

**Working Papers of the  
International Institute for Research and Education**

The *Working Papers of the IIRE* are designed to announce works in progress and circulate early drafts and materials, an important stage in preparing them for possible later publication -whether as a *Notebook for Study and Research*, one or several articles in a magazine, a book, etc. They present in particular reworked transcripts of oral educational reports.

The circulation of the *WPIIRE* is deliberately limited and may vary depending on the topic at hand. Their main purpose is to help the author by stimulating comments, suggestions and criticisms. These may concern the content as well as the form, the sources as well as the analysis. We hope the *WPIIRE* will enhance international exchanges and contribute to a better collectivization of current theoretical, historical and political thinking.

The studies presented in this format generally retain an unfinished character. They are circulated to insure some exchange prior to completion and possible publication. It is therefore requested that they not be quoted or referred to in public without the formal authorization of the author.

*Working Paper Number 14 :*

**Helena Molony:  
Actress, Feminist, Nationalist,  
Socialist and Trade-Unionist**

*Penny Duggan*

November 1990  
IIRE/IIRF  
Postbus 53290  
1007 RG Amsterdam  
The Netherlands



## Introduction to Working Paper 14

This *Working Paper* of the IIRE is a study by Penelope (Penny) Duggan about the Irish actress, feminist, nationalist, socialist and trade-unionist Helena Molony. It has been presented for a Maîtrise (university degree) in 1990, at the Institut des Études Anglophones, Université de Paris VII (France). We are circulating this *Working Paper* in the framework of preparations for the Seminar on Women's Oppression and Struggles due to take place at the I.I.R.E. in September-October 1991. With such *WP* we wish to make known studies done by the participants themselves.

This is the third *WP-IIRE* that we are publishing for the 1991 Women Seminar. The first one is the *WP* n° 9, "Lessons from Women's Everyday Forms of Resistance in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia", by Carol McAllister. The second one is the *WP* n° 13, "Sexual Oppression and Class Oppression", by Stephanie Coontz.

We hope to publish before the end of 1990 and beginning of 1991 several more *Working Papers* on women's issues. We would be very happy to receive proposals, especially from those to whom these *WP-IIRE* have been sent and from those who will participate to the seminar.

### *Working Papers of the International Institute for Research and Education* *Documents de travail de l'Institut International de Recherche et de Formation*

- Number 1: *Dynamics of the US Labor Upsurge of the 1930s*, by John Barzman  
 Number 2: *The Formation of Russian Marxism*, by Pierre Rousset  
 Numéro 3: *La révolution chinoise et le maoïsme revisités; et Dix ans de réformes : bouleversements et incertitudes*, par Roland Lew.  
 Numéro 4: *La révolution algérienne*, par Denis Berger  
 Number 5: *Civil war and Reconstruction in the U.S. - Primitive Accumulation and the Bourgeois Revolution (1844-1877)*, by Charles Post  
 Numéro 6: *La gauche philippine et les années 80 - une introduction à un dossier*, par Pierre Rousset et Rizalina Viegelmann  
 Number 7: *The Meaning of the American Revolution*, by Kit Adam Wainer  
 Number 8: *Constructing a Printshop, a case study in building the party apparatus*, by Bernard, LCR (F)  
 Number 9: *The Uneven and Combined Character of Third World Development: Lessons from Women's Everyday Forms of Resistance in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia*, by Carol McAllister  
 Numéro 10: *Combats et débats de la IVe Internationale: -I- Des origines à 1963*, par François Moreau  
 Numéro 11: *Combats et débats de la IVe Internationale: -II- De la réunification de 1963 à nos jours*, par François Moreau  
 Numéro 12: *Combats et débats de la IVe Internationale: -III- Retour sur les grand thèmes de débats*, par François Moreau  
 Number 13: *Sexual Oppression and Class Oppression*, by Stephanie Coontz  
 Number 14: *Helena Molony: Actress, Feminist, Nationalist, Socialist and Trade-Unionist*, by Penny Duggan



## Introduction

"The most valuable heritage of the Irish Labour movement today is the Connolly tradition and if there is one person who embodies this more than any other, it is Helena Molony, for she worked side by side with Connolly to create it. The Connolly tradition is that point of view which regards true Nationalism and true democracy as being irrevocably linked or, as Helena Molony put it, they are two sides of one movement."<sup>1</sup>

This is a striking accolade from the well-

known nationalist historian R. M. Fox. Yet, apart from the chapter in his own book *Rebel Irishwomen*, Helena Molony appears in histories of the period as a minor character, who is only once or twice at the centre of the action.

Who is she, what did she do, how did this young lady from a "bourgeois background"<sup>2</sup> win this accolade? This is a first attempt to find some of the answers.

□

---

1. Fox, R.M., *Rebel Irishwomen*, Progress House, Dublin, 1935, 1967, p. 65.

2. Levenson, Samuel, *James Connolly, Socialist, Patriot and Martyr*, Quartet Books, London, 1977, p. 333.

## Chapter 1

## These Women Get Everywhere!

The society into which Helena Molony was born, Ireland in the 1880s, was one which was to change almost out of recognition in the next 40 years, including for women, though they did not win everything they fought for.<sup>3</sup> Helena played her part in carrying through these changes.

By 1921, a militant struggle and armed confrontation with Britain had won a "Free state" rather than the Home Rule fought for during so many years by the constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party in Westminster.

The labour movement had grown from small craft-based unions to a mass union movement wielding considerable industrial strength.

A new national Irish culture had been developed through the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletics Association and the national theatre in the Abbey.

Women achieved equal political rights with men. These were first asserted in the Easter proclamation and then enshrined in the 1922 Constitution. However, much still remained to fight for, starting with women's right to go out to work if they chose and not be forced to stay at home.

None of this was won without the active participation of women in all these struggles. They were often among the most radical forces and many of them, like Helena Molony, were fighting on all these fronts at the same time. Few men were so consistently in the front line.

The number of political organizations founded by Irish women in this period is formidable; Helena was a central member of several of them.

### *Principal women's organizations founded in Ireland between 1860 and 1935'*

1861: Irish branch of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Educated Women

1881: Ladies Land League formed first as support to and then to take on the work of the Land League when most of the (male) leaders were imprisoned, under the leadership of Charles Stuart Parnell's sister Anna. It was closed down mainly because when they were released from prison Parnell and the others found it too radical.

1882: Central Association of Irish Schoolmistresses and Other Ladies Interested in Irish Education (mainly Protestant).

1900: Inghinidhe na hEireann (nationalist women's organization)

1901: Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association (non-Catholic and middle-class)

1902: Irish Association of Women Graduates

1908: Irish Women's Franchise League (militant but non-party)

1911: Irish Women Workers' Union

1911: Irish Women's Suffrage Federation as a federation of local suffrage associations.

1914: Cumann na mBan (started as women's auxiliary to Irish Volunteers)

1917: Cumann na dTeachtaire (women Republicans)

1922: Cumann na Saiorse (pro-Treaty split from Cumann na mBan)

1933: Mna na Poblachta (split from Cumann na mBan when it abandoned the leadership of the Second Dail to become more socially aware).

Jennie Wyse-Power, vice-president of Sinn Fein and long-time nationalist activist rather played down the early stage of this activity when in 1924 she wrote:

"Between this period [Ladies Land League] and the birth of the Gaelic League, there is nothing to record the activities of Irishwomen except their atti-

tude during the Parnell crisis."<sup>5</sup>

Not only did Irish women continue to organize but they also won some formidable victories in extending their political rights and access to education.

#### *Some milestones in Irishwomen's emancipation*

1877: Medical degrees opened to women.

1878: Intermediate Education Act.

1879: Royal University Act permits women to sit for university degrees.

1884: Nine women graduate from the Royal University of Ireland.

1893: Foundation of the Gaelic League which accepted women on equal terms with men.

1898: Women with the appropriate property qualifications can be elected to district councils.

1904: Trinity College is opened to women.

1905: Sinn Fein is formed and women accepted equally with men. Jennie Wyse-Power is a vice-president.

1909: National University in Dublin and Queens University Belfast opened to women.

1911: Women can be elected to county councils.

1916: The Easter Proclamation, addressed to "Irishmen and Irishwomen", states that the Republic guarantees "equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens" and that the National Government will be elected by "the suffrages of all her men and women".

1922: The Constitution of the Irish Free State gives equal political rights to men and women.

However, although the work of the women in the national struggle had forced the men to accord them equal political rights, women's right to work on equal terms with men was not so easily achieved.

There were few opportunities for employment for educated Irishwomen, who were concentrated in teaching or nursing (especially midwifery) as their only alternative to the convent. However, the spread of French-style non-enclosed orders during the nineteenth century brought nuns increasingly into teaching and also increased the numbers of women joining religious orders. The comparison between the census figures for 1861 and 1911 shows this.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Evolution of women's employment between 1861 and 1911*

<u>Category</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1911</u>
Teaching	8,900	8,500
Nuns	2,609	8,887
Midwives	492	790
Nurses		621
Sub-medical categories		2,513
Officers/clerks in civil service		1,858

*Note: Figures for 1861 include both Catholic and Protestant women. Figures for 1911 are for Catholic women only.*

As these figures show, civil service clerical jobs were the other major opening for women educated in the National School system to find jobs. The first department to recruit women was the post office. As early as 1882, a National schools inspector noted that the opening of the competitive examinations to women was beginning to create ambitions in some pupils to get these jobs, which were also relatively well-paid. The first woman clerk in another department of the Civil Service in Ireland was appointed in 1901. Subsequently commercial companies began to appoint women clerks. For example, Guinness Breweries appointed four in 1906. The 1911 census returns show 7,849 women clerks and typists in employed in private companies.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from these "professional" categories women were employed primarily as shop assistants and in the textile and food industries. Conditions were often very bad. James Larkin referred to the conditions in Jacobs' Biscuit factories as "sending them from earth twenty years before their time".<sup>8</sup> Such women were not represented by the male craft unions which dominated the early labour movement. This was the importance of the Irish Women Workers' Union which was addressed to these women. Its first secretary, Delia Larkin, appealed to:

"Sisters ...whether you work in the mill, the factory, biscuit or jam, sack or packing — whether you are a weaver, spinner, washer, ironer, labeller, box-maker, sack-mender, jam-packer, biscuit maker — whatever you are or wherever you work ...to enroll in the Irish Women Workers' Trade Union."

Yet, despite their conditions, they were prepared to defend themselves. In August 1911, just before the IWWU was founded, 3,000 women workers at Jacobs had struck work in pursuit of a pay claim.<sup>9</sup>

The IWWU, in the tradition of Larkin's union, was also clearly an Irish and thus nationalist union. Liberty Hall was the headquarters of the ITGWU and the IWWU but it also became an organizing centre of the nationalist movement and the Easter Rising itself. The IWWU women played their part.

Yet, they were also obliged to fight, even against their own comrades, to defend their right to those jobs which they were forced to take to help support their families. As a correspondent to *The Irish Worker* wrote:

"Some people tell us that woman's place is in the home; that she should devote all her energies towards making it bright and cheerful. But it is very little of the home working women see."<sup>10</sup>

Later, the Free State that they had helped to create attempted to limit their right to work, first of all in the 1935 Conditions of Employment Bill which attempted to restrict the trades in which women could work and then in the 1937 Constitution. Article 41.2 stated that:

"2.1. In particular the state recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2.2. The state shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

But Irish women continued to organize to fight for their own rights, and Irish rights in general, even when the odds were overwhelmingly against them. Helena Molony was one of them. □

## Notes Chapter 1

3. *The Irish Dictionary of National Biography* (Boylan, Henry, ed., Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1988) gives Helena Molony's birth date as 1884 although her death certificate of 29th January 1967 gives her age as 84 implying she was born in 1883. The most probable is that she was born in the first quarter of 1883 in Dublin where there is a recorded birth of a Helena Mary Moloney. Both spellings of her name are used but the most frequently used is without an "e" and this is used in the bulk of "official" references to her (death certificate, grave stone, newspaper reports, etc.).
4. This list is compiled from information in Cullen Owens, Rosemary, *Smashing Times*, Attic, Dublin 1984.
5. Wyse-Power, Mrs J., "The Political Influence of Women in Modern Ireland" in Fitzgerald, W., ed., in *The Voice of Ireland*, Virtue, Dublin & London, 1924, pp 158-61.
6. Fahey, Tony "Nuns in the Catholic Church in Ireland in the nineteenth century" in Cullen, Mary, ed., *Girls Don't Do Honours*, Women's Education Bureau, Dublin, 1987.
7. O'Connor, Anne V., "The revolution in girls' secondary education in Ireland, 1860-1910" *ibid* p. 54.
8. Jones, Mary, *These Obstreperous Lassies*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1988, p. 3.
9. *Ibid* p. 2.
10. *Ibid* p. 3.

