

T H R E S H O L D :   T H E   F I R S T   Y E A R

MAY 1979

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## THRESHOLD: THE FIRST YEAR

### INTRODUCTION

THRESHOLD has now been operating for one year. The office was first opened on Monday 3 April 1978. The following report covers the period up to 31 March 1979 with some emphasis on the six months October 1978 to March 1979.

### GENESIS OF THRESHOLD

THRESHOLD was an initiative of Pax Christi, the International Catholic peace movement. Those who founded the organisation either had direct experience of the housing problem in their own lives or had indirect experience of it through working in the voluntary housing field.

### PERIOD OF THIS REPORT

As already mentioned, this report covers the first year's operation, but it outlines with greater emphasis the second six months in that period. The reason for this is that methods of recording information were changed during the first six months of operation. From 1 October 1978 a system of recording data was used which permits a wider range of problem categories and more complete information to be presented.

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#### NEED FOR AN OFFICE

The Board of THRESHOLD has always been firmly of the opinion that the complex nature of the housing problem and the existing lack of any legal protection for those in the private rented sector, make it imperative to work closely with many individuals and organisations in finding solutions to individual problems of homelessness. This necessity makes an office open during working hours essential to any success. While it was our intention to open such an office, it could not have been opened at so early a date, but for the financial support of the National Committee. We are very pleased to record our gratitude for that support. This first year has been anything but easy. Without finance it would have been impossible.

#### METHOD OF THE REPORT

This report outlines the work of the first year and attempts to relate it to the objectives of the organisation and also to parts of the agreement between THRESHOLD and the National Committee on Pilot Schemes to Combat Poverty. This agreement commenced on 1st December 1978, but was not signed until 7 February 1979.

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#### THRESHOLD OBJECTIVES

##### SHORT TERM

The short term objectives involved helping people to help themselves in solving their housing problems; and to assist people in dealing with organisations and landlords.

The means to be used in this work were information, advice and support.

##### MEDIUM TERM

The medium term objectives included generating an awareness among people of the need for them to act in their own interest to obtain their entitlements; develop links with other organisations relevant to the scope and objectives of THRESHOLD; do research on homelessness to stimulate legislative and attitudinal change and research into the comparative cost of housing; and involve clients in the development and management of the project centre.

The means here include those of the short term objectives, together with research projects and exercises to help liaison with other organisations including local and national government.

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#### LONG TERM

Through evidence, obtained through research, to create a public and political will for change in housing policy and legislation; develop a pilot scheme to promote the idea of voluntary housing aid and education on a national basis; stimulate alternative patterns of housing; and to develop programmes aimed at preventing homelessness by self help and individual planning. In the last point, the key lies in being aware of the problem in advance in order to avoid it. It is too late when the problem strikes, just as it is too late to start thinking of the problems of retirement on the day we retire.

The means to be used in this third group of objectives include those previously mentioned, together with the use of various communications media.

#### TIME SPAN OF OBJECTIVES

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The objectives summarised above represent a substantial programme.

It would be irresponsible to attempt them all at once, for some follow from others. The objectives, however, are not mutually exclusive and do not presuppose a chronological start up sequence i.e. it is not envisaged, for example, that medium term objectives must wait until the short terms are achieved. Some medium term objectives have in fact been achieved in part through using a methodology which encourages people to help themselves, and also by working in co-operation with other bodies.(see appendix I).

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The Board of THRESHOLD, therefore, had a timescale in mind for achieving the objectives: short term to be achieved over twelve months; medium terms 18 months to two years; long term three to five years. These timescales presume that the objectives are dynamic not static. That is to say, the work involved in the objectives is on-going. It does not cease because an objective is achieved eg, helping people to help themselves solve their housing problem is a short term objective in terms of getting that work started, but once started it will continue as long as THRESHOLD continues. Moreover, no group of objectives can be reasonably achieved to the maximum in the minimum time. Performance and effectiveness will improve with growing knowledge and experience.

#### RECRUITMENT

Our first practical task was to recruit someone to run the office, co-ordinate work and be a contact point. We advertised in the three national daily papers and received 43 replies. We short-listed six of these and set up a sub-committee of three, which included a person from outside THRESHOLD, who was experienced in selection interviewing. The sub-committee chose Sean McGhee and this was ratified by the Board. We opened the office for the first time on Monday 3 April 1978.

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A second full-time member of staff, Ann Dempsey, joined us at the beginning of October 1978. She has handled all secretarial work for the office and has also been very closely involved with clients.

