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Journal of British Studies / Volume 53 / Issue 04 / October 2014, pp 992 - 1010
DOI: 10.1017/jbr.2014.116, Published online: 07 November 2014

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0021937114001166

How to cite this article:

Lauren Arrington (2014). Socialist Republican Discourse and the 1916 Easter Rising: The Occupation of Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union Explained. *Journal of British Studies*, 53, pp 992-1010 doi:10.1017/jbr.2014.116

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Socialist Republican Discourse and the 1916 Easter Rising: The Occupation of Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union Explained

Lauren Arrington

Abstract The events of the Easter Rising have been subjected to extensive analysis by historians who have focused on military strategy as a means of explaining the occupation of specific sites. However, Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union have proven resistant to this paradigm. The political value of both places can be understood by giving close attention to the long history of antagonism between these two institutions and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, out of which the Irish Citizen Army that fought in the rising was formed. In his articles for the *Irish Worker* and *Workers' Republic*, James Connolly adapted traditional republican discourse of economic emancipation through political sovereignty to address a contemporary urban context. An understanding of the way that this discourse functioned facilitates an understanding of the role of Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union in the Easter Rising: as sites of actual and symbolic liberation. This analysis of popular discourse in the contemporary press offers a new approach to the study of events that have been termed the Irish Revolution, and it presents a model for understanding the way that republican discourse accommodated the very different political objectives of Irish separatists.

The 1916 Rising was foundational to the emergence of the partitioned Irish nation-state. Across Dublin on Easter Monday, civic and private property was occupied by the new army of the Irish Republic: a combined force comprising the revolutionary fraternity of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Volunteers who opposed Ireland's participation in Britain's imperial war, and the Irish Citizen Army. The latter was a workers' militia that had been formed as a result of police brutality against Dublin's striking union members on Bloody Sunday three years earlier. Although the Citizen Army was numerically the smallest component of the new force, its leader was the socialist theorist and labor leader James Connolly, who in January 1916 joined the elite military council that planned the rising. The entire military council was executed soon after the surrender on Saturday, 29 April. Britain's execution of these prisoners of war mobilized mass

Lauren Arrington is lecturer at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool. She would like to thank Colin Reid and James McConnell for their invitation to present an aspect of this work at their 2012 symposiums, "The Third Home Rule Crisis: Centenary Perspectives," at Hertford College, Oxford, and the National Library of Ireland; this essay benefited immensely from discussions that arose on those occasions and afterward. She is also grateful to Richard Bourke, James McConnell, Ciaran O'Neill, Ultán Gillen, and Roy Foster for their comments on various drafts.

support for separatism. The executions also left the planning and organization of the rising shrouded in secrecy, vulnerable to interpretation by the ideologies of the emergent state and by popular memory. This article analyzes socialist republican discourse in the contemporary press in order to explain the occupation of two sites, Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union, during the rising. Furthermore, it suggests that discourse analysis offers a methodology for understanding the way that groups with different practical political objectives joined forces in a bid for Irish independence.

Connolly's political thought was strongly influenced by the nineteenth-century revolutionary James Fintan Lalor, who participated in the Young Ireland Rising of 1848 that was inspired by the French Second Republic. In his essay "The Rights of Ireland" for the newspaper the *Irish Felon*, Lalor proclaimed,

The entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland; that they, and none but they are the land-owners and law-makers of this island; that all laws are null and void not made by them, and all titles to land invalid not conferred or confirmed by them; and that this full right of ownership may and ought to be asserted and enforced by any and all means which God has put in the power of man. In other, if not plainer words, I hold and maintain that the entire soil of a country belongs of right to the entire people of that country, and is the rightful property, not of any one class, but of the nation at large, in full effective possession, to let to whom they will . . . one condition, however, being unavoidable and essential, the condition that the tenant shall bear full, true, and undivided fealty and allegiance to the nation.¹

Lalor's words were brandished across the masthead of the *Irish Worker*, the newspaper of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union out of which the Citizen Army was formed. From its inception in 1911, the *Irish Worker* frequently conjoined socialist and republican rhetoric, laying the foundation for the eventual alliance of Irish socialists and separatists.² The constitution of the Citizen Army, adopted in March 1914, combined Lalor's arguments with Connolly's Marxism and the language of Wolfe Tone: "the first and last principle of the Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland moral and material is vested of right in the people of Ireland . . . one of its objects shall be to sink all differences of birth, property, and creed under the common name of the Irish People."³ The Proclamation of the Republic that was issued from the General Post Office at Easter 1916 did not simply echo Lalor's phrase but also incorporated the socialist objectives of the Citizen Army's constitution in its commitment to economic equality and equality of the sexes:

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland . . . The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts . . . oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government.

¹ *The Writings of James Fintan Lalor* (Dublin, 1847), 67–68.

² Adrian Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism 1909–36* (Dublin, 2012), 37.

³ "Citizen Army," *Irish Worker* (28 March 1914), 2. Tone, founder of Irish republican thought, organized the United Irishmen who launched a rebellion in 1798.

The radical social and economic program set out in the Easter Proclamation was subsumed by the internal divisions that plagued the separatist leadership after the rising, divisions that ultimately resulted in the Civil War of 1922.⁴

At the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, F. X. Martin challenged hagiographic historiography in his landmark article, “The 1916 Easter Rising: A ‘Coup d’Etat’ or a ‘Bloody Protest?’,” which argued that “the rising as it took place, or even as it was to have taken place . . . was ill-conceived and unrealistic, as a military affair.”⁵ One of the most puzzling aspects of the event for Martin and later historians was the insurrectionists’ decision to occupy Jacob’s Biscuit Factory, located on Bishops Street in the city center, and the South Dublin Union, situated south of the Liffey on the outskirts of Dublin. Neither of these sites was civic property, the occupation of which could be explained according to its perceived political value, nor can Jacob’s or the South Dublin Union be understood as important militarily. These inexplicable decisions consolidated historians’ views of the rising as poorly planned at best, and at worst—as F. X. Martin described it elsewhere—as a “drama” that was “conceived with artistic vision and with exceptional military incompetence.”⁶

In contrast to the battle sites Jacob’s Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union, the General Post Office, which was the headquarters of the Rising, was an imposing edifice on Sackville Street, the city’s main thoroughfare. As Charles Townshend writes in his important book, *Easter 1916: the Irish Rebellion*, “the GPO was an impressive stage for the political drama that the military committee, now the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic, had prepared.”⁷ The General Post Office would also be the base for the widespread occupation of other buildings in Sackville Street and Henry Street, which intersected it. Dublin Castle and the adjacent City Hall had similar significance as military and political objects. The Castle, the seat of the British administration in Ireland, also had a large garrison, which if taken would provide essential weaponry and inhibit the British military’s response. The rail station at Harcourt Street and nearby St. Stephen’s Green, a 9,000 square-meter public park in the south of the city center, were seized, effectively shutting down transportation in the southeast of the city.⁸ Although the tower at Jacob’s factory presented an excellent vantage point from which to oversee Kingsbridge (Heuston) Station and Richmond Barracks, the garrison at Jacob’s was only engaged in gunfire once. Townshend writes of the fighters, “most of them stayed in the biscuit-filled mausoleum for the rest of the week, waiting for an attack that never came.”⁹ Similarly, Townshend questions the motivation for Eamonn Ceannt’s 4th Battalion taking the South Dublin Union, a “rambling mass of buildings, covering fifty acres . . . His force was never

⁴ For example, women’s suffrage was unambiguously declared in the Easter Proclamation, but equal suffrage was not accorded until the Irish Free State was established in 1922, while partial suffrage was granted in 1918 as part of UK legislation; for a discussion of women in the leadership of Sinn Féin, see Senia Paseta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900–1918* (Cambridge, 2013), 230.

