opinion that it would be prudent to await experience with the Rural Economy Division of the Agricultural Institute and with the Economic Research Institute before coming to any conclusions on the suggestion for making separate arrangements to study rural sociology.

It would also be of advantage when considering the matter, to have the benefit of the advice of the Commission on Higher Education, for whom the Taoiseach understands Muintir na Tire are at present preparing a memorandum.

The Taoiseach is in full sympathy with the aims which Muintir na Tire had in mind in proposing the setting up of a rural sociological research centre. And, before deciding to suggest that the proposition be deferred for the time being, he has assured himself that the assistance and co-operation which the Movement may expect from the Agricultural Institute and with the Economic Research Institute will be such as to ensure that the development of their work in the sphere of Community Development will not in any way be hampered by the absence of a rural sociology research centre.<sup>6</sup>

The letter from MNT Honorary Secretary Frank Lyddy which thanked Lemass for the attention he had given the research centre proposal set out the reasons why MNT had put it forward in more concrete terms than the January memorandum had done:

In putting forward the suggestion that a Rural Sociological Research Centre be established, we were aware of the time lag which will be necessary before academic circles in Ireland become convinced that there is a place for sociology. Our members who advised on this section of the memorandum submitted to An Taoiseach were taken aback by the apparently exclusive emphasis on economics in the shaping of the new Economic Research Institute. As the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society was a parent body, the avoidance of the word "social" in naming the new Institute, as well as the announcement of the programme and the selection of the personnel, all seems to indicate a definite taking of sides in what has been recognised in other countries (e.g. the U.S. and Britain) as a tug-of-war between the disciplines of economics and sociology.

Muintir na Tire does not claim to be an academic body, yet the carrying out of pioneer work in social research on rural problems was left to us and financed by a comparatively small branch from Grant Counterpart funds and our own slender resources. It seems that the first of the Agricultural Institute's personnel to be sent for training in Rural Sociology was sent to Oxford, to an agricultural economics institute, in the first instance, and was only recently directed to Wageningen, Netherlands. We have good relations with An Foras Taluntais [i.e. the Agricultural Institute] and I do not intend this as a criticism of that Institute but merely to illustrate the grounds for what might appear to An Taoiseach to be an exaggerated insistence on the importance of sociology and social research. Rather we wish to insist that the newer field of study should get due recognition.<sup>7</sup>

MNT's criticism that sociology and social research were being neglected prompted correspondence between the Secretaries of the Departments of the Taoiseach and of Finance in the run up to the June 1961 official opening of the ERI. This resulted in the insertion of a passage in the speech the Taoiseach delivered at this function which declared that 'the Institute's net will be cast wide... it does not intend to confine itself to purely economic affairs, important as these are... it is planning also to undertake research into wider social and community affairs'.<sup>8</sup> Financially MNT emerged from its 1961 approach to the government with a small amount of additional funding to extend the range of studies encompassed by the Limerick Rural Survey. In 1964 that Survey concluded with the publication of its five interim reports in a single volume (Newman 1964; Murray and Feeney 2009). In the same year a fresh proposal for a sociological institute linked to MNT was put forward for the government's consideration.

*The 1964 plan for community development and rural sociology*

With three appendices included, "A Plan for Community Development in Ireland Submitted to the Government as an aid to the implementation of the Second Programme for Economic Expansion" ran to twenty-two pages in length. It began by sketching how MNT had embraced the concept of community development:

The movement had little contact and derived little help from experience in countries outside Ireland and it was not really until 1958 that it began to take note of "community development" as defined in many other countries of the world... In the years which have elapsed since the death of the Founder, Muintir na Tire has made increasing study of the community development process... Within Muintir na Tire itself the 1963 Rural Week revealed the fruition of the movement's actions in preceding years. This Rural Week clearly provided the indication that the more "academic" study of community development must now yield way to action. It provided a convincing mandate for the movement to put before Muintir na Tire and Rural Ireland generally, a comprehensive plan for Irish Community Development.

It went on to discern a convergence between MNT's commitment to the concept and an increasing recognition on the part of the government that community development had a vital role to play in developmental initiatives the state was undertaking such as

the Pilot 6 Area Development Programme (Scully 1968) recently launched to tackle the chronic problems facing small farmers in western counties:

Community Development is, therefore, being increasingly accepted in Ireland as a most useful instrument not only by some rural organisations but by the Government itself and by some of the service agencies (notably Bord Failte and the Agricultural Advisory Services). It would be tragic if this commitment were not supported by the most effective possible organisation to link the voluntary and public bodies. A right relationship for joint action is essential.

The convergence of the movement and the government on the concept of community development was situated with a broader context of MNT support for the fundamental shift in state strategy the Lemass government was implementing and the planning process through which change were being pushed forward:

Muintir na Tire welcomes the new spirit abroad in Ireland – what An Taoiseach calls “the new and positive attitude to progress” – since the advent of the First Programme for Economic Expansion. It acknowledges the stimulation and impetus given to our people by a realistic approach to our economic problems on the part of the Government. It is glad to find even more detailed programming and targetsetting, especially in the field of agriculture, in the Second Programme for Economic Expansion.

This present contribution from the National Executive of Muintir na Tire is respectfully presented as a complement to the Second Programme, a sincere endeavour from one of the oldest of Ireland’s voluntary rural organisations to gear itself to a rapidly-changing rural scene and to ensure that national programming will not fail for lack of local, virile communities. To this task Muintir na Tire willingly re-dedicates the strength of its 398 guilds throughout the country. Never before was the application of a genuine Community Development approach to rural problems a matter of such urgency.

Joint action was to be based on the creation within MNT – an organisation that then had only a rudimentary national headquarters based in Tipperary town - of a cadre of fulltime and part-time educators, administrators and community development field workers that would enable it to function as a comprehensive interface organisation linking the statutory and the voluntary sectors across the state. (The plan diagram setting out the envisaged structure is reproduced in Appendix 1 below). Forming part of an integrated organisational plan, rather than appearing as it had in 1961 as one of a series of (at best) loosely connected concerns, one of this structure’s components is an Institute of Community Development and Rural Sociology. One of the plan’s appendices dealt in more detail with the role of this Institute which was to be named after MNT’s founder, Canon Hayes and was intended to become a ‘recognised Centre for research into the rural condition and the ways of its amelioration, and for the dissemination of good practice in the relevant fields of endeavour’. The three tasks on which the Institute would initially concentrate were to be leadership training for rural community leaders, ‘the direction and execution of research into social processes and problems of the rural society’ and, through the attraction of students from Ireland and overseas, ‘the enrichment of ideas and practices through cultural cross-fertilisation’:

This institute could meet the very real need to advance the academic study of rural sociology in Ireland. This is best done outside the cities where the major institutions of higher learning and research are already established. Past neglect in this field has meant that the subject has been developed to a limited extent and on a piece-meal basis. The result has been that in spite of the opportunity which Ireland presents, this country has failed to make the contribution to knowledge and study which it very well might. There is no reason to suppose that this Institute should not develop into an International Centre for the longer-term study of this subject, possible in some association with the United Nations and/or its agencies. Such help and support is likely to be forthcoming only if the necessary preparations are first made at home.