## VOLUNTARY EFFORT

The primary work of threshold is to be done through the activities of volunteers. In the first year, voluntary effort was not as high as was hoped. It is time that the Board, composed of twelve volunteers, met regularly either at management and policy meetings or in sub-committees, and that six of them engaged in other activities such as interviewing, data collection and office work. In addition, five other volunteers, not members of the Board, also interviewed clients either in Church Street or Rathmines from November onwards.

However, the complexity of the work made haste imprudent. Moreover, the opening of the office, and its accompanying work load, seemed to make the voluntary effort appear smaller than it was. It is unlikely, had the office not opened, that voluntary effort would have speeded up. The worker of the office prepared the way for substantial voluntary work and plans for this are in train.

A six week training course has recently concluded (for content see Appendic V) and this involved an average of 24 people each week. On the second last night of the course, they filled in a substantial questionnaire indicating, among other things, the amount of time per week they were will to commit to Threshold and what work they would undertake e.g. interviewing, follow-up case work, research support, office work, befriending etc. As a result the sub-committee on volunteers was able to plan a comprehensive schedule and from the end of June we will be interviewing five nights per week in both Church Street and Rathmines as compared with the current two nights in each location. Three of those on the training course were originally clients, apart from the four members of the current Board.

It is appreciated that a course such as this cannot turn out people ready for interviewing. It can, however, provide people with

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information and an opportunity of hearing problems described and discussed. It can also help them to identify personal skills.

#### PRELIMINARY TASKS

Two preliminary tasks had to be undertaken before significant progress could be made: misconceptions in our own minds about the nature and complexity of the housing problem had to be cleared away; and a track record had to be established vis-a-vis other organisations, if we were to establish a working relationship with them.

The relative quiet of the first quarter, when only 69 clients came to us, was helpful in a situation in which we were trying to find our feet. This was particularly true of Sean McGhee and he used the time to make a significant number of contacts. These have continued to increase either by THRESHOLD seeking the assistance of other organisations or by other organisations referring clients to us. Ongoing contact has been maintained with some 42 statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations and these are listed in Appendix I.

From July 1978, however, numbers increased substantially and for the next six months they averaged over 100 additional cases per month. In the fourth quarter, the monthly average exceeded 135

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new cases per month. This was all the more interesting in the light of our decision not to publicise THRESHOLD during the first year's operation. (see APPENDIX II).

We had to learn by doing. It is the most effective method of learning, but it is slow at the start (one is groping to find ways), and mistakes are made. This dual process took up considerable time in the first twelve months.

#### WORK OF THE FIRST YEAR

The volume of work in the first twelve months was very high and altogether 1154 cases were considered. Their distribution throughout the year is shown in FIGURE I.

FIGURE I

Quarter Apr/Jun '78		Quarter Jul/Sep '78		Quarter Oct/Dec '78		Quarter Jan/Mar '79	
April	2	July*	83	Oct.	134	Jan.	147
May	20	August	104	Nov.	137	Feb.	116
June	47	Sept.	136	Dec.	75	Mar.	153
	69		323		346		416

\* First 19 cases in July not categorised as to marital status.

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#### MARITAL STATUS

In July 1978 we began to breakdown enquiries according to the marital status of the enquirer and also to record enquiries from landlords. This analysis is shown in FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 2

	July/Sept '78		Oct/Dec '78		Jan/Mar '79	
	No of cases	%	No of cases	%	No of cases	%
Single Persons	164	54.5	187	54	267	64
Single Parents	44	14.0	43	13	23	6
Couples	93	30.5	109	31	119	29
Landlords	3	1.0	7	2	7	1
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TOTAL	* 304		346		416	

\*First 19 cases in July not categorised as to marital status.

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Fig. 3

	Repairs	Rent Increases	Evictions	L.A. Accomm.	House Purchase	Deposit	Trespass	Homeless	Misc.
Single Persons	18	55	55	3	3	7	5	6	35
Single Parents	4	1	3	7	16	1	-	10	1
Couples	8	13	16	27	9	2	1	21	12
	30	69	74	37	28	10	6	37	48

Fig 4

QUARTER JAN - MAR 1979

	Repairs	Rent Increases	Evictions	L.A. Accomm.	House Purchase	Deposit	Trespass	Homeless	Misc.
Single Persons	33	61	55	1	13	14	5	2	83
Single Parents	2	2	1	4	5	-	-	5	4
Couples	10	10	27	19	21	-	-	10	22
	45	73	83	24	39	14	5	17	109

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#### CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMS

In the first six months, cases were classified under five headings: homeless, evictions, repairs, rent increases and miscellaneous. From October 1978, the number of categories was increased to 9 as shown in FIGURES 3 and 4. The miscellaneous category includes queries relating to ESB supply, the setting of coin meters, the rights and obligations of tenants interpretation of leases, harrassment, squatting, noise and complaints from and about fellow tenants and neighbours. However, from 1 April 1979 the number of problem categories has been further increased to 11, and matters relating to harrassment and leases/agreements are now shown under their own heading and apart from the miscellaneous category.