⁵ F. X. Martin, “The 1916 Rising: A ‘Coup d’Etat’ or a ‘Bloody Protest?’,” *Studia Hibernica* 8 (1968), 110.

⁶ F. X. Martin, “1916: Myth, Fact, and Mystery,” *Studia Hibernica* 7(1967), 7–126, 9.

⁷ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2005), 159.

⁸ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, 166.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

large enough to attempt to hold the whole perimeter.”¹⁰ Fearghal McGarry also notes in his recent book, *The Rising*, “It remains difficult to understand why it was considered acceptable to locate a garrison in the South Dublin Union, the largest poorhouse in the country which housed over three thousand sick and destitute inmates, when other locations would have served equally well.”¹¹ Townshend points out that the South Dublin Union grounds included “its own churches, stores, refectories, and two hospitals with full medical staff,” but even so, he writes, “Ceannt was taking a daunting responsibility in turning it into a battleground.”¹²

Yet, the political value of Jacob’s Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union as sites of occupation can be explained by turning to the long history of antagonisms between those two institutions and the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union, which waged a war against Jacob’s and the South Dublin Union in the pages of the *Irish Worker*. The owners of the factory and the management of the South Dublin Union were believed to have violated, in Lator’s phrase, “full, true, and undivided fealty and allegiance to the nation.”¹³ Historians’ focus on the military strategy of the Easter Rising has neglected an essential source in the contemporary press. This article analyses socialist republican discourse in the *Irish Worker* and *Workers’ Republic* in order to recover the radical vision of the separatist leaders of the Easter Rising. This vision is exemplified in the insurrectionists’ occupation of Jacob’s Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union, which can be understood as a claim of “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland” in moral and material—political and economic—terms.

JACOB’S BISCUIT FACTORY AND THE LEGACY OF THE 1913 DUBLIN LOCKOUT

Jacob’s Biscuit Factory opened its Dublin operation in 1851. By 1911, its employees numbered approximately three thousand.¹⁴ George Jacob, chairman of the factory from 1902 to 1931, is described in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* as a “benevolent employer in the quaker tradition,” who “was ahead of his time with employee-focused reforms.”¹⁵ Yet unlike the Quaker capitalists George Cadbury or Arthur Rowntree in Britain, Jacob paid low wages, and his Quakerism did not prevent him from profiting from war: he supplied biscuits to the British Army, a policy for which James Connolly would later take him to task. Jacob was also one of the most obstinate participants in the 1913 Dublin Lockout and his was one of the last companies to readmit Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union (ITGWU) members into its workforce. In 1913, when he was challenged by the Belfast

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹ McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), 188.

¹² Townshend, *Easter 1916*, 173.

¹³ *The Writings of James Fintan Lator*, 67–68.

¹⁴ Mary E. Daly, *Dublin, the Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History, 1860–1914* (Cork, 1984), 33.

¹⁵ Pauric J. Dempsey, ‘Jacob, William Beale,’ *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, ed. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge, 2009): <http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:5725/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4249-A> (Accessed 23 August 2011).

branch of the Independent Labor Party to allow an impartial inquiry into wages paid prior to the industrial dispute, Jacob stated unequivocally that he would not enter into correspondence on the question of wages and that another factory would be started in England in preference to extending the company's base in Dublin.¹⁶

Delia Larkin, founder of the Irish Women Workers' Union and sister of Jim Larkin, was the first to attack Jacob's Biscuit Factory in the *Irish Worker*. In June 1911, she published the article "Takes the Biscuit: How Miss G. M. Jacob Got Some of Her Wedding Presents." She described how workers were intimidated into giving "voluntary" contributions in order to purchase a congratulatory gift for the Jacob heiress's nuptials.¹⁷ In the wry tone that characterizes her "Women Workers' Column," Larkin wrote that she hoped that the gift was an alarm clock and

that every time Miss G. M. Jacob eats a biscuit that the groan and suffering which have gone to the building up of this business, known as Jacobs Biscuit Factory, will be made plain to her, and that the tick of the clock will remind her of those who have gone down to the grave—the young and beautiful destroyed by the system under which they were sweated.

She urged the workers at Jacob's to unionize in order to defend themselves against unfair treatment: employees who were one minute late on three occasions in a month were fined and locked out for three days; anyone "caught eating a biscuit" was dismissed.¹⁸ The following year, Larkin used her column to expose further corruption at the factory. In one case, a forewoman permitted a worker to count extra tins of biscuits on her docket beyond the work that she had actually done. In exchange, the worker gave the forewoman homemade gifts, including handkerchiefs and gloves. When an audit was conducted and one hundred tins of biscuits that were on the books were found to be missing, the kickbacks were discovered. The forewoman received a stern warning, while the worker's livelihood was threatened. Larkin concluded, "Jacobs & Co. have no qualms of conscience whatever as far as the workers are concerned; they are out to make a profit, and make it they will, even though it be at the cost of ill-health and disablement to the girls, women, and men of Dublin."¹⁹

Delia Larkin's words proved prophetic during the 1913 Lockout. In early September, the factory's managers displayed a notice prohibiting the wearing of the Red Hand badge, which was the symbol of membership in the ITGWU. On 6 September, Larkin published an article in which she stated that over 250 women had been dismissed from Jacob's. She questioned the integrity of the Quaker firm as a "Christian employer" and argued that the company had "sealed [its] own doom." Referring to the police brutality on 31 August (Ireland's first Bloody Sunday), she proclaimed, "The drunken Cossacks may do their share by taking life and the employers their share by locking out the workers, hoping to break their spirit; but not all the combined forces will make the workers deviate one inch from the path of progress

¹⁶ "Jacobs and Their Workers," *Irish Worker* (6 December 1913), 3.

¹⁷ "Takes the Biscuit: How Miss G.M. Jacob Got Some of Her Wedding Presents," *Irish Worker* (17 June 1911), 2.

¹⁸ "A Few Biscuits from Jacob's," *Irish Worker* (24 June 1911), 2.

