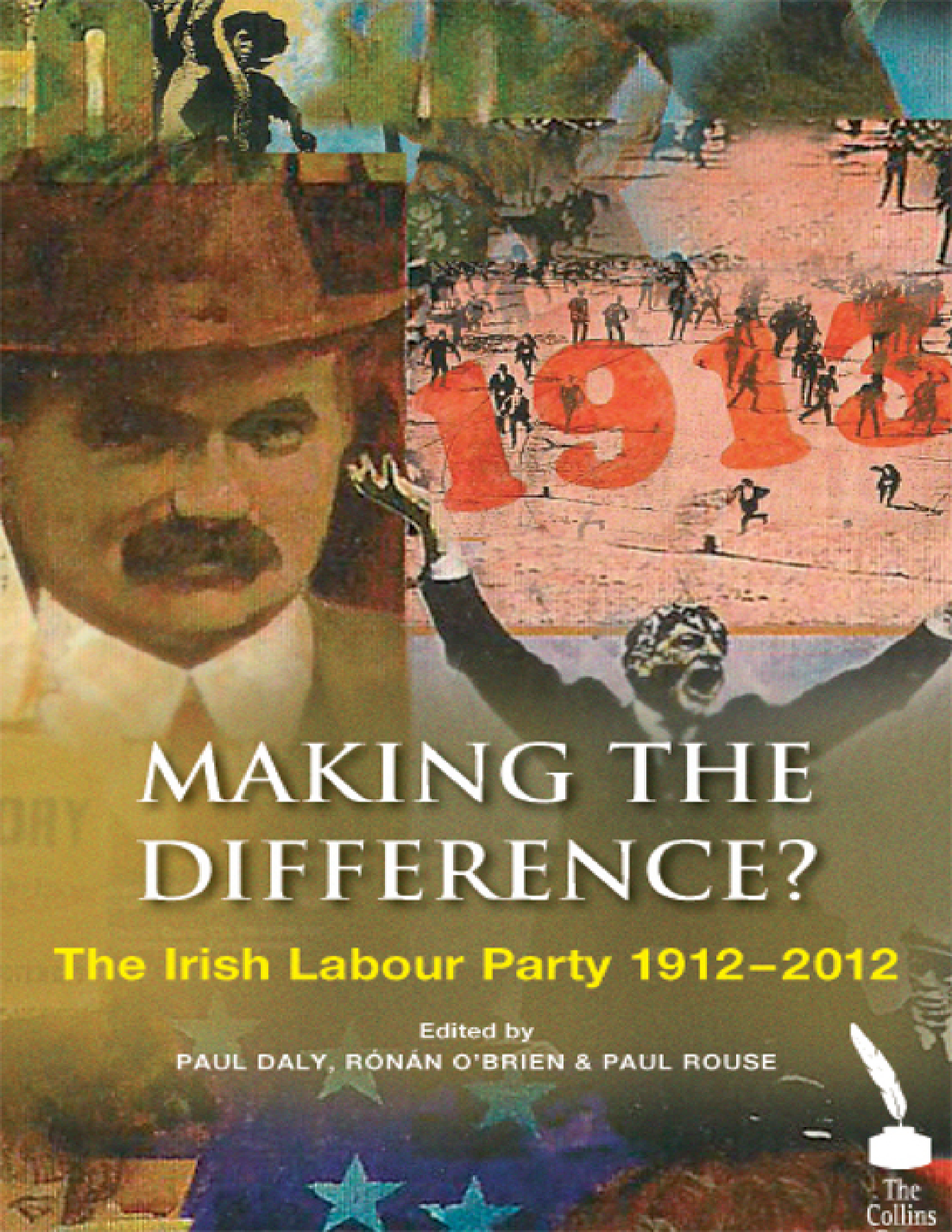




MAKING THE DIFFERENCE?

The Irish Labour Party 1912–2012

Edited by
PAUL DALY, RÓNÁN O'BRIEN & PAUL ROUSE

The
Collins

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations

Acknowledgements

Introduction

1. A Various and Contentious Country: Ireland in 1912 – *William Murphy*
2. A Divided House: The Irish Trades Union Congress and the Origins of the Irish Labour Party – *Rónán O’Brien*
3. In the Shadow of the National Question – *Michael Laffan*
4. Labour and Dáil Éireann, 1922–32 – *Ciara Meehan*
5. Forging a Better World: Socialists and International Politics in the Early Twentieth Century – *William Mulligan*
6. ‘If it’s socialism you want, join some other party’: Labour and the Left – *Niamh Puirseil*
7. Labour and the Pursuit of Power – *Paul Daly*
8. ‘No good Catholic can be a true Socialist’: The Labour Party and the Catholic Church, 1922–52 – *Diarmaid Ferriter*
9. ‘A particular view of what was possible’: Labour in Government – *David McCullagh*
10. Labour and the Media: The promise of socialism, negative campaigning and *The Irish Times* – *Kevin Rafter*