( FIGURES 3 & 4 see page 9A)

#### SOLUTIONS

While each case must be handled on its merits and particular circumstances, there are wide areas of similarity among cases. Individual cases vary in detail particularly in relation to urgency, severity and personal circumstances. However, all solutions offered take into account the fact that tenants in un-controlled lettings do not have any security of tenure. The emphasis is on problem solving rather than confrontation, although where there has been no alternative confrontation has been sought in a legal context with success.

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#### GENERAL PROBLEM

There is one general problem relating to the recording of solutions which should be noted at this stage. It is very difficult to obtain an accurate fix on solutions in the information/advice area. It is simple enough in the case of illegal eviction where injunctions are sought against landlords. They can be counted. The same is true of house purchase. In the case of information and advice, it is difficult to have accurate records. The reason is that we can only know if a particular option has been chosen or a given solution has worked, if the client returns to say so. Nine times out of ten they do not. If the problem continues, or as happens, a further problem arises some time later, clients will come back. Negatively, it could be assumed, therefore, that if they do not return, matters have worked out either as desired or as predicted. All clients are invited to return, if the information or advice given does not help or fit the particular circumstances. The fact that people do return in these situations suggests that a degree of optimism is justified. Moreover, it is characteristic of problems in the housing field, analogous to health problems, that those who have solved their problem wish to forget it ever existed. This is a very natural reaction.

#### NINE CATEGORIES

The following are general indications of the nature of the information and advice given to clients whose problems fit into the 9 categories into which our work was divided up to 31 March 1979.

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1. REPAIRS

Depending on the nature and extent of the repairs to be carried out:

a) Where repairs are of a minor nature:

There is no effective legal sanction which can be imposed against the landlord in order to force him to carry out these repairs. A common sense approach is to advise the tenant to address the following comments either verbally or in writing to the landlord is usually advised.

"I realise how time constraints prohibit you from getting these done and accordingly, if it is all right with you, I shall have the repairs carried out and shall deduct the cost from the rent. Should I not hear from you to the contrary by X date, I shall assume that you have agreed to my suggestion."

This approach has proved to be fairly successful.

b) Where the repairs are of a serious nature or are required by Bye-Law, it is pointed out to the landlord that he is in breach of Section X of the Bye-Laws and he is asked to get the repairs done immediately. Should this fail to prove effective, the matter is reported to the Corporation.

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In some instances the landlord advises the tenant:

"If the flat does not suit, you are free to go." This can precipitate a Notice to Quit, leading to eviction.

The possibility of this happening is always spelt out to the client.

## 2. RENT INCREASES

### a) Controlled Tenancies:

Tenants are advised not to pay any increase. We also take the opportunity of establishing whether a rates element is present in the current rent. If so we advise the tendering of the true rent, that is the current rent less the rates element.

### b) Uncontrolled Tenancies:

The only factor with a controlling influence on rents in these instances is the principal of supply and demand. There is no legal inhibition on a landlord who seeks to increase rent. There is no legal obligation on the landlord to grant relief following the removal of rates, notwithstanding the comments by the minister during his answers to questions in the Dail on this subject. The client is always advised of these facts and accordingly they have little choice in paying the increase. There is always the temptation, especially where the question of repairs also arises, to advocate the withholding of all or part of the total rent or the proposed increase. This would put the tenant outside the law and would endanger the protection the tenant may obtain from a court of competent jurisdiction if the landlord

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harassed or even illegally evicted the tenant. The equity maxim of "he who seeks equity should seek it with clean hands" is always borne in mind.

In a number of instances, we have written to the landlord and made a case for not increasing the rent. This has met with mixed success. Again the over-riding factor is the tenant's insecurity of tenure and the inevitable success which the landlord will enjoy if he ultimately seeks to re-possess through the appropriate channels.

### 3. EVICTIONS

These can be divided into two categories:

- a) threat of eviction; and
- b) illegal eviction.

#### a) Threat of Eviction

- ie i) verbal request/instruction to leave
- ii) written notice to quit.

