

WORKING NOTES

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FACTS AND ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

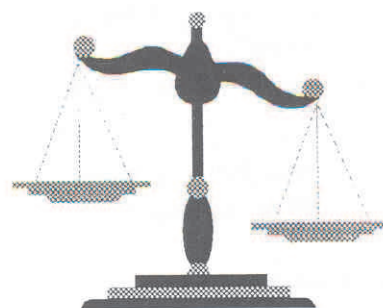
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY JUSTICE?

Almost everybody in Ireland would, if asked, profess to believe in justice and to want a just society. Many individuals would consider the pursuit of social justice to be one of the key elements of their job. Government ministers, senior civil servants, health board workers, clergymen, and a host of others must at least make the pretence that their main task in life is to build a more just society. Yet when we scratch the surface we find that there is in fact little agreement on what constitutes social justice. Some policies are pursued in the name of justice which fly directly in the face of other policies also pursued in the name of justice. This may account for much of the uncertainty and frequent changes of direction in public policy in Ireland, as elsewhere.

The basic ambivalence in the area of justice relates to the notion of *equality*. Equality is generally seen as a key element in social justice. For instance in South Africa during apartheid it was the unequal treatment of black people and white people that was universally condemned. The fact that many black people in South Africa were fairly well off, often much better off than other black Africans, was considered irrelevant. In this country unequal treatment of men and women in such matters as recruitment for jobs, social welfare entitlements, and membership of sports clubs, is seen as less and less acceptable. In Ireland the fact that the richest ten per cent of the population are, on average, fifteen times better off than the poorest ten per cent, is often cited as unjust.

On the whole, people do not get as excited about the last injustice mentioned as the first two. The first two examples concern basic liberties of citizenship, and it is widely agreed that citizens of a just society should have the same basic rights. It is not, however, universally agreed that the distribution of wealth and income should be equal. One reason for this is that nowadays equality of wealth or income is seen to be

less basic a right than equality of opportunity. In practice this means opportunity to gain positions of authority, status and wealth. If a woman, or a man, is discriminated against in a competition for the post of managing director, carrying a salary of £100,000, such unequal treatment is likely to be considered more unfair than the fact that the canteen workers in the company earn £6,000 per annum.



But a serious side-effect of equality of opportunity is that it militates against economic equality, and this in turn, over time, makes equality of opportunity impossible. It should be stressed that it is not the *equality* of opportunity that is the problem, but the acceptance of *opportunity* it entails. In practice, opportunity means opportunity for *advantage*. Our culture makes champions of people who 'get on' in life. 'Getting on' means being in a better job than that of one's parents, living in an area populated by rich people, being able to holiday in places inaccessible to poor people.

In recent years the culture of opportunity has become rampant in the industrialised world. Government policies reflect this. Thus there was great concern in Ireland in the mid-eighties that the tax regime would inhibit bright young people from gaining economic advantage over their fellows, and that they would be 'forced' to emigrate. In other words taxation meant

there was not enough opportunity for inequality to make Ireland attractive. In Britain, recent Tory party policies have reflected a glorification of advantage, of getting on, of unequal wealth, with emphasis on lower taxes, privatisation, curbing the trade unions, and supposedly 'freeing the market'.

The charge is sometimes made that pressing for more economic equality is merely 'envy'. But envy can be a cheap word to use. People are justifiably resentful that society can treat them so unequally in the way it distributes its wealth. Moreover a lack of economic equality, however engendered, creates inequalities of other basic needs and rights. Technically the poor in Ireland have equal 'basic' liberties with the rich (defined as e.g. the right to vote and be voted for, freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience and thought, the right to property and freedom from arbitrary arrest). But they do not have equality in basic needs such as education or training, healthcare, access to the law on many issues, equality of respect, access to employment, housing or leisure activities. Nor, consequently, do they have equality of opportunity. The inequality in basic needs is bad enough in itself, but it also means that in practice some of the so-called basic liberties, such as the right to be elected to public office, or the right to private property, are meaningless.

It must also be stressed that great inequality will always cause poverty, because poverty has a relative, as well as an absolute dimension. It is now accepted that an individual in Ireland (or in the U.S., or Germany) can be said to be living in poverty if their income is less than half the average income in that country. This is because such a level of income will inevitably exclude them from ordinary living patterns and activities. To quote Townsend, Poverty in the UK, (1979):

"Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the kind of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged, or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities."