It was estimated that the establishment of the Institute would entail an initial capital cost of £40,000 and an annual running cost of £12,000. Government subvention would be required to meet an unspecified proportion of this cost although it was hoped to attract financial support from 'trusts and foundations' as well as from business sources for MNT's plans. Even without the implementation of its Plan, it was stated, MNT was going have to look for new sources of financial support as the Marshall Aid counterpart funds it been had been drawing on since the late 1950s were now almost exhausted.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Responding to the MNT Plan*

On 13 August 1964 MNT's National Chairman wrote to the Taoiseach enclosing the plan and seeking a meeting to discuss it. On 17 August Lemass minuted:

It is necessary to have them [the MNT proposals] fully considered by the Departments concerned and comments prepared thereon with a view to a discussion with Muintir na Tire's representatives which I will arrange for a date in September. It is desirable that there should be a positive approach in all Departments to the proposals on the understanding that the Government will wish to go along with them, unless they can be shown to be impracticable or undesirable or better means of achieving the same purposes can be suggested... the meeting with the Muintir na Tire representatives should take place if possible in about a month's time.<sup>10</sup>

Accompanied by the Taoiseach's view on the desirability of a positive approach, the plan was circulated to seven departments - Agriculture, Finance, Lands, Gaeltacht, Local Government, Education, Industry and Commerce. Of the six that replied, two - Lands and Gaeltacht - made no comment on the proposed Canon Hayes Institute. Three of the four departments that did comment had also done so on MNT's 1961 research centre proposal. Finance and Agriculture responded to the new proposal much as they had to its predecessor. For Finance economics and sociology were matters for the universities, the ERI ('which also has social research within its ambit') and the Agricultural Institute. The existence (since 1963) of an informal committee on social research (of which Jeremiah Newman was a member) examining how Irish needs in the field should be met provided a further argument against piecemeal institute creation. Finance also considered both capital costs and running costs to be

greatly underestimated.<sup>11</sup> Agriculture's comments on the Canon Hayes Institute proposal were framed by its wider observation that:

It has been the experience of the Department of Agriculture that Muintir na Tire is disappointing as an organisation in the promotion of agriculture. Theoretically it covers a very wide field of activities but in practice there is very little effective work done by the organisation and in many types of activity in the field of agriculture it tends to be outshone by other rural organisations e.g. Macra na Feirme, Macra na Tuaithe, I.C.A., N.F.A.

The proposed Institute would overlap with the Agricultural Institute, the ERI and the universities. Macra na Feirme, with departmental and advisory service help, were already providing leadership courses. MNT could do likewise without the necessity for creating a new Institute. The Institute's costs were again considered to have been underestimated and its creation 'would create jealousy amongst other rural organisations and give rise to demands for other prestige making projects'.<sup>12</sup>

By contrast, the Department of Education was more positively disposed than it had been in 1961, although for the present it favoured deferral:

In principle, the establishment of an Institute for Community Development and Rural Sociology seems to be a proposal worthy of consideration. The question arises, here again, however, as to whether the government and administration of such an Institute should be left entirely to one voluntary organisation. The Institute of Management, and the Institute of Public Administration, have both done very good work and are continuing to do so. There would seem to be room for an Institute for Community Development and Social Administration in our national economy. Its formation and establishment might well be deferred, however, until the ground-work in Community Development is more widely covered.<sup>13</sup>

The Department of Local Government, which had not been consulted in 1961, also looked favourably on the proposal – 'the Institute could play an important part in research and training in the wide area of common ground between rural community development and physical planning with benefit to local planning authorities'.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the individual departmental responses there was also a composite memorandum drawn up within the Department of Agriculture following a meeting it had hosted of all the departments concerned. This stated as a shared view that 'the Departments thought that consideration of the proposal to establish a Canon Hayes Institute for Community Development and Rural Sociology might be deferred until the whole position in relation to social research needs has been clarified – the Social Research Committee operating under the aegis of the Institute for Public Administration propose to bring over a U.N. expert to examine the position and report'.<sup>15</sup>

Reacting to these responses on 25 September Lemass minuted that:

It seems to me that the Muintir na Tire proposals are approached in the Departmental Memorandum on the basis that Muintir na Tire is just another rural organisation trying to cut in on work now being done by other similar organisations in the agricultural field. I do not think this is quite fair to Muintir na Tire, which is concerned with social activities of various kinds, and not merely agricultural problems, and which has, notwithstanding its weakness in organisation, already done something significant in creating community consciousness and self confidence, as well as in promoting understanding of, and respect for, the social teachings of the church.

On the specific issue of the Canon Hayes Institute, his view was that:

I think we need an Institute of Rural Sociology. Research into rural social processes and problems is almost non-existent. Whether this Institute should be linked with Muintir na Tire is another question but I see advantages in so doing, although it could not be left entirely to their administration, in view of the amount of money involved, their own organisational inadequacies, and the need to associate the universities or other bodies with them. In this respect, I suppose we must await the report of the enquiry now in progress, but it can hardly result in anything else but a recognition of the need for such an Institute, however it may be organised.<sup>16</sup>

The views of Ministers on the lines along which Lemass proposed to respond at his meeting with the MNT delegation, as set out in the minute, were then sought. Again, however, the appeal for a positive approach fell on deaf ears. From Agriculture came a reiteration of the previously expressed view that MNT was ineffective:

While the stated aims and objectives of Muintir na Tire cover rural affairs generally and are not confined solely to agriculture, it has been the Minister's experience that the organisation has concentrated mainly upon agricultural problems. The Minister feels, however, that up to the present its impact either on agriculture or in the improvement of living standards has been insignificant. Nor indeed can he see much tangible evidence in the Irish countryside of any widespread results from its influence in developing community activities or a spirit of self-help amongst rural people.<sup>17</sup>

The initial response from Lands had made no comment on the Canon Hayes Institute proposal but a second opportunity to comment brought forth vehement opposition to it:

The Minister profoundly disagrees with the proposition that it is either necessary or desirable to set up an Institute of Rural Sociology. In his view there are more than enough institutions and organisations capable of supplying information about rural Ireland or carrying out any research work which might be needed from time to time.<sup>18</sup>

The departmental report of the meeting between Lemass and a nine-person MNT deputation on 29 October indicates that – while MNT continued to criticise the existing research bodies and wanted to continue its own involvement in social

research – the proposal for a separate rural sociology institute had by then been both ruled out by the government and dropped by the movement:

As regards Rural Sociology, the Taoiseach said that the Government recognised the need for sociological research. They were not impressed however by the suggestion of a special Institute to organise it under the auspices of Muintir na Tire. An informal Social Research Committee (of which Father Newman was a member) was at present looking into the community's needs in this matter and he suggested that the results of the Committee's deliberations should be awaited. It was unlikely, however, that a new body would be set up to handle it; we already had institutions like the Economic Research Institute, An Foras Taluntais and the Universities doing a certain amount of social research and it would seem wasteful to create a new Institute.

Dr. Newman appeared to have reservations about both the Economic Research Institute and an Foras Taluntais. Both he and [MNT Chairman] Fr. Browne stressed that a special new Institute of Rural Sociology was not now being advocated by Muintir na Tire. What they envisaged was the inclusion of rural social research in the general work of the organization that would be aided by the Government grant; it was important that Muintir na Tire should carry out social research, rather than that members should rely on official sources or the work of other groups for the statistical etc. material necessary for cultivating forward-looking attitudes in rural communities. The Taoiseach said that it would be up to the leaders of the organization to satisfy the Minister for Education that the projects they had in hand came within the ambit of the grant.

The 'Government grant' referred to here had been suggested in the composite memorandum produced by the Department of Agriculture (see below for further discussion) and affirmed in the Lemass minute of 25 September:

It is not contested that the Muintir na Tire organisation in rural areas requires to be improved and strengthened, that this would be advantageous, and that there is a case for Government financial help in this respect, sufficient to provide it with a National Director and some subsidiary staff. I think a subvention of about £5,000 per annum should with their own resources meet their requirements in this respect. There is something to be said in favour of providing this subvention through the Department of Education rather than through the Department of Agriculture.

As recorded by the report of the meeting, this 'something to be said' was put in the following terms by the MNT deputation when it met Lemass on 29 October;

The deputation was anxious to have it established and understood that Muintir na Tire had wider interests than agriculture; if getting the grant from a source other than the Department of Agriculture would help towards getting this across they would favour it. If there was any aspect of their work they wanted

to stress it was education in the broad sense. This would suggest the Vote for the Department of Education.<sup>19</sup>

The effect of this arrangement was to end to the grouping of MNT with Macra na Feirme and the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) that had existed during the period of anticipation or availability of Marshall Aid Grant Counterpart money from about 1950 onwards.<sup>20</sup> On the Education Vote the movement would join institutional expressions of Catholic social action like the Catholic Workers College and the Dublin Institute of Catholic Sociology although, as we will see below, Macra na Feirme's youth wing – Macra na Tuaithe – also appeared among Education's clientele.