- i) Where verbal request/instruction is issued, we advise the tenant that they do not have to leave without a Court Order. We also advise that, if the landlord takes

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legal proceedings, he will inevitably succeed. If the tenant agrees, we write to the landlord seeking a reason for his actions and advise that the tenant will not be leaving. We also advise him against taking the law into his own hands and advise him to seek the relief of the appropriate court if he wishes to pursue the matter. The cost involved in doing this usually means that the matter dies a natural death.

- ii) Again, where the written notice to quit is issued, we advise the tenant that he does not have to leave without a Court Order. The advice is given tempered by informing the tenant that, due to the nature of the letting, if the landlord seeks the relief of a court of competent jurisdiction, he will inevitably succeed.

We always advise the tenant to tender the rent after the expiration of the notice to quit. Should the landlord accept, the net effect is that the tenancy is renewed and the notice to quit becomes void. If the landlord does not accept the rent, the tenant is advised to place the rent each week (or whenever it becomes due) in a separate bank or post office account, in case the landlord gets a decree eventually for mesne rates.

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It also means that if the landlord takes the law into his own hands and the tenant seeks the protection of the Court, he is able to demonstrate that he was willing and able at all times to pay the rent and his position is not compromised. Usually when a landlord issues a notice to quit, it shows that he knows his business and has taken advice and accordingly the chances of illegal eviction are reduced.

b) Illegal Eviction

This usually stems from landlords feeling that they can do as they wish with "their property". In the initial three month period we negotiated ourselves with the landlord and advised him of the consequences of not heeding our "instructions". Over the past nine months or so, we have advised clients to seek the aid of a solicitor. Where they agree, we refer them to a solicitor known to us, who immediately seek an injunction for re-instatement and subsequently appropriate damages. Altogether 48 cases were involved and clients were successful in all but one of these. Of these 48 cases, 35 were settled to the clients satisfaction prior to an injunction. The solicitors negotiated with the landlords. In the remaining 13 cases, 12 injunctions were granted with damages and costs being paid by the landlords. In the 13th case, the injunction was denied, but, we negotiated the re-housing of the clients to their satisfaction.

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From experience the cost involved to landlords who shun Court proceedings following on actions of this sort, works out usually around £900 to £1,000.

Illegal evictions vary from the locking out of tenants to their physical removal from the premises together with their belongings.

#### 4. LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOMMODATION

As can be imagined, each case in this category is different. Generally, we examine the points allocation for the person in question and seek ways to increase these, ie, by trying to establish increased entitlement or otherwise to medical points, welfare points, etc. What we do is request the client to get the appropriate certificate from their medical advisers which we then submit to the Local Authority with appropriate representations. Where we feel the client falls into a special category, we make representations to the Authority, seeking overall priority on whatever grounds are possible.

We have always found the Local Authority and Dublin Corporation in particular, humane, understanding and helpful in these instances. This we believe is the result of reasoned and reasonable representations to them which have contributed to the building up of mutual trust over the period of our operations.

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5. HOUSE PURCHASE

The first thing that we do in these cases, is establish whether the client wishes to buy or not. If they do, having regard to their salary, we assist them in obtaining Local Authority loans or Building Society loans, as the case may be. In some instances, where the difference between the resources to hand and the gross cost of purchase is up to £2,500 to £3,000, a bank is requested to make up the difference, by way of a supplementary loan. In our experience, all the associated banks, either to a greater or lesser degree, have made this kind of loan available to THRESHOLD clients. Where the client is tendering a booking deposit, we invariably supply the covering letter, which sets out the conditions under which the deposit is being paid, ie, subject to loan approval and satisfactory completion of contract. The extension of the Local Authority Small Dwellings Acquisition/Low Rise Mortgage scheme to single parents was of enormous assistance in bringing home ownership within the grasp of many single parents.

There are, of course, arguments against home ownership. However, given the financial and temperamental ability of the client to cope with buying, our advice would be to do so. Our concern must be with the immediate plight of a family and the real possibility of taking them out of the difficulty for

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good. Often this can be done for a monthly financial commitment which is less than the rent paid for a "flat" when tax relief is taken into account. Moreover, the person who leaves the rented sector in this way, leaves also a flat for someone else. Altogether 35 clients have either bought or are buying their own houses. This question of home ownership is one on which the Board had to revise its views in the light of experience. Initially, we did not see house purchase as a practical solution given the level of prices. Experience proved us to be wrong.