¹⁹ D. L., "Women Worker's Column," *Irish Worker* (21 September 1912), 2.

they have taken.”²⁰ The next week, she reported that the number of locked-out women workers had risen to 310, and she reprinted letters of solidarity from women across the United Kingdom.²¹

The dispute with Jacob’s stretched into the middle of 1914, and even then it was not resolved.²² James Connolly published a long article, “The Outrages at Jacob’s,” in the March edition of the *Irish Worker*. He criticized the nationalist politician Timothy Healy’s actions as counsel for the employers in the Board of Trade inquiry into labor relations in Dublin.²³ Healy had “waxed eloquent upon the high esteem in which the people of Ireland held the Quakers owing to the exceedingly charitable work performed by members of that religion during the years of the great Irish famine,” but, Connolly protested, this historical charity was not “a justification of the industrial practices” of the current Messrs Jacobs. Connolly argued that the mistreatment of contemporary industrial workers was equivalent to the exploitation by Irish landlords that marked the previous century: “A work girl, sweated in a biscuit factory, is, or should be, as sacred in the eyes of humanity as a tenant farmer, rackrented and starving on an Irish farm.” This is an important instance of Connolly’s application of the discourse of nineteenth-century agrarian agitation to contemporary labor relations and is an example of the way that socialist republican discourse would be used in 1916.

The conditions that Connolly went on to outline were, as he described them, “diabolical.” Locked-out workers seeking re-employment at Jacob’s were summoned for systematic humiliation, first verbal and then physical insult:

[C]ompel[ling] them to submit to his examination of their clothes, their hats, skirts and blouses, to submit while he pinches their arms, and examines their physical condition and that all through his degrading examination he keeps up a running fire of insulting remarks . . . the girls have to strip to the waist, take off boots and stockings and then in a semi-nude state go before a doctor to be examined.²⁴

It was not until after the examinations that the women were given the verdict on re-employment, which, Connolly argued, was never going to be granted in the first place. Men were treated similarly, forced to undergo medical examinations as if they were “recruit[s] for the army.”²⁵ Connolly’s simile evokes his campaign against the conscription of Irishmen into the imperial army and lays the foundations for his later journalism on the subject of Jacob’s participation—and profit from—the war.

From the outbreak of the First World War and the escalation of the threat of conscription, the *Irish Worker* was dominated by news from the front and anti-enlistment propaganda. The lockout receded from the front pages of the *Irish Worker*, but it was not forgotten. Prior to the *Irish Worker*’s suppression under the Defense of the Realm

²⁰ “W. and R. Jacob’s and Co., Ltd. Charge,” *Irish Worker* (6 September 1913), 2.

²¹ “Women Workers’ Column,” *Irish Worker* (13 September 1913), 2.

²² The lockout ended in early 1914, when the British Trades Union Council refused to support the ITGWU through a sympathetic strike. Jim Larkin left for the United States in October.

²³ James Connolly, “The Outrages at Jacob’s,” *Irish Worker* (14 March 1914), 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Act, Connolly reviewed a new book, *Disturbed*, in which the author, Arnold Wright, condemned the “Larkenite” movement as “anarchical.”²⁶ Wright praised Dublin industrialists and cast the directors of Jacob’s as public benefactors, who had been “maligned and calumniated to an incredible degree, they have been made victims of a vendetta.”²⁷ The ITGWU had, by Wright’s account, disturbed the utopia overseen by Messrs. Jacob. Connolly argued that a true history of the lockout would be “like an epic in which the heroes and heroines were the humble men and women who went out in the streets to suffer and starve rather than surrender their right to continue as they chose for the uplifting of their class.”²⁸ This narrative of heroic suffering resonates with the republican rhetoric of martyrdom and illustrates how Connolly and the nationalist separatist leadership shared propagandist techniques as well as an antagonism to British imperialism.

The *Irish Worker’s* successor, *The Workers’ Republic*, was launched in May 1915. It propagandized the left’s anti-conscription campaign, particularly through Connolly’s cleverly titled page-one column “News from the Front” that had a consistently anti-imperialist message. The left’s antagonism towards Jacob’s arose again, this time in protest against the firm’s participation in a recruitment drive for the British Army. In November 1915, a laborer, Arthur Ascott, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Workers’ Republic* in which he argued that while conscription had not been formally instituted, it was occurring in Ireland: workers were being dismissed by their employers who mandated their enlistment in the British Army and promised that their jobs would be waiting when they returned. Ascott stated that he had approached Jacob’s for work because he was aware that the company was Quaker: “I . . . was told that although they were in need of men, they would not give us a job unless we had army rejection papers. Thus I learned that even Quaker Capitalists are pleased to force the Workers to kill other people for them.”²⁹ The *Workers’ Republic* investigated Ascott’s allegations and discovered that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wimborne (director of recruiting in Ireland), had circulated a letter to Dublin employers asking that they encourage recruitment.³⁰ The circular allegedly included details on pay, dependents’ allowances, and pensions. This document is not extant in the papers of Jacob’s Biscuit Factory held in the National Archives of Ireland or in documents related to recruiting in the Matthew Nathan Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. However, the validity of the *Workers’ Republic’s* report is suggested by Jacob’s representation at the Dublin employers’ recruiting meeting held in November 1915.³¹

On 23 November, some of Dublin’s biggest employers met to discuss the best way of assisting recruitment for the British Army. In Wimborne’s address, reported by the *Irish Times*, he stated that he did not wish for employers to “act as recruiting agents;” rather, he proposed that a committee of employers consult the Recruiting

²⁶ Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin: The Story of the Great Strike of 1913–14* (London, 1914), v.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸ Quoted in Fox, *Citizen Army*, 99.

²⁹ Arthur Ascott, Letter to the Editor, “Jacob’s As Recruiting Officers,” *Workers’ Republic* (13 November 1915), 5.

³⁰ “Dublin Employers Asked to Become Recruiting Sergeants,” *Workers’ Republic* (27 November 1915), 3.

³¹ “Dublin Employers and Recruiting,” *Weekly Irish Times* (27 November 1915), 6.

Department in order to determine the percentage of workers that could be spared from various industries.³² The committee formed for that purpose included the Lord Mayor of Dublin (James Michael Gallagher), G. N. Jacob, and William Martin Murphy, who had led the campaign to break the power of the ITGWU in 1913.³³ The *Workers' Republic* described the meeting of "All of the employers who locked out their workers in 1913" and interpreted the committee's remit to determine essential versus dispensable labor as an opportunity for capitalists to rid their industries of the most radical elements: "blacklegs, pimps, and toadies could be certified as 'indispensable,' and the military would do the rest."³⁴

These suspicions might seem to be extreme, were it not for the Munitions of War Act of the same year, 1915. The act prohibited industrial action including lockouts and strikes in industries associated with supplying goods directly to the war effort, and it also forbade "any other work of any description" if the British state determined it "expedient in the national interest."³⁵ Very similar to the policy that Ascott reported in the *Workers' Republic*, the act included a clause mandating that any worker whose previous place of employment had been subjected to the act must not be re-employed unless he held a certificate ensuring that he had left with his previous employer's consent. Mary Davis argues in her biography of Sylvia Pankhurst that the Munitions of War Act "clearly aimed at preventing sacked militants from working again," an interpretation that supports the concerns raised by the *Workers' Republic*.³⁶ Although the Under Secretary for Ireland, Sir Matthew Nathan, opposed the enforcement of the Munitions Act in Ireland, he was pressured by George Askwith, head of mediation at the Department of Trade in London, to employ the act. Askwith believed that this would force a resolution to an industrial dispute between the ITGWU and the Dublin Steam Packet Company—a dispute in which George Jacob and William Martin Murphy were also involved.³⁷ It was perhaps only the paralysis of Nathan, immobilized by his desire to appease all sides, that prevented the labor left's suspicions from being realized.