## Chapter 2

## The Making Of A Militant

### a) Joining Inghinidhe na hEireann

Helena Molony described her first contact with the organized nationalist movement thus:

"I was a young girl dreaming about Ireland when I saw and heard Maud Gonne speaking by the Custom House in Dublin one August evening in 1903.... she inspired me — as she did many others — with a love of Ireland....She made me want to help and, encouraged by my brother Frank, I went to join Inghinidhe na hEireann."<sup>11</sup>

Inghinidhe na hEireann (Daughters of Erin) was the women's nationalist organization founded by Maud Gonne in 1900 when she found that women were excluded from many of the existing nationalist organizations. It had started in the organization of the Patriotic Children's Treat by Maud and a group of other women for the nationalist children who did not go to the Children's Treat organized on the occasion of Queen Victoria's visit to Dublin in 1900.

The Inghinidhe was committed to complete independence of Ireland, encouraging Irish manufactures and combatting English influence particularly in popular entertainment. The activities of the Inghinidhe included teaching children Irish history, the Irish language and Irish dancing, singing and culture as well as organizing monthly ceilidhs (social evenings including dancing and singing) and theatrical productions. The membership was mainly young working girls, not working class but earning independent livings.

Helena's first contact with the Inghinidhe was a veritable baptism of fire. King Edward VII of England visited Dublin in July 1903. Maud Gonne and the Inghinidhe had been active in launching the campaign to prevent Dublin City Corporation giving a Loyal Address of Welcome to him. At the time of the visit itself, although the Inghinidhe had pasted

up copies of the king's Coronation Oath, showing how the English monarchy was anti-Catholic and tied to the Church of England, Maud Gonne felt this was not enough and on returning to her Dublin home hung out a black flag in mourning for Pope Leo XIII who had recently died, as an act of defiance to the Union Jacks which were flourishing elsewhere. The first time this was removed by the police. A second one was hung out and Maud Gonne's determined efforts to defend it led to a physical confrontation with the police and neighbours.<sup>12</sup>

Helena Molony, who had gone to the offices to join the Inghinidhe, instead found a message telling members to go to Maud Gonne's house in Coulson Avenue. She found herself in the midst of this battle. When challenged by the police she claimed to be a member of Inghinidhe although:

"I felt I was claiming too great an honour, for me to be a member of such a body was the greatest honour in the world. However, friends told me to come up and join the following week."<sup>13</sup>

Despite her initial shyness Helena Molony rapidly became a close friend of Maud Gonne. Although almost twenty years younger than Maud, she became one of a close circle of friends who shared sailing trips and the recreation of ancient Celtic ceremonies on Ireland's Eye.<sup>14</sup>

Her role in the Inghinidhe rapidly became a central one. Not long after she joined, the secretary Maire Quinn left with her husband Dudley Digges to go to America where, according to Levenson, they were going to act in an Irish play in the World's Fair in St Louis although other sources refer to them as emigrating.<sup>15</sup> Helena then took over as secretary.

During much of the life of the Inghinidhe, Maud Gonne was in fact absent from Ireland. Helena Molony therefore became a vital understudy for her, sending weekly reports and

making at least annual visits to Maud in Paris to keep her in touch with what was going on and what the Inghinidhe was doing. Within the Inghinidhe, members were often known by Celtic names, for security reasons to prevent them from victimization, and to make a link with strong women figures from Ireland's history and mythology. Helena Molony took the name "Emer". This was the name of the wife of the legendary hero of Ulster, Cu Chulainn. The Gonne MacBride family used this name for the rest of her life.<sup>16</sup>

### b) Bean na hEireann

One of the most successful of the Inghinidhe projects and one to which Helena Molony was central, was the launching of a journal *Bean na hEireann* (Woman of Ireland) in 1908. She herself described it:

"We wanted it to be a women's paper, advocating militancy, separatism and feminism."<sup>17</sup>

This was in comparison to the journal *The United Irishman* which she dismissed as:

"starting as a physical force, separatist journal had gradually changed its policy to one of reactionary social and dual kingdom ideas. We wanted to start a paper to counteract this."<sup>18</sup>

It was so successful not only among women that it became "the ladies paper that all the young men read".<sup>19</sup>

The journals are a curious mixture with fashion articles — always strongly advocating wearing Irish products, presumably tweeds in winter and linen in summer — alongside articles on streetfighting. Regular features included "Woman with a Garden" (apparently originally by Maud Gonne but taken over by Constance Markievicz from February 1909)<sup>20</sup> and the column by "A Worker". This latter was the responsibility of Helena Molony herself who thus came into contact with the Dublin labour movement through going "to the Trades Hall for my Labour notes".<sup>21</sup>

The launch of *Bean na hEireann* seems to have been the occasion for the introduction of Constance Markievicz into the women's nationalist movement. Although the precise details in the different accounts vary it seems clear that she was invited by Helena to the

first meeting where the launch of *Bean na hEireann* was discussed and arrived in full evening dress having come from a Castle or other society function. Whatever it was, she attended few other such functions and from this point became active in all aspects of the movement and often spoke on public platforms. One memorable speech she gave to the Students National Literary Society in Dublin in March 1909 on the theme "A Free Ireland with no Sex Disabilities in her Constitution" was subsequently reprinted by the Inghinidhe in *Bean na hEireann* and in pamphlet form.

In this speech she formulated the double oppression of Irishwomen in a way that no doubt summed up the feelings of the Inghinidhe members, given the promotion they gave to it:

"As our country has had her freedom and her Nationhood taken from her by England, so also our sex is denied emancipation and citizenship by the same enemy. So therefore the first step on the road to freedom is to realize ourselves as Irishwomen — not as Irish or merely as women, but as Irishwomen doubly enslaved and with a double battle to fight."<sup>22</sup>

### c) Fianna na hEireann

*Bean na hEireann* was the launching pad for one of the projects in which Helena Molony was involved and showed her inclinations for militant physical activity. In May 1909 Constance Markievicz suggested through the pages of *Bean na hEireann* the launch of an Irish nationalist equivalent of the Baden-Powell boys scouting movement. After a false start under the name of the "Red Branch Knights" this became the Fianna na hEireann and an important training ground for those who were later to fight in the Easter Rising and the IRA. Helena participated actively with the Countess in training the boys in drilling and tracking. She also learnt to shoot (taught by Constance) and went on at least one camp with them.

Also along with Constance she suffered the indignity of having her presence at the first Fianna convention questioned on the grounds that "a physical force organization is no place for women". This attempt was defeated and she remained a committee member.

*Bean na hEireann* gave continuous coverage to the activities of the Fianna during its three years of existence.

### d) The Belcamp Park commune

A less successful venture initiated by Constance in which Helena participated was the short-lived attempt at a self-sufficient (at least in vegetables and farm produce) cooperative in a big house in Belcamp Park, Rathgar, County Dublin. Helena was one of the four adult members of the commune (with Constance, Bulmer Hobson the nationalist and Donald Hannigan graduate of Glasnevin Agricultural College as the agricultural expert) and was ready to offer:

"the portion of money she was expecting to get from the sale of a small estate of her mother's through the Land Court."<sup>23</sup>

However, it was not a success. The Fianna boys raided the neighbours for milk and hens, the garden did not produce the hoped for vegetables and in all it was a very inconvenient life for two very active and busy women between the household tasks and bicycling into Dublin for all their meetings.

Bulmer Hobson went off to Dublin, leaving Helena and Constance to split the liabilities between two rather than three of them. Helena also moved out sometime in 1910 while Constance and her husband moved back into Dublin in 1911.<sup>24</sup>

### e) The school meals campaign

Another project launched through the pages of *Bean na hEireann* in April 1910 was that of providing meals for school children. This was already the responsibility of the government in England through an Act of Parliament passed in 1906 but had not been extended to Ireland. The practical work of volunteers providing school meals got underway in some national schools in the autumn of 1910. In her "A Worker" column, Helena Molony expressed doubts about charity's ineffectiveness in alleviating bad social conditions, but was taken to task by Maud Gonne in an editorial arguing from the point of view of the immediate interests of the children.<sup>25</sup>

Later Helena Molony described this project in approvingly but with care to answer in part her own former criticisms:

"These were not free school meals but school dinners....All children who could afford it paid. The cost was one penny per dinner per day which dinner consisted of meat and vegetables for four days weekly with milk rice and jam on Fridays....The teachers collected the pennies from the children who could pay. No one knew who did or did not pay."<sup>26</sup>

It was not simply an Inghinidhe project but included the Irishwomen's Franchise League and had the backing of James Connolly. Desmond Greaves in fact attributes to Connolly himself the idea of campaigning for an extension of the Act to Ireland in November/December 1910.<sup>27</sup>

Whoever had the idea, Maud Gonne and Connolly met the Executive Committee of Dublin Trades Council on 10th November. At this meeting the Executive agreed to ask the Lord Mayor to call a conference to launch the campaign. This conference finally took place on 12th December. For militant socialists and nationalists it was also an opportunity to point out the inadequacies of the Irish Parliamentary Party which had not fought for an amendment to the original bill.

The political campaign for the Act to be extended to Ireland continued until it was met with success by an Act adopted by the Westminster parliament in September 1914.

### f) First woman political prisoner of her generation

Helena Molony's participation in the protests against the Royal Visit of 1911 by George V and Queen Mary was much more striking than her timid involvement in the 1903 protests and won her the distinction of being the first woman political prisoner of her generation. She was in fact arrested twice.

The first time, on 4th July 1911, she had participated in a demonstrative burning of the Union Jack organized by Constance Markievicz.

"Remembering her brother Frank's stories of breaking windows of shops displaying the Union Jacks during the 1898 centennial celebrations,"<sup>28</sup>

she filled her handbag with stones which she distributed to young men in the crowd. In fact, they were not thrown because the most influential radical nationalist organization, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, had issued orders against disturbances and had organized a meeting at Wolfe Tone's grave in Bodenstown at the same time. But when Helena saw an optician's window on Nassau Street displaying pictures of the King and Queen she herself threw a stone. She was arrested and convicted. The sentence was 40 shillings or 1 month's imprisonment. Refusing to pay the fine, she was jailed until Anna Parnell paid her fine to enable her to go on editing her *History of the Ladies Land League*.<sup>29</sup> This did not please Helena at all who thought that a man (possibly the Lord Mayor) had paid her fine:

"I am extremely sorry his kindness took this form, which is most distasteful and irritating to me, and was done against the wishes of myself and my friends."<sup>30</sup>

The Socialist Party and Inghinidhe na Eireann had planned a joint meeting for the release of Helena and SP member James McArdle imprisoned for the flagburning. It went ahead as scheduled although Helena had in fact been released a fortnight previously. Paying tribute to Walter Carpenter, a trade-union organizer jailed for calling the king a descendant of scoundrels, Helena not only repeated the same thing but said that the king himself was "one of the greatest scoundrels in Europe".<sup>31</sup> She was promptly rearrested. In her own account:

"The police had me down on the charge sheet for "high treason". That was marvellous; I felt myself in the same company as Wolfe Tone. Then they reduced it to "using language derogatory to His Majesty". In my secret heart of hearts I felt degraded by such a miserable accusation."<sup>32</sup>

Finally the administration decided that discretion was probably the better part of valour and the case was dismissed.

Helena was nevertheless feeling worried about what she had done because:

"Even some of my friends thought my conduct reprehensible and rowdy. I was feeling rather crushed about this — for I was still young and inexperienced — when I received a telegram from Maud Gonne who was then in Paris. It read: "Splendid. You have kept up the reputation of the Inghinidhe na hEireann." I cannot describe how elated I felt when I received that. My heart was lifted up."<sup>33</sup>

### g) Inghinidhe begins to decline

Nevertheless, from 1911, the activity of the Inghinidhe began to decline. Already there had been a hiatus in the publication of *Bean na hEireann* in between March and August of 1910 and the last issue came out in March 1911.<sup>34</sup> A new physical force journal, *Irish Freedom*, published by the Irish Republican Brotherhood began publication in November 1910 and probably took away some of the "young men" readers.