11. Labour and the Making of Irish Foreign Policy, 1973–77
– *Eunan O’Halpin*
12. Labour and Europe: From No to Yes – *Stephen Collins*
13. Ireland’s Journey to the Third Way: the hi-social model?
– *Jane Suiter*
14. Labour and the Liberal Agenda – *Ivana Bacik*
15. The Second Century of Labour – *Eamon Gilmore*

Notes

Bibliography

Contributor Biographies

Index

ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Administrative Council
ANV	Alliance for a No Vote
CCCA	Cork City & County Archives
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DL	Democratic Left
ECB	European Central Bank
EEC	European Economic Community
FIDAC	International Federation of Ex-Servicemen
GPB	General Prisons Board
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ILLA	Irish Land and Labour Association
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILP	Irish Labour Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
ITUC	Irish Trades Union Congress
ITUC&LP	Irish Trades Union Congress & Labour Party
ITWU	Irish Textile Workers' Union
IWFL	Irish Women's Franchise League
IWLM	Irish Women's Liberation Movement
IWWU	Irish Women's Workers' Union
LCLL	Liaison Committee of the Labour Left

LWNC	Labour Women's National Council
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NDC	National Development Corporation
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PDs	Progressive Democrats
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
SDLP	Social Democratic Labour Party
SEA	Single European Act
SFIO	French Section of the Workers' International (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière)
SIPTU	Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
SLP	Socialist Labour Party
SPD	Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
TNA	The (British) National Archives
TOAI	Textile Operatives Association of Ireland
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCD	University College Dublin
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
USNA	United States National Archives
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union

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Paul Daly, Rónán O'Brien and Paul Rouse

INTRODUCTION

AFFORDING A TITLE to a collection of essays as diverse as those gathered here is no easy task. After some soul searching, the editors settled on *Making the Difference?* This title is derived from the party's 1997 election slogan 'Making The Vital Difference' – the election following what was arguably the party's most successful period in government and the occasion of one of its greatest electoral setbacks. Such has been the Labour Party's first hundred years.

'Making the difference?' also encapsulates an important aspect of what it means to have been a member of the Labour Party at any stage during the past ten decades. To join the Labour Party is, in itself, an act of difference. While criticism of the party's successes and failures abound, and are certainly included in this volume, the Labour Party's intent has always been to change Ireland. At its best the party has argued for the Ireland that might be, rather than accept an Ireland as it is or romanticise a mythic Ireland of the past. For that reason alone, many of Labour's successes – the liberalisation of society, for instance – have been achieved both outside and inside government.

Underpinning the party's first century has been a desire to make a difference through an idea – or more properly a set of ideas – which has evolved over time. At their core these ideas imagined Ireland as a society defined by equality, justice and tolerance. It is the nobility of these ideas, and the vision which flows from them, that has attracted generations of Irish people to the Labour Party and has brought such people to toil in its service, often without

reward and often, too, in the face of cynicism and criticism. It is why the party survived in arid times.

This book does not, of course, offer a detailed narrative account of the events that happened in and around the Labour Party over the course of its first hundred years. Indeed, a perusal of the chapter themes may point to some notable absences, such as the party's relationship with the trade unions or its seminal achievements in the sphere of education. There are also many contributors who, perhaps, should have been included: Labour has never wanted for writers.

However, the aim of this book is to look at aspects of the history of the party from a host of different perspectives. The result is a spectrum of opinions from historians, political scientists, journalists, elected representatives and party members. Whether the project lives up to its ambition is for the reader to judge. While proud of its past and at times frustrated at how its contribution is often written out of history, the party did not want to perpetrate an 'official' history – bland and sanitised as they inevitably come.

The origins of this volume come from within the Labour Party itself. Indeed, the idea of a diverse collection of essays to mark the party's centenary originated from within the party leader's office. However, it evolved into an 'unauthorised' project, compiled without input or direction from the party, precisely because this degree of editorial independence was necessary to ensure the contribution of as talented and broad a collection of voices as came on board. That the Labour Party should welcome such an acute and, at times, critical analysis of its past is a tribute to its long-standing and occasionally problematic respect for diversity of opinion.

Inevitably, there are opinions expressed in the chapters that follow with which many people – both inside and outside the Labour Party – will disagree. More than that,

some of these opinions will, most likely, infuriate, frustrate and displease. It would not be the Labour Party, if that were not the case. Fergus Finlay, who has been an advisor to two party leaders, Dick Spring and Pat Rabbitte, tells a story of the party membership's capacity for self-criticism. It goes something like this:

Upon reading criticism of the party in national newspapers, members of Fianna Fáil would likely as not burn editions of the paper at cumainn meetings and demand the resignation of the editor. Fine Gael members faced with a similar dilemma would write long and worthy letters to the paper defending their party. Labour members, however, would move immediately to table motions of no confidence in the party leader!

