



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

Rationing in Emergency Ireland, 1939-48

by

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Abbreviations

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BMA	British Medical Association
<i>BJN</i>	<i>British Journal of Nutrition</i>
<i>BMJ</i>	<i>British Medical Journal</i>
CIE	Córas Iompair Éireann
CYMS	Catholic Young Men's Society
CPS	County Production Scheme
CSSC	Catholic Social Services Conference
DAA	Dublin Diocesan Archives
DED	District Electoral Division
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
<i>DIFP</i>	<i>Documents on Irish Foreign Policy</i>
DLGPH	Department of Local Government and Public Health
DTA	Department of An Taoiseach
dwt	Deadweight tonnage
EPA	Emergency Powers Act
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
FF	Fianna Fáil
FG	Fine Gael
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GAAA	Gaelic Athletic Association Archive
GSR	Great Southern Railway
HA	Home Assistance
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IHA	Irish Housewives Association
<i>IHS</i>	<i>Irish Historical Studies</i>
<i>IJMS</i>	<i>Irish Journal of Medical Science</i>
INDC	Department of Industry and Commerce
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRC	Irish Red Cross
<i>Ir. hist. statistics</i>	W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick, <i>Irish historical statistics: population, 1821-1971</i> (Dublin, 1978)
<i>ITJSB</i>	<i>Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin</i>
IWM	Imperial War Museum
<i>JN</i>	<i>Journal of Nutrition</i>
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NNS	National Nutrition Survey
NUIM	National University of Ireland Maynooth
OLC	Archives of Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, Ireland
QUB	Queen's University Belfast

List of abbreviations continued

RAMI	Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
SJAI	Saint John's Ambulance Brigade
<i>Stat. Soc.</i>	<i>Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of</i>
<i>Ire. Jn.</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
SVP	Society of St Vincent de Paul
TB	Tuberculosis
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TD	Teachta Dála, member of Dáil Éireann
TDB	Turf Development Board
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
UA	Unemployment Assistance
UCD	University College Dublin
UI	Unemployment Insurance
UN	United Nations

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Introduction

Opening Statement

The Second World War was the deadliest and most widespread conflict in human history. It resulted in a huge loss of human life, massive material destruction and brought about a rearrangement of the world's geopolitical landscape. While Ireland remained neutral during the Emergency (Ireland's vernacular for the Second World War), the country and its population could not escape the knock-on effects of the conflict. Although spared the human and material losses endured by other nations, Ireland's economy was severely dislocated. Securing imports for agriculture and industry became difficult; industrial production was reduced and the nature of employment affected. The inventory of consumer goods available on the open market was drastically cut and shortages led to price increases. Consequently, the standard of living fell and the prevalence of diseases associated with malnutrition increased. Extraordinary times called for extraordinary measures; the Irish government assumed an exceptional set of dictatorial-like powers under the Emergency Powers Act (EPA), 1939. This act formed the basis for government control which extended to all facets of life in Emergency Ireland including censorship, internment, travel restrictions, and rationing measures. Although repealed in September 1946, many of the controls introduced under the EPA (as well as the conditions which necessitated their introduction) remained in force for many years afterwards. Poverty increased in Ireland during the Emergency, and in urban areas it was endemic. This elicited a whole host of responses from governmental, institutional, and public quarters and produced new ways of thinking about food, health, and the state's responsibility to its citizens. A rich social history that is reflective of the wider wartime experience thus emerges from the period.

Literature review

A series of articles by Professor Thomas D. Williams published in the 1950s, and a collection of essays he edited together with Kevin B. Nowlan, in *Ireland in the war years and after, 1939-51* (1969), initiated the historical examination of Ireland's Emergency. *Ireland in the war years and after*, through its examination of issues of both social and political significance, represented a promising start for the period's historiography. While the sources available at this time were limited, Nowlan and Williams insisted that 'a beginning... must be made'.¹ Much of the scholarship which followed however, has been largely coloured by F.S.L. Lyons' use of the 'Plato's Cave' allegory in his landmark socioeconomic work, *Ireland since the Famine* (1971). Using the metaphor of 'Plato's Cave' to describe life in Ireland during the Emergency, Lyons suggested that:

The tensions – and the liberations – of war, the shared experience, and comradeship in suffering, the new thinking about the future, all these things had passed her by. It was as if an entire people had been condemned to live in Plato's cave, backs to the fire of life and deriving their only knowledge of what went on outside from the flickering shadows thrown on the wall before their eyes by the men and women who passed to and fro behind them. When after six years they emerged, dazzled, from the cave into the light of day, it was to a new and vastly different world.²

Lyons invoked an image of Irish society totally cut off from the rest of the world, unaware of and unaffected by the momentous events of the Second World War, one which belies the reality of life in Ireland during the Emergency.