Already in June 1910 an editorial admitted that *Bean na hEireann* had little appeal for the "average woman".<sup>35</sup>

The political perspective of the Inghinidhe was very much in the nationalist tradition. The fight for women's right to vote for example tended to be dismissed as "English" agitation and something that Irishwomen should only demand when they had an Irish government to demand it from.<sup>36</sup> However, the articles in *Bean na hEireann* tended to reflect the individual views of the writers rather than a homogeneous "party line". The openly expressed difference between Helena and Maud Gonne on the school meals question shows that Helena's own developing radical socialism did not meet with complete agreement. However, Maud Gonne was absent for much of this period and according to Levenson:

"During the summer of 1911 the Daughters of Erin [the Inghinidhe] became increasingly inactive and publication of its organ ceased....Her [Maud Gonne's] chief lieutenant in Dublin, Helena Molony, was too young and attracted more by violence than editorial work."<sup>37</sup>

□

## Notes Chapter 2

11. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen* p. 65. Note however that it seems unlikely that she heard Maud Gonne speak in August as the first recorded Inghinidhe event in which Molony participated (see below) took place in July 1903. One possibility is that the meeting was the famous one in the Rotunda on 18th May when Maud Gonne challenged the Irish Party over the question of the king's visit. This is the dating given in Cardozo, Nancy, *Maud Gonne, Lucky eyes and a high heart*, Gollancz, London 1979, p. 234.
12. For descriptions of this incident see in particular Levenson, Samuel, *Maud Gonne*, Cassell, London, 1977, p. 217 and Ward, Margaret, *Maud Gonne, Ireland's Joan of Arc*, Pandora Unwin, London, 1990 p. 83.
13. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen* p. 66.
14. See Ward *Maud Gonne* p. 67, Cardozo *op cit* p. 234 and Coxhead, Elizabeth, *Daughters of Erin*, Smythe, Gerrards Cross, 1979, p. 42.
15. Levenson, *Maud Gonne*, p. 217 and Ward, *Maud Gonne*, p. 90., who dates this as "shortly after the protests against Synge's play" (*In the Shadow of the Glen*, which opened in October 1903).
16. Ward, *Maud Gonne*, p.90.
17. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p. 66.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Quoted in Norman, Diana, *Terrible Beauty, A Life of Constance Markievicz*, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1988, p. 78 as "its own description of itself".
20. Molony's own account in Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*. p. 66 and Marreco, Anne, *Rebel Countess*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1967, p. 102 and Van Voris, Jacqueline, *Constance de Markievicz: In the cause of Ireland*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1967, p. 63.
21. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen* p. 67
22. Cited in Cullen Owens *op cit*, pp. 104-5.
23. Marreco *op cit* p. 131.
24. See Norman *op cit* pp 67-8 and Van Voris *op cit* p. 72.
25. Ward, *Maud Gonne*, p. 97.
26. An unpublished manuscript in the Hugh O'Connor Collection, Dublin. It is a tribute to Maud Gonne written on the third anniversary of her death, therefore in 1956. Hereafter "Maud Gonne".
27. Desmond Greaves, C., *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1972, p. 253
28. Van Voris *op cit* p. 84.
29. This history, after having been passed to a number of different people for editing and mislaid for many years, was finally published in 1986 under the title *The Tale of A Great Sham* by Arlen House Dublin, edited by Dana Hearne.
30. *Sinn Fein*, 19th March 1911, quoted in Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 79.
31. In her account in Fox *op cit* p. 68, she makes it clear that "I was only concerned with his public character as a foreign ruler in Ireland and, as here he stood for oppression, I regarded him in that capacity as one of the greatest scoundrels in Europe."
32. Undated and untitled press cutting in Hugh O'Connor collection.
33. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p.68.
34. The collection of *Bean na hEireann* held in the National Library in Dublin runs from No 6 (April 1909) to No 25. No 17 is dated March 1910 while (undated) issue No 18, referring to 23rd June as "having been a day of great victory", seems to be the August issue. Margaret Ward in *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* (Pluto, London, 1983, p. 74) gives the last issue as February 1911 but I think she is mistaken as No 21 is definitely not October 1910 as it refers to 21st October in the past tense.
35. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 74.
36. Nevertheless a mass meeting in June 1912 which demanded that women's right to vote should be included in the Home Rule Bill won widespread support including from Constance Markievicz, Jenny Wyse-Power, vice-president of Sinn Fein, Maud Gonne, Kathleen Lynn, and Helena Molony (Cullen Owens, *op cit*, pp. 51-2).
37. Levenson, *Maud Gonne*, p. 271.

## Chapter 5

## The Abbey Theatre Actress

In the midst of her other activities, Helena also joined the Abbey Theatre company in 1909.<sup>38</sup> As the Inghinidhe also acted pieces, and the Count and Countess Markievicz had an acting company (the Independent Dramatic Company founded in 1908) it is likely that she already had some experience. She continued to act with the Abbey until 1922, while also appearing in the acting groups of first the Inghinidhe and then the IWWU/Liberty Hall.

Among her first parts was apparently one of the Count's plays *The Memory of the Dead* which opened at the Abbey in April 1910 with the Countess and Seán Connolly among the cast.<sup>39</sup> In Lennox Robinson's history of the Abbey Theatre we see Helena's name appearing in the cast lists of first productions at the Abbey between 1912 and 1922 with significant gaps in 1914, 1916-18, and 1920-1 with only one appearance in November 1920.<sup>40</sup> Of course, the Abbey did not only show new productions, and Fox records that she appeared in *The Mineral Workers* by Boyle during the 1913 lockout, on at least one occasion going out between her appearances in the first and last act to address a strike meeting in Liberty Hall.<sup>41</sup> This is not listed in Robinson's history as it was not a first production.

In the Count's company, one of her roles was in *Eleanor's Enterprise* by George Birmingham where she played Mrs Finnegan to Seán Connolly's Mr Finnegan. A scene between them was "played as a concert item for years" according to Jacqueline Van Voris.<sup>42</sup> However, she does not say whether by the

original cast as in this case it would not have been for many years. Seán Connolly was the first nationalist killed in the Easter Rising in 1916.

Among other notable theatrical events in Helena's life she played the mother in a production of W. B. Yeats' *Cathleen ni Houlihan* when Lady Gregory played Cathleen. Most spectators thought this production better forgotten — Lady Gregory not being in the least like Maud Gonne for whom Yeats had written the part and who had played it in the first production.

In 1922, when she was almost 40, she took the leading role in the first production of Lennox Robinson's *Crabbed Youth and Age* as a mother of three grown up daughters who is such an attractive personality that all the young men who come to the house originally attracted by the daughters in fact fall in love with the mother.

A number of the plays in which she took roles were those written by the "Cork realists" which, breaking with the "Romantic Ireland" tradition of Yeats, contained social criticism although "blunted by merriment". *The Mineral Workers* is one such play which is a criticism of the power of landowners.<sup>43</sup>

An appreciation of her in the Irish Press at her death states that:

"In the Abbey Theatre of the pre-1916 days, critics spoke of her as having all the qualities of the top actresses of the theatre's greatest days."<sup>44</sup>

38. *Irish Times*, 30th January, 1967.

39. Van Voris, *op cit*, pp 75 & 79.

40. Robinson, Lennox, *Ireland's Abbey Theatre, A History 1898-1951*, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, London 1951.

41. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p. 68.

42. Van Voris, *op cit*, p. 95.

43. Malone, Andrew E, "The Rise of the Realist Movement" in *The Irish Theatre*, ed. Lennox Robinson, Macmillan, London, 1939.

44. *Irish Press*, 30th January 1967.

## Chapter 4

## In the Connolly Tradition

### a) First contact with Connolly

In her own account Helena Molony describes her coming to Connolly's ideas with a certain naivety:

"...I knew little of Labour ideas. But I was always on the side of the underdog. My attention was turned definitely to Labour matters when I discovered that one of the best and most intelligent girl members we had [in Inghinidhe] was getting 5 shillings a week as a shirtmaker. At this period I was fumbling at the idea of a junction between Labour and Nationalism — which Connolly worked out clearly."<sup>45</sup>

She says of *Bean na hEireann*:

"Although I was not attached then to any section of the Labour Movement I am proud to remember that we had Labour notes as a permanent feature contributed by a good friend Carl O'Knapton who was a member of the Trade Council."<sup>46</sup>

It was as early as 1909, while Connolly was still in the United States of America, publishing *The Harp*, that Helena first wrote to him saying:

"I only wish it was in Ireland that you were publishing the *Harp*. There is a very, very great need for a workers' Journal in Ireland. The *Trade and Labour Journal* will not supply it I am afraid."<sup>47</sup>

Connolly obviously recognised in Helena a future colleague because he asked his friend William O'Brien the trade-union organizer and future Irish Citizen Army commander to get in touch with her. He followed this up in later letters asking O'Brien if he had yet had time to do so.<sup>48</sup>

According to Helena they exchanged papers and she often reprinted articles from *The Harp* in *Bean na hEireann*.<sup>49</sup>

### b) After Connolly's return

James Connolly returned to Ireland in July 1910 to become organizer of the Socialist Party. Helena Molony was a member or at least close sympathiser of this party so presumably it did not take long for she and Connolly to meet. In any event, in early 1911 Helena Molony and James Connolly spoke together in a public meeting addressed to workers calling on them to adopt a resolution opposing the adoption of a Loyal Address on the occasion of the Royal visit. This meeting was apparently jointly organized by the Socialist Party and the Inghinidhe, like the meeting later that year on Helena's release from prison.<sup>50</sup>

### c) The Dublin Lockout

The Dublin Lockout was the "biggest confrontation between workers and employers that Europe had ever seen".<sup>51</sup> It was provoked by the decision of the Dublin employers, organized in a federation, to smash the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, founded by James Larkin in 1909, which now organized over 20,000 Dublin workers and had also founded the Irish Women Workers' Union in 1911.

In essence, the major employers told their workers to leave the ITGWU. Those who refused (the vast majority) were then locked out by the employers. A number of violent incidents led to at least three deaths and many hundreds wounded by police and scab violence.

The Lockout went on from mid-August to January when it ended in a draw, the employers agreeing to re-employ the locked-out if there were jobs for them but not to recognize the ITGWU. During this period the locked-out workers and their dependents (numbering at least 100,000 people) were living in conditions of poverty and starvation. Soup kitchens

in Liberty Hall (the ITGWU headquarters) were staffed by the women of Inghinidhe and the Irish Women's Franchise League as well as locked-out workers, including the IWWU members from Jacob's Biscuit factories while out-of-work seamstresses (also IWWU) made over and altered donated clothing for use by those who needed it.<sup>52</sup>

Helena Molony, like the other members of Inghinidhe and so many of the women — whatever their political viewpoints — who had been active in the nationalist and women's movements, was involved in this relief work.

Her one specific recorded activity was to make up James Larkin as an elderly clergyman so that he would be able to get to a mass meeting on Sunday 31st August at which he had promised to speak despite being banned from doing so by the courts. The disguise was obviously successful because Larkin managed to address the crowds in O'Connell Street from the balcony of the Imperial Hotel.

She was also among the "prominent citizens" who followed the coffin of James Nolan, an ITGWU member batoned to death by the police, to its grave at the funeral on the following Wednesday.<sup>53</sup>

#### d) Working directly with Connolly

After the Lockout was over many hundreds of men and women workers remained unemployed. One project was to employ some of them was in a Workers' Cooperative originally founded by Delia Larkin. Connolly decided to revive this and asked Helena Molony to take on organizing it.

The Co-op was based on Eden Quay just next and in fact adjoining to Liberty Hall. The specialty product was a working shirt "The Red Hand" selling for 2s 6d. The Workers Co-op was not simply a women workers' co-op. The members were also members of the ICA and "seditious literature" was stored in the backroom of the shop. Later on it became a "receiving depot for small parcels of arms and ammunition" Helena described it as a "tigress in kitten's clothing".<sup>54</sup> After the Rising the Co-op was reorganized as the Connolly Co-op.