One of the central theses of Irish political life has been that the Labour Party has not risen to the heights of other social democratic parties across Europe, so much so that former General Secretary Brendan Halligan countered that to survive at all in the climate in which the party had to operate was a success in itself. The former opinion is, in part, based on a starry-eyed view of the success of parties far away – take the unflattering first forty years of the British Labour Party as a case in point – and on definitions of political achievement that equate progress solely with electoral success.

Perhaps Brendan Halligan's hurdle is a low one, but this series of essays does set out the difficult environment in which the party had to develop and which it has largely overcome. Only in recent years, for example, has Labour's role in ensuring parliamentary democracy during the early years of the state received credit. The achievement of 'success', too, is a more difficult one for a party that sets its goal as the transformation of society rather than short-term

electoral victory. Indeed, many of the failings of the Labour Party – sometimes too timid, sometimes too acquiescent, sometimes too short-sighted – are wider failings of Irish society.

But Labour, too, can also claim to have contributed to many of Ireland's successes. To put the scale of Ireland's progress over the past hundred years in context, when the Party was founded in 1912, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, isolated on the periphery of Europe, with an economy dominated by agriculture and a society dominated by subservience to a controlling and authoritarian religion. The story of the last hundred years has been the transformation of those features of Irish life; this is a process to which the Labour Party and its members have contributed in large measure.

In short, Ireland in 2012 is a fairer, more inclusive and tolerant society. The Labour Party's role in bringing about this change is as great, if not greater, than most. As Eamon Gilmore points out in his epilogue, which looks forward to the next hundred years, there is much still to do.

The problems that confront this country now may at times resemble, in magnitude at least, the economic, social and political problems that confronted a generation a century ago. Then as now, there was a body of Irish people who believed that politics was not just about victory or defeat, personal advancement or party decline. They believed that politics is about a set of ideas – equality, justice and tolerance. These ideas are still the common thread that binds together the Irish Labour Party, and they are ideas that will have a central place in the Ireland of the twenty-first century.

1. A VARIOUS AND CONTENTIOUS COUNTRY: IRELAND IN 1912

WILLIAM MURPHY

IN 1912 IT seemed obvious to many that Ireland was a country in the throes of significant change. Streets, meeting rooms, workplaces, newspaper offices, homes, theatres, indeed individuals, were animated with the energy of sometimes contending, sometimes complementary, social, cultural and political movements. In a frequently cited speech of 1913, W. B. Yeats argued that there 'is a moment in the history of every nation when it is plastic, when it is like wax, when it is ready to hold for generations the shape that is given it. Ireland is plastic now and will be for a few years to come ...'¹ The decision taken by the Irish Trades Union Congress at Clonmel on 28 May 1912 'that the independent representation of Labour upon all public boards' should be among its objectives, a decision that signalled the birth of the Labour Party,² was a product of that energy and the prevailing sense of possibility. It was a declaration by the trade union movement – or more accurately by some within that movement – that they intended to influence the shape of Irish society using district council room, city hall and, most importantly, the anticipated Home Rule parliament. Others in this book will concentrate on the direct circumstances of the foundation of the Labour Party. The purpose of this essay is to give that decision some context

by offering a short, inevitably partial, introduction to that apparently plastic place, Ireland in 1912.

I

In December 1912 the Ulster Literary Theatre staged a play by Gerald MacNamara called *Thompson in Tír-na-nÓg*. It told the story of Andy Thompson, a loyal Orangeman, who is blown into Tír-na-nÓg when his rifle explodes during a recreation of the Battle of the Boyne. There he meets the heroes of Irish myth and a comedy of mutual incomprehension ensues. The play was a warning against the dangers of a contemporary politics bolstered by 'essentialist' and 'nostalgic' versions of history.³ Just such a politics seemed to be tightening its grip on Ireland in response to the most widely expected, and widely feared, development of 1912: the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill, which provided for limited self-government for Ireland. The legislative path to Home Rule had opened when the Parliament Act, which limited the powers of the House of Lords, received royal assent on 18 August 1911. In the early months of 1912, the Liberal government and their Irish Party allies discussed the detail of the Home Rule Bill and it was introduced on 11 April. Nationalist public opinion seems to have been marked by complacency in the months prior to the opening of parliamentary debate. The *Cork Examiner* expressed this in the confident assertion that 'History repeats itself; and despite the threats of the Ascendancy class, Home Rule is as certain as Church disestablishment, land reform and franchise extension'.⁴ The Irish Party attempted to generate, and put on display, widespread nationalist enthusiasm through a mass Home Rule demonstration in Dublin on 31 March and a Home Rule convention on 23 April. Despite these events, historians

have noted the continued lack of dynamism that marked popular support for Home Rule during 1912.⁵