*Looking Abroad – MNT, The Kellogg Foundation and UN Technical Assistance*

During 1965 the issue of providing an infrastructure for social research in Ireland moved from deferral to decision and MNT took the quest for funding of its plans to the USA.

Set up in 1963, the 'Social Research Committee operating under the aegis of the Institute of Public Administration' (SRC) straddled the civil service (it included several Department Secretaries), the universities and the state-sponsored research institutes. While the comments quoted above convey the impression that Newman's membership gave MNT representation on the SRC, his presence was due not to his active role in the movement but to his being a Maynooth Professor. The existence of the SRC started a debate in which two alternatives were canvassed. These were a scheme of universitybased postgraduate research fellowships whose holders 'would investigate specific problems of Irish sociology, preferably of an applied nature' which the SRC advocated and the reconstitution of the Economic Research Institute on a multi-disciplinary basis which Finance Secretary T.K. Whitaker favoured. In the report he completed in May 1965 the SRC's UN Consultant (the Director of the Danish National Institute of Social Research) came down decisively on the side of the latter (Friis 1965).

Action followed quickly and by August the matter had been brought before the government by a memorandum from Finance entitled "Social Development Programme". This obtained approval for two proposals. One was that the Friis recommendation of an integrated economic and social research institute with a survey unit attached be accepted in principle. The other was that M.D. McCarthy, Director of the Central Statistics Office (CSO), be asked 'to formulate a preliminary programme for the organisation and integration of the studies and inquiries on which the official aspects of a social development programme should be based'. The two were linked by the expectation that, when the ERI's Director Roy Geary retired in the following year, McCarthy would succeed him. The CSO Director had assisted Whitaker in the drafting of *Economic Development* (Fanning 1978: 516), had done much of the detail work involved in setting up the ERI (Kennedy 1993: 226) and was also centrally involved in the activities of the SRC (Kennedy 1993: 239-241). In his new social research role he would, by his own account, be much more than just an Irish executor of a foreign expert's conception – 'I had very close contact with Dr. Friis when he was preparing his report and found that he was able to take account of all the views which I gave him while drafting his document'.<sup>21</sup>

Earlier in the Summer MNT's Chairman and Public Relations Officer visited the USA where they had meetings with Kellogg and Ford Foundation officials and at the UN. In August MNT circulated an application for UN Technical Assistance which stated that Muintir na Tire proposes to establish an Institute of Community Development which will promote training courses at different levels and also initiate survey and research work' and that 'this Institute would be available to the United Nations for courses or for giving experience to personnel'.<sup>22</sup> In October a representative of the Kellogg Foundation met MNT representatives in Dublin and 'made a number of suggestions which he intimated would give the application a greater chance of success'. Evidence that MNT's proposals enjoyed the support of the government and of other Irish rural organisations featured prominently among these suggestions and in November an MNT deputation went to the Department of Agriculture to discuss their latest effort to establish 'a permanent Institute of Rural Community Development'. In December Agriculture circulated a draft Memorandum for the Government on the matter. This stated that:

The proposal which Muintir na Tire have put before the Kellogg Foundation is basically the same as that described in the "Plan for Community Development". More emphasis is, however, placed on the development of community leadership and the provision of facilities for overseas students, and less on social research. The Organisation has in fact made it clear that the Institute would not be involved in basic research but would be confined in the main to the investigation of community problems and the application of community development processes. Assisting the field work of groups of students from abroad, and assembling data which would be made available to those concerned with community development, within and outside the country.

For Agriculture, 'although the previous objections as to the proposed Institute's involvement in social research would appear to have been largely met', the concern previously expressed about overlapping between the proposed Institute and other bodies in the leadership training area remained valid while 'the establishment of an Institute as proposed might well involve the Exchequer in a heavy and continuing financial commitment.' The Minister (Charles Haughey) considered that he could supply the specific forms of assistance MNT had sought from him 'but as the offer of such assistance could be construed as official endorsement of the proposal to establish an Institute he would be glad to have the decision of the Government in the matter.'<sup>23</sup>

Both the departments known to have responded (Finance and Education) took the contrary view that earlier objections to MNT involvement in social research remained unmet. In November 1965, on Charles Murray's suggestion, Finance had offered M.D. McCarthy the support of one its officers in discharging the role its Social Development Programme memorandum had created for him – 'this would be good training for our people and would help to introduce them to this field, which will be no stranger to us in coming years'. It was the officer assigned to work with McCarthy, Development Division Assistant Principal Brian Kissane, who initially reviewed Agriculture's draft memorandum. His response was that 'I would not agree that previous objections as to the proposed Institute's involvement in social research have

been largely met' and that it was 'inappropriate that official backing be given at this juncture to the establishment of a centre by Muintir na Tire in which social research would be undertaken'.<sup>24</sup> The memorandum was then sent to McCarthy in the CSO for his views. In relation to MNT social research involvement he concluded that 'the new formulation [of the Kellogg application] can, I think, be interpreted exactly as the old one [of the 1964 Plan]'. Widening the focus, he wrote:

A number of steps have been taken to implement the decision in principle by the Government that it would accept the Friis report in connection with the Economic Research Institute. The legal and organizational changes needed [sic] are in process of being carried out but no final decisions have yet been taken as to the scale or the financing of the new organization. I think that I can say that it is envisaged that it will endeavour to act as a co-ordinating agency for all empirical social research in this country. In fact consultations are already taking place with the relevant university faculties and with the Human Sciences Committee of the Irish National Productivity Agency with a view to avoiding overlapping. Relations have also been established with the new Medico-Social Research Board which has been set up by the Minister for Health with the same objective in view. With the great shortage of technical manpower capable of carrying out social research in this country it is eminently desirable that there should not be too much fragmentation and certainly no overlapping of effort.

Referring to the ERI experience, he also emphasised that Foundation funding would not last indefinitely and that therefore 'it is essential that the Government should have a very clear, realistic idea of what implicit financial commitments it would be entering into before it gave any official endorsement to the proposal'. To McCarthy, the costs estimated by MNT seemed 'quite unrealistic'.<sup>25</sup>

The Finance response sent to Agriculture enclosed a copy of McCarthy's letter and spelt out its own four grounds of objection to MNT's proposal - overlapping activities, scarce personnel, underestimated costs and lack of clear objectives warranting substantial state subsidisation. MNT should concentrate on improving its organisation and 'expanding the area served by it which at present represents only a small portion of the country' while 'no indication of Government support should be given to Muintir na Tire regarding the suggested Training and Research Centre'.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of Education – the department into whose sphere of operation MNT's financial relations with the Government had been shifted - the late 1964 acceptance that there was 'room for an Institute for Community Development and Social Administration in our national economy' had by early 1966 been replaced by a set of objections that were very similar to those being expressed by Finance:

While the Minister notes that the proposed Institute's involvement in social research has not been stressed in the organisation's proposal to the Kellogg Foundation, he considers that, pending further development of the arrangements now being made to further the promotion of research in the social sciences generally, no action should be taken which might encourage the establishment of an Institute of Rural Community Development with

functions (even limited functions) in this field. The Minister also agrees that the establishment of such an Institute with support from the Kellogg Foundation would be likely to involve the Exchequer in a heavy and continuing financial commitment. In this connection he recalls that the Kellogg Foundation's support of a scheme of organizational development for Macra na Tuaithe led eventually to the provision of grants-in-aid of that organization from this Department's Vote.... the Minister for Education is not convinced that it is in the best interests of Muintir na Tire to embark on enquiries of the type proposed or that doing so would be in accordance with the aims and ideals of its founders. He also finds it difficult to accept that the costs appertaining to an Institute as contemplated would be within the estimated amounts stated i.e. a capital sum of £60,000 and current expenditure of £10,000 to £16,000 per annum.<sup>27</sup>