6. DEPOSITS

Deposits vary from case to case, but are usually established on the basis of a week or multiple of a week's rent. There is evidence that some landlords at least, make a practice of withholding all or part of the deposit, for sometimes spurious reasons when a tenant is leaving. Landlords sometimes tend to confuse (either deliberately or otherwise) normal wear and tear and damage due to negligence on the part of the tenant. Where deposits are withheld it is always difficult to establish the true facts of the situation, as sometimes we have found our clients have not given us full particulars. Usually we deal with these cases by writing to the landlord, demanding the return of the deposit, and if this does not produce results, we write again, informing the landlord that we are advising the client to place the matter in the hands of a solicitor. Usually the landlord will then make a case to justify his action and the matter is then usually resolved. In a small number of instances however, clients were obliged to put

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the matter in the hands of Solicitors. In one instance, towards the end of the period under review, a spokesman for a limited company, who are the owners of a premises, advised the tenant that "limited companies do not return deposits!"

7. TRESPASS

In cases where we suspect trespass, we first establish whether the landlord, at the time of letting, reserved the right to enter the premises at any time during the tenant's occupation. This is rarely the case, but nevertheless it is crucial when trying to establish whether trespass has taken place or not. If the landlord has not reserved that right, we invariably advise the client to alter the lock on the door and if the landlord subsequently makes an issue of the matter, we usually advise him of the legal position regarding trespass. It would appear that trespass is very widespread but most tenants, whether it be due to ignorance of the law or not, rarely make an issue of it.

8. HOMELESSNESS

In this context the term homeless means roofless and not the meaning normally applied by THRESHOLD. Homeless persons and families are usually committed in the interim, either by the Health Board in one of the hostels, or with relations.

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The Corporation gives special treatment to people who in the normal course would qualify for Local Authority accommodation anyway, who find themselves homeless, through no fault of their own. This would normally mean that they had been evicted legally from private rented accommodation, had been locked out of a relatives home, or had returned from abroad without making the necessary provision for accommodation. We liaise between the Health Board and Corporation and assemble all the necessary documentation, etc, so that the Corporation are in a position to offer emergency accommodation.

In some instances people who initially came to us because of their homeless situation, by availing of emergency accommodation in order to establish themselves in a work situation, eventually went on to buy their own homes within six or seven months of first consulting us. The hostel accommodation which is available, particularly for families, is uninviting and hopelessly inadequate. There is no hostel whatsoever in Dublin, which will take an entire family of mother, father and children.

The situation however with regard to single people, is always that little bit more difficult as, unless they are over 56 years of age, the Local Authority usually has no function. Each case is different, as the question of means,

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the persons own resources, etc, becomes relevant. In some cases we have succeeded in getting flats for people or advising them on how best to go about getting one.

9. MISCELLANEOUS

The miscellaneous section covers enquiries regarding the terms of Leases/Agreements, ESB supply, noise, harassment, etc.

a) Leases/Agreements

In these cases the Lease/Agreement is perused and the client advised as to its content and implication. In some instances the assistance of the Solicitors was enlisted.

b) ESB Supply

Enquiries of this nature usually centre around the settings of coin metres. If the landlord is overcharging, by not providing sufficient units per coin, he is made aware of the fact and if he still persists, the matter is referred to the Prices Commission to take appropriate action.

c) Noise, harassment, etc

Enquiries in this category usually occur where there are inter-tenant disputes in the house and accordingly the matter is always delicate and difficult to resolve.

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Normally we advise clients to discuss the matter openly and fully with the offending tenants. In other instances, where the neighbours complain to the landlord about the general conduct of the tenants, this usually precipitates the service of a notice to quit.

Landlords, it would appear, are more apt to appease those living in the neighbourhood in which their property is situated, rather than make any constructive approaches to their tenants.

## RESEARCH POLICY

## General

Our research sub-committee has developed a set of recommendations which we consider are most appropriate to form the basis the development of Threshold's research policy. The sub-committee has deliberately refrained from drawing up a wholly dogmatic statement which would seek to comprehend all aspects of future research. It has provided a flexible policy document which is as flexible as possible. It allows wide scope in regard to the selection and timing of particular research topics, while ensuring that all selected topics are in accordance with Threshold's objectives. The board has accepted this flexible approach to research policy. It has also accepted the recommendation that research policy should be developed in two stages. The research priorities appropriate to those stages are listed later under each stage. Other issues integral to the development of a research policy will also be outlined.

So far the major problems encountered have involved the private rented sector. As other organisations such as NATO and ACRA are looking after the interests of tenants in the public sector and owner occupiers, Threshold's research will be confined, initially, to the private rented sector. We don't necessarily see solutions to the problems confronting people in the private rented sector in that sector. For this reason, we are building up relationships with individuals, organisations and institutions such as state agencies, banks, building societies, solicitors, auctioneers, agents and local government agencies. A longer term approach lies in promoting the development of alternative patterns of tenure.

