

# IRELAND'S REPORT ON HOMES FIZZLES

**Bill Donohue**

Catherine Corless, the local typist from Galway behind the "mass grave" hoax, must be furious. She has every right to be. Just last Friday she spent two hours listening to Ireland's Minister for Children, Katherine Zappone, wax emotional about the Mother and Baby Homes. Corless was all jacked up awaiting the release of the second interim report on this subject. But now she has nothing to chew on.

The report is a dud. Zappone's commission examined the Homes over the period 1922-1998, issuing its first interim report in July 2015. The second interim report, released yesterday, has been sitting on Zappone's desk since last September.

It sat because the government was scared to death of its own liabilities. The Attorney General and others were weighing all of the nitty-gritty legal and financial problems connected to this matter. They prudently concluded that the government would be deeply implicated in any alleged wrongdoing. To top things off, there was no finding of abuse.

The report says that "the Commission is not asserting that abuse occurred in the institutions which it is investigating." In a Q&A published in the official release of the report, it was asked: "Why has the Government decided not to offer redress to unaccompanied children at this time?"

Here is its answer: "The Government examined the matter very carefully. It is conscious that the Commission has made no finding to date about abuse or neglect in these homes." Not much left on the table after that, save, of course, for accusations about a "mass grave." It is nowhere mentioned in the report.

By redress, of course, the alleged victims were looking for cash. But they won't get a dime from their consoling officials. Not even Prime Minister Enda Kenny has any spare change for them.

It should be pointed out that these children were not "unaccompanied." In fact, they were dumped on the doorsteps of the "evil" nuns by their mother or their father: They did not just walk down the street at the age of three looking for Sister Margaret Mary to offer them room and board.

The report owns up to the role of the Irish government, saying, "the fact of financing [the Homes] did give the State the ultimate regulatory power—that is, the power to close the institutions." It was not lost on the officials how consequential this was.

The Irish Times quotes an official who knows what is at stake. "One Minister said that if the Government were to accept the redress recommendation from the commission, then the 'sky' would be the limit for potential future liabilities for the State. This would be a whole new level." The reporter, Fiach Kelly, says the Minister added that "there were no findings of negligence or wrongdoing and the mother and baby homes were not Government regulated."

So what is lawmaker Catherine Connolly going to say about this? Last month she blasted Zappone for sitting on the report. Indeed, she smelled a rat. "What is in it that is so frightening? What is in it that prevents it from being published?"

What is really frightening is people like her who anxiously await condemnatory news about nuns, and are then livid when the probe ends with a whimper. Others, according to the Irish Independent, called the absence of a redress scheme "devastating" and "shameful." Paul Redmond, poster boy for victims, is demanding a meeting with Kenny. If they meet,

perhaps he can tell the prime minister where the shoeboxes are: he is on record saying the nuns buried kids in shoeboxes.

How much loot these activists were looking for is uncertain, but it is a sure bet that if the government wasn't on the hook—and only the nuns stood to being fleeced—there would be a really fat redress package.

The hunt for shoeboxes and a “mass grave” will continue. But sooner or later this game of “hide and seek” will end, and most will realize that this entire war on the nuns has more to do with discrediting the moral voice of the Catholic Church than it has to do with justice.

What is driving the effort to smear the nuns is a full-throated push for abortion rights. By sullyng the Church's past, they weaken its influence today. Give them an “A” for strategy, but an “F” for ethics.