This opposition – which the conclusion to the Agriculture draft memorandum positively invited – seems to have effectively killed off the Kellogg Foundation application. A similar fate seems to have befallen support for MNT in the form of UN technical assistance shortly afterwards. When External Affairs sought the views of other departments on the matter in May 1966, Education replied that ‘the application to the United Nations does not appear to this Department to differ fundamentally in its conception from that to the Kellogg Foundation and in this Department's view the same general criteria should apply in relation to consideration of official support for it’.<sup>28</sup>

The Friis report had contained only two references to MNT – the first at the outset when the LRS featured in an enumeration of social research exercises carried out to date in Ireland and the second in an appendix listing the individuals and organizations with whom Friis had held meetings while preparing his report. No ongoing relationship between the multidisciplinary research institute whose creation his report advocated and MNT was envisaged by Friis. This was remarkably short shrift for a movement that could claim to have played a pioneering role in initiating Irish social research, had made two proposals to the government for the creation of social research bodies linked with itself and had received the Taoiseach's assurance of a level of assistance and co-operation from both the ERI and the Agricultural Institute that would leave its community development work unhampered by the deferral of official action on the first of these proposals. It also stands in noteworthy contrast with the treatment by Friis of the Human Sciences Committee of the Irish National Productivity Committee (HSC). Friis was positive in his assessment of the job HSC had done and wanted to see its structure preserved within the new institute. ‘To develop programmes for particular areas of research’, his report suggested that ‘the Council [of the restructured institute] might set up committees with experts in the particular field’, supplying the example that ‘the existing Human Sciences Committee of the Irish National Productivity Committee might be re-organized so as function as the committee on labour market research and human relations in industry’ (Friis 1965: 24). Why did Friis not propose a similar association with the new integrated institute for MNT? It seems safe to conclude that McCarthy did not suggest that he do so. The only clue provided by the text of a report that strongly prioritised social research with a public policy orientation is the characterization of MNT (where Friis makes reference to the LRS) as ‘a private organization’ (Friis 1965: 11).

There is no documentary evidence of any protest being made against this treatment of MNT by the figure whose presence on the SRC was presumed to provide the movement with an input into that body's discussions, Jeremiah Newman. The minutes of SRC meetings are admittedly uninformative about the detail of these discussions. They give no indication of MNT's future role within the social research field being raised at any point by Newman or by any other member.<sup>29</sup> When McCarthy sent a memorandum dealing with the transformation of the ERI into an Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to a number of clerical academics in National University of Ireland social science departments in late 1965, he received substantive responses from UCC and UCD but Newman replied only that he would send his comments later: 'I have been rather under the weather since I saw you last – strain and overwork'.<sup>30</sup> No subsequent correspondence between these two is on file. While McCarthy's influence was, as we have seen, deployed against MNT receiving government funding or endorsement for activities incorporating a social research component, he was an active sponsor of Newman's involvement in the research initiatives of 1960s state planning. In 1962 it was McCarthy who suggested that Newman become a member of the Steering Committee of the *Investment in Education* study ('though his experience of statistical exercises is limited, his presence on the Committee might be valuable').<sup>31</sup> In 1966, when clerical social science academics were being divided by McCarthy into desirable sheep and undesirable goats as he engineered an acceptable composition for the Council of the new ESRI, Newman was one of those immediately included in the former group.<sup>32</sup>

Leaving Newman aside, no protest, either private or public, appears to have been made by any MNT figure about the manner in which Friis treated the movement in his report. By October 1964, several months prior to the arrival of Friis in Ireland, MNT was no longer pressing for government funding of a separate social research institute operating under its own aegis but it still remained actively committed to carrying out its own social research. The February 1966 issue of *The Landmark* reproduced a newspaper report of a speech by the Minister for Education in which the government's intention to implement the recommendations made by Friis was stated and accompanied this piece with a commentary headed 'Muintir Leads The Way':

The Limerick Rural Survey was the first piece of social research to be carried out on a large scale by the native Irish. At the time of the formation of the Economic Research Institute, regret was expressed in Muintir circles that a body which derived its lineage from a society for "statistical and social" research should in the nineteen sixties be blind in one eye from birth. The defect is now happily being remedied and the scope of university training in social skills can now be enlarged.

MNT's rebuff by Friis notwithstanding, the 'inclusion of rural social research in the general work of the organization' did continue for several years - the most notable examples being a collaborative Parish Resource Survey carried out with the Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCO) and a series of Tipperary parish surveys (SFADCO and Muintir na Tire 1972; Muintir na Tire 1975). By the mid-1960s, however, the movement's interest in and identification with rural sociology appears to have been waning. When the conference of the European Society for Rural

Sociology came to Ireland in August 1966 there was no coverage of the proceedings at Maynooth in *The Landmark*. Nor was the speech delivered to the conference by the Minister for Agriculture published under MNT auspices. It appeared instead both in *Sociologia Ruralis* and in *Eire-Ireland* (Haughey 1966a and 1966b).<sup>33</sup>

Eclipsing rural sociology as the main concern of MNT's top echelon by this time was community leadership training. The Department of Education report of its Minister's discussion of the new government grant-in-aid with MNT representatives on 10 December 1964 quotes Newman as stating that 'the thing they needed most... was a Training Centre... Muintir na Tire was concerned mainly with community leadership'<sup>34</sup> and it was with this focus that the Canon Hayes Institute project was also kept alive amidst the setbacks documented above. Under the headline 'Buiochas le Dia', *The Landmark* announced in September 1966 that 'after years of frustration... the Institute is to be established in Foynes, Co. Limerick, immediately'. Such references caused alarm in the Department of Education where a Senior Inspector in the Vocational Education Branch reported on 17 November:

I understand that the Institute would be a centre for Leadership Training courses, refresher courses of various kinds – particularly those dealing with Community Development – the type of work now being carried on in temporary accommodation at Foynes. I have been informed that it is not to be an Institute of Rural Sociology, about which we have grave reservations.

The position with regard to Community Development – as opposed to Rural Sociology – is not too clear from the official side since the Minister at his meeting with representatives of Muintir na Tire on 10/12/64 stated that "there would be no objection to their starting a training centre for community leaders or the like". The Taoiseach did not look with favour on a Muintir na Tire Institute for Sociological Research and he was assured that this was not then (29/10/64) being advocated by Muintir na Tire.

My own feeling is that Muintir na Tire needs a centre for leadership training courses, seminars etc. such as they now have in Foynes to fulfil short-term limited, and feasible, objectives but that any tendency to go further than this should be resisted. The position will become clearer when we see how the Foynes venture has worked over a reasonable experimental period. On the other hand, we should be careful to ensure that the Foynes experiment is not used as a means to implement the grandiose scheme for a national institute put forward in the Plan for Community Development as submitted to the Government in August 1964.<sup>35</sup>

Originally conceived as 'renting a location that would serve as a training centre until such time as more adequate facilities can be provided' through Kellogg Foundation funding, the Foynes project appears to have been an experiment that fairly rapidly failed. Reporting to the 1967 MNT National Congress, National Director Norman Riley – the creation of whose post was the main result of the government grant-in-aid – observed that 'the location at Foynes leaves a great deal to be desired, not in terms of facilities but in terms of location'. The facilities were not free from problems, however, as later in that year it was stated that 'the building which we were using

(Aras Ide) is under-going structural alterations and is not available to us'. The running of courses at Foynes does not seem to have resumed after this hiatus. MNT accounts for 1968-69 record a writing off of most of the value of 'Furniture and Equipment Arus Ide' accompanied by the transfer of a small portion of these assets to MNT's Tipperary office.<sup>36</sup>