In contrast, unionist apprehension was rapidly transformed into action. The primary organisational vehicle for unionist resistance was a network of Unionist Clubs that swelled from 164 in December 1911 to 316 in August 1912. By May, some of these clubs had begun to drill and to establish associated rifle clubs. So too had some Orange Lodges.⁶ In June, an amendment to the Home Rule Bill, proposing the exclusion of counties Antrim, Armagh, Londonderry and Down, was defeated after an acrimonious debate, but the opponents of the Bill continued to ratchet up the pressure. Andrew Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative Party, told an anti-Home Rule demonstration at Blenheim Palace that the Bill was the product of 'a corrupt Parliamentary bargain' and that Ulster unionists 'would be justified in resisting by all means in their power, including force'. He continued, 'under the present conditions I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster will go in which I shall not be ready to support them'.⁷ The intimidating mobilisation of unionist resistance reached a popular crescendo with Ulster Day, on 28 September, when well over 200,000 men signed Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant in which they pledged to use 'all means that may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule parliament in Ireland'. A similar number of women signed a declaration associating themselves with 'the men of Ulster'.

Wild rumour, millennialist prediction and spurious allegation had become commonplace. One of the more unusual outcomes of this was a court case heard in Edinburgh in March 1912 when Robert Browne, the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne, and six of his diocesan priests sued the *Dundee Courier* for libel. They sought £2,000 in damages for the bishop and £500 for each priest because in an article

published on 1 August 1911, under the headline 'Sinister Sidelights on Home Rule', the *Courier* alleged that they had used their influence with Catholic businessmen and traders in the town of Queenstown (Cobh), County Cork, to secure the dismissal of all Protestant employees. It further alleged that when one trader refused to comply they had ruined his business. Browne travelled to Edinburgh to give evidence on his own behalf, bringing with him various Irish Party MPs, a collection of the respectable citizens of Queenstown (both Catholic and Protestant) and an assortment of well-disposed Protestants from Limerick, Cork and Dublin to testify on his behalf. Browne and the priests won the case: he was awarded £200 and each priest £50.⁸

That summer, the heightened tension expressed itself in violence on the streets. On 29 June 1912, a Sunday school outing from Whitehouse Presbyterian Church in Belfast was attacked at Castledawson, County Derry, by a group of (allegedly drunken) members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. The Hibernians were returning from a Home Rule meeting at Maghera when, apparently, one of their number took offence at a Union Jack carried by the Sunday school children as they 'processed' through the town, sparking a violent confrontation.⁹ In Belfast, fuelled by accounts of Castledawson, July was marked by serious sectarian rioting and the expulsion of thousands of shipyard workers, mostly Catholics. News of this provoked some in southern counties to campaign for a boycott of Belfast manufacturers.¹⁰ When, a few weeks into the new football season on 14 September, Belfast Celtic and Linfield met at Celtic Park, a full scale riot saw over fifty people admitted to hospital, some with gunshot wounds.¹¹ Despite this atmosphere nationalists and unionists continued to cooperate in matters of mutual interest. When the English Board of Agriculture introduced regulations to restrict the import of Irish cattle, following an outbreak of foot-and-

mouth in Ireland in the summer of 1912, unionists and nationalists combined in condemnation.¹²

Matt Kelly and James McConnel have explored the manner in which Fenian sentiment found expression and, indeed, former Fenians found a place on the benches of Redmond's Parnellite party of the 1890s and the reunited Irish Party of the first decade of the twentieth century.¹³ This 'domestication' of Fenianism was not, however, complete or secure. In the vituperative and increasingly polarised atmosphere of 1912, Home Rule – an attempt to forge a constitutional framework that rendered Irish nationalism compatible with the link to Britain and the Empire – was increasingly vulnerable to simpler, more extreme, perhaps more coherent ideologies. In 1912, the primary threat seemed to come from irredentist unionism. Manifestations of Irish nationalism that were more radical than the Irish Party remained, on the face of it, marginal and organisationally weak, but the longer Home Rule was deferred and the more bellicose unionism became, the more fertile the ground for more radical expressions of Irish nationalism. As Michael Wheatley has demonstrated, many of the Irish Party's own supporters continued to be less comfortable with the idea of Empire and the language of compromise than John Redmond and some of his allies within the leadership had become.¹⁴ In the same month as the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, the Abbey Theatre staged the premiere of *Patriots* by Lennox Robinson. The play told the story of a Fenian, James Nugent, who returns to his home town after nearly two decades in prison for a 'political murder'. Nugent finds a public that is willing to celebrate him for his prison suffering but has little interest in his efforts to promote a reinvigorated radical separatism. This seemed an accurate enough assessment of the contemporary political scene on Robinson's part, although critics noted that the Abbey audience seemed not only to

sympathise with the fictional Fenian, but to approve of his uncompromising rhetoric.¹⁵