The stated objectives of the last Government Budget (February 9, 1995) illustrates the tension between

policies designed to create greater equality, and those designed to give more opportunities for greater inequality. Mr Quinn stated:

"I intend to set out three objectives for the Budget: (1) to reward work; (2) to promote enterprise; and (3) to strengthen social solidarity.."

It is not the purpose of this article to state that the 1995 budget was a particularly unjust one. Nevertheless it is inescapable that, as bald statements, objectives (1) and (2) are likely to reduce the social solidarity which objective (3) is aimed at, since they will increase economic inequality, and intensify the social exclusion of those who cannot access work or find opportunities for entrepreneurship. The first two objectives pander to the ideology of the dominant, who proclaim that they cannot use their wealth and talents in the interests of society unless they are allowed to be fifteen times as wealthy as those at the bottom of the heap.

Not even the most rabid egalitarian expects or desires that all people should be exactly equal in income, wealth or personal circumstances. Yet is there any good reason why we cannot construct a society where the richest person is no more than, say, twice as well off as the poorest? Are we so venal that we cannot contribute our gifts and talents back to the society who gave them to us without demanding exorbitant compensation? It may be true that the best talents can only be tapped by allowing rewards to be allocated according to labour market forces. But in practice high rewards are given to individuals precisely where the market is *not* allowed to operate frequently. High profits come about as the result of lack of competition and monopoly power, and high salaries and 'emoluments' as a result of closed shops, boardroom cliques, old boy networks, and effective exclusion of most shareholders, not to speak of the general public. If a 'Dutch auction' was allowed to operate for the jobs of the board members of the largest companies and financial institutions in Ireland, (assuming that it was possible for the auctioneer to identify comparable talent) how many of the present incumbents would keep their jobs?

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES -WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Once again various community, statutory and voluntary organisations are submitting applications for funding to the European Union's (EU) Community Initiatives, such as Horizon, Now, Youthstart and Adapt. The Initiatives are aimed at strengthening cohesion within the EU through the achievement of a more balanced economic and social development.

The first three are different strands within the "Employment and Development of Human Resources" Initiative and are intended to contribute to the achievement of Objective Three of the EU's structural policies for the period 1994-1999. This Objective is aimed at combating long-term unemployment and facilitating the integration into working life of young people and other persons excluded from the labour market, for example, the disabled, drug addicts, travellers and ex-offenders. The aims of the Employment/Human Resources Initiative are the following:

- development of human resources
- improvement of working patterns
- the revival of employment
- support for equal opportunities for women in the labour market

The Adapt Initiative is a response to the changes taking place within labour markets and production systems at a global level. This Initiative relates to Objective Four of the EU's structural policies. Objective Four is aimed at facilitating the adaption of workers to industrial changes and to changes in production systems. Adapt is intended to assist enterprises in order to improve their productions systems, to access new markets, to develop new products and to enable the workforce to be trained in new areas where skills are in demand.

The Initiatives are intended to support only pilot projects, which will operate on average for two years, the aim of which is to explore new methods of working on a small scale in order to test their effectiveness to address particular social and economic problems. The funding is not intended to form long-term core financing for the projects involved in the Initiatives.

The key criteria for the approval of funding is that of innovation. Projects must show that the actions that they intend to undertake are innovative. Projects are not funded to simply extend an existing service/ action or to duplicate an approach being pursued elsewhere. This raises particular difficulties for community/voluntary organisations involved in the Initiatives who have difficulty accessing financial resources to maintain existing services. A number of community/voluntary organisations have received funding for "innovative" projects over the period 1991-1994, as part of the Employment/Human Resource Initiative. The funding for these projects has now stopped and the question which needs to be asked is, what happens to the innovative actions after the Initiative ends? Do they just stop and are the lessons ignored? Do organisations in order to access more financial resources simply think of more innovative ways of addressing the same problems and apply for more funding?

The funding community organisations receive from the Initiative tends to become an intrinsic part of their operation. If an organisation has access only to relatively small and insecure amounts of money and then becomes involved in the Initiative it could receive funding of £200,000 for two years. This would tend to change the whole profile of the organisation. The funding would enable it to develop organisational skills and employ staff. They would undertake a series of actions which may prove effective in addressing a particular social/economic problem.