Role of Research in Threshold

While it is recognised that the objectives outlined above are

fundamental to Threshold's future operations, it must also be accepted that the organisation cannot continue indefinitely merely as a purveyor of advice and information. Although there will be a continuing need for such a service, it will not bring about change. As such, the evolution of Threshold as a useful organisation, in the medium terms, must be based on the contribution it can make towards promoting reform in the private rented sector. Threshold will have to address itself to more fundamental issues about the nature and functions of a private rented sector in our housing system, and how these functions can be most efficiently and equitably fulfilled. The evolution of Threshold in this manner must be based on the production of detailed and wide-ranging research. We see such research developing in two stages.

#### Stage One Research Objectives

Threshold's second phase of development is seen as involving the creation of public awareness of the problems in the private rented sector. It is intended that this be achieved by means of a series of publicity campaigns. These campaigns will be based on the findings of research work undertaken on the large amount of data currently held in Threshold's files. From these files we can identify a range of issues which arise over and over again, e.g. rent increases, illegal evictions, poor living conditions, harrassment and trespass by landlords or their agents, lack of security of tenure, and lack of knowledge, among others. The issue of rent control could also be examined at this state.

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The first stage of research would, accordingly, have as its objective the analysis of such issues, using individual case studies as back-up for more generalised statements, in order to demonstrate publicly the severe limitations which beset the private rented sector, and to enable solutions to be advanced which would alleviate those limitations. This stage would have a rather limited objective to bring about improvements in the existing accomodation without attempting to influence the actual supply.

#### Second Stage Research Objectives

This stage poses and attempts to answer fundamental questions concerning the long term role of private rented accomodation and questions whether the role can be more effectively filled by an alternative form of tenure. If private rented accomodation is to continue or an alternative is to be developed, what section of the population should it aim to serve? How can an adequate supply be ensured? How should it be distributed and managed? Where should future supplies be located? What should be the role, if any, of central and local government? What polich should govern rent levels? Should subsidies be given and, if so, to whom? There are but some of the many questions which need to be answered about the private rented sector. The answers to these questions will contribute to a comprehensive housing policy embracing public and private sector rented accomodation and owner occupation.

Our major contribution to the formation of such a policy will be in our background research on the functioning of the private rented sector, and/or in terms of the proposals we can make regarding alternative tenure forms, such as accomodation provided by voluntary housing associations.

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#### Employment of Research Worker

It is agreed that Threshold should employ a researcher on a part-time basis to do its research. To this end, a suitably qualified person is being sought and the appointment will be made as soon as is feasible.

#### Selection of Research Topics

The selection of research topics in the first stage should emanate from recommendations made by the research and campaign sub-committee to the Board. The final details should be worked out between the researcher and the research sub-committee. It is of the highest importance that such topics be clearly defined and understood by the Board and the researcher. It is essential also that both parties understand the objectives behind each piece of research.

#### Research Facilities

To do the research work effectively, the researcher would need access to a wide range of facilities. These would include both individuals and organisations and the latter would include specialist research bodies and specialist libraries. Threshold also needs to build up a basic library of relevant books, reports, journals and cuttings.

#### Research Timetable

Threshold aims to launch its initial campaign in the autumn of this year. Following on this campaign, we hope aim to initiate two further campaigns in 1980. Furthermore, 1980 should see a start on one of the second stage research issues already mentioned.

Most of the issues discussed have some bearing on the relationship between Threshold and the National Committee. In the general context

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of research findings, there is the question of the use which the National Committee may find for them. More particularly there is the precise way in which they might be used by both Threshold and the National Committee. This matter requires discussion and clarification.

#### Conclusion

The policy and plans outlined above are in accordance with our objectives and should contribute to their development. Moreover, these research priorities are consistent with the relevant articles of the agreement between the National Committee and Threshold.

#### CO-OPTION TO THE BOARD

The Board has co-opted its first member. He is Bill Darmon, Chief Executive of Bethlehem Foundations and Chairman of the federation of Voluntary Housing Organisations. other members will be co-opted in due course. In all cases, co-options will be made for one reason: the knowledge, experience or organisational connection of the person will be valuable to Threshold in a housing aid context. In Bill Darmon's case, he has wide experience of both voluntary and public housing work. It is hoped, moreover, in due course, to have the same organise relationship between Threshold and the Foundation as exists between many housing aid societies and housing associations in Britain.

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FINANCE

Appended are the accounts for the period 10 November 77 to 31 December 1978. They would not vary greatly if brought up to the end of May 79, as Threshold has not received any finance additional to that shown. A proposal is currently being developed, however, based on the first year of operation, to solicit funds from the private sector. We have sounded several individual enterprises and received a favourable reaction.