At much the same time as its resources were being depleted by the ill-fated Foynes initiative, an attempt was being made by MNT to secure funding from the third of the potential sources identified alongside government and foundations in the 1964 National Plan – private businesses. MNT envisaged that the salaries and expenses of a number of Community Organisation Officers would be financed by 'industrial, commercial and professional interests, on the general argument that as long as local communities remain viable purchasing power and manpower will continue'.<sup>37</sup> However the movement soon found itself having to support out of its own funds the first (and only) such officer it appointed in 1968 'because of the failure to raise the necessary money from the local industrial, commercial and professional people in the counties of Galway and Clare'.<sup>38</sup>

With its efforts to secure funding – public or private, Irish or foreign - unsuccessful, and its bank overdraft mounting, MNT found itself at the end of the 1960s undertaking a further change in direction with the adoption of its community council focus. While this turn may not have been any more successful in establishing relationships with government and grassroots activism that would put MNT on a secure long-term financial footing, it was certainly one that has been documented and discussed in considerably greater depth by sociologists than the earlier one towards sociology and social research. As pieced together from government archival sources, the previously untold story of this earlier sociological turn raises a question that we will address in conclusion - why, with a very sympathetic disposition on the part of the Taoiseach, did MNT's research centre/institute proposals to government fail so completely to secure acceptance?

### *Concluding Reflections*

At first sight Sean Lemass and MNT make an odd couple. Anti-urbanism had been a central component of MNT ideology (Devereux 1991) while Lemass, according to a close political associate of longstanding, had 'little real rapport with rural Ireland' and:

Considering the amount of traveling he did when building up the Fianna Fail organization, he had surprisingly little intimate knowledge of the countryside and its people. He was essentially the Dublin Jackeen with the ready wit and derisive humour so common in the city (Andrews 2001: 247)

Before becoming Taoiseach in 1959 Lemass had spent almost all of his ministerial career in Industry and Commerce, a department upon whose responsibilities MNT's activities impinged only slightly. As two of its officers told colleagues from Finance's Economic Development Branch in December 1960 'while representations have been received from time to time from this organisation and while they will assist where possible in endeavours to attract an industry to a locality, on the whole, their contacts with Industry and Commerce are infrequent'.<sup>39</sup> Industry and Commerce was the only

department to which MNT's 1964 community development plan was circulated not to respond with comments. During World War Two, however, Lemass had headed an improvised Department of Supplies and MNT had been to the fore in organizing shortage-alleviating local initiatives in growing food and cutting turf (O'Leary 2004: 237-240). While documentary evidence is lacking, it may be plausibly suggested that the high regard in which Lemass held MNT during the 1960s dated back to this Emergency period.

Why this evidently positive disposition failed to translate into substantive resourcing benefits for MNT may be related to the role played at this time by the Department of the Taoiseach within the Irish government system. This Department has dramatically expanded in size over the past half century. A recent study attributes this growth to EU membership after 1973, orchestration of social partnership arrangements after 1987 and the manner in which 'the Department may be used by different Taoisigh to 'incubate' favoured policy areas and pet projects associated with the different governmental programmes' (Adshead and Tonge 2009: 27). The Taoisigh referred to here are those who have held the office since the retirement of Jack Lynch in 1979. Prior to the operation of such expansionary influences, the Department of the Taoiseach, while it was 'responsible for the administration of such of the Public Services as are not assigned to any other department', was very small and played a role that was construed in minimalist terms. In September 1964 the attachment of the MNT grant to the Department of the Taoiseach's Vote had been suggested by the Department of Education 'since the aims of Muintir na Tire and the scope of its activities have a bearing on the work of many Government Departments and since their new programme lays particular stress on Community and Economic Development'. But this was opposed within the Department of Taoiseach itself and Education subsequently agreed to carry the subvention on its Vote.<sup>40</sup> Such a minimalist assumption of direct responsibility by his department left measures favoured by a Taoiseach vulnerable to the indifference or worse of those administering them. At the end of World War Two, for example, De Valera had sought to initiate a 'positive and liberal' policy on the admission of refugees but the Department of Justice and other agencies exercising day-to-day control over entry frustrated this by adhering to existing highly restrictive practices (O'Halpin 1999: 293-295).

The case of MNT's plans differed from this scenario in that a Taoiseach's view that it was 'desirable that there should be a positive approach in all Departments to the proposals on the understanding that the Government will wish to go along with them, unless they can be shown to be impracticable or undesirable or better means of achieving the same purposes can be suggested' was openly countered by departmental responses characterising the proposals as impracticable, undesirable or sub-optimal. Duplication loomed largest among the objections to the proposed sociological research centre or institute. As a latecomer MNT faced the problem that, even if it were accepted that sociology was being neglected with significant deleterious consequences, the problem could be addressed by restructuring existing institutes rather than creating a dedicated new one. In this context it is noteworthy that the duplication argument was also deployed against the ERI when it was first proposed. The source of the objection then was the Agricultural Institute's Director Dr. Tom Walsh and the person most actively involved in attempting to refute it was CSO

Director McCarthy, the nemesis of the subsequent MNT social research proposals. Walsh contended that inevitable duplication between the existing Agricultural Institute and the proposed ERI made the provision of state aid to the latter inappropriate and requested the Minister for Agriculture to seek clarification on the issue from the government. When he was told that the ‘Minister feels that the necessity does not arise of raising the matter with the Government’ and that ‘the Taoiseach is in general accord’, Walsh persisted until closure on the matter came from the top – ‘the Taoiseach has instructed me to inform you that it is his view that no further clarification of the matter is necessary or, indeed, practicable at this stage’.<sup>41</sup> Possessing a broad base of powerful backers was plainly advantageous when duplication charges had to be seen off. In the case of MNT this breadth was evidently and fatally absent.

To MNT rural sociology was a vital theoretical base for community development practice. Yet in the practical sphere MNT’s ability ‘to ensure that national programming will not fail for lack of local, virile communities’ could be countered by Finance’s observation that ‘the area served by it... at present represents only a small portion of the country’. Saturation point for an Irish Catholic movement based on the parish unit is around 1,300 branches (Garvin 1981: 80): the 1964 plan’s statement that MNT ‘willingly rededicates the strength of its 398 guilds throughout the country’ to the assistance of national programming indicates a level of national coverage at this date of roughly one third. In December 1968 MNT’s second National Director, Tomas Roseingrave, told Department of Education officials that ‘the Guilds are most numerous in Munster, being mainly concentrated in Tipperary, Cork and Limerick; Leinster is also reasonably well serviced but there are few in Connaught and almost none in Ulster’.<sup>42</sup> MNT thus possessed the potential to effectively partner the state regionally rather than statewide. This potential was partially realised after 1969 when SFADCO was given an enlarged responsibility for economic development in a Mid-West region consisting of three counties in which MNT guilds were relatively strongly organized - Clare, Limerick and Tipperary North Riding. SFADCO thereafter provided MNT with a subvention for community development initiatives while MNT reorganized the area serviced by its sole Community Organisation Officer to correspond with the Mid-West region’s boundaries.<sup>43</sup> After he resigned his MNT post in 1970,<sup>44</sup> that officer, Fr. Harry Bohan, was to be centrally involved in a series of innovations in development practice, such as the Rural Housing Organisation, that were launched within the specific statutory/voluntary collaborative context of the Mid-West. A post-MNT synthesis of Catholic social theology, Irish rural sociological perspectives and broadened-out development practice is presented in his book *Ireland Green* (Bohan 1979).

Receipt of a central government grant-in-aid from 1963-64 could be said to have compounded rather than alleviated the difficulties faced by MNT. The following passage from the report of the meeting between Lemass and the MNT delegation in October 1964 frames some of the problems that would recur in the subsequent years:

Coming to the subject of organizational improvements in Muintir na Tire, the Taoiseach said that, while he deplored the idea of giving Government financial help to a voluntary body whose very foundation was the concept of self-help, he had been convinced by the representations made for a subvention to enable

Muintir na Tire to engage a full-time director and subsidiary staff and make its efforts more effective. The Government was therefore prepared to give a subvention of about £5,000 a year for a few years, during which the organization could strengthen itself, improve its membership and its finances, so that it could carry on without a grant thereafter. He urged that Muintir na Tire should work hard to free themselves from reliance on Government subvention: he was convinced of the value of financial independence to voluntary organizations.