Many of Dublin's workers had little choice but to join the British Army due to the threat of unemployment and poverty. The *Workers' Republic* coined the phrase "economic conscription" to describe this type of enlistment.³⁸ This was also the view of anti-war Sinn Féin. At a meeting of the Dublin Trades Council on 29 November 1915, P. T. Daly (a Sinn Féin member of Dublin City Council) argued that the

³² Ibid.

³³ "Lord Wimborne Explains," *Irish Independent* (24 November 1915), 5.

³⁴ "Enlist or Starve," *Workers' Republic* (27 November 1915), 4.

³⁵ Munitions of War Bill 1914016 (109), House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&cres_dat=xri:hcpp&crft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1914-018430 (Accessed 3 August 2011).

³⁶ Mary Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics* (London, 1999), 47–48.

³⁷ Matthew Nathan to Askwith, 17 December 1915, MS Nathan 465/543–55, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Askwith exerted pressure to resolve the strike of quay workers for the Dublin Steam Packet Company. Jacob's was one of the Dublin employers whose trade was affected by the strike, and Charles E. Jacob approached Nathan, advocating that a resolution to the dispute be forced. See "Deputation from Dublin Citizens Association," 7 February 1916, MS Nathan 469, Bodleian.

³⁸ At the Trade Union Congress of September 1914, Jim Larkin led a resolution "condemning economic conscription." See Arthur Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics, 1890–1930: The Irish Labour Movement in an Age of Revolution* (Dublin, 1974), 62.

collusion of the British Government and major Dublin employers equated to conscription: “They wanted men to be martyrs to the cause of Empire.”³⁹ Connolly was in attendance and raised his voice in agreement: “They were endeavouring to force the workers to join the armed forces of the Crown by the force of Economic Conscription,” which would “secure the sons of the working class to protect the property of the rich without sacrificing any of the rich or bourgeois class.” This is further evidence of the shared concerns of socialists and nationalist separatists, and it foreshadows the union of separatists and labor that occurred through the formation of the Irish Neutrality League of which Connolly was president and Sean T. O’Kelly (Sinn Féin) was secretary. Thomas Farren, vice president of the Dublin Trades Council, was treasurer of the league and at a Trades Council meeting in December invoked Wolfe Tone’s famous phrase: “If they wanted to get men to defend the Empire—in reality to defend their own property—let the men with the property defend it. They would defend what they valued—the elementary right to map out their own course (loud applause).”⁴⁰

On 18 December 1915, the regular “Notes on the Front” column of the *Workers’ Republic* discussed the recruiting activities of the Dublin employers in the context of the lockout:

In 1913 the employers of Dublin used the weapons of starvation to try and compel men and women to act against their conscience. In 1914 [*recte* 1915] the employers of Dublin and Ireland in general are employing the weapon of starvation in order to compel men to act against their conscience. The same weapon, the same power derived from the same source.⁴¹

The article, written by Connolly, unequivocally connected the collusion of the state and Dublin’s employers in 1913 with their support for the British war effort in 1915. His historical argument then called for action: militancy, the destruction of the imperial infrastructure, and the nationalization of industry and agriculture. Connolly drew directly from Lalor’s “The Rights of Ireland” by declaring,

We want and must have Economic Conscription in Ireland for Ireland. Not the Conscription of men by hunger to compel them to fight for the power that denies them the right to govern their own country, but the Conscription by an Irish nation of all the resources of the nation—its land, its railway, its canals, its workshops, its docks, its mines, its rivers, its mountains . . . its factories and machinery, its horses, its cattle, *and* its men and women, all cooperating together under one common direction.⁴²

³⁹ “Dublin Trades Council,” *Workers’ Republic* (4 December 1915), 3. Daly was imprisoned after the Rising, along with other trade union leaders who had shown themselves to be sympathetic with separatism. See Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics*, 70.

⁴⁰ “Dublin Trades Council,” *Workers’ Republic* (4 December 1915), 3. Jim Smyth argues that despite the various historiographical interpretations of Tone’s phrase, “the men of no property,” the participants in the Easter Rising used the phrase in its populist sense. Smyth, “The Men of Property: Politics and the language of Class in the 1790s,” in *Politics, Society and the Middle Class in Modern Ireland*, ed. Fintan Lane and Maria Luddy (Basingstoke, forthcoming), 7–20.

⁴¹ “Notes on the Front,” *Workers’ Republic* (18 December 1915), 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*

As 1916 dawned, Connolly's articles became even more specific. "Notes on the Front" argued that it would not be necessary to conscript soldiers in the establishment of the Irish Republic because volunteers stood at the ready, "But we shall need to conscript the material; and as the propertied classes have so shamelessly sold themselves to the enemy the economic conscription of their property will cause few qualms to whosoever shall administer the Irish Government in the first days of freedom."⁴³ Although no particular employers were mentioned, he proclaimed "All factories and workshops owned by people who do not yield allegiance to the Irish Government immediately upon its proclamation should at once be confiscated." It was a Munitions Act for the new Republic.

On 26 February 1916, in "The Slums and the Trenches," Connolly stated that the Citizen Army was preparing to take up arms against "the men who locked us out in 1913, the men who solemnly swore that they would starve three-fourths of the workers of Dublin in order to compel them to give up their civil rights."⁴⁴ The agents of recruitment in Dublin were "the men who set the police upon the unarmed people in O'Connell St., who filled the jails with our young working class girls." In March—fewer than two months before the Easter Rising—the *Workers' Republic* specifically named Jacob's Biscuit Factory:

In the great industrial dispute of 1913–14 one of the most malignant firms upon the side of the employers was the firm of Messrs W. & R. Jacobs, Biscuit Manufacturers. No firm engaged in the dispute touched as low a depth of meanness as did this firm; none so vilely used their power when the fight was over . . . As soon as the war broke out the responsible hands of this firm of pious sweaters and soul murderers joined hands with the recruiters in the attempt to swell the ranks of the British Army. They who had outrivaled the lowers in their methods of warfare upon the rights of the workers of Dublin became clamorous that the men of Dublin should go out to fight and die to protect them from the Huns . . . For some time back this firm has had its reward by being kept going with Government orders, and its male employe[e]s mostly resisted the attempt to seduce them into the army that keeps the Messrs. Jacobs upon the necks of Labour . . . Messrs. Jacobs in 1913–14 used their power over the means of livelihood of their employe[e]s to coerce them out of the trade union of their choice on the pain of starvation; now that same firm is again using its power over the means of livelihood of the workers to coerce them into an army that stood ready to shoot them down in 1913–14.⁴⁵

The article cited a circular by the employers' recruiting committee asking that Jacob's permit canvassers from the Department of Recruiting for Ireland to interview employees eligible for military service.⁴⁶ The *Workers' Republic* suspected that a "spy system" was in operation and that factory workers would be forced to state their "political convictions:" those "of advanced opinions will be marked out for early victimisation." It would be, the *Workers' Republic* argued, "political terrorism" worse than the "worst day[s]" in Russia.