But the major project in which Connolly involved Helena was in fact to become her life's

work. The Irish Women Workers' Union had been founded in 1911 under the impetus of James Larkin and with his sister Delia as its first secretary. However, the disorganizing effects of the Lockout had been particularly hardly felt by women workers and the union was in a state of collapse. Along with asking Helena to be secretary to the Workers' Coop, Connolly asked her to become secretary to the IWWU "sometime in 1914".<sup>55</sup> She took on the job and was to remain an organizer for the IWWU until retirement although:

"I had no experience or idea of any kind of organizing and it was really he who did the work coming with me to the various factory gates to try to enlist girls into the Union."<sup>56</sup>

After her time in Inghinidhe and running *Bean na hEireann* almost single-handed, to say she had "no idea or experience" is a little exaggerated, but for a middle-class young lady who obviously had not had much contact with working class girls (cf her shock at finding out that a woman worker at Jacobs earned only 5s a week although this was far from being the lowest wage paid to women in Dublin at that time) factory gate recruiting must have been daunting.

Nonetheless, by November 1915, Helena was sufficiently knowledgeable to read a paper on "Women's Wages and Trade Unions" at a Women's Industrial Conference held at the Mansion House in which she pointed out:

"Women workers are still suffering great hardships, still earning the same wage as four years ago. Some grown women could only earn 3s a week."<sup>57</sup>

Another sign of the confidence that Connolly had in Helena was that he asked her to become the registered proprietor of the *Workers Republic*, the newspaper he founded in May 1915 after *The Irish Worker* was suppressed and its plant seized. The journal was printed behind the shop and this led to Helena's and the other women's first armed confrontation with the police. In March 1916, the police raided the Gaelic Press. They then arrived at the Eden Quay shop to seize the *Workers' Republic*. Connolly appeared, revolver in hand, and forced them to leave the newspapers because they had no warrant to search and seize. They returned later, with a warrant. By this time the papers had been put

in the back room by Helena and the other women present. Connolly told the police that they could search the shop but that behind the counter was Liberty Hall and they had no warrant to search that. The police retreated because:

"We were all armed, which fact helped to make up the Inspector's mind as to the undesirability of raiding Liberty Hall for which he had no warrant."<sup>58</sup>

### e) The Irish Citizens' Army and the Easter Rising

The Irish Citizens' Army had been started during the 1913 Lockout as an armed force to protect the locked-out workers. It later adopted a constitution which stated:

"1. That the first and last principle of the Irish Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland, material and moral, is vested of right in the people of Ireland."

There was also a clause which required members to be members of the appropriate, Irish TUC-affiliated, union.<sup>59</sup> This armed body was much smaller than the Irish Volunteers, an armed movement created in 1914 in response to Edward Carson's (of "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right" fame) creation of the Ulster Volunteers. The Volunteers recruited much more broadly and without age limitation. Women supporters of the Volunteers were organized in Cumann na mBan as a women's auxiliary with support tasks. The Inghinidhe amalgamated with this new organization in 1914 but on special terms which allowed them to form a branch rather than just being dissolved into it. Helena, Constance et al would not have wanted to be relegated to the role of a women's auxiliary. The new organization was also criticized by the feminist organizations, such as the IWFL, for accepting this subordinate role. But in the ICA:

"They [women] were an integral part of the army and not in any sense a "Ladies Auxiliary" but shared duties and responsibilities with their brothers."<sup>60</sup>

Helena Molony was an active member of the ICA. A handwritten letter dated 7th April 1937 and signed by Peoptra ni O'Roim (Old Commanding Officer South County Dublin) certified:

"Miss Helena Molony was one of the

old group of Irish women whom were always to be acquired for special service during the years of active service. I am well acquainted with her activities as a member of the Irish Citizen Army from 1916-23."<sup>61</sup>

During the early months of 1916 when the preparations of the Rising were underway, she was working alongside Connolly in a day-to-day fashion and they were both living at Constance Markievicz's home, Surrey House. When Connolly disappeared for several days in January 1916 it was Constance and Helena who raised the alarm and Helena who dared ask him when he reappeared:

"Where have you been?" I gasped. "I have been through hell" he said wearily. "Did they kidnap you?" asked Madame. "Yes" replied Connolly "but I converted my captors."<sup>62</sup>

Although the mystery surrounding this incident has never been completely elucidated, it seems clear that Connolly was forcibly invited to attend a meeting with the leadership of the IRB which was the secret force in the leadership of the Volunteers and they agreed on the plans for the Rising. It is well documented that from that point Connolly's criticisms of the Volunteers' cautious policies ceased.<sup>63</sup>

These next few months were a time of "daily tension and anxiety" but work continued. The women's co-op was turning out haversacks and a machine gun belt which:

"gave us women headaches because of the extreme accuracy of the measurements required. It was homemade as were all the bombs and hand grenades which the Citizen Army was accumulating."<sup>64</sup>

The prelude to the Rising itself was the raising of a large green flag with a golden harp but without a crown over Liberty Hall on Sunday 16th April. The Rising was scheduled for one week later. But in the meantime the Volunteers' commander, Eoin MacNeill, countermanded the order and brought chaos. The ICA under Connolly's leadership decided to countermand the countermand and mobilize for Easter Monday, 24th April.

The confusion was such that the Rising was doomed yet for Helena Molony:

"When we walked out that Easter Monday morning we felt in a very real sense that we were walking with Ireland into the sun."<sup>65</sup>

Helena is described variously as one of the three women along with Dr Kathleen Lynn, chief medical officer of the ICA and Constance Markiewicz to hold a commission in the ICA, or, with others also including Marie Perolz, Madeleine Ffrench-Mullen and Maeve Cavanagh, as playing a leading role or being responsible for the "women's section" of the ICA.<sup>66</sup>

She was in the group assigned, under the leadership of fellow Abbey actor Seán Connolly, to stage an attack on Dublin Castle and then occupy City Hall. Helena was a close friend of Seán Connolly "a young captain, a young actor that I knew very well". Some authors go further and state that she was engaged to him.<sup>67</sup>

Seán Connolly shot dead the policeman on duty at the gates of Dublin Castle when he tried to stop them entering. Fox says "this bullet destroyed the status quo in Ireland".<sup>68</sup> Helena was also one of the first to fire a shot but her's merely served as a warning to send another policeman into retreat round the corner from which he had appeared.<sup>69</sup>

The group then occupied City Hall. This tiny group (16 men and 9 women) feeling in need of reinforcements, Helena went over to the GPO to ask for them. None being available they had to hold on as they were. Early on Seán Connolly was shot by a sniper and, despite the medical aid of Kathleen Lynn, died of his wounds. The group was forced to surrender within 24 hours. Kathleen Lynn, as the senior officer present, negotiated the terms. During most of this time Helena was keeping guard over a British soldier she had taken prisoner.<sup>70</sup>

When the garrison surrendered, Helena marched with the others to the Ship Street barracks. From there they were taken to Kilmainham jail, from which she apparently tried to tunnel out with an iron spoon!<sup>71</sup>

Of the 79 women arrested after the Rising, 5 were finally taken to England: Nell Ryan, Brigid Foley, Marie Perolz, Helena Molony

and Winifred Carney.<sup>72</sup> After a sojourn in Holloway Jail in London, Marie Perolz and Brigid Foley were released, and Nell Ryan (released shortly afterwards), Winifred Carney and Helena were taken to Aylesbury where Constance Markiewicz was also imprisoned but as a common prisoner. The three asked to also be treated as common prisoners so that they could be with her but this was refused.<sup>73</sup>

Winifred Carney, who had worked with Connolly in organizing the women textile workers in Belfast and had come to Dublin as his assistant, and Helena:

"refused to organize any defence or pleading of their cause other than that which came from the Dublin Trades Council [DTC]. In acknowledgement of this, the meeting of the DTC on 6th November 1916 suggested that their detention was related to their activities in the labour movement and that the women "looked to their own class to secure their freedom". A resolution, passed unanimously, called for their immediate trial by a civil tribunal or their release from Aylesbury Prison."<sup>74</sup>

They were released in the general amnesty for internees on Christmas Eve 1916. Helena Molony returned to England in June 1917 to greet the 122 men and Constance Markiewicz who were finally released from English prisons in Lloyd George's belated attempt to calm down things in Ireland by releasing all the Rising prisoners.

They all, and especially Constance Markiewicz, returned to an ecstatic welcome from a population whose nationalist sentiment had been finally awoken. Helena Molony summed it up as:

"Failure [of the Rising] was greater than Triumph and Victory less than Defeat."<sup>75</sup>

## f) The 1917 anniversary of the Rising

In 1917 it was the ICA women under Helena's leadership who organized a commemoration of the Rising and Connolly's execution. They pasted copies of the Proclamation onto pillar boxes and hung Tricolors on the College of Surgeons and the General Post Office.

"It took the police and fire brigade hours to get the Post Office flag down and as for the Proclamations we'd used glue with the paste and fairly enamelled them

on. They were there for weeks."<sup>6</sup>

Over Liberty Hall they hung a streamer "James Connolly, Murdered by the British Government, Easter 1916". The first having been torn down by the police, Helena and Rosie Hackett made another one, took it up and

hung it from the top floor and barricaded themselves in by shooting two tons of coal down in front of the door leading up. The police again demanded it be removed, firing to make their point. When this was refused they had no option but to dig through the coal."<sup>7</sup>

□

## Notes Chapter 4

45. Fox *op cit* p. 67.
46. Unpublished manuscript in Hugh O'Connor collection, Dublin. It is an appreciation of Connolly written 40 years after his death so dating from 1956. Hereafter "James Connolly".
47. Levenson, *James Connolly*, p. 162.
48. *Ibid.* p. 172
49. "James Connolly".
50. Van Voris *op cit* p. 81 and Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, Pluto, p.76. Ward states that the meeting was reported in *Sinn Fein* of 19th March 1910, this is presumably an error for 1911.
51. Beresford Ellis, Peter, *A History of the Irish Working Class*, Pluto, London, 1985.
52. Norman, *op cit*, p. 90.
53. Van Voris, *op cit*. p. 108.
54. Unpublished manuscript "Years of Tension" in the Hugh O'Connor Collection. Hereafter "Years of Tension".
55. This is what Helena says in "Years of Tension". Other accounts eg. Fox in *Rebel Irishwomen* p. 69 put it in 1915. Certainly for part of 1914 she was in France with Maud Gonne recovering from illhealth and then nursing wounded soldiers.
56. "James Connolly".
57. Jones, *op cit*, p. 16. Quotation from *Irish Citizen*, 20th November 1915.
58. "Years of Tension". This incident is also described in Jones *op cit* pp. 17-18 and Marreco *op cit* p.195
59. O'Casey, Seán, *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*, Journeyman Press, London 1980, p. 14.
60. "Years of Tension".
61. In the Hugh O'Connor Collection, Dublin.
62. "Years of Tension".
63. See among others Desmond Greaves *op cit* pp. 386-393.
64. "Years of Tension".
65. Van Voris, *op cit* p.199 quoting from *An Phoblacht*, November 1930.
66. Norman, *op cit*, p. 129, Fox, R.M., *History of the Irish Citizen Army*, Duffy & Co, Dublin 1944, p. 136 and Robbins, Frank, *Under the Starry Plough*, The Academy Press, Dublin, 1977, p.39.
67. Nancy Cardozo *op cit* p. 306, and Ward in *Maud Gonne*, p. 109. In Haverty, Anne, *Constance Markievicz*, Pandora Unwin, London, 1989, p. 102 she is stated to have a fiancé and to have "cradled Seán Connolly's head as he died" without any particular connection made between the two. Unfortunately for this romantic story, Mrs Seán Connolly, widow of the hero, was alive and active after the Rising. She appeared at a concert in the City Hall Cork organized by Cumann na mBan on 23rd September 1917 (Conlon, Lil, *Cumann na mBan*, Kilkenny People, Kilkenny, 1968, p. 51) and wrote (supporting the Treaty) to the *Freeman's Journal* of 22 December 1921. Her in-laws subsequently replied, taking the opposing side.
68. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p. 70.
69. She had her own revolver, apparently given to her by Connolly before the Rising.
70. Fox, R.M., *The Green Banners*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1938, pp 249-251 and Fox, *History of ICA* p. 150..
71. Fox, *Green Banners*, p. 298.
72. Fox, *History of ICA*, p. 85. Markievicz is presumably not counted because she was jailed as a common prisoner, not a political internee.
73. Van Voris *op cit* p. 233 and Norman *op cit* p. 163 citing Helena Molony writing in *An Phoblacht*, November 1930.
74. Jones *op cit* p. 21.
75. "Years of Tension".
76. Coxhead, *op cit*, p. 64, quoting recollections of Helena in conversation with the author.
77. Fox in *Rebel Irishwomen* p. 72 and his Introduction to *History of the ICA*.