The deputation said that they too valued independence. Their dilemma was that members of Muintir na Tire did not pay membership fees and the organization was dependent for funds on the contributions of local Guilds. If a Guild was active it had to spend money on its own projects and it could not spare much for the running of the organization as a whole.<sup>45</sup>

This financial arrangement was notably less generous than that suggested in the composite memorandum produced by the Department of Agriculture in September:

The Departments recommend that consideration might be given to making an annual grant not exceeding £5,000 on the basis of £ for £ of subscriptions and other income and a further fixed grant of £5,000 reducing by £1,000 annually and so disappearing in five years. A grant on this basis would mean that Muintir na Tire would be getting about the same financial assistance as the I.C.A. and Macra na Feirme and the purpose of suggesting the 'extra' aid on a reducing basis is to give the organization an opportunity of improving their organisation and establishing a position of financial independence for themselves. This has already been done with the I.C.A.<sup>46</sup>

While MNT, ICA and Macra had been aided on a basis of equality by Grant Counterpart Fund allocations, MNT had not done as well as the other organizations in the case of Irish state aid. The Agriculture Vote had provided subventions to the ICA since 1952 -53 and to Macra na Feirme since 1961-62. Whereas MNT was, as we have seen, effectively blocked off from access to foundation funding by state action, the ICA and Macra na Tuaithe had secured grants of £95,000 and £30,000 respectively from the Kellogg Foundation. In both cases this funding had knock-on expenditure effects for the Agriculture or Education Votes. Here being a relative latecomer in making applications for foundation funding undoubtedly handicapped MNT. By the time it got involved in applying, the longer-term government departmental budgetary implications of foundation-backed initiatives had become much clearer as the funding periods of earlier successful Irish applications expired or were on the point of expiring.

Continuously quoted by civil service documents, the context of 'a few years' of grant aid to be followed by liberation from dependence on the state, combined with the amount of money actually paid over, placed MNT in a situation of ongoing uncertainty not experienced by the other state-assisted rural organizations. Changes in MNT's constitution in 1967 introduced individual membership subscriptions. In 1969 management consultants were brought in to advise on how MNT's own income generation could be enhanced.<sup>47</sup> However the flow of funding from the localities to

the centre did not significantly increase. As initiatives aimed at revitalizing grassroots support - the Foynes training centre and the Community Organisation Officers Scheme - came unstuck and incurred unforeseen costs, increasingly desperate pleas for an increase in the grant-in-aid were addressed to the Department of Education. These eventually produced some relief<sup>48</sup>, although the move out of Agriculture's sphere and into that of Education was financially ill-advised. In relation to both departments MNT was a square peg organisation in a round civil service hole – rural but not agricultural in one setting, educational without a central focus on schooling in the other. But Education supported its clientele less generously than other departments like Agriculture. When the Department of Labour was created in 1966 one of MNT's fellow Education grant recipients, the College of Industrial Relations (formerly Catholic Workers College), immediately commenced a campaign to move Vote in order to secure a higher level of state support (Murray 2009: 138-140). Whether MNT got maximum bang from its government buck might also be questioned. Setting the National Director's salary at £3,000 per annum absorbed sixty per cent of the subvention leaving little scope for any recruitment of subsidiary staff or the launching of new initiatives.

While government actors regularly deplored dependence on state aid, they also made use of the opportunities for control that accompanied the creation of such dependence. The consideration of the MNT plan by Agriculture took place while Patrick Smith was minister. During his tenure this department seemed indifferent to MNT's departure from its sphere of influence. But, when he resigned on 9 October 1964 – accusing Lemass of pandering to the trade unions while neglecting the farmers - and was replaced by Charles Haughey, a change in attitude took place. Haughey protested against movement of the 'centre of gravity' of the state's relations with MNT and his intervention was effective in securing agreement that Education would administer the grant with prior clearance of the activities it supported being obtained from affected departments. In seeking to maintain a connection between Agriculture and MNT, Haughey had a specific concern in mind:

At present, I may mention, the National Farmers' Association are seriously disturbed by the activities of Muintir na Tire in relation to cattle marts. While their motives are the best, their efforts in this direction may result in the erection of completely unnecessary and uneconomic cattle marts. This particular problem can only be sorted out by my Department...<sup>49</sup>

This matter cropped up when the MNT deputation met the Minister for Education in December 1964. There:

The Minister said that he agreed fully that the Muintir should not be tied down but stated that on the other hand he must emphasise that they could not be given a grant to do something that some other proper body was already doing. For example they should not open a cattle mart in opposition to the ideas of the Department of Agriculture as to where a cattle mart should be.

The observation (by Jeremiah Newman) that most of the government grant to MNT would be taken up by the Director's salary and expenses helped to dispose of the matter on this occasion. In subsequent correspondence, however, the Department

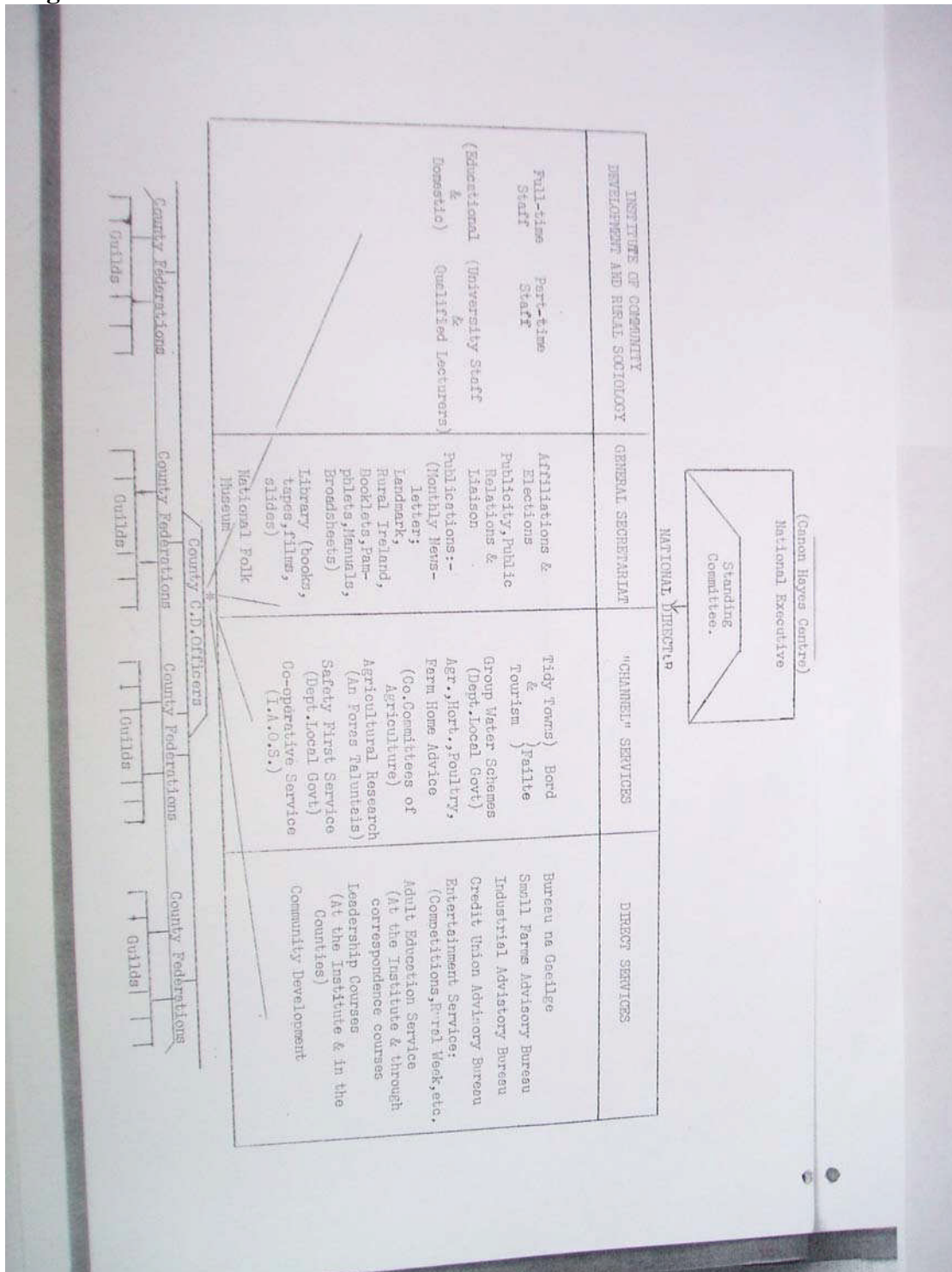
‘took the opportunity to confirm that it was agreed in the course of discussions with Muintir na Tire on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1964, that it is a general principle of your organisation to consult and co-operate with the relevant Government Department in any particular matter where a Government Department is concerned’.<sup>50</sup>