⁴³ "Notes on the Front," *Workers' Republic* (15 January 1916), 1.

⁴⁴ "The Slums and the Trenches/News on the Front," *Workers' Republic* (26 February 1916), 1.

⁴⁵ "A Union of Forces," *Workers' Republic* (18 March 1916), 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The memory of the alliance of capital and the state in the Dublin Lockout was augmented by William Martin Murphy and Jacob's Biscuit Factory's support for the British Army's recruitment drive in Ireland. Jacob's support for the British war effort was interpreted as symptomatic of the relationship between industrial capitalism and imperialism, which resulted in "the social and political enslavement of the people of Ireland."⁴⁷ That these arguments, which had been building over the course of five years, were discussed at length fewer than six weeks before the Easter Rising is essential for understanding the occupation of Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the shared vision of the insurrectionists. Although the union of labor and nationalism under Connolly has been criticized as a betrayal of the aims of the ITGWU and of the socialist ideal—most famously by Sean O'Casey in *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* in 1919—the editorial in the *Workers' Republic* that announced the replacement of the Starry Plough with the Volunteers' flag emphasized the centrality of labor to the "momentous decision" made "in the most serious crisis Ireland has witnessed":

We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord, not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalist, not the sleek and oily lawyer, not the prostitute pressman—the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish Working Class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.⁴⁸

This program of economic emancipation through political sovereignty is articulated in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, which replicates Lalor's assertion of the ownership of Ireland by the people of Ireland, a discourse that accommodated the political aims of the labor left as well as nationalist separatists.

At the end of February 1916, in the same edition of the *Workers' Republic* in which Connolly identified the leaders of the Lockout as the proponents of imperialism, another long-standing struggle was brought into play. The target was Councilor John Scully, whose maladministration of the South Dublin Union had also been the subject of a campaign by the *Irish Worker* since the newspaper's foundation in 1911.⁴⁹ Scully's corruption demonstrated a similar lack of allegiance to the people of Ireland, and like the managers of Jacob's, Scully and his cronies were destined for eviction.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See P. O. Cathasaigh (pseudo. Sean O'Casey), *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* (Dublin, 1919); "The Irish Flag," *Workers' Republic* (8 April 1916), 1.

⁴⁹ "Miss Harrison and John Scully and Others," *Workers' Republic* (26 February 1916), 1. D. R. O'Connor Lysaght recounts the claim of a subsequent general secretary of the ITGWU, Michael Mullen, that following the rising, a meeting of the union executive ("probably inquorate") was held and voted "to deprive Connolly of his position and union membership"; regardless of the veracity of Mullen's statement, O'Connor Lysaght argues that "this reflected a real attitude" and "even had Connolly survived, he would have had major problems continuing his strategy"; he characterizes Connolly as "a revolutionary and a defeatist"; see "Labour in Waiting: The After-Effects of the Dublin Lockout," *History Ireland* 21, no. 4 (2013): 44–47.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOUTH DUBLIN UNION: JAMES CONNOLLY VS. JOHN SCULLY

With a population of 226,634 at the time of the 1911 census, the South Dublin Union represented the largest poor-law district in Ireland. The geography of the poorhouse was also expansive, covering a long stretch of the outskirts of the city center along the River Liffey.⁵⁰ As Frank Cullen established in his book, *Cleansing Rural Dublin*, the board of guardians of the South Dublin Union possessed political power that extended beyond the remit of relief for the poor.⁵¹ It was dominated by Home Rule nationalists, who were also united in their hostility to the rising power of the ITGWU. This animosity is evident in the proceedings of the election of officials at the annual general meeting of 1911.⁵² The outgoing chairman, John Scully, JP, a senior figure in Dublin's United Irish League, presided over the businesses of electing his successor. Francis Cole, then Chairman of the Finance Committee, was initially proposed, not out of opposition to Scully—the nominees made clear—but on the principle that one man should not be in the chair for more than three years. Other members of the board supported the reelection of Scully, while two representatives from the Trades Council, Richard O'Carroll and Lorcan O'Toole, opposed both candidates. They argued, as the *Irish Times* reported, that “representatives of organised labour” could not vote for Cole due to his opposition to industrial action taken by Dublin's unionized dockers, and they could not vote for Scully because he had purchased “bread made by non-union labour.”⁵³ Under pressure, Cole withdrew his name to avoid splitting the vote, after which “Scully then declared himself elected.”⁵⁴ W. A. Shea, DL, JP (who seconded the motion to reelect Scully) was elected vice chairman, and O'Carroll was appointed deputy vice chairman. Crucially, given the scandals that would unfold, Cole was reelected as chair of the Finance Committee. The most important positions on the governing board were occupied by their incumbents.

Although Thomas Lawlor (who would go on to have a career in the Irish Labor Party) had secured a motion to the effect that the South Dublin Union would not employ “scab” or “non-unionised” labor, this proved to be a token gesture from the board.⁵⁵ An incident in August betrayed the majority of the guardians' attitude to trades unions. The *Irish Worker* reported that when the secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters wrote to the guardians to complain that an employee of the South Dublin Union had been denied a wage increase solely because the board

⁵⁰ As Cullen outlines, after 1872 the Local Government Board oversaw the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1838. Ireland was divided “into 159 districts known as ‘poor law unions.’” The South Dublin Union was constituted in June 1839. Frank Cullen, *Cleansing Rural Dublin: Public Health and Housing Initiatives in the South Dublin Poor Law Union, 1880–1920* (Dublin, 2001), 5–6.

⁵¹ Cullen, *Cleansing Rural Dublin*, 6.

⁵² Board of Guardians: Minute Books: South Dublin Poor Law Union, National Archives Ireland (NAI), MFGS 49/084.

⁵³ “South Dublin Union/Annual Meeting of Guardians,” *Irish Times* (10 June 1911), 10.

⁵⁴ NAI, MFGS 49/084.