When the funding ends it will have a detrimental effect on the organisation as a whole. Without access to continued funding the alternative is for the organisation to think of a new innovative activity and apply to the Initiative once again in the hope of receiving more funding. Without some way of integrating the lessons learned from the Initiative, the experiences gained and the potential value of the projects are now lost to the community. How can this situation be remedied?

Clearly a structure is needed to allow organisations involved in the Initiatives to access resources in order to consolidate the innovative activities over the medium to long-term. This is necessary to ensure the maximisation of the benefits provided by the Initiatives, which gives organisations the opportunity to explore new methods of addressing serious social and economic problems.

Long-term benefits will be sustainable only if there is a structure through which the lessons from the pilots can be used to influence more mainstream national and EU policies, and resources are put in place to maintain those elements of the Initiatives which are demonstrated as being effective. Unless such a structure is established and, importantly, that participating projects are aware that the positive aspects of the pilots can be integrated into mainstream actions, then the effectiveness of Initiatives such as those above will be limited.

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The area of Services is now such a major source of job creation that it may be useful to list some of the activities that are included under this heading:

Banking, financial services
Insurance
Estate Agents, Developers
Legal Services
Accountants, Tax Experts, Auditors
Consulting Engineers and Architects
Advertising and Press Agencies
Market Research and Management Consultancy
Computer and Office Machine Services
Employment Agencies
Debt Collecting Agencies
Security Services
Translation and Typing Bureaus
Leisure, Arts and Culture
Travel and Transport
Personal Services e.g. hairdressing

NEW JOBS - WHERE WILL THEY COME FROM?

There are expected to be 115,000 more people at work in the Republic of Ireland in 1998 than there were in 1991. This will not be enough to absorb the number of young people coming on to the labour market, nor the people displaced from declining industries and occupations. Nevertheless it is a significant number of jobs, and it is important that anyone with an interest in employment trends should know where the additional jobs are likely to come from. There is broad agreement among a number of agencies such as FAS, the ESRI, the ILO etc. about likely trends.

The Growth Sectors

The projected new jobs can be looked at under two different headings. First of all, certain **SECTORS** seem likely to expand their employment. This is shown in the Table below.

Sector	Projected Job Increase 1991-1998
Miscellaneous Market* Services	63,000
High Technology Manufacturing	24,000
Distribution Services	23,000
Non-Market* Services, mainly	
Health & Education	23,000
Building	12,000
Traditional Manufacturing	4,000
Public Administration, Security	4,000
Transport and Communication	2,000

By 'market' services are meant services that are traded i.e. bought and sold. Many services provided by the State, such as education, are generally paid for out of taxation and are not bought and sold and are thus 'non-market'

In the EC about 7 million people are employed in business services, and over 2 million in leisure, arts and culture.

The Growth Occupations

Within the growth sectors, not all **OCCUPATIONS** are forecast to grow. For instance although Building is set to grow, employment of building labourers is likely to decrease, while employment of, say, quantity surveyors is likely to grow.

The occupations which seem likely to grow in greatest numbers, in order of magnitude, are:

Proprietors/managers in service industries
Senior Managers
Sales assistants
Clerks
Business, finance and legal professionals
Health 'associate' professionals
 (nurses, technicians)
Typists and telephonists
Catering occupations
Skilled building workers
Education professionals
Engineering and science professionals
Electrical/electronic operatives
Security workers
Electricians and Fitters

Other occupations likely to grow include health and other professionals, sales agents, drivers, and craft workers.

Women's employment prospects are expected to be affected by a number of different developments:

- the increase in 'unisex' employment, with more women being employed in, say, engineering; but also more men being employed in, say, nursing.

- mechanisation in industries, especially traditional industries, where women are employed;

- the decline of some traditional industries where women are employed.

Thus by 1998 a higher number, and proportion, of women can expect to be employed (or self-employed) as managers, supervisors, sales agents, lawyers, accountants, engineers and technicians.

A declining number of women can expect to be employed as packers, bottlers, textile workers; and a declining proportion, at least, of women in certain professional occupations traditionally occupied by women such as nurses and physiotherapists.

Sources:

Employment in Europe 1994, European Commission, 1994.

Occupational Employment Forecasts 1998, FAS/ESRI, 1995.

YOUTH WORK HIT BY DRUG ABUSE

Peter McVerry, S.J.