If receipt of the grant opened MNT up to government pressure, it was also to lead to a shutting down of the access to Taoisigh the movement had hitherto enjoyed. In July 1966 MNT National Director Norman Riley sent Lemass a memorandum and requested a meeting to discuss the issues it dealt with. Preparations for a meeting similar to those of 1961 and 1964 were set in train but on this occasion they were not completed. Instead Riley was informed that a meeting with the Minister for Education ‘would be an appropriate first step’.<sup>51</sup> In 1966, and in later years when other approaches were made by MNT, no further steps would follow such a meeting. Lemass retired in December 1966 and in August 1967 a speech by his successor, Jack Lynch, stated that:

Since the foundation of Muintir na Tire each of my predecessors as Taoiseach has made it a point to address a session during your Rural Weeks. It is a great pleasure for me... to maintain the practice...

One year was as long as this maintenance lasted. In 1968 the invitation was declined as ‘he and Mrs Lynch expect to be abroad’. In 1969 the ground for declining was that ‘Seanad election results are due on that day and ... it will be necessary for me to be in close contact with my office at that time’. On 8 August 1969 the *Irish Press* published a story on the Rural Week about to be held in Ennis headed ‘Government disappoints Muintir men’. This reported ‘a feeling of disappointment among the organisers that, so far, no member of the Government has signified his intention of attending’.<sup>52</sup> By this point the once high value of MNT’s political capital was clearly plummeting. With institutions like Rural Week, *Rural Ireland* and *The Landmark* jettisoned along the way, the movement’s struggle for survival would henceforth take MNT along a different path from that followed during the 1960s.<sup>53</sup>

**APPENDIX 1: MNT's 1964 Plan for Community Development in Ireland Diagram**



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> National Archives of Ireland (NAI) Department of the Taoiseach (DT) S10,816 Muintir na Tire General File Frank Lyddy, Honorary National Secretary, Muintir na Tire to An Taoiseach

10/1/1961

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. "Deputation from Muintir na Tire to an Taoiseach, Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1961 Memorandum submitted to An Taoiseach"

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Department of Education to Department of the Taoiseach 8/3/1961 enclosing "Memorandum Presented By Muintir na Tire To The Taoiseach Observations of the Department of Education Observations on Section (4) of the memorandum headed "Rural Sociological Research Centre". Taoiseach's Private Secretary to Frank Lyddy 8/3/1961 passes on the Department of Education's suggestion that Muintir na Tire make a submission on the matter to the Commission on Higher Education. For the Commission's treatment of the submission see Commission on Higher Education 1960-67 Report Volume 1 Paragraphs 12.35 and 12.36.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Department of Finance to Department of the Taoiseach 15/4/1961

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Department of Agriculture to Department of the Taoiseach 19/4/1961

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Taoiseach's Private Secretary to Frank Lyddy 20/4/1961

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Frank Lyddy to Taoiseach's Private Secretary 25/4/1961

<sup>8</sup> NAI DT S16,705 B/61 Centre for Economic and Social Research in Ireland Establishment N. O'Nuallain, Department of the Taoiseach to T.K. Whitaker, Department of Finance 5/5/1961; T.K. Whitaker to N. O'Nuallain 8/5/1961: text of speech delivered by an Taoiseach

<sup>9</sup> NAI DT S17,138 B/95 Community Development: Federation of Local Development Associations; General "A Plan for Community Development in Ireland Submitted to the Government as an aid to the implementation of the Second Programme for Economic Expansion"

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Sean Lemass to Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach 17/8/1964

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. "Observations of the Department of Finance on "A Plan for Community Development in Ireland" prepared by Muintir na Tire"

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Department of Agriculture "Muintir na Tire Plan for Community Development in Ireland"

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Department of Education "A Plan for Community Development in Ireland. Muintir na Tire Document, Published August, 1964"

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. "Department of Local Government observations on Muintir na Tire document entitled A Plan for Community Development in Ireland"

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. "Muintir na Tire Plan for Community Development"

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Minute Sean Lemass to Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach 25/9/1964

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Private Secretary to Minister for Agriculture to Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach 6/10/1964

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Private Secretary to Minister for Lands to Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach 9/10/1964

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Report of Meeting 29/10/64 Muintir na Tire Plan for Community Development, August 1964

<sup>20</sup> A state receiving US dollar aid under the Marshall Plan was obliged to deposit in a special account a local currency sum equivalent to the value of the dollars it had been given. These local currency funds were known as counterpart funds and they were intended for developmental use. US dollar aid could take the form of either grants or loans. Between 1948 and 1952 Ireland received \$18 million in grants and \$128.2 million in loans (Whelan 2000: 127). The way in which the specific uses to be made of the local currency funds was decided varied according to whether the dollars to which they formed the counterpart were loaned or granted. If loaned, then the recipient country's government decided how the counterpart funds should be spent. If granted, the expenditure of counterpart funds had to be agreed between the recipient government and the US authorities. Loan counterpart was fairly quickly expended by the Irish government (mostly on 26 land reclamation) while protracted negotiation of

agreements between Irish and US governments held up the spending of grant counterpart until the late 1950s (Whelan 2000: 286-314; Murray 2009: 59-61). For the full list of grant counterpart projects eventually agreed between the USA and Ireland see Whelan (2000) Table 7.2. Grants of £10,000 each were earmarked for the Irish Countrywomen's Association, Muintir na Tire and Macra na Feirme. From a reserve fund initially set aside to cover unforeseen contingencies an additional £4,000 was subsequently allocated to each of the three organizations. Payments from these allocations were made to Muintir na Tire between 1955-56 and 1963-64.