## Chapter 5

## Organizing in the Irish Women Workers' Union

### a) Reorganizing the union

Since its foundation in 1911, the IWWU had suffered a number of disrupting experiences, the 1913 Lockout, the clash between its first secretary Delia Larkin and the parent ITGWU, and now the 1916 Rising and imprisonment of its secretary Helena and president Constance. Helena called on some one she had already invited to participate in the work of the IWWU before the Rising.

Louie Bennett had been invited to meet Helena Molony in 1915 and had discussed with her and James Connolly. She wrote an account of this discussion in a letter to a friend:

"A few days later I went down to Liberty Hall to see the secretary of the Women's Trade Union. I was anxious to do so but I felt that if there was any risk of the women workers being drawn into the dangerous political atmosphere which I felt sure now dominated Liberty Hall I could not conscientiously assist the women's union. As a pacifist I would not support any organization threatening force. Miss Molony, the secretary of the union, agreed with me that politics ought not to be introduced into the union. But Connolly came in and joined our discussion. He was particularly "dour" and antagonistic. He was not prepared to make any terms with me. He insisted over and over again that I did not really want to help the women (implying that if I did I would take all the risks)! At last I said that I was a pacifist first and before everything and I would not give up that principle for trade-unionism."<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, when from Aylesbury prison Helena asked her to help in reorganizing the union she apparently agreed. A meeting at the beginning of July 1916 re-established the

IWWU naming Helena as secretary, although a Miss Eden undertook the functions. Marie Perolz attended the meeting and attended the TUC that year as IWWU delegate."<sup>79</sup>

But in February 1917, after Helena had been freed and an IWWU meeting had been held to welcome her back on 8th January, a meeting was held at which officers were elected. These were published in the *Saturday Post* on 3rd February 1917. Constance Markievicz (still then in prison) was Honorary President, Marie Perolz Acting President, Helena Molony General Secretary and Louie Bennett and Helen Chenevix Vice-Presidents. In addition, Helena represented the union at the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (ILP-TUC) in 1917.

The IWWU as a whole welcomed the appointment of its president Constance Markievicz as Minister of Labour in the government formed by the Sinn Fein candidates elected in 1918. Even pacifist Louie Bennett was later to look back longingly to the days when negotiations with employers were cut short by Constance, gun in hand, giving them an imperative deadline.<sup>80</sup> But the political differences in the IWWU meant that some had their attention divided between many activities and others concentrated on the union. Those that stayed behind set the agenda and so, by 1918, Helena had become simply the official with responsibility for organizing domestic workers. She, like many of the other women who had been instrumental in founding and maintaining the IWWU, had many other activities.

Nevertheless, the IWWU did participate in nationalist political activities such as the anti-conscription campaign, and in 1919 an appeal by leading women activists to women in other countries calling for the formation of a committee of inquiry into the conditions of Irish political prisoners was signed by Helena Mo-

lony for the IWWU.<sup>81</sup>

At the same time the work of the union went on. The union continued to expand, organizing laundry workers and a toffee factory in Limerick in 1917.<sup>82</sup> There was a dispute over the readmittance of the union's founder, Delia Larkin, in 1918. Helena opposed this as she was later to oppose the admittance to the TUC of the new union founded by Larkin when he was expelled from the ITGWU.<sup>83</sup>

In 1919-20 the IWWU merged with the Irish branch of the Women's Federation, thereby forming a branch of domestic workers for which Margaret Buckley (later Sinn Fein president) was responsible. This involved shifting Helena to being the deputy of Louie Bennett (now the general secretary). The union was reorganized with a finance committee, and an organization committee on her proposal, in 1919. In 1920 she was awarded a wage rise for her "excellent work for the union".<sup>84</sup>

### b) Delegate to the ILPTUC during the 1920s

Helena Molony represented the IWWU at the special TUC conference on the munitions transport strike in November 1920 and again at the regular conference in August 1921.<sup>85</sup>

She was an active delegate, intervening in a number of discussions.<sup>86</sup> In 1921, one of the central discussions was the Congress attitude to the workers at Knocklong Creamery and Arigna mines where the workers had taken over the enterprises and were running them themselves.

"It was Helena Molony, together with Louie Bennett, who brought forward the central issue — what was the congress-party going to do on the matter of seizures? They urged a committee or department "to help other bodies of workers to conduct industries which they might have to take over."<sup>87</sup>

Helena's concern for the practical living conditions of the working class was shown in her urging congress to back both a full system of unemployment insurance and a comprehensive system of a public health service because the "workers need a good health service". She also moved a resolution that it should be a rule that jobs replacing interned workers should be

temporary.

In relation to a resolution welcoming the formation of a women's labour council and directing the National Executive and affiliated unions to seek its opinions on matters concerning women and children, Helena pointed out that the purpose was not to segregate women but because she asked whether did just giving women equality work out? Women needed a special channel because they were "submerged and inarticulate".<sup>88</sup>

The IWWU was often associated with playing a conciliatory role within the labour movement and Helena spoke in relation to a problem of "poaching" between unions and the division between the "amalgamated" (British) and Irish unions calling on them to act with "proper common politeness". Helena was elected a member of the National Executive with 174 votes, the second highest number.

In February 1922 there was again a special congress of the ILPTUC to decide on what to do in the first elections to be held under the new Free State constitution. Helena attended as a member of the NEC although reportedly she had been imprisoned after the Treaty was signed in December 1921.<sup>89</sup>

The purpose of the discussion was to decide whether or not Labour candidates should stand in the election to defend an independent pro-Labour position as neither the pro- nor the anti-Treaty wing of Sinn Fein stood for Labour's objectives. As the elections were to be held under a system of proportional representation with a single transferable vote, the Executive was for participation arguing that the workers could show by their second preference where they stood on the Treaty issue. Mitchell divides the opposition to standing into 4 currents: the Republicans who thought the overwhelming issue was that of the Treaty and so wanted a clear pro and anti divide; those, including Louie Bennett, who wanted Labour to concentrate economic and trade-union matters at least until the electorate had decided on the Treaty; a third group, including Delia Larkin, who were opposed because they were opposed to ITGWU leadership for other reasons; and the "revolutionaries" represented by Walter Carpenter who wanted a revolution through direct action like seizures.<sup>90</sup>

It was finally Helena, the ardent Republican, who moved the resolution that "Labour do not take part". This was defeated by 115 to 82 votes.

As an NEC member she also attended the ordinary congress later the same year, although she spoke less than in the previous year. She spoke in support of the railway workers' demands for a living wage, advocating nationalization as the way to bring it about. And later in a discussion on "citizen soldiers" she said that the "chief thing was the founding of a Workers' Republic".

She did not stand for the National Executive at this congress. Her union was also in some difficulties as she and Louie Bennett had to accept wage cuts.<sup>91</sup>

In 1923, her most significant contribution was to criticise the Labour members of parliament for having taken the oath of loyalty and taking part in a parliament:

"that was part of the British empire which oppressed India and Egypt, and engaged in exploiting other countries. She thought it was unbecoming in the Irish Labour Party to take part in such an Assembly."<sup>92</sup>

At this point the dispute between Larkin and the Transport Union was at its height and a group of his supporters had tried to prevent the delegates entering Mansion House to start the congress. Helena was among those who condemned such an action.

At the next congress in 1924 she continued her attack on the Labour Party:

"The reason so few Labour candidates were returned [in the 1923 election] was because 75% of the people preferred to stick by their word and the ideal of a Workers' Republic....She did what she did in the election because she believed she was right. Labour would do better when it became conscious of what an ideal was and also an oath."

She then went on to defend being a Republican in the Labour movement.<sup>93</sup>

Later she called for more education and information for example on the "Red Revolution" because she did not want Irish labour to be "stick in the mud".

"If they had a good sound active policy it would do a good deal to wipe out dissension and make their Labour Party the spear head of trade-unionism and progress."<sup>94</sup>

There was great dissension with the split with Larkin and the question of recognition of his new union, the Workers' Union of Ireland. Helena Molony for the IWWU had moved that the first item on the agenda should be to settle internal differences but this was withdrawn when the Executive said there was agreement on the "spirit" of the resolution. However, there was no practical action taken and the WUI was not admitted to the TUC. The IWWU favoured the recognition of the WUI on a democratic basis if it respected the rules of the TUC.<sup>95</sup>

Over the next few years Helena seems to be in a period of relative inactivity. In 1924 she led a delegation to Dublin Corporation to register a "Dublin Workers' Grievance" over the conditions of homeworkers in the bag industry. In 1925 she was involved in the IWWU unemployment campaign including a poster campaign around the opening of the Dail in November.<sup>96</sup>

She was again delegate to the ILPTUC for the special congress on the Shannon Electrification scheme in November 1925 — which decided on a workers' boycott because of the low wages — and to the regular congress in 1926.

Once again one of her main contributions was in relation to the Labour party when she moved an amendment, which was very narrowly rejected, to delete any mention that local Labour Party branches should send delegates to congress. Labour should "put its industrial house in order first."<sup>97</sup> Later on she moved another amendment, similar to motions which had been presented by the IWWU in the past, that there should be an industrial committee of the leading unions. Presumably the IWWU leaders could agree on this, Louie Bennett because she thought political and trade-union matters should be kept separate and Helena because, politically supporting another party, she thought the main business of congress to be the trade-union side. The IWWU was accused by other unions of wanting to divorce the political and trade-union

wings of the movement.

Concern for specifically trade-union questions was not forgotten. She again moved a resolution on unemployment, pointing out that the nurse members of the IWWU were very concerned about the effects of unemployment of family breadwinners on the health and vitality of women and children. The IWWU, which had now incorporated the nurses' union, presented a motion on their conditions of service.

The IWWU, with Helena as their spokeswoman, also moved a motion calling on the National Executive to make more effort to get the political tests for public employees removed. This was carried without dissent.

### c) Dublin Trades Council

The Dublin labour movement was divided during the 1920s between the Dublin Workers' Council and the Transport Union on one side and the Dublin Trades Council on the other. This was not simply a pro- or anti-Larkin split although it was connected to that power struggle.<sup>98</sup> The IWWU had been affiliated to the Dublin Workers Council but withdrew in 1925 on the pretext that the Workers' Council was not doing enough for the unemployment campaign. However, this move was just a prelude to the IWWU, and particularly Helena, playing a central role in reuniting the Dublin labour movement into a united Dublin Trade Union and Labour Council.

In 1926 a committee of both councils was formed but in February 1927 negotiations broke down. The next move was a conference of all unions in February 1928 when there was the election of a united committee of which Helena was a member. Although this committee, composed mainly of inexperienced people, was not expected to achieve much and did not do so, it put into motion a dynamic which resulted in the formation of the united council in November 1928 in which Helena was elected member of the executive committee.

In 1929 Helena was a delegate for the newly united council to the ILPTUC. She once again played an active role, speaking in many discussions, including on the internal organization of congress, such as the questions of the

secretaryship, the nature of its newspaper *The Irishman*, and on the continuing theme of unemployment and nationalization. In moving a resolution of the DTULC calling for a census of the unemployed she was obliged to accept an amendment of the IWWU replacing the word "men" by "person"! She showed her interest in workers' and adult education by expressing her dissatisfaction with the TUC being satisfied with simply having individual local activities.

On behalf of the nurses union, a branch of the IWWU, she also moved three resolutions on nurses' conditions. She was also particularly active in the IWWU at this time which was facing some internal problems with Louie Bennett wanting to decrease her workload and share the post of general secretary. Although Helena objected to this she also asked for Louie Bennett to delay sending in a letter of resignation. She herself was chair of the organizing committee set up that year.

The DTULC was also active. It organized a May Day cum James Connolly celebration in May for which Helena contributed to the *Dublin Labour Year Book* in an editorial signed jointly by Helena Molony, M.J. McCabe and P.T. Daly which :

"commemorated the first occasion on which a much divided and sectional Dublin working class publicly demonstrated as a united movement its belief in the teachings of a giant intellect."<sup>100</sup>

Although she was again delegate for the DTULC to the ILPTUC in 1930, for the special conference on reorganization the same year — which was much more important — she was delegate for the IWWU.