⁵⁵ The motion passed 28 to 11. See *Irish Worker* (8 July 1911), 3. For comprehensive list of guardians, see “South Dublin Union/Annual Meeting of Guardians,” *Irish Times* (10 June 1911), 10. Lawlor, O'Carroll, O'Toole, Alderman Thomas Kelly (Sinn Féin), and Helena Molony (secretary of the Irish Women Workers Union) were exceptions as advocates of labor on the board.

refused to “be bullied” by the society, the letter was suppressed by Scully despite protests to have it read aloud at the meeting.⁵⁶

The dispute between the ITGWU and the guardians of the South Dublin Union became more virulent as the *Irish Worker* exposed the malnutrition that was prevalent among the union’s residents. This was attributed to the greed and cronyism that was rife in the South Dublin Union’s administration. The *Irish Worker* was not the only newspaper to comment on the proceedings of the board of guardians, but it was the only paper to conduct investigative journalism when suspicions about the board’s conduct were raised. For example, in its regular coverage of the July 1911 meeting of the board of guardians, the *Irish Times* recorded that “[t]he financial position of the Union at the close of the period under review was not at all satisfactory.”⁵⁷ This was due in part to the mismanagement of accounts relating to building work and an overcharge of 3,000 pounds weight of bread, which was found missing from the storehouse. At the same meeting, the unsatisfactory condition of the patients’ food in the workhouse’s Catholic women’s hospital was brought to the board’s attention.⁵⁸ A member of the Visiting Committee had taken samples of the food and beef tea, which the guardians had found “little better than water.” Scully deferred a discussion on the question, despite protest from other guardians.⁵⁹ One guardian, Thomas Greene, argued that there could be little “nutriment [*sic*] in the beef tea, when the Master stated that there were nine beasts less killed in the week than there used to be.” Greene’s point, noted in passing in the *Irish Times*, is an important indication of the extent of the corruption at the poorhouse. The *Irish Worker* would soon allege that the South Dublin Union’s administrators were raising livestock in the union and selling it for personal profit and that those animals were being fed on rations intended for the poor.

The *Irish Times* continued to report the proceedings of the board of guardians without inquiry, even when cases of malnutrition and corruption were suspected. In August 1911, the paper noted only that there was “almost unanimous” support for the raising of the master’s salary by £20. The *Irish Worker* gave a fuller account of the meeting, especially a complaint from “inmate” Christopher Hayes that “the beef tea issued to the sick and dying in the hospital” consisted solely of water.⁶⁰ As in the case of the earlier complaint, some of the guardians objected to the reading of the letter outside the committee; Lawlor intimated that “the letter contains something that has to be suppressed,” suggesting that he may have been the *Irish Worker*’s informant. Another letter to the editor of the *Irish Worker*, printed on the front page of the 19 August issue, reiterated the nutritional deficiencies of the provisions for the sick and dying.⁶¹ Again, in mid-September, the *Irish Worker* reported that a sample of milk from a contractor had been sent for analysis and returned with a report of 28 percent added water. The master of the South Dublin Union, Scully, ordered that the supplier be prosecuted, but pressure from within the board resulted in the

⁵⁶ “South Dublin Union: another attempt to suppress letter,” *Irish Worker* (19 August 1911), 3.

⁵⁷ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (20 July 1911), 3. Minute books for this period are incomplete.

⁵⁸ The hospitals were segregated according to religion and sex.

⁵⁹ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (20 July 1911), 3.

⁶⁰ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Worker* (29 July 1911), 3.

⁶¹ “Nibbling in the South Dublin Union,” *Irish Worker* (19 August 1911), 1.

order being rescinded, and the adulterator went unpunished.⁶² None of these events were mentioned in the *Irish Times*.⁶³

In January 1912, a further complaint about diet was submitted to the board by the South Dublin Union “inmate” Christopher Hughes.⁶⁴ Scully was dismissive and tried to discredit Hughes’ character, alleging that he had “spent one portion of his life in jail, and the other portion in the workhouse, and [he] never did a hard day’s work in his life.”⁶⁵ Hughes, who had been a sailor in the Peruvian navy, attempted to sue Scully for slander and £100 in damages. The case was brought to trial where it emerged that Hughes had made further allegations of misconduct at the South Dublin Union, including suspicious circumstances surrounding a prolonged building project: “it took four times longer to build a couple of outhouses at Pelletstown than it did to re-build San Francisco.”⁶⁶ Hughes argued that he had lodged his complaints with the board of guardians in the interest of Dublin’s ratepayers, but Scully used the court’s exasperation with Hughes’ aggressive personality to turn the verdict in his own favor. When Hughes lodged another complaint in September 1912—“inmates are performing many of the duties for which trained nurses are paid”—the Visiting Committee “declined to see him” and voted that Hughes’ “letter be consigned to the waste paper basket.”⁶⁷

In autumn 1912, A. J. O’Brien—the most tenacious of the South Dublin Union’s plaintiffs—wrote to the secretary of the Local Government Board to suggest reasons for the malnourishment of the South Dublin Union’s residents. His case was printed in the *Irish Worker*. O’Brien reported that sour milk and rotten potatoes were given to the residents of the garden infirmary of the South Dublin Union, while good milk and fresh vegetables were being sent to the piggery.⁶⁸ There was no meat in the stew, no dietary scale in the dining hall (a direct infringement of regulations), and food—including large quantities of meat from the slaughterhouse—was being sold to residents of the union and people outside the South Dublin Union. All the while, tea, sugar, and meat were disappearing from the kitchens. O’Brien kept a diary to provide evidence for the case that he was building: on 4 June, two large cases of milk were delivered for the pigs; on 5 June, “six cases of milk for the pigs and sour milk for breakfast.”⁶⁹ In total, eleven cases of good milk were delivered for the pigs in the course of one week. He reported that the residents of the union were waiting for milk deliveries and sneaking drinks of it before it was poured into the boilers: “The best of milk, soup, and large quantities of stirabout go to these wretched brutes, the inmates’ enemies.” O’Brien argued that pigs should not be permitted in the South Dublin Union at all: “where pigs are reared in a Union the inmate[s] suffer.”⁷⁰

⁶² “Guardians of the Poor,” *Irish Worker* (16 September 1911), 2.

⁶³ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (14 September 1911), 10.

⁶⁴ Probably the incident recorded in the minute books for 24 January 1912: “He [the master, Scully] submits a letter from some inmates in the G. I. [Garden Infirmary] re their diets. Diet scale cannot be interfered with without notice of motion to Visiting Committee.” NAI, MFGS 49/085 (120).

⁶⁵ “Union Rascalities: Pauper’s Slander Suit,” *Irish Independent* (29 January 1912), 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Visiting Committee Report, 30 September 1912, NAI, MFGS 49/085 (1460).