The emergence of readily available illegal drugs has effected the most significant change in youth work in deprived areas of Dublin in recent years. The characteristics of the typical drug user are young, unemployed, early school-leaver, living in disadvantaged areas and often from dysfunctional families. For many, the meaninglessness of life, with its sad and confusing past and its bleak and aimless future, makes drug use attractive, at least temporarily. Some current drug users are themselves the children of drug users and many are rearing children who will, in turn, be seeking treatment in the drug clinics in a few years time. The problems that I experience operating a number of hostels for homeless young people, are:

- the long delays, up to six or seven weeks, in even accessing a detoxification programme. This makes life in the family or hostel almost impossible as parents or staff try to be supportive of the drug user in his/her willingness to seek help but also having to minimize the potential damage to other children in the home

- the absurdly long delays (sometimes four or five months) in accessing the ten bed unit in Beaumont Hospital which serves an estimated 4,000 to 7,000 hard drug users (depending on who is doing the estimating!)

- the absence of any treatment programme (as distinct from a detox programme) for medical card holders who are under 17 and the availability of only one treatment programme, Coolmine Therapeutic Centre, for over 17s. Coolmine is a very valuable programme, but it is only one model of treatment for drug users and is not suitable for everyone. Younger people who feel very insecure and with very low self-image may not be suited to the model which Coolmine operates

- the huge waiting lists for the Community Drug Clinics in Baggot St., Amiens St., and Cherry

Orchard involving often a year or more before a vacancy occurs. While recognising the difficulty in opening more Community Clinics because of local opposition to any suggested location, the political apathy on this issue is only matched by the political apathy on travellers' issues

- the failure to involve more GPs in the treatment of long-term drug users. Many GPs are understandably wary of having drug users coming to their surgeries and the lack of readily accessible back-up, such as urine analysis, ensures that manipulation of GPs by drug users who wish to sell their physiotherapy is all too easily achieved

- the absence of any proper detox, treatment or education programme within the male prisons where many drug users end up, often serving relatively long sentences during which some rehabilitation work could usefully be undertaken.

I would consider the minimum service to drug users to include;

- "walk-in" assessment centres where initial steps towards detoxification and treatment are immediately accessible. Such centres ideally should be community based but in the interim, while local residents' fears are dealt with, could be based where available

- ready availability of several residential treatment centres based on different models of treatment

- proper medical detoxification, treatment and education programmes in the prisons, at least up to a standard which is available outside prison

- encouragement and proper resourcing of GPs who are willing to provide services to drug users who have been assessed and stabilised

- an education programme on drugs, alcohol and valium, beginning in primary schools, and including in later years parenting skills.

The inadequacy of resources committed to dealing with the problems of drug users is indicative of the low political concern for the issue. The drug problem is primarily a problem

of poor people and deprived neighbourhoods and therefore gets a token response. In such inadequately resourced services, even committed staff are frustrated at the impossibility of providing quality care to drug users or dealing in any substantial way with their problem. There is no time to work on building self worth or dealing with dysfunctional family relationships.

An adequate response to drug use has to be linked to a comprehensive community care programme. Where drug users come from dysfunctional families in deprived neighbourhoods, with family members who can no longer cope and are worn out trying to care, a drug treatment programme without a proper community care programme is seriously ineffective. An inadequately resourced drug treatment programme linked to an inadequately resourced community care programme has brought us to the mess in which we now find ourselves.

A whole re-assessment of our response to the drug problem is required. We need to fundamentally question what we are doing. But a political system which is more concerned with the problem of crime and social control than with treating addiction and which seeks instant solutions even for complex problems, is probably incapable of initiating such a re-assessment and certainly not prepared to provide a co-ordinated, inter-disciplinary response which can meet the needs of drug users and the multiple personal, interpersonal and community difficulties which have created and which maintain their drug addiction. The problem is going to get much worse before it gets any better.

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ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

HOW RELEVANT TO THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED?

Since the mid 1970's unemployment in most Western economies has increased. A number of factors can account for this:

- Declining economic growth since the mid 1970's oil shocks.
- Structural changes in the world production systems, largely as a result of the increased use of technology and global trade.
- Past policy inadequacies which contributed to poor economic performance and ineffective labour market policies.

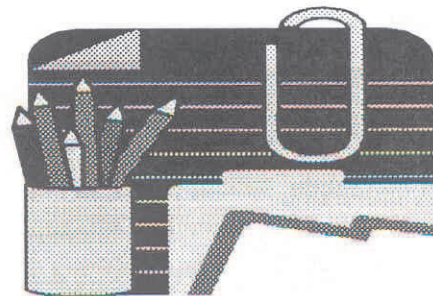
Other factors such as the political changes in Eastern Europe and the growth of new economies in South East Asia have all contributed to a changed economic, political and social environment compared to the 1960's.