<sup>21</sup> NAI DT S17,678/95 Programme for Social Development, Department of Finance Memorandum for the Government "Social Development Programme" 24/8/1965; M.D. McCarthy, Central Statistics Office to N. O'Nuallain, Department of the Taoiseach 25/8/1965

<sup>22</sup> NAI Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, "Adviser in Community Development. A Request from Ireland under the United Nations Technical Assistance Regular Programme towards the salary of an Adviser in Community Development for a period of two years"

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Department of Agriculture Draft Memorandum for the Government "Application of Muintir na Tire for financial assistance from W.H. Kellogg Foundation"

<sup>24</sup> NAI Department of Finance (DF) 2001/3/952 Programme for Social Development, Note from CHM to Secretary 9/11/1965 : NAI DF 2001/3/1000 Plan for Community Development in Ireland, Note from BK to Mr. O'Neill 19/1/1966

<sup>25</sup> NAI DF 2001/3/1000 Plan for Community Development in Ireland, M.D. McCarthy to L.D. O'Neill, Department Finance 11/3/1966

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. L.D. O'Neill to Runai, Agriculture and Fisheries 25/4/1966

<sup>27</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, Department of Education to Department of Agriculture 24/2/1966

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Department of Education to Department of External Affairs 8/6/1966

<sup>29</sup> These minutes are in Economic and Social Research Institute Box 1 History of ERI/ESRI File 'Institute of Public Administration 59 Lansdowne Road Dublin 4 Social Research Council'

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. J. Newman, St. Patrick's College Maynooth to M.D. McCarthy, Central Statistics Office 26/1/1966

<sup>31</sup> NAI DF 2001/3/775 Proposed Pilot Study of Future Educational Needs with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance, M.D. McCarthy, Central Statistics Office to J.F. McInerney, Department of Finance 19/4/1962

<sup>32</sup> Economic and Social Research Institute Box 1 History of ERI/ESRI File 'No. 1 Closed', M.D. McCarthy, Central Statistics Office to T.K. Whitaker, Department of Finance 14/10/1966

<sup>33</sup> While Newman - a member of the European Society for Rural Sociology Council - was still expressing reservations about the Agricultural Institute in October 1964, the Institute's extensive sponsorship and support for the holding of the Society's conference in Ireland is acknowledged in the Foreword to Volume VI, Number 3-4 of *Sociologia Ruralis*. An Editorial Note also states that 'with the kind help of An Foras Taluntais (The Agricultural Institute), Ireland, we have been able to present to our readers in this double issue the Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of our Society, which was held in Maynooth College, August, 1966.' No reference is made to Muintir na Tire in either the Foreword or the Editorial Note. The only reference we have found so far to the conference in MNT documentation is, when itemising the decisions taken at National Executive meetings during the year, the Honorary National Secretary's Report to the 1966 Muintir na Tire Annual Congress (copy in NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire) records that on 27 February 1966 'Rev. P. Hallinden, C.C. was appointed to attend the Conference for Rural Sociology organized by the European Society to be held in Maynooth College at the end of August'.

<sup>34</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, "Minister's Discussion with Representatives of Muintir na Tire on 10/12/64"

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Note from M. MacEachmharcaigh to B. O' Foghlu 17/11/1966. The term 'grandiose' was used again when the same officer prepared Notes on Muintir na Tire in advance of a deputation's meeting with the Minister in June 1970. On this occasion he wrote that: 'the big project during the early 1960s was to found a School of Rural Sociology, in memory of Canon Hayes. This was a grandiose scheme that never got "off the ground"'. The Department was opposed to it since it would impinge on the work of the Universities which were then starting faculties of Sociology'. These Notes are also in this file.

<sup>36</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, "Brief to Department of Education RE: Grant-in-Aid 1966/67" enclosed with N. Riley, National Director, Muintir na Tire to Secretary, Department of Education 10/11/1965; National Director's Report to National Congress 1967; F. Lyddy, Honorary National Secretary, Muintir na Tire to Secretary, Department of Education 27/10/1967; Muintir na Tire Balance Sheet 1968-69

<sup>37</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, T. Roseingrave, National Director, Muintir na Tire to B. O'Foghlu, Department of Education 1/8/1968

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. T. Roseingrave, National Director, Muintir na Tire to B. O'Foghlu, Department of Education 16/6/1969

<sup>39</sup> NAI DF 2001/3/166 Community Development, "Community development role of local development associations" 5/12/1960

<sup>40</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, Department of Education to Department of Agriculture 17/9/1964 enclosing desired amendment to memorandum drafted after the meeting in the Department of Agriculture on 8 September 1964; NAI DT S 17,138 B/95 Community Development: Federation of Local Development Associations; General, note from Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach to Taoiseach 22/9/1964 states that "the Department of Education's idea that provision of a grant to Muintir na Tire should be included in this Department's Vote, because several Departments are concerned, would be unacceptable"; NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire Secretary, Department of Education to Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach 20/10/1964

<sup>41</sup> NAI DT S16,705 A Centre for Economic and Social Research in Ireland Establishment, T. Walsh, Director, Agriculture Institute to M.D. McCarthy, Honorary Secretary, Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland September 1959 and 21/9/1959; M.D. McCarthy to T. Walsh 16/9/1959; T. Walsh to J. J. Nagle, Secretary, Department of Agriculture September 1959 and 2/10/1959; J.J. Nagle to T. Walsh 26/9/1959, M. O'Muineachain, Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach to T. Walsh 12/10/1959

<sup>42</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, "Muintir na Tire Discussion with Mr. Roseingrave National Director on 11 December 1968"

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. "Memorandum on the Work and Development Plans of Muintir na Tire" enclosed with T. Roseingrave, National Director, Muintir na Tire to Taoiseach 4/2/1970 and with T. Roseingrave to Minister for Education 16/2/1970

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Director's Annual Report to Muintir na Tire National Conference 1970

<sup>45</sup> NAI DT S17,138 B/95 Community Development: Federation of Local Development Associations; General, Report of Meeting 29/10/64 Muintir na Tire Plan for Community Development, August 1964

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. "Muintir na Tire Plan for Community Development" [i.e. composite memorandum drafted

after meeting of consulted departments held in Department of Agriculture 8/9/1964]

<sup>47</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, T. Roseingrave, National Director, Muintir na Tire to B. O'Foghlu, Department of Education 20/5/1969

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. The grant was raised to £8,000 in 1970-71.

<sup>49</sup> NAI DT S17,138 B/95 Community Development: Federation of Local Development Associations, Charles Haughey, Minister for Agriculture to Taoiseach 24/11/64; memorandum recording agreement between Agriculture and Education on procedure 3/12/1964.

<sup>50</sup> NAI DETE 2002/67/25 Muintir na Tire, "Minister's Discussion with Representatives of Muintir na Tire on 10/12/64"; Department of Education to Frank Lyddy, Honorary National

Secretary, Muintir na Tire 4/2/1965. It seems that a mart which it was propose to establish at Drumcollogher in Limerick rather than a number of marts was at issue here.

<sup>51</sup> NAI DT 98/6/119 Muintir na Tire General File, N. Riley, National Director, Muintir na Tire to Taoiseach 30/7/1966 enclosing memorandum: Private Secretary to the Taoiseach to N. Riley 18/8/1966

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Rural Week speech of Taoiseach Jack Lynch, Thurles 15/8/1967; Private Secretary to the Taoiseach to National Director, Muintir na Tire 23/5/1968: J. Lynch to T. Roseingrave 10/7/1969: Irish Press clipping 8/8/69 “Government disappoints Muintir men” – the story continued “It is now being asked if Muintir’s interest in the Shannon Free Airport Development Company’s plan for the Clare-Limerick-North Tipperary region and the Buchanan and Lichfield reports may be the reason for the absence of Government members.” Clareman Patrick Hillery did attend the Ennis Rural Week but, as newly-appointed Minister for External Affairs, he undoubtedly had more pressing concerns in the month that saw a major escalation of violence in Northern Ireland and the first deployment of British troops on the streets during the Troubles.

<sup>53</sup> NAI DT 2003/16/89 Muintir na Tire General File - as the state programming/planning system into which MNT had unsuccessfully sought to insert itself was on the point of being abandoned, the movement turned to ‘a committee of distinguished people’ drawn from outside its ranks and chaired by Agricultural Institute Director Dr. Tom Walsh to formulate the basis of a five year plan for its development. Published in August 1971, the Review Committee Report on Muintir na Tire envisaged the creation (by the Minister for Local Government) of a national council for community development. MNT ‘would act as an agent of this council’ as well as having a specific responsibility for establishing and servicing local community councils. Such a servicing role would require the establishment of a development unit within MNT receiving financial support from both central government and local authorities. This, the most recent file released to date, breaks off with an MNT application to the Department of Education for a grant-in-aid of £41,000 in 1972-73 under consideration. £25,000 of this total was for the establishment of a Development and Service Unit.

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