Non-fictional Fenians were busily reorganising the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). In the early months of 1912 and after a bitter struggle, a faction centred on Tom Clarke and consisting of a young, energetic and militant cohort that included Seán MacDermott, Denis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson and Patrick McCartan seized control of the IRB's supreme council and of its newspaper, *Irish Freedom*. Matt Kelly, again, has offered an interesting analysis of this group's thinking as reflected in the pages of *Irish Freedom*: it was then edited by Hobson. Just as the prospect of Home Rule prompted some in the labour movement to advocate the establishment of a political party, so too the newly dominant faction within the IRB began to consider a republican party which would engage in electoral politics under a Home Rule dispensation. The aim of this party, they suggested, should be to expose Home Rule and its creators as imperialist sell-outs. If, on the other hand, Home Rule failed, *Irish Freedom* insisted 'our work will be destructive and will be an attack all along the line on every English institution in Ireland'.¹⁶ Simultaneously, in the summer of 1912, *Irish Freedom* began to promote the establishment of Freedom Clubs by those who shared the paper's ideals. It is possible that Hobson imagined these clubs would provide a foundation for the mooted post-Home Rule republican party. Within months, clubs were formed in Belfast, Dublin, Sligo, Galway and Maryborough, County Laois.¹⁷

That Hobson should contemplate a new political party was, perhaps, not that surprising. In 1905, along with McCullough, he had established the Dungannon Clubs. These had later combined with other groups, including Arthur Griffith's National Council, to form Sinn Féin. Hobson and McCullough left Sinn Féin in 1910 and had since concentrated their energies on the IRB; however, they had

no objection in principle to separatists' participation in electoral politics. Having been a growing, if small, organisation between 1907 and 1909, Sinn Féin then began to decline. By 1912 it seemed to be nearing extinction.¹⁸ At the municipal elections of January 1912, Seán T. O'Kelly did take a seat on Dublin Corporation on a Sinn Féin ticket (for the Inns Quay ward) but the party did not muster a candidate, never mind a victory, in any of the nineteen other wards they could have contested in the city.¹⁹ In contrast, labour had a good election in Dublin as five of the seven candidates for the corporation, behind whom the *Irish Worker* threw its weight, won. Elsewhere, there were occasional labour victories, including in Sligo, Waterford and Drogheda. Jim Larkin was among labour's victors in Dublin, although he would be removed from the seat within months, on the grounds that he was a convicted felon of recent vintage.²⁰

The year 1912 also saw the election of a woman to Dublin Corporation for the first time. Although she was not an official 'labour' candidate, Sarah Cecilia Harrison's victory was celebrated by the *Irish Worker*.²¹ The better relief of the unemployed had been a major plank of Harrison's campaign in the South City Ward and, once in office, she embarked upon a crusade challenging the operation of the Distress Committee of Dublin Corporation. That body, which had been established in 1906 under the terms of the Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905, was a mechanism for keeping a register of the city's unemployed and offering relief. Harrison alleged that it was operating corruptly and inefficiently, and succeeded in forcing a public inquiry which met in August and September 1912.²² Although the inquiry rejected many of Harrison's charges, her campaign highlighted the plight of the unemployed at a time of 'chronic unemployment, particularly among building

workers and general labourers', following an apparent collapse in the city's building industry from around 1906.²³

Harrison, like Dr Mary Strangman who became the first woman elected to Waterford Corporation in January 1912,²⁴ was a campaigner for female suffrage. Although women could vote at, and contest, local government elections by 1912, they were still denied the parliamentary franchise. The emergence in Britain in 1903 of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) marked the beginning of a militant campaign for female suffrage which involved, among other tactics, the breaking of windows in public buildings, politicians' homes and shops. These actions led to the imprisonment of suffragettes (as the militants were known) and, beginning in 1909, these women embarked upon a campaign of hunger strike, demanding treatment as political prisoners.²⁵ Initially, Irish suffragism did not respond to this development, remaining comparatively moderate. Even after the establishment of the avowedly militant Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) in November 1908, Irish suffragists refrained from militant acts on Irish soil.

In 1912, however, this changed dramatically when, on the morning of 13 June, eight women threw stones through the windows of various government offices in Dublin and were arrested.²⁶ The women acted then because they were angered at the contribution of Irish Party MPs to the recent defeat of the Conciliation Bill, a bill that provided for a limited female parliamentary franchise, and because of the Irish Party's failure to insist that the female franchise should be included in the Home Rule Bill.²⁷ From May 1912, with the establishment of the *Irish Citizen*, they also had a weekly paper with which to put their case to the public. The IWFL women were soon joined in Mountjoy by three members of the WSPU. They had followed Prime Minister Herbert Asquith to Ireland – he was on a visit to Dublin to speak at a Home Rule event on 18 July – and succeeded in

throwing a hatchet at him and Redmond before attempting to set the Theatre Royal ablaze.²⁸ The suffragette prisoners would garner some public sympathy when, in August, they embarked upon the first 'political' hunger strike in Ireland during the twentieth century,²⁹ but in the immediate aftermath of the attack on Asquith and Redmond Irish public opinion was demonstratively anti-suffragette. Suspected suffragists were attacked in the streets and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington reported to his wife, Hanna, who was in Mountjoy, that when they organised a rally at the Phoenix Park, on 28 July, an 'enormous and entirely hostile crowd' gathered and engaged in 'organised & continuous howling ... Even I, standing behind the bench close by the speakers, could not hear a word they said.' Among the speakers at the meeting was James Connolly. He insisted 'that free speech was involved, and that this crowd might be turned on labour meetings any time'. Sheehy-Skeffington contrasted this with Jim Larkin's failure to offer support.³⁰