The dominance of Lyons' ahistorical interpretation is reflected in the histories of the Emergency published (most notably) in the following two decades. Sparse attention was paid to issues of social and economic significance. Instead, top-down high political analysis dominated. The diplomatic minefield negotiated by Ireland's Taoiseach Eamon

¹ Kevin B. Nowlan and Thomas D. Williams (eds), *Ireland in the war years and after, 1939-51* (Dublin, 1969), ix.

² F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (Dublin, 1971), p. 551.

de Valera (and his government) vis-à-vis the threat posed to Ireland by both the Allies and Germany emerged as a key theme.³ The role of the treaty ports also figures prominently. So too has the very anatomy of neutrality itself been scrutinised with a debate over its nature ensuing. Within these top-down histories, a narrative of neutrality which suggests that the policy was biased towards the Allies has developed.⁴ Dermot Keogh, the principle proponent of this view, highlights the joint planning between the Irish and Allied military authorities; the intelligence exchange between G2 and its equivalents in the Allied services; the forwarding of meteorological data and reports of sightings of German naval and aircraft off Irish waters to the relevant British authorities; and the Irish government's secret agreement with the British to allow its seaplanes based in Lough Erne to fly through Irish airspace to reach the Atlantic.⁵ More recent studies have challenged the conventional narrative of Ireland's neutrality and questioned its moral basis. The work of Geoffrey Roberts and Brian Girvin stands out.⁶ The issue of espionage and counter-intelligence in Ireland has garnered significant interest with recent studies benefiting greatly from wider access to source material.⁷ Bearing in mind the extent to which Ireland was viewed as a 'hotbed of espionage' this focus is justifiable. Bernard Share's admirable study, *The Emergency and Neutral Ireland, 1939-1945* (1978) was an exception to this trend. Exploring issues of social, cultural, and economic importance as well as the more traditional themes, Share concluded that

³ See: Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the war years* (New York, 1975); T. Ryle Dwyer, *Irish neutrality and the USA, 1939-47* (Dublin, 1977); Robert Fisk, *In time of war, Ireland, Ulster and the price of neutrality, 1939-45* (London, 1983); John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985).

⁴ T. Ryle Dwyer, *De Valera's finest hour* (Dublin, 1982); Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988).

⁵ Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth century Ireland, nation and state* (Dublin, 1994), p. 120.

⁶ Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland 1939-45* (Dublin, 2006); Geoffrey Roberts, 'Three narratives of neutrality: historians and Ireland's war' in Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (eds), *Ireland and the Second World War, politics, society and remembrance* (Dublin, 2000), pp 165-79.

⁷ Carole J. Carter, *The shamrock and the swastika* (Palo Alto, 1977); Mark Hull, *Irish secrets: German espionage in Ireland, 1939-45* (Dublin, 2003); Eunan O'Halpin, *Spying on Ireland: British intelligence and Irish neutrality during the Second World War* (New York, 2008).

the period brought about significant developments in each of these respects.⁸ This was a conclusion which ultimately stood in opposition to the idea of Emergency Ireland being akin to ‘Plato’s Cave’. Share noted that important practical steps were taken during the Emergency both voluntarily and out of necessity such as in the fields of health and welfare, an idea which warrants further inquiry.

In the 1990s, while the top-down histories of the Emergency persisted, the scope of historical inquiry into the Emergency began to broaden. Gerard Fee’s doctoral thesis, ‘The effects of World War II on Dublin’s low-income families, 1939-1945’, marked the beginning of a new departure.⁹ Viewing the Emergency from a sociological vantage point, Fee illustrates the extent to which Dublin’s poor – the largest and most vulnerable group in Irish society – suffered. Examining the roles played by church and state, Fee shows how social issues were propelled to the fore of Irish politics. Hardship was widespread in Dublin and therefore cannot be ignored in any social history of the Emergency, however this thesis will seek to shed light on the experience of Ireland’s poor in general.

Clair Wills’ 2007 study, *That neutral island, a history of Ireland during the Second World War*, represents a significant addition to the period’s historiography. Through an examination of a wide range of topics using varied sources, Wills shows that neutrality was not synonymous with a global peacetime existence. In the process Wills demonstrates how Ireland existed both inside and outside the war. Wills suggests that:

One version of Ireland’s wartime story is that it is all about absence – the absence of conflict, of supplies, of social dynamism, of contact with the ‘outside world’.¹⁰

⁸ Bernard Share, *The