## CONCLUSION

The limited experience of this first year has confirmed our belief that there is a big role for Threshold in the context of the housing problem. It is a broad role, because the only way to tackle homelessness is from a broad base. Solutions which may appear disconnected do have a reciprocal effect.

The Threshold approach is one of comprehensive housing aid. This concept involves five aspects: information, advice, assistance, support and research. It is a problem solving approach which seems to both help with individual cases of housing deprivation and also present evidence to bring about change.

It is clear from the circumstances of many of those who have already come to us that poverty in both absolute and relative terms enters substantially into the housing problem i.e. there are clear examples of families whose incomes are below the level needed to cope with the cost of living, and families whose income would be sufficient, but for the high proportion which goes on rent. There is certainly material to be had through research which will be valuable to the National Committee in meeting its objectives relating to poverty. In the context of poverty, homelessness is an acute form of deprivation.

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## APPENDIX I

### CONTACT ORGANISATIONS

- a) Organisations with whom THRESHOLD is in contact and has a referral relationship.

		Referred	
		By Us	To Us
1.	Dublin Corporation		
	a) Housing Allocations	X	X
	b) Loans and Grants	X	
	c) Community and Environment	X	
	d) Welfare Officers	X	X
	e) Sanitary Services Section		
	i. Landlords Registration (list of premises sent each week)	X	
	ii. Health Inspectors	X	
	f) Rodent Control	X	
2.	Dublin County Council		
	a) Housing Allocations	X	
	b) Loans	X	
3.	Dun Laoghaire Corporation		
	Housing Section	X	
4.	Westmeath County Council		
	Housing Section	X	
5.	Limerick County Council		
	Housing Section	X	

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		Referred	
		By Us	To Us
6.	Kildare County Council Loans Section	X	
7.	Clare County Council Housing Section	X	
8.	Wexford County Council Loans Section	X	
9.	Eastern Health Board		
	a) Bru Chaoimhin	X	X
	b) Local Assistance Officers	X	
	c) Social Workers		X
10.	St Vincent Housing Society	X	
11.	St Vincent de Paul Society		
	a) Furniture Section	X	
	b) Various Conferences in the City	X	X
12.	Gay Byrne Hour Financial and other material assistance for destitute homeless families	X	X
13.	Garda Siochana		
	a) Rathmines Station	X	X
	b) Mountjoy Station	X	X
	c) Bridewell Station	X	
14.	Bethlehem Foundation	X	
15.	Telephone Exchange Dublin - Enquiries		X
16.	Allied Irish Banks Staff	X	X

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		Referred	
		By Us	To Us
17.	Bank of Ireland Staff	X	X
18.	Ulster Bank Staff	X	X
19.	Irish Civil Service Building Society	X	
20.	First National Building Society	X	
21.	Irish Permanent Building Society	X	
22.	Michael D White, Solicitors	X	
23.	Alan G McGonnagle, Solicitors	X	
24.	Kent Garty & Co, Solicitors	X	X
25.	District Court Justice (1)		X
26.	Cherish	X	X
27.	Woman's Aid	X	X
28.	Various Catholic clergy		X
29.	Various Church of Ireland clergy		X
30.	Catholic Rescue & Adoption Society		X
31.	Catholic Marriage Advisory Bureau	X	
32.	Gamblers Anonymous	X	
33.	Department of the Environment		X

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		Referred	
		By Us	To Us
34.	Department of Social Welfare		X
35.	Dublin Lord Mayor's Office		X
36.	Bord Failte		X
37.	Rehabilitation Institute - Welfare Officer		X
38.	Various hospital based Social Workers		X
39.	Halston Street Community Council		X
40.	St Francis Xavier Community Council		X
41.	Ballyfermot Community Council		X
42.	Shelter (England)	X	X
43.	Sanmaritans		X

b) Contact with following organisations without referrals

1. Irish Building Companions
2. Radio Dublin
3. National Association of Building Co-Operatives
4. Dublin Artisans Dwelling Co
5. Various Insurance Companies
6. Various Auctioneers
7. Catholic Youth Council

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## APPENDIX II

### PUBLICITY

When the office was opened, the Board took a decision not to publicise the service during the first year's operation.

There were three main reasons for this: first, it would be irresponsible and insensitive to raise peoples' expectations by publicly announcing a service in the housing field before any practical experience had been gained and before a group of trained volunteers existed; secondly, the size of the housing problem suggested that we would be overwhelmed and would not have coped with the number of clients responding to publicity; (the large number who came in the absence of publicity seems to bear this out); thirdly, to make claims or to appear to be making claims about what we were going to do would only bring voluntary housing work into disrepute, in the event of unforeseen difficulties.