At Trade Union Congress in May, however, Larkin, with Connolly, had proposed a motion calling for full adult suffrage. When a delegate of the bookbinders' union had objected, warning that female suffrage would end peaceful 'home life' and see 'the destruction of the nobility of character for which their women were prized' his comments were rebutted by Connolly and Mary Galway, general secretary of the Textile Operatives Association of Ireland (TOAI). The motion was carried.³¹

At that Congress, Galway and Connolly were more often at odds. During the previous autumn a dispute had arisen between them when Connolly organised female linen workers in Belfast into a new union called the Irish Textile Workers' Union (ITWU), beginning with a group at the York Street mill. Galway regarded Connolly as 'an adventurer' encroaching upon her territory and sought redress, first, at the Belfast Trades Council, and later at Congress in 1912. In

turn, Connolly and others accused Galway and the TOAI of failing to cater for many mill workers.³² The 1912 Congress also saw the affiliation of the Irish Women's Workers' Union (IWWU) represented by its general secretary Delia Larkin. Like the ITWU, the IWWU was established in autumn 1911 and it too aroused suspicion among existing trade unions, fearing the loss of members to the new 'catch-all' organisation.³³

II

The IWWU's one big brother, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), was busy getting bigger in 1912. In 1911, and again in 1913, the growth of syndicalist militancy was evident in a series of bitter strikes. In comparison, 1912 was quiet, as if the 'Labour movement was pausing to catch its second wind'.³⁴ The concern that the apparent rise of socialist and syndicalist ideas prompted in some quarters is evident, however, in 1912. In January, in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, John MacCaffrey ended his review of the year just gone with the warning that 'Ireland has a labour problem of its own which requires solution, and is likely also soon to have a Socialist group of its own compensating themselves for the smallness of their numbers by the extreme violence of their theories'.³⁵ Several Catholic bishops used their Lenten pastorals to warn against 'the mania for organising strikes'³⁶ and the most popular Irish novelist of the era, Canon P. A. Sheehan, responded with the publication of *Miriam Lucas*, a preposterously plotted tale in which striking was portrayed as a misguided tactic that played into the hands of the employer while workers' grievances were constructed as largely imagined, inculcated by false leaders spreading false ideologies.³⁷ Soon there was talk among Catholics, influenced by ideas of Catholic action, of establishing a Leo

Social Guild 'which seeks to form study circles of workmen and students of all classes for the understanding and application of Catholic principles to social evils'.³⁸

But it was the alleged combined danger posed by modern literature and the British press that really generated action among Catholic conservatives in 1912. The final months of 1911 had seen a campaign in Limerick city against newsagents who sold certain English Sunday newspapers and the establishment of the Dublin Vigilance Committee with the purpose of protecting people of that city from the 'insidious attempts of modern journalism to corrupt them'.³⁹ For obvious reasons, the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Independent* gave a good deal of publicity to this movement and, on 4 January 1912, the Executive Council of the Dublin Vigilance Committee wrote to the *Irish Independent*, claiming that 187 newsagents in Dublin had signed undertakings not to sell 'objectionable newspapers'.⁴⁰ Further vigilance committees were founded in that year, encouraged by the Catholic hierarchy in their Lenten pastorals.⁴¹ On 1 July the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lorcan Sherlock, hosted a large meeting at the Mansion House to encourage the movement. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Aberdeen, addressed the meeting and messages of support from the Pope and Cardinal Logue were read: Logue informed the attendees that 'no protest can be too strong and no vigilance can be too great to protect our people from the plague of dangerous and unclean publications'.⁴²

Beginning in February 1912, the *Catholic Bulletin*, which was influential in its promotion of a particular brand of extreme Catholic nationalism, began to publish a regular item entitled 'Notices of Books Approved as Suitable for Libraries', dividing these books into three categories:

Class A – Books written by *Catholics* for *Catholic* youth, with a *direct* religious or moral tendency.

Class B – Books written by *Catholics* to interest youthful readers, with no *direct* religious or moral aim. Books of ‘Historical’ or ‘Adventure’ class, written in a healthy *Catholic* tone, with little or nothing of a sentimental character about them.