The special conference on reorganization was held at the end of February 1930 in Dublin. It was at this conference that the trade union movement and the Labour Party finally separated, having been a single body since the 1912 Clonmel conference decided that Irish Labour would stand candidates in elections. According to Mitchell, it had been only the IWWU which had called for a separation of the political and trade-union wings of the movement. But from 1928 there was increasing friction between the two wings, with the trade unions complaining that the elected representatives did not follow their policy and the

elected representatives feeling that the trade unions did not bring them much support neither financially and organizationally nor in terms of votes. The 1929 congress appointed a committee which reported to the 1930 special conference.<sup>101</sup>

An IWWU motion to the special conference couched the proposal to separate the two wings in terms of the better development of the labour movement in pursuit of a common aim. But, apart from that, the main contributions of Helena on behalf of the IWWU were in amending the aims of both the TUC and LP. Her amendments criticized the proposed aims of the TUC as being purely trade-unionist and proposed instead: the ownership and control of labour by the workers; management and control by the whole body of labour; equality of political and social rights irrespective of sex, race or religion; and abolition of all powers and privileges, social and political, based upon property or ancestry. This amendment was defeated.<sup>102</sup>

When Helena moved also amendments to the aims of the Labour Party she was denounced for moving amendments to something she was "not prepared to go out and fight for".<sup>103</sup>

The regular conference was a fairly routine affair with Helena moving or supporting motions on nurses' conditions, *The Irishman*, inter-union disputes or automatic rotation of the National Executive members. One motion, on compulsory provision of school meals, must have reminded her of her early Inghinidhe days and the school meals campaign.

However the IWWU had not given up the fight on the aims of the TUC and moved an amendment, supported by Helena, that would make the aims advocate "workers' control of the industries and services in which they are engaged" rather than this control being "subject to the general interests" and "adequate", which they felt watered down the proposal. But this was lost on the chair's casting vote.

Once again that year the DTULC organized its special May Day/James Connolly commemoration. The *Year Book* featured articles on women: "James Connolly and Women" by Helena, "Women and the Labour Movement" by Louie Bennett and "Women and the Irish

Labour Movement" by C. Chalan. There was also an advertisement for the IWWU (Cumann Ban Oibre Eireann) as:

"An independent Irish union, open to women workers of any trade or profession. The first principle which forms the basis of its general policy is 'Equality of opportunity for all men and women.'"

The IWWU led the printing group in the parade.

Both photographs of Helena, as a member of the Executive and the demonstration organizing committee, show her with a small dog on her lap.

Over the next few years Helena was regularly a delegate to the ILPTUC from the DTULC. A lot of her contributions to congress were on the "bread and butter" issues of workers' conditions both at work and socially such as apprentices' conditions, the provision of housing, unemployment etc. The school meals question was raised again in 1931.

There were regular efforts to highlight the "woman question". When congress discussed the Charter of Industrial Demands in 1931 she stressed equal pay for women. The same year she supported the IWWU motion urging representation of women on management committees where there were many women workers, asking how it was that mixed organizations like the Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO) never selected women representatives. In the 1934 debate on the 40-hour week she pointed out how this would help unemployed women and how women's claims were left in the background.

The 1935 Conditions of Employment Bill showed what women were up against. This Bill wished to limit the trades in which women could be employed.<sup>104</sup> The IWWU was active in protesting against such a bill. Its convention sent a message of protest and its members in the TUC Congress continued the argument. When a member of the Typographical Association said that:

Woman is the queen of our hearts and of our homes, and for God's sake let us try to keep her there.

Helena replied directly:

"It was terrible to find such reactionary opinions expressed at that congress by

responsible leaders of labour in support of a capitalist Minister in setting up a barrier against one set of citizens. She followed this up by asserting women's right to be carpenters or blacksmiths".<sup>105</sup>

And then later, in moving the vote of thanks to the Scottish fraternal delegate:

"Miss Devine must have been struck by the chivalry of Irish Trades Unionists who would make women the queens of their hearts and their homes but would give them no jobs."<sup>106</sup>

After the congress, Louie Bennett and Helena formulated an amendment to the disputed Section 12 of the Bill which offered the allocation of specific work to women. Congress then accepted this and took the women's position on Section 12.

According to Margaret Ward this was sufficient for Helena to defend the labour movement at a mass women's protest meeting in November, saying that the TUC had been against the Bill and that the Labour Party had tried to get the clause on women deleted; although Mary Jones states that the women did not forgive the Labour Party for not supporting them.<sup>107</sup>

#### d) President of the TUC

Helena had again been elected to the National Executive of the TUC in 1934, was elected vice-president in 1935 and president in 1936. Unfortunately, she was suffering from illhealth in 1937 when she should have presided over Congress and given a presidential address.<sup>108</sup>

It is interesting to note that the first three women presidents of the TUC, Louie Bennett in 1932, Helena in 1937 and Helen Chenevix in the 1950s were all members of the IWWU.

In 1936 Helena defended the organization of the IWWU:

"not as a deliberate pursuit of a policy of organizing women on sex lines ... but a temporary necessity owing to the fact that women are a separate economic class."<sup>109</sup>

But the idea put forward in her earlier argument for the Women's Labour Council, that it

was necessary because women were "submerged and inarticulate", helps explain why it was IWWU members who were amongst the most prominent women within the trade-union movement. Helena herself was frequently the only woman on the DTULC executive.

It is a sign of her standing in the labour movement that she was elected to president of Congress although at different times her outspoken radical and Republican stance had undoubtedly created tension with some of her colleagues, such as in the discussion on the formation of the Labour Party.

In 1929 she was a member of the Irish labour delegation which visited Soviet Russia. Although an official labour delegation whose report was published by the DTULC, the IWWU itself refused to purchase 100 copies of the report as Helena proposed. In a strongly worded reply Helena:

"thought it a disgraceful thing that the Irish Women Workers Union should refuse to take cognizance of the report of her own fellow workers in preference to the reports of the capitalist press."<sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, there was an expression of the "exception taken by members of the Union to Miss Molony's public connection with Communists" and a motion was finally passed, proposed by Louie Bennett, regretting that "certain principles of religion or liberty" were not upheld in Soviet Russia.

A couple of years later the union leadership publicly dissociated itself from her when she caused a storm by being reported to have attacked the Pope and accusations of "communist" were again made. This provoked a heated discussion in the columns of the *Irish Independent* despite vigorous rebuttals from Helena herself, Maud Gonne and Sydney Czira née Gifford. She explained that she had said:

"Ireland should not countenance any hare-brained and irresponsible scheme on the part of tricky English politicians to drag the head of the Catholic Church into a row over money between England and Ireland.

I further said that if Ireland learned anything from her unhappy history she had no reason to look with confidence for Papal intervention in Irish secular or po-

litical affairs."<sup>111</sup>

But after 1937 she was frequently absent and her union duties were reduced. She remained responsible at different times for the Rosary Bead workers (those in industries making religious items), laundry workers, nurses and domestic workers. Although delegate again to the ITUC for the DTULC in 1939 she does not seem to have spoken. In September 1940 she asked for three months leave of absence but did not in fact return until April 1941. She finally retired in October

1941 at the age of 58. Despite the hope expressed by the executive that she would:

"maintain contact with them and retain the bonds of friendship established with them through long association and many trials and triumphs jointly experienced",<sup>112</sup>

Mary Jones points out that she was not very well treated by them, retiring on a disability allowance of £6 per month in which she herself had later to ask for increases.<sup>113</sup>

□

## Notes Chapter 5

78. Fox, R.M., *Louie Bennett, her Life and Times*, Talbot, Dublin, 1958, p. 49.
79. Desmond Greaves, C., *History of the ITGWU, Formative Years 1909-1923*, Gill and Macmillan for ITGWU, Dublin, 1982, p. 177
80. Jones, *op cit*, p. 43
81. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 147.
82. Greaves, *History of the ITGWU*, pp. 190-1.
83. Jones, *op cit*, pp. 29-30
84. *Ibid.* p. 41., p. 32 and p. 48.
85. The munitions transport strike was the refusal by Irish workers to transport munitions for the British forces in Ireland. Their action was overwhelmingly approved by the ILPTUC. See Mitchell, Arthur, *Labour in Irish Politics*, Irish University Press, Dublin, 1974, pp. 120-1.
86. Unless otherwise attributed all references to the proceedings of Irish Labour Party and TUC conferences are taken from the official Proceedings. Hereafter *ILPTUC*.
87. Mitchell, *op cit*, p.140.
88. *ILPTUC* 1921, p. 193.
89. *Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* 30th January 1967.
90. Mitchell, *op cit*, p. 154.
91. Jones, *op cit* pp. 61-61.
92. *ILPTUC* 1923.
93. *ILPTUC* 1924, p. 153.
94. *ILPTUC* 1924, p. 174.
95. Jones, *op cit*, pp. 63-65.
96. *Ibid*, p.52 and p. 68.
97. *ILPTUC* 1926, p.141. The amendment was rejected by 87 votes to 86.
98. See Mitchell, *op cit* pp.183-5.
99. *ILPTUC*, 1929, p. 112.
100. *Dublin Labour Year Book*, Dublin Trades Union and Labour Council, 1929.
101. See Mitchell, *op cit* pp. 278 ff.
102. *ILPTUC*, 1930, p. 139.
103. *Ibid*, p. 146.
104. This Bill, like the 1937 Constitution, is undoubtedly a reflection of De Valera's own attitudes to women (although it was drawn up Seán Lemass as the appropriate government minister). De Valera was the only Commander in the Rising who refused to have women in his post, Boland's Mill.
105. Jones, *op cit*, p. 129
106. *ITUC*, 1935, p. 153.
107. Jones *op cit* pp. 130-2 and Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, pp. 235-6.
108. The proceedings for 1937 are missing from the National Library collection but according to Jones *op cit* p. 154, she sent "regrets".
109. Jones, *op cit*, pp. 137-8.
110. *Ibid* pp. 96-7.
111. *Irish Independent* 19th-23rd July, 1932.
112. Jones, *op cit* p. 165, quoting letter of IWWU executive to Helena Molony.
113. *Ibid* p. 204.

Chapter 6

## Other political activity

### a) Women's role in reorganizing the nationalist movement

Although the IWWU and labour movement activities formed the bulk of Helena's activity they were by no means all. As after the lock-out her energy had been directed towards the labour movement, so directly after the Rising her political energy was directed towards the reorganization of the nationalist movement. In April 1917, Count Plunkett called a convention of nationalist groups in the Mansion House Dublin which established a new central committee of the nationalist movement. There was friction with Sinn Fein, whose leader Arthur Griffiths still retained his reactionary monarchist views which had made young radical republican women like Helena determined to have nothing to do with the organization. But there was finally a merger and although the convention held in October - which Helena attended — was called the 10th Sinn Fein convention, the completely new situation in the aftermath of the Rising created a completely new organization.

There are differing accounts of the role of women in this process. According to Margaret Ward, at the Mansion House conference itself Helena Molony objected to the lack of women on the new committee that was formed and was added along with Countess Plunkett.<sup>114</sup> But Rosemary Cullen Owens states that Countess Plunkett was on the initial committee and it was only after it was reorganized and expanded to include the returning prisoners that the women demanded more representation which was finally accepted with the cooption of Helena, Anne Ceant, Jennie Wyse Power and Miss Plunkett.<sup>115</sup> However, at the Convention Helena was not among the women elected to the Executive.

After a first meeting of nationalist women in May 1917 they decided to form their own coordinating body, the Cumann na dTeach-

taire. This was to consist of women delegates to all conferences held by Irish republicans. Helena was involved in this association which also worked jointly with the suffrage association the IWFL and later coopted the Cumann na mBan executive. Cumann na mBan had become a more aggressive organization since its founding as a "Ladies auxiliary". These different organizations worked together and with the IWWU in the anti-conscription campaign of 1918 and the 1919 international appeal to women for an inquiry into the conditions of Irish political prisoners.

Of course Helena did a lot in the 1918 election campaign, supporting the Sinn Fein candidates and particularly her friend Constance Markievicz. She was still on instant mobilization for the ICA and during the War of Independence was apparently acting as an IRA courier and frequently "on the run". She was of course against the Treaty and took part in anti-Treaty protests and was imprisoned for her pains.<sup>116</sup>

She was also presumably active on the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War, although during this period she also had important responsibilities in the IWWU and was acting at the Abbey.