⁶⁸ A. J. O’Brien, “South Dublin Union Scandal,” *Irish Worker* (2 November 1912), 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The *Irish Worker* reported that O'Brien was interviewed by a Local Government Board inspector, but the assistant master of the South Dublin Union was also present and had demanded the names of witnesses to O'Brien's allegations. The inspector agreed that O'Brien was required to give names, but O'Brien refused in order to prevent the intimidation of his fellow residents. He also hoped that by withholding the names, he could guarantee an official inquiry.⁷¹ In a separate letter to the editor of the *Irish Worker*, O'Brien reported that after repeated illnesses due to ingesting sour milk, he had requested a pass to leave the South Dublin Union in order to visit the LGB office. This was denied without cause: "inmates of this department are treated very unjustly by those who are responsible for our welfare and whose bounden duty it is to see that we get what the Guardians have contracted for and what the Ratepayers are paying for." O'Brien's eloquence is striking:

Let not the gentlemen of the L.G.B. imagine for a moment that because we wear a different coat to-day on our back from the one that they are wearing, or a different one to-day from the one we wore outside these walls, that we are destitute of feeling, or that we left our manhood and sense of judging right from wrong in the gutter in James's Street the evening we crossed the threshold of the gate of the South Dublin Union. No, we did not. . . . We are simply seeking for what is our due—for what the guardians have contracted and for what the ratepayers are paying for. That is all. It is monstrous to think of such things happening in a civilised city like Dublin, and with the Local Government Board at our very gate.⁷²

The playwright and activist Andrew Patrick Wilson, who published in the *Irish Worker* under the pseudonym "Euchan," visited the South Dublin Union to meet O'Brien. He wrote a front-page feature on his visit in which he condemned the inertia of the Local Government Board: "It stands to reason, that if the government of a country chooses to uphold an economic system that creates and penalizes poverty, that Government is not interested either in nominally or really dealing with those suffering from poverty." The imperial and the local government—with Home Rule nationalists in power—were perceived to be colluding in the oppression of Dublin's poor.

While reports of malnutrition simmered, John Scully was personally implicated in another inquiry, which investigated allegations that he had used for his own profit labor, vehicles, and materials purchased by the Local Government Board's Distress Committee. Cole, the chairman of the South Dublin Union's finance committee, was also incriminated. Neither the *Irish Times* nor any of the other national papers reported the inquiry, which the *Irish Worker* argued amounted to "the lime-washing of Scully." The only mention of the case in the *Irish Times* was in a short report of a South Dublin Union board meeting at which Scully was congratulated

⁷¹ A. J. O'Brien, "South Dublin Union Scandal," *Irish Worker* (2 November 1912), 2. The suppression of these complaints is suggested by the absence of correspondence in the South Dublin Union's minute books. On 30 October 1912, the master's report contains the first mention of A. J. O'Brien: "That he submits letter from an inmate named Matthew Fisher with reference to a letter which appeared in the *Irish Worker* from an inmate named O'Brien." NAI, MFGS 49/085 (1595).

⁷² A. J. O'Brien, "South Dublin Union," *Irish Worker* (2 November 1912), 4.

“on the complete and effective vindication of his character, both as a public representative and a gentleman of honour and probity.”⁷³ The *Irish Worker* declared that if the press continued to collude against the poor, then “It is up to the honest, hardworking capable citizens to remove this pest, these creatures, who are contaminating the very atmosphere with their presence.”⁷⁴

A. J. O’Brien took his grievances to the national press and to the chief secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, who also served as president of the Local Government Board. News of corruption at the South Dublin Union was becoming difficult to suppress, so on 5 December 1912 the *Irish Times* finally reported that the Local Government Board inspector had found shortages of milk, butter, and coal rations at the South Dublin Union.⁷⁵ The only repercussion of the discovery was the transfer of the ward master to a position of less responsibility, despite arguments from labor representatives that the master of the South Dublin Union, Scully, was culpable.⁷⁶ An official inquiry into O’Brien’s allegations began in earnest in January 1913, but this proved to be farcical, with tabloid-style coverage in the *Irish Times* similar to the *Irish Independent*’s mockery of Hughes during his libel suit against Scully. While the paper deigned to grant that O’Brien’s testimony on the first day had been “clear and intelligent,” by the conclusion of the trial, he was lampooned by South Dublin Union officials who accused him of hiding money and tobacco in his wooden leg.⁷⁷ Ultimately, the assistant master of the South Dublin Union suggested that all of the fuss about malnutrition was really “a rebellion” against the new dietary scale, and he alluded to the influence of the ITGWU: “about 20 or 30 of the inmate attendants in the hospital went on strike. (Laughter.)”⁷⁸

In February 1913, the *Irish Worker* returned to the issue of the maladministration of the South Dublin Union with an article that reminded readers of its coverage of the guardians’ fraudulent contracts. It reported that although O’Toole and Lawlor had recently secured a resolution that no tenders be accepted from individuals who were found guilty of adulterating goods, the board had accepted an offer for milk to be supplied by the husband of a previously convicted milk adulterator. The *Irish Worker* asserted, “We have had enough of this jobbery and corruption.”⁷⁹ The following month, an article entitled “The Treatment of Pigs and Christians in the South Dublin Union” alleged that Scully had earned a profit of £637 on the raising of pigs at the South Dublin Union over the past year. The columnist asked, “When will the manhood of Dublin assert itself and insist on officials and Guardians doing their duty by the Poor?”⁸⁰

⁷³ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (28 November 1912), 3.

⁷⁴ “Distress Committee Inquiry Scandal,” *Irish Worker* (30 November 1912), 2.

⁷⁵ Also see Charles H. O’Connor to the Board of Guardians, 3 December 1912, NAI, MFGS 49/085 (1792–93).

⁷⁶ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (5 December 1912), 10, and “South Dublin Union” (12 December 1912), 11.

⁷⁷ “Dublin Workhouse Administration,” *Irish Times* (11 January 1913), 11, and “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (27 January 1913), 10.

⁷⁸ “South Dublin Union,” *Irish Times* (27 January 1913), 10.

⁷⁹ Vartty Water, “Robbing the Poor in South Dublin Union,” *Irish Worker* (15 February 1913), 3.

⁸⁰ Michael Mullen, “The Treatment of Pigs and Christians in the South Dublin Union,” *Irish Worker* (1 March 1913), 3.

The institutional corruption at Dublin's largest poorhouse fueled the ITGWU's struggle to end the oppression of the city's working class. As the industrial disputes of 1913 gained momentum, the *Irish Worker's* pages were filled with calls for organization of the workers and details of the ITGWU's grievances against major Dublin employers, including Murphy's United Tramways Corporation and Jacob's Biscuit Factory. After the suppression of the *Irish Worker* and the launch of the *Workers' Republic* in 1914, James Connolly linked the *Worker's* campaign against Scully's abuse of the poor with the exploitation of Irish people through Britain's imperial war with Germany:

What is HE [Scully] charging for goods he had in stock long prior to the war? What is he charging for such commodities as sugar, butter, eggs, etc. We are informed that the goods which were sold by Scully on Saturday prior to the "inflation" resolution at two pence per pound were sold on the day before the Board meeting [of the South Dublin Union] at five pence per pound, and since that at sixpence. Is this an "artificial inflation"—or just John Scully's usual robbery?⁸¹

On the front page of the 26 February 1916 issue of the *Workers' Republic*, Connolly targeted "Councillor Scully, as light weight champion, [who] has achieved unenviable notoriety." Scully was in court along with other members of the Dublin Distress Committee for "increasing the value of their private property at the public expense."⁸² On 18 March 1916, coverage of both Jacob's Biscuit Factory and of "Harrison v. Scully" featured in the *Workers' Republic*; the latter article detailed Scully's culpability in embezzling money intended for the Dublin Distress Committee's improvement works.⁸³

As in the case of Jacob's Biscuit Factory, the left's campaign against corruption at the South Dublin Union began in the first year of the *Irish Worker's* publication and continued in the weeks prior to the Easter Rising. While other Dublin institutions were occasionally targeted in the paper, these campaigns are exceptional in their tenacity and venom. James Connolly played a strong editorial role at the *Irish Worker* and *Workers' Republic* and was the author of several of the articles indicting Jacob's and the management of the South Dublin Union, particularly during the crucial period of the separatist nationalist and labor left's anti-enlistment campaign and in the early months of 1916.