APPENDIX III

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF ENQUIRIES

1. Dublin Area
2. Longford
3. Fungarvan
4. Naas
5. Cork
6. County Wexford
7. County Donegal
8. County Louth
9. Limerick City
10. County Wicklow
11. County Galway
12. County Kildare
13. Clonmel
14. Galway City
15. County Roscommon
16. Manchester
17. Ashton under Lyne
18. Ellesmere Port
19. London
20. Birmingham

THRESHOLDC/O CAPUCHIN FRIARYCHURCH STREET, DUBLIN 7INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD FROM  
10th NOVEMBER 1977 TO 31st DECEMBER 1978INCOME

	£	£
Combat Poverty		7,000
Donations		1,504
		<hr/>
		8,504

EXPENDITURE

Salary & Wages	4,709	
Recruitment	207	
Travelling Expenses	100	
Housing Conference	60	
Stationery	265	
Telephone	207	
Postage	12	
Light & Heat	21	
Catering	85	
Miscellaneous	63	
Repairs	132	
Rent	750	
Cleaning Supplies	4	
Security	57	
Bank Interest & Charges	31	
	<hr/>	6,703

Surplus

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£1,801

## APPENDIX IV

THRESHOLDC/O CAPUCHIN FRIARYCHURCH STREET, DUBLIN 7BALANCE SHEET AT 31st DECEMBER 1978FIXED ASSETS

	£	£
Office Furniture		33

CURRENT ASSETS

Combat Poverty	1,000
Bank of Ireland	3,147
	<u>4,147</u>

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Loans	850	
Accruals S.W.I.	779	
Rent	<u>750</u>	
	1,529	
	<u>2,379</u>	1,768
		<u>1,801</u>
		<u><u>1,801</u></u>

Represented by:

Revenue Reserve	<u><u>1,801</u></u>
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THRESHOLD TRAINING COURSE

LOCATION: IRISH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

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MONDAY 23 APRIL 1979

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Session 1:

7.00 pm - 8.15 pm

The housing problem and THRESHOLD

8.15 pm - 8.45 pm

COFFEE

Session 2:

8.45 pm - 10.00 pm

Role-play interviews

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MONDAY 30 APRIL 1979

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Session 1:

7.00 pm - 8.15 pm

Controlled tenancies, uncontrolled tenancies, evictions, rent increases, harassment, repairs, trespass, refund of deposits, abolition of rates, etc.

8.15 pm - 8.45 pm

COFFEE

Session 2:

8.45 pm - 10.00 pm

Voluntary agencies, leisure activities

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MONDAY 7 MAY 1979

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Session 1:

7.00 pm - 8.15 pm

Continuation of first session of Monday 30 April 1979

8.15 pm - 8.45 pm

COFFEE

Session 2:

8.45 pm - 10.00 pm

House purchase loans, budgeting and banking as it relates to purchase

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## APPENDIX V

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MONDAY 14 MAY 1979

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Session 1:

7.00 pm - 8.15 pm	Local Authority housing qualifications, points system
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8.15 pm - 8.45 pm	COFFEE
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Session 2:

8.45 pm - 10.00 pm	The theory of interviewing
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MONDAY 21 MAY 1979

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Session 1:

7.00 pm - 8.15 pm	Interviewing practice
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8.15 pm - 8.45 pm	COFFEE
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Session 2:

8.45 pm - 10.00 pm	Interviewing practice
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MONDAY 28 MAY

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Session 1:

7.00 pm - 8.15 pm	Interviewing practice
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8.15 pm - 8.45 pm	COFFEE
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Session 2:

8.45 pm - 10.00 pm	Interviewing practice
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Please pin this up in your flat



Father Donal celebrating Mass with a gathering of young people in a Dublin bedsitter.

*Father Donal O'Mahony*  
(Capuchin)

**CHAPLAIN**  
**FOR**  
**FLAT DWELLERS**  
**NORTH CITY CENTRE**

**SERVICES :**

- ★ Evening Mass in flat
- ★ Organising cheap weekend trips home
- ★ Spiritual and Moral Advice (e.g. pregnancy, etc.)
- ★ Use of free time : Leisure Pursuits, Social Work, etc.
- ★ Tenant's Rights
- ★ Contemplating Marriage?

NOTE: CHAPLAINCY DOES NOT EXTEND TO FAMILIES OR MARRIED COUPLES.

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**PHONE 684793 (Anytime)**

**Automatic answering/recording system installed**