### b) Seeking a radical political alternative

Towards the end of the 1920s she was obviously finding the politics of Sinn Fein an inadequate vehicle for expressing her radical social views. Her contributions in the ILPTUC show that she did not find the Labour Party any better. The report of the Irish labour delegation to the Soviet Union in 1929 which she signed shows that the delegates had been impressed although not totally uncritical.

They recognized that "many things may be objected to but they are trying honestly to

solve them" and "Russia is not a paradise". They did note the special care for women and children. Certainly Helena was sufficiently impressed to take the chair at the founding meeting of the Friends of Soviet Russia society in April 1930.<sup>117</sup> She also continued to give lectures on aspects of life in Soviet Russia.

Also in November 1930 she spoke at a "League Against Imperialism" meeting in Dublin that Seán MacBride described as a "Republican Who's Who", with Eamonn De Valera, Peadar O'Donnell, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and others.<sup>118</sup>

### c) Saor Eire

But she was not alone in the radical wing of Republicanism in searching for a new political expression. There were different attempts by the IRA, which had separated from Sinn Fein, to form a new politically radical grouping. Helena was an executive committee member in one of these, Saor Eire, which was launched in September 1931.

The aims of this organization were:

1. To achieve an independent revolutionary leadership for the working class and working farmers towards the overthrow in Ireland of British imperialism and its ally, Irish capitalism.
2. To organize and consolidate the Republic of Ireland on the basis of the possession and administration by the workers and working farmers, of the land, instruments of production, distribution and exchange.
3. To restore and foster the Irish language, culture and games.<sup>119</sup>

This organization was never particularly active and was denounced by the Church as "communistic". It was quietly allowed to die by the IRA. Some of its main organizers, like Seán MacBride, were so discouraged with the failure of Saor Eire they refused to become involved with the next attempt to form a radical Republican grouping in the shape of the Republican Congress, launched in 1934.<sup>120</sup> Neither was Helena Molony involved in the Republican Congress and it seems she finally

joined the Labour Party.<sup>121</sup>

### d) Always active

Whether the member of a political party or not Helena was always active. The "Red Scare" provoked by the "communistic" Saor Eire had led to the banning of a number of organizations, including Friends of Soviet Russia, the IRA, Cumann na mBan and the Women's Prisoners Defence League in which Helena was active along with Maud Gonne, Charlotte Despard and others. They promptly renamed their organization the People's Rights Association and continued to hold poster parades and other activities in central Dublin. At their first meeting after the ban Helena:

"impudently grinned and quoted Shakespeare 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.'"<sup>122</sup>

Around 1933 she was speaking at anti-Blueshirt meetings which were "all the rage" with Maud Gonne and Sydney Gifford Czira.<sup>123</sup> She spoke at an anti-Fascist meeting sponsored by the IRA in June and another organized by the TUC on College Green on 6th July 1934. In the former, the *Republican Congress* report criticized the IRA speakers for approaching the fight against fascism from a purely military standpoint but reported that Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Helena put the emphasis on the need for unity of forces.<sup>124</sup>

In July 1935 she gave a 'Woman's Talk' on radio dealing with the 'political and economic position of women in Ireland today'. This was the time at which the discussion on the 'Conditions of Employment Bill' was provoking widespread discussion on 'women's place'.<sup>125</sup>

She was active in the Anti-Partition League in 1938 along with those few Republicans still opposed to accepting any Constitution which accepted partition. The approval of De Valera's 1937 constitution had been a defeat for Republicans in its de facto acceptance of Partition and for women because it enshrined in the Constitution the notion that woman's place was in the home.

---

## Notes Chapter 6

114. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 124.
115. Cullen Owens, *op cit*, pp.114-6.
116. *Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* both of 30th January 1967.
117. Mulvihill, Margaret, *Charlotte Despard - A biography*, Pandora Unwin, London, 1989, p. 169.
118. Seán MacBride in ed. Mac Eoin, Uinseann, *Survivors*, Argenta, Dublin, 1980, pp. 122.
119. Cronin, Seán, *Irish Nationalism*, Pluto, London, 1983, p. 156, quoting the Constitution of Saor Eire adopted at the founding conference.
120. Seán MacBride in Mac Eoinn, *op cit*, p. 122.
121. Jones, *op cit* p. 126 states Helena was a member of the Labour Party executive in 1935, however the only record I found was that she attended Labour Party Congress as a delegate from the IWWU in 1938, 1939 and 1940.
122. Ward, *Maud Gonne*, p. 157, quoting Maud Gonne from An Phoblacht, 12th November 1932.
123. Seán MacBride in Mac Eoinn, *op cit* pp. 123.
124. Ward, *Maud Gonne*, p. 168, referring to *Republican Congress* 9th June 1934.
125. Press cutting dated 2nd July 1935 in Hugh O'Connor Collection.

## Chapter 7

## After retirement

### a) Reduced activity and health problems

Although Seán MacBride said that Helena was "associated with every aspect of the national and labour struggle right into the fifties" I have found little further reference to her political activity after her retirement. However, a fact communicated to me by Margaret Ward gives the most likely explanation. Helena was an alcoholic. She quotes Anna MacBride White (grand-daughter of Maud, daughter of Seán MacBride):

"Helena Molony used to visit Iseult [Maud Gonne's daughter] a lot. She was an alcoholic. She used to bore Iseult out of her mind, talking about things no one else was interested in. Iseult wasn't politically minded at all. Helena spent one Christmas at Roebuck and went missing, on the tear, and there was great commotion in the house."<sup>126</sup>

This fact, which was obviously not talked about publicly, possibly explains a great deal as to what were these periods of 'ill-health' that forced Helena to be absent from her union responsibilities for several months at a time in the later part of her life and why she had to retire at 58 although she lived for another 25-odd years. It was not the IWWU which imposed a strict retirement age. Louie Bennett continued to be active in the union into her eighties. Nevertheless, Bowyer Bell, in his history of the IRA, says that in 1940 Pearse Kelly persuaded her and Liam Lucas to form a group to evolve a social and economic programme for the IRA because he did not want a "hit and run" IRA but he gives no further details.<sup>127</sup>

In 1944 a German spy was sent over by Francis Stuart, the estranged husband of Iseult Gonne living in Berlin, in response to a request from the IRA. When the police got on his trail and arrested Iseult having connected her with the safe house in which he was stay-

ing, it was Helena who got him away and to another. She was then over 60 and it was probably the last such action she was involved in.

The recorded activities of the last years of her life are what could be expected from an elderly lady with health problems.

### b) Commemorations

In the Hugh O'Connor collection are a number of manuscripts she wrote about James Connolly, Maud Gonne or the Rising period. Two of them are definitely dated 1956. One, a short piece about Maud Gonne, could be the text of the radio tribute she gave in 1953 on the occasion of Maud Gonne's death.

In 1956 she presented a painting of Constance Markievicz "gallant comrade and friend and the illustrious first president of our union" to the Annual Convention of the IWWU.<sup>128</sup>

On 10th November 1961, along with Maire Comerford and Eveleen O'Brien she was received by the An tUachtaran (the President Eamonn De Valera). However there is no indication of the purpose of the interview.<sup>129</sup>

In 1966, 50th anniversary of the Rising, she was present at the commemoration itself, in a wheelchair, and at the reopening of the Abbey Theatre where, along with the two other company members who had fought in the Rising, she was commemorated in a plaque.

### c) Her death

She died, in the home of her friend Eveleen O'Brien where she had apparently been living for some years, on 29th January 1967. Her death was front page news in the three main Irish newspapers, the *Irish Times*, the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press*. The *Press* called her a "Heroine of 1916 Rising", the *Times* "an outstanding figure in the events

leading up to and embracing the 1916 Rising, a pioneer woman trade-unionist and former Abbey actress".

They all carried in their 30th January editions the statement by De Valera:

"Helena Molony was one the great patriotic women of our time. With James Connolly and Countess Markievicz she worked for Irish freedom, for the Irish worker and for the poor.

She stood firmly for the rights of women and their political equality with men in our society.

She was admired and beloved by those who knew her as a noble Irishwoman who had deeply at heart the welfare of our nation and its people. May she long be remembered amongst us.

I bhflaitheas Dé go raibh sí."

Her funeral took place on 31st January. Eamonn De Valera, President of Republic, and his wife attended, as did representatives of the Minister of Defence and the Eastern Com-

mand; Ruari Roberts, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Fintan Kennedy, General Secretary of the ITGWU; Barry Desmond, representative of the Labour Party; Phil O'Kelly and Gabriel Fallon, representing the Abbey Theatre; Thomas J. Byrne of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA; veterans of the ICA; representatives of the IWWU; an ICA guard of honour; an Army firing party; Clann na Gael girl scouts and a bugler who played the Last Post.<sup>130</sup> The *Irish Independent* added that "a cluster of Helena's nearest friends wept quietly".

She is buried in the Republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery under a headstone reading:

*"Helena Molony 'Emer'*

*29th January 1967*

*'A Gallant Irishwoman and Beloved  
Friend'*

*May the angels guard her sleep."*

□

## Notes Chapter 7

126. Letter from Margaret Ward to Penelope Duggan, 6th September 1990.

127. Bowyer Bell, J., *The Secret Army - The IRA*, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1989, p.216.

128. Jones, *op cit*, p. 231.

129. Press cutting dated 11th November 1961 in Hugh O'Connor collection.

130. *Irish Press*, 1st February 1967.

## Conclusion

In her activity, Helena Molony did her best to put into practice Connolly's thinking that: "the two currents of revolutionary thought in Ireland — the Socialist and the National — were not antagonistic, but complementary, and that the Irish socialist was in reality the best Irish patriot, but that in order to convince the Irish people of that fact he must first of all learn to look inward upon Ireland for his justification, rest his arguments upon the facts of Irish history, and be the champion against the subjection of Ireland and all that it implies."<sup>131</sup>

Helena Molony herself made it clear that Connolly was the major external influence on the development of her political thought. We can see that even on the question of school meals she could have been influenced by what he wrote in "Socialism Made Easy" about New York:

"Free lunches have been opened in the poorest districts, bread lines have been established and charitable organizations are busy visiting homes and schools to find out the worst cases. But all this has only touched the fringe of the destitution...the insulting methods of the capitalist bread lines and charitable organizations in general."<sup>132</sup>

She also found inspiration in the study of Irish history as Connolly recommended:

"I had been studying Irish land tenure, and had found out that up to the sixteenth century no chief had an absolute right to the land, and that he could not surrender it without the consent of his people. This Irish view of property seemed to me to be right and it helped to form my Labour views."<sup>133</sup>

We have already seen that at the time of the 1917 anniversary of the Rising it was Connolly alone that she commemorated. In her political assessment of the Rising it is also Connolly who is the crucial figure:

"Connolly was the driving force.... Per-

haps the time was not ripe for success. Our people had not a widespread economic knowledge to cope with social evils. I should have hated to see Pádraig Pearse as President of an Irish Republic if the misery and wretchedness of the tenements had still gone on. Our next move forward must be accompanied by clear knowledge and determination to deal with poverty, unemployment and industrial servitude. Connolly had this knowledge — all the leaders of 1916 had goodwill. But our movement must stand finally on what it proposes to do for the mass of the people of Ireland."<sup>134</sup>

She defines political stances she takes in reference to Connolly. For example, in 1930, she refused to appear on a platform with members of the Irish Labour Party because the presence of such figures:

"is calculated to deceive the workers as to Connolly and his teachings or as to the aims and objects of the Irish Imperial Labour Party. ...I will merely take part as a member of the remnant of Connolly's followers, i.e. the Worker Republicans."<sup>135</sup>

In the same year she expanded on her ideas on feminism and women's struggle in an article written in the Dublin *Labour Year Book*. Connolly was notable among the labour and nationalist leaders of the time in his concern for and defence of women's interests. Whereas many of the other nationalist leaders were indifferent or even opposed to women's suffrage agitation he regularly spoke on their platforms. He encouraged women to participate in the labour and nationalist movements on an equal footing. Perhaps today Helena would not express this as "fatherly care and encouragement" but she frequently pays tribute to his interest and encouragement for younger and newer activists and "joy in their independent thought".

In her 1930 discussion of women's position she reflects the same concerns as did Connolly.

ly:

"The women's movement, now unhappily long spent, which aroused such a deep feeling of social consciousness and revolt among women of a more favoured class, passed over the heads of the Irish working woman and left her untouched....