Class C – Books of the ‘Historical’ or ‘Adventure’ class, written by non-Catholics, but with no anti-Catholic bias or sectarian opinions of any kind; books of a negative character as regards religion, inculcating merely natural virtues of manliness, courage, honesty, truth; written in a healthy style, with no sentimentalism unless introduced in a harmless, passing way.⁴³

James Joyce’s final, futile efforts during the summer of 1912 to persuade George Roberts at Maunsel & Co. to proceed with the publication of *Dubliners* were almost certainly hampered by the atmosphere generated by this campaign against ‘pernicious’ literature.⁴⁴ The *Catholic Bulletin’s* concern to influence the stock of libraries, in particular, was a response to the opening of a wave of libraries during the preceding decade. These libraries were established at local initiative and many were funded by the Scottish-born, American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. In 1912, such libraries opened at Cabinteely, Garristown and Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) in Dublin while district councils in west Limerick announced their intention to open Carnegie-supported libraries at Athea, Broadford, Cloncagh and Feenagh.⁴⁵ These institutions did not always prosper, but (however temporarily) the access to books they provided transformed the lives of ordinary people in many small towns, villages and suburbs.

In this period, Irish cities and towns also witnessed the emergence and rapid proliferation of cinemas. James Joyce was manager of the first stationary cinema in Ireland, the

Volta Electric Theatre, when it opened on Mary Street, Dublin, in December 1909. As with many early cinemas, that building had been converted from a previous use. In the case of the Volta, the building had been the premises of a builder and ironmonger. The first purpose-built cinema, the Phoenix Picture Palace, was officially opened on 3 December 1912 on Ellis Quay, Dublin. The 'spacious auditorium' seated 730 patrons.⁴⁶ By 1916, 149 cinemas and halls were listed as 'showing motion pictures'.⁴⁷ If popular culture was in the process of profound transformation under the influence of technological innovation, then the changing face of popular culture was, in turn, recorded using new technologies. The Munster hurling final of 1912 between Cork and Tipperary at Dungarvan was filmed by 'cinematograph operators', the film to be shown in America.⁴⁸ Mark Duncan has noted that in these years the somewhat older technology of photography recorded the emergence of county colours within the GAA. Throughout 1912 the *Gaelic Athlete*, a newspaper which was established in that year to promote Gaelic games, mounted a campaign, urging all county boards to switch from the practice of fielding the county team in the colours of their champion club and instead to decide upon county patterns that would remain in place, year in year out. The great Kilkenny team that dominated hurling in that era won the 1909 All-Ireland in the colours of Tullaroan, but they wore new 'Kilkenny' jerseys in winning three-in-a-row between 1911 and 1913. Quickly, this became standard practice.⁴⁹ Modern grounds and improved transportation were keys to the growing crowds in attendance at sporting fixtures. According to Neal Garnham, when Shelbourne Football Club opened a new ground in 1912 the fact that it was 'just a penny tram fare' from the centre of Dublin was considered a considerable advantage.⁵⁰

Although sport, and the Gaelic Athletic Association in particular, prospered in rural Ireland, urbanisation was a key to the development of modern sport in this era, and Ireland, as with much of Europe, was an increasingly urban society. According to Cormac Ó Grada, between the Great Famine and the outbreak of the First World War the proportion of Ireland's population living in towns or cities with populations of 2,000 people or more increased from one-seventh to one-third.⁵¹ The extent to which the Irish urbanised in the sixty years prior to 1912 is even more striking when those who had migrated from rural Ireland to the great cities of the USA's east coast and the industrial centres of Britain are taken into account. In 1912, more than 29,000 men and women emigrated: there had been only two years since 1851 when the figure leaving was lower.⁵² In Ireland, Belfast had grown with a singular rapidity: its population in 1851 was 97,784, rising to 386,947 in 1911.⁵³ By then, Harland & Wolff and Workman Clark, the biggest shipbuilding firms in Belfast, were producing over 150,000 tons between them annually.⁵⁴ Infamously, of course, 1912 was the year in which the most famous product of Belfast's shipyards, the *Titanic*, sank on its maiden voyage.

In comparison, Dublin's growth had been sluggish, so much so that 'the deposed capital', as Mary E. Daly called it, was outstripped in population terms by Belfast; Dublin grew from 246,465 in 1851 to 304,802 in 1911. The populations of Cork and Limerick actually contracted during the period, although these declines were smaller than those evident in Galway city and, more importantly, rural Ireland.⁵⁵ Increased suburbanisation was a common trend in these cities. Even in Limerick, with its declining population, the city's footprint increased as a significant proportion of the middle classes moved to new suburbs.⁵⁶ Many poorer city dwellers, however, continued to live in city centre slums. In Belfast in 1901 as few as 1 per cent of families lived in one-

room tenements, but in Cork the figure was 11 per cent and in Dublin it was a staggering 36 per cent.⁵⁷ In 1911, the number of families in Dublin living in the poorest category of housing, fourth class accommodation, was 20,564.⁵⁸ This contributed to Dublin's failure to match the improvement in mortality experienced by equivalent British cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1905 Dublin had a death rate per thousand of 22.3 whereas for Liverpool the figure was 19.6, for Birmingham it was 16.2 and for London it was 15.6.⁵⁹