A growing feature of the unemployment problem, in Europe, is the increasing numbers of long-term unemployed (individuals unemployed for over twelve months). This is particularly the case in Ireland where long-term unemployment accounts for 48% of total unemployment. Individuals with low levels of skills and education tend to remain unemployed longer. Due to the interaction between housing and labour market policies the long-term unemployed also tend to be concentrated within certain communities.

The longer a person is unemployed the greater is their exclusion from the economic mainstream of society. In order to address the problem a range of measures needs to be developed, such as subsidised employment, education and training, community and personal development, welfare support and enterprise. These measures should be linked and long-term.

Enterprise and the development of an enterprise culture is often cited as an important ingredient that Ireland lacks in the fight against unemployment. There is no doubt that Ireland must develop more indigenous companies which have the capacity to generate employment opportunities. However, the question which must be asked is, how relevant is enterprise development to the long-term unemployed?

In addressing this question we must first answer another question, i.e., if enterprise development results in more people becoming employers will they employ the long-term unemployed? All the evidence to date indicate that they will not. This arises for a number of reasons. First, in general, employers hold negative views about the long-term unemployed and are therefore reluctant to recruit them. Second, the older, low skilled long-term unemployed, in particular, will still have difficulties in competing with better qualified and younger job seekers. As a result, enterprise development alone will not solve the special labour market problems faced by the long-term unemployed.



The Growth of Self-employment

Enterprise development can however be viewed as a solution to the employment needs of the long-term unemployed by encouraging them to become self-employed. But is this a realistic option?

A higher proportion of those in work in the European Union (EU) are self-employed than in other comparable economic blocs. In part this is due to the greater importance of agriculture to the EU. In most EU countries, around half or more of the people employed in this sector work for themselves.

In 1990, 50% of those engaged in agriculture in the EU were self-employed. Self-employment is also more prominent in the industrial and service sectors of the EU than elsewhere, accounting for 13% of the number in employment, in 1990, compared with 12% in Japan and only around 7% to 8% in the US. In 1991 the self-employed in these sectors accounted for 28% of total employment in Greece, 22% in Italy and 17% in Spain and Portugal, with Ireland and the UK marginally below the EU average of 13%.

Self-employment and the Unemployed

Of those becoming self-employed, in the EU, most were formally working for someone else. Almost 60% of new entrants into self-employment between 1983 and 1991 had previously been employees. Most of the other new entrants had previously been inactive, while only a small proportion, 15%, had been unemployed. This indicates that only a small percentage of those who become self-employed have previously been unemployed. The question that must be asked is, why is this the case? A number of reasons can be put forward:

Unemployed individuals, particularly the long-term unemployed, have low levels of skills and education.

Transferring from a welfare income to one generated from self-employment can create financial insecurity and difficulties.

Personal, social and family problems can affect their level of motivation and confidence.

The unemployed have inadequate personal financial resources for cash flow and start up costs.

The unemployed often have no credit record or references to enable them to access funding from the normal banking system.

For many of the unemployed their skills are suited to the establishment of enterprises in the

service sector. This is a sector for which finances for start up, cash flow etc. is hardest to access from financial institutions.

In Ireland, over the last number of years, measures have been put in place which are intended to encourage and support more long-term unemployed to become self-employed. For example, financial assistance is available from organisations such as First Step, Tallaght Trust Fund, Area Partnerships programmes and the Area Allowance Scheme.

Additional Actions

Despite this progress additional actions are required, in particular the establishment of closer links between local enterprise groups, the long-term unemployed and the main banking institutions. This could take a number of different forms given local conditions. For example:

The establishment of joint programmes aimed at the development of enterprise ideas among the long-term unemployed.

Educational and training programmes in areas such as how to operate bank accounts and financial management.

A percentage of any Enterprise Development Fund, established by the main financial institutions could be used as matched funding for service sector projects which are supported by local enterprise centres and trust funds.

Enterprise development is an important part of the measures needed to tackle unemployment. However, the issues briefly addressed in this article suggest that special recognition must be given to the needs of the long-term unemployed if they are to benefit from the development of an enterprise culture. This applies to both the opportunity for them to become self-employed and the opportunity to access the jobs generated by the additional enterprise activity.

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