Women, since his [Connolly's] day, have got that once coveted right to vote, but they still have their inferior status, their lower pay for equal work, their exclusion from juries and certain branches of the civil service, their slum dwellings and crowded, cold and unsanitary schools for their children."

And she concluded by quoting Connolly: "In its hatred of thralldom and passion for freedom the women's army forges ahead of the militant army of labour."<sup>136</sup>

Another echo of Connolly can be found in the storm over "Miss Molony and Pope" which broke out in 1932 over remarks she made that Ireland "if she had learnt anything from her unhappy history" had "no reason to look with confidence" on Papal intervention. Helena Molony appears to have remained a practising Catholic all her life. Talking to Fox about the development of her political views she acknowledges:

"I also found much support in the Christian moral code of justice and righteousness."<sup>137</sup>

In 1927, she participated in a night-long vigil praying for Constance Markievicz as she lay dying in hospital. She also, as did many other Catholic Socialists, used references to the Papal Encyclicals which could be interpreted as encouraging the formation of a new economic order, in her arguments.<sup>138</sup> James Connolly never attacked Catholic beliefs and he was attended by a priest before he died although he was often attacked for being an atheist. But in the opening pages of "Labour, Nationality and Religion" he lists the numerous occasions in which papal intervention went against his loyal Irish following and often supported the Protestant oppressor, England.

Helena Molony never wavered from her support for Connolly. An article she wrote about him in 1956 was as great a tribute as

when his memory was still fresh:

"Connolly had a clear and burning vision of complete freedom — political and social. ...We have an urgent need to bend the attention of our young workers to the work and writings of Connolly so that by their study they will be able to put a new shape on Irish life with a new security and dignity for the worker in every sphere. Now more than ever we need a revival of his spirit and vision.

It is difficult for those who did not personally know Connolly to appreciate the enthusiasm and fervour he inspired. He always had the encouraging word for the young and weak. No one near him could fail to have the highest confidence in him and his judgement. He exercised an immense but quiet influence on the whole National as well as the Labour movement of his day. It was a privilege to have known this man and when the crime, which was his death, was perpetrated on this day — forty years ago — the whole world of Labour everywhere and indeed Humanity itself was left the poorer for his going."<sup>139</sup>

When Fox made his comparison of Helena and Connolly in 1935 she was still at the centre of activity in the Irish labour movement nationally and locally, on the executives of the Dublin Trades Council and Trades Union Congress, and fully involved in nationalist political activity. Her activity and possibly also her political judgement declined later. Certainly she is not recorded in history as a figure to compare with Connolly. For one thing, of course, she did not die a "hero's death" at the hands of the enemy. But even so, for women to gain recognition in history is far more difficult than for men.

Women face particular problems in imposing themselves as leaders in political movements or the trade unions. This Helena recognised herself when she defended the need for a Women's Labour Council because women are "submerged" and "inarticulate". They are also less likely to be where the power is. Helena, for example, organized women in food factories or the "Rosary Bead" industries, not dockers and transport workers with the muscle to bring a country's economy to a standstill.

Whatever the contribution of the Inghinidhe na hEireann or Cumann na mBan in carry-

ing on the radical nationalist tradition, the movement is always thought of as the "Sinn Fein" movement under its male leaders. No women signed the Easter Proclamation although apparently Hanna Sheehy Skeffington was designated to be a member of the Provisional Government and Constance Markievicz held an important post (Minister of Labour) in the government of the first Daíl.

For Helena herself, it seems there is also her own personal tragedy, that of her alcoholism. At this stage it is impossible to say what was the cause of it. Maire Comerford obviously thought it was a longstanding problem:

"Poor thing... her father was an alcoholic and she was brought up — as a baby she got drink and she was always under a difficulty about that. I think she deteriorated towards the end of her life, she seemed to lose the revolutionary spirit — although she kept in close contact with a number of very good people. She admired De Valera, she didn't seem to appreciate what was going on."<sup>140</sup>

But not all children of alcoholics grow up to be so themselves. Was Helena's life as a woman activist particularly difficult? Much of her activity was alongside other women which must have provided a certain companionship but perhaps she lacked close friends. Many of her fellow activists were also married. Political activism for women is difficult particularly in a society where the norm is for women's

priority to be their family. Male activists find it much easier to combine their activism with a "normal" home life. James Connolly had his devoted wife and daughters up to the end. Perhaps the death of Seán Connolly was a personal blow to Helena, even if he was married. But these are just some of the elements that could explain what is a rather sad end for a woman who during her life had done so much. But it does not discount what she did do. And as is shown above, her admiration of Connolly remained. There is no record that she knowingly renounced her commitment to the political ideals she had always defended despite the comment of Maire Comerford. But unwavering revolutionary spirit and judgement are difficult, particularly for individuals who do not have the support of a collective group.

Helena Molony, and no doubt many other women of whom even less is known, are as important to forming a Connolly tradition as was the man himself because they continued to put into practice, long after he was dead, the political ideas that he also expounded in writing. But Helena won her own tributes on her own merits from those who saw her in action:

"Helena Molony was a great lady, very much concerned for the working women and a sound Republican. We were never stuck for a speaker when she was about."<sup>141</sup>

## Notes Conclusion

131. Connolly, James, Introduction to "Erin's Hope" in Dudley Edwards, Owen, and Ransom, Bernard, *James Connolly Selected Political Writings*, Grove Press, New York, 1974, p. 166. Hereafter *Selected Writings*.

132. Connolly, James, "Socialism Made Easy" (1909) in *Selected Writings* pp. 245-6.

133. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p. 67.

134. *Ibid*, p. 70.

135. Letter dated 10th May 1930 in Hugh O'Connor Collection, Dublin. No destination given but probably to Dublin Trades Council which organized a May Day cum James Connolly commemoration event (he was shot on 11th May 1916).

136. All quotations from Helena Molony "James Connolly and women" in *Dublin Labour Year Book*, 1930.

137. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p.67.

138. Jones, *op cit*, p. 156.

139. "James Connolly".

140. Margaret Ward letter 6 September 1990.

141. Eithne Coyle in Mac Eoin *op cit*, p. 158.

## Bibliography of works cited and consulted

### Newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets

*An Bhean-Oibre* 1929  
(Journal of the IWWU)

*Bean na hEireann* Nos 6 - 25  
(Journal of the Inghinidhe na hEireann)

*Dublin Labour Year Book* 1929, 1930  
(Dublin Trades Union and Labour Council)

*Catholic Bulletin* 1918

*Irish Independent, The* January 1967

*Irish Press, The* January 1967

*Irish Times, The* January 1967

□ □ □

### Books

#### *Abbey Theatre*

Nic Shuiblaigh, Maire, *The Splendid Years*,  
Duffy, Dublin, 1955.

Hunt, Hugh, *The Abbey, Ireland's National  
Theatre 1904 - 1979*, Gill and MacMillan,  
Dublin 1979.

O hAodha, Míchéal, *The Abbey — Then and  
Now*, Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 1969.

Robinson, Lennox, *Ireland's Abbey Theatre,  
A History 1898 - 1951*, Sidgwick & Jackson  
Ltd, London 1951.

Souvenir Programme, *Abbey Theatre — Dub-  
lin 1904-1966*, Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 1966.

□ □ □

### Women's history

Conlon, Lil, *Cumann na mBan*, Kilkenny Peo-  
ple, Kilkenny, 1968.

Coxhead, Elizabeth, *Daughters of Erin*, Colin  
Smythe, Gerrards Cross, 1979, (1st edition  
1965).

Cullen, Mary, ed., *Girls Don't Do Honours*,  
Women's Education Bureau, Dublin, 1987.

Cullen Owens, Rosemary, *Smashing Times; A  
history of the Irish women's suffrage move-  
ment 1889-1922*, Attic Press, Dublin, 1984.

Fox, R.M., *Rebel Irishwomen*, Progress  
House, Dublin, 1967 (1st edition 1935).

Jones, Mary, *These Obstreperous Lasses*, Gill  
& Macmillan, Dublin, 1988.

MacCurtain, Margaret, "Women, The Vote  
and Revolution", in *Women in Irish Society,  
the historical dimension*, Margaret MacCur-  
tain and Donncha P Corrain eds, Arlen House,  
Dublin, 1978.

Parnell, Anna, *The Tale of A Great Sham*, ed.  
Dana Hearne, Arlen House, Dublin, 1986.

Wyse-Power, Jenny, "The Political Influence  
of Women in Modern Ireland", in W. Fitzge-  
rard (ed) *The Voice of Ireland*, Virtue, Dublin  
and London, 1924 pp 158-161.

Ward, Margaret, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: women and Irish nationalism*, Pluto Press, London, 1983.



### Biographies

Cardozo, Nancy, *Maud Gonne, Lucky eyes and a high heart*, Gollancz, London, 1979.

Desmond Greaves, C., *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1976, (1st edition 1961).

Fox, R.M., *Louie Bennett — Her Life and Times*, Talbot Press, Dublin, 1958.

Haverty, Anne, *Constance Markievicz*, Pandora Unwin, London, 1989.

Larkin, Emmett, *James Larkin*, Nel Mentor, London 1968.

Levenson, Samuel, *James Connolly, Socialist, Patriot and Martyr*, Quartet Books, London, 1977 (1st edition 1973).

Levenson, Samuel, *Maud Gonne*, Cassels, London, 1977.

Marreco, Anne, *The Rebel Countess*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1967.

Mulvihill, Margaret, *Charlotte Despard — A biography*, Pandora Unwin, London, 1989.

Norman, Diana, *Terrible Beauty, Life of Constance Markievicz*, Poolbeg, 1988, (1st ed. 1987).

O'Connor, Frank, *The Big Fellow*, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1979 (1st edition 1937).

O'Faoláin, Seán, *Constance Markievicz; or, the average revolutionary*, Cape, London, 1934.

Ward, Margaret, *Maud Gonne, Ireland's Joan*

*of Arc*, Pandora Unwin, London, 1990.

Van Voris, Jacqueline, *Constance de Markievicz: in the cause of Ireland*, The University of Massachusetts Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1967.



### The national struggle

Bowyer Bell, J., *The Secret Army — The IRA*, Poolbeg, 1989.

Clark, Helen, *Sing a Rebel Song*, City of Edinburgh District Council & History Workshop, Edinburgh, 1989.

Cronin, Seán, *Irish Nationalism; A History of its Roots and Ideology*, Pluto Press, London 1983 (1st edition, Academy Press Dublin, 1980).

Edmonds, Sean, *The gun, the law and the Irish people*, Anvil, Tralee, 1971.

Fox, R.M. *The Green Banners*, Secker and Warburg, London 1938.

Fox, R.M. *The History of the Irish Citizen Army*, Duffy, Dublin, 1943.

Mac Eoin, Uinseann, *Survivors*, Argenta, Dublin, 1980.

O'Casey, Seán, *History of the Irish Citizen Army*, Journeyman, London, 1988 (1st edition 1919).

Robbins, Frank, *Under the Starry Plough; Recollections of the Irish Citizen Army*, The Academy Press, Dublin, 1977.



### Labour history

Berresford Ellis, Peter, *The History of the Irish Working Class*, Pluto, London and Syd-

ney, 1985 (1st ed. 1972).

Boyd, Andrew, *The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions*, Anvil, Dublin, 1985 (1st ed. 1972).

D'Arcy, Fergus & Hannigan, Ken (eds), *Workers in Union*, National Archives, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1988.

Dudley Edwards, Owen and Ransom, Bernard, eds., *James Connolly; Selected Political Writings*, Grove Press, New York, 1974.

Greaves, C. Desmond, *History of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union*, Gill and Macmillan for the ITGWU, Dublin, 1982.

Mitchell, Arthur, *Labour in Irish Politics*, Irish University Press, Dublin, 1974.

□ □ □

### General History

Brown, Terence, *Ireland: A Social and Cultu-*

*ral History*, Fontana, London, 1981.

Dudley Edwards, Ruth, *An Atlas of Irish History, Second Edition*, Methuen, London and New York, 1981 (1st edition 1973).

Lyons, F.S.L. *Ireland Since the Famine*, Fontana, London, 1972.

MacManus, Francis, ed., *The Years of the Great Test 1926-39*, Mercier Press, Cork, 1967.

O'Connor Lysaght, D.R., *The Republic of Ireland*, Mercier, Cork, 1970.

□ □ □

### Primary sources consulted

Hugh O'Connor Collection, private collection, Dublin.

□