The contribution of tuberculosis to this figure began to receive greater attention in the first decade of the twentieth century. Campaigns aimed at preventing 'the contamination of public and private spaces by the human tuberculosis sufferer' were mounted by the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis and Consumption (branches of which were established in Dublin and Belfast in 1899) and the Women's National Health Association, founded by Lady Aberdeen in 1907.⁶⁰ The isolation of sufferers in sanatoria was forwarded as the most effective answer to the problem and 1912 saw the opening of Peamount Sanatorium in south county Dublin. Sanatoria had opened at Whiteabbey, just outside Belfast, in 1906, Buttevant, County Cork, in 1910 and at Crooksling, also in south county Dublin, in 1911, while others would open at Armagh, Dungannon, Cloonahan, Roscrea, and Monaghan before 1920.⁶¹ The foundation of these specialist institutions was facilitated by legislation introduced by the Liberal government in 1908 and 1911. That government was in the process of rapidly transforming the relationship between the state and the citizen by instituting a wide-ranging programme of welfare reform. Most famously, in 1908 they introduced old-age pensions for those over seventy and in 1911 a system of unemployment and health insurance.⁶² The government had underestimated the extraordinary impact in Ireland of

the introduction of old-age pensions; by March 1912, 205,317 Irish people were in receipt of such pensions, constituting 21.8 per cent of all those receiving pensions in the United Kingdom.⁶³ The National Insurance Act of 1911 was not delivered through the establishment of a vast state bureaucracy, but by cooperation between the state and a network of 'approved societies'. By 1912, around 675,000 Irish people were members of such societies, the biggest of which was the Ancient Order of Hibernians.⁶⁴

Alongside these emergent, modern systems of welfare and health existed older practices and attitudes. On 7 December a jury at the Munster Assizes acquitted Thomas Burke, a Clare farmer and 'bone-setter', of manslaughter. He was prosecuted when a man named John Sullivan, whom he had treated, died of complications from a leg injury. A doctor gave evidence that Burke was guilty of 'gross negligence' and this had caused Sullivan's death, but Burke claimed that although he had in this instance made a mistake he was experienced at setting fractures. Burke's acquittal suggests that for many bone-setting was still regarded as a legitimate practice while the judge certainly influenced the jury when he commented that 'Clare farmers look twice at a halfpenny before they would spend it, and they are slow to give money to a doctor, a lawyer, or their priests'.⁶⁵

The farmers of Clare may have been careful with their money, but the living standards of farmers in rural Ireland had increased significantly since the Great Famine as a consequence of changed fertility and inheritance patterns, consistent emigration and reforms in land distribution and ownership facilitated by a series of Land Acts introduced from the 1880s. This transfer of land had accelerated greatly following the Wyndham Land Act of 1903; according to Diarmaid Ferriter, 3 per cent of rural dwellers were owner occupiers in 1870, by 1906 this figure was 29.2 per cent, and by 1916 it had increased again to 63.9 per cent.⁶⁶ In

the years 1911-12 and 1912-13 alone a combined total of over 1.5 million acres was purchased by tenants.⁶⁷ Eventually, this created a conservative rural polity of small farmers, but during the process it generated huge potential for unrest and radical activity among those rural dwellers (well over a third in 1912) who remained tenants or landless labourers. This was evidenced in the Ranch War of 1904-08, in the large-scale land agitations that took place during 1917-18, and again during the Civil War.⁶⁸

It was also evidenced in the enormous growth of the ITGWU in rural Ireland and a wave of strikes for better pay among agricultural labourers, particularly in the years 1917-19.⁶⁹ By 1911, David Fitzpatrick has argued, the Irish agricultural labourer was a member of a much reduced and deeply discontented class, earning 'much less than his English counterpart and absurdly less than his relatives employed in foreign cities'.⁷⁰ Unlike his Dublin counterpart, however, the accommodation available to agricultural labourers was improving rapidly at this point as a consequence of the Labourers' (Ireland) Act, 1906, which provided significant funding for the construction of labourers' cottages. In 1912 alone, 39,241 such cottages were constructed, most of these in Munster and Leinster.⁷¹

In late August 1912, the press reported daily on the consequences of a particularly wet and cold summer. In various parts of the country, houses were flooded, a little boy was swept away by the Tolka River in Dublin, sporting fixtures were disrupted, bogs were on the move, crops were in danger, and food prices were on the increase.⁷² This is a reminder of the truth of a point made by L. P. Curtis, Jr, when concluding an article 'Ireland in 1914' in *A New History of Ireland VI*. He noted that many Irish men and women 'had much on their minds' other than the great political struggles of the day or 'the search for their "true" cultural identity'.⁷³ The texture of everyday Irish lives

consisted of a rich weave of changing social and economic realities, vibrant and contested popular cultures, a political circumstance in a state of flux, and, of course, a few constants. 'The newspapers were right.' The rain was 'general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward into the dark mutinous Shannon waves.' It was falling 'upon all the living and the dead',⁷⁴ but in 1912 there was no archetypal Irish place or Irishman or Irishwoman.