While F. X. Martin has claimed that Dublin Castle was "Ireland's Bastille," that privilege in fact belonged to the South Dublin Union, described as such in the *Irish Worker* in the headline "South Dublin Union (Bastille)" [*sic*] over an article proposing that a sign should be hung on the gate of No. 1 James Street: "Abandon Hope all ye that enter here as inmates."⁸⁴ The Bastille prison was widely understood to be a "bastion of corruption and tyranny," the fall of which marked a break between the ancien régime and a new era of history; the symbol resonated beyond immediate

⁸¹ "The Food Fakirs," *Workers' Republic* (15 August 1914), 4.

⁸² "Miss Harrison and John Scully and Others," *Workers' Republic* (26 February 1916), 1. Harrison was bringing the case against Scully and was praised by Connolly.

⁸³ "Harrison v. Scully," *Workers' Republic*.

⁸⁴ Martin, "The 1916 Rising," 2.

history through collective memory.⁸⁵ From the perspective of strictly military history, the Irish insurgents' occupation of the South Dublin Union seemed to endanger the lives of its "inmates." However, the militant labor left's equation of the country's largest poorhouse with the Bastille suggests that the South Dublin Union was deliberately selected as a site of actual and symbolic liberation.

"THE CAUSE OF LABOUR IS THE CAUSE OF IRELAND"

2013 marked the centenaries of the foundation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Citizen Army. However, a focus on militarization leading inexorably to armed revolt neglects the political discourse that motivated the labor left and through which the labor movement under James Connolly found affinity with separatist nationalism. The hostility of the rank-and-file of the Irish Volunteers to socialism and the fates of Republican "irreconcilables," who after the Irish Civil War of 1922 either joined parliamentary politics or fell into political disrepute, are further factors that have contributed to the historical neglect of the strong presence of a leftist social program in the Easter Proclamation. This program was enacted in the occupation of Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union during the rising.

By 1947, when the Bureau of Military History began its project to collect oral histories of the revolution, the passing of time was the least of the many hindrances to historical accuracy. In *The Rising*, McGarry discusses the problematic nature of this source material:

Many veterans—including Eamon de Valera . . . refused to provide statements. Some chose not to participate because of their opposition to the State, others because of their unwillingness to betray confidences, their desire to forget the past . . . their reluctance to formally detail their role in it; others refused because of their distrust of the project or the government responsible for establishing it.⁸⁶

The problems of distrust and allegiance are evident in the contributions by surviving members of the Citizen Army, who signed uniform statements that endorsed Fox's history as the official account. Nonetheless, some useful facts emerge from that archive. In her statement, Annie Mannion, who was assistant matron at the South Dublin Union during Easter Week, recalled that "about a week prior to Easter Sunday," Eamonn Ceannt had visited the South Dublin Union with his wife, had asked for a tour of the grounds, and had been shown the garden infirmary: "Ceannt simply walked around, and examined the views that could be obtained from the windows . . . I picked up a slip of paper which seemed to have been torn out of a notebook. The names of those who were on guard were written on it."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom* (Durham and London, 1997), 241–43. Bastille Day festivals in Ulster were important occasions for civic and military display in the eighteenth century; in fact, the Society of United Irishmen arose out of an anniversary parade in Belfast on 14 July 1791; see Ian MacBride, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves* (Dublin, 2009), 379.

⁸⁶ McGarry, *The Rising*, 6.

⁸⁷ BMH WS 297 (Annie Mannion).

Ceannt was in command of the garrison that occupied the South Dublin Union, and in light of Mannion's statement, his assignment to the site does not seem to have been arbitrary or the product of a last-minute decision. Furthermore, a statement by John Hanratty, member of the Citizen Army in 1916, suggests that Jacob's Biscuit Factory was perceived to be of military significance since, he states, "it was expected that the garrison in Jacob's of Bishop Street would spread out and occupy Stephen Street . . . and dominate Ship Street and the [Dublin] Castle Yard from their rear."⁸⁸ Comments on tactics are rare, and rarer still are discussions of specific ideological motives, the absence of which can be attributed to the minority status of socialism in the first instance, changes in personal politics over time, and post-civil war debates and sensitivities about the nature of republicanism.

Two other witness statements are important for their reflections on the discrepancy between historiography and popular memory. Thomas Johnson, leader of the Irish Labor Party, argued that "Any historian's incidents of the history of the military struggle should require at least a background of knowledge of the social and political conditions prior to 1914."⁸⁹ He intimated that he had a "vague theory that [the events of] 1914–1921 can be connected directly with the strikes on the docks in Belfast in 1907 and the military intervention at that time." The 1907 strike was the first to be organized by James Larkin and laid the foundation for the formation of the ITGWU in 1908. Johnson also discussed "the Dublin Strike" of 1913 and implied that this event was also central to understanding the separatist struggle. Similarly, James Larkin Jr.'s witness statement acknowledges the large discrepancies between historians' views of the period and those of "the popular mind." He suggested that official history had ignored the importance of the labor struggle:

"1913" in Dublin was the outbreak of a storm which had been building up and gathering its forces from Belfast in 1907, Cork in 1909, Wexford in 1913, and in Dublin week in and week out, had been fanning and strengthening the spirit of revolt.⁹⁰

Scholars have been eager to pillage the recently available Bureau of Military History archive but have not given the same attention to enlightening source material that is available in the contemporary press. The labor left's newspapers, *The Irish Worker* and its successor, the *Workers' Republic*, illustrate the continuity of the left's struggle to emancipate the Irish working class from oppression by capitalist imperialists. In their support of and profit from the First World War, the management of Jacob's Biscuit Factory and many of the guardians of the South Dublin Union were implicated as part of this system of imperialist oppression. Furthermore, close analysis of the *Irish Worker* and *Workers' Republic* demonstrates the shared discourse of republicanism and socialism that was grounded in Lator's iconic claim of the ownership of Ireland by the people of Ireland—for it to be let to its tenants on the essential condition of undivided loyalty to the nation. In their oppression of the poor and the working-class, the guardians of the South Dublin Union and the management of Jacob's Biscuit Factory were believed to have violated that allegiance. The occupation of these sites at Easter 1916 was an expression of the radical social vision for the imagined state.

⁸⁸ BMH WS96 (John Hanratty).

⁸⁹ NAI BMH WS1755 (Thomas Johnson).

⁹⁰ NAI BMH WS906 (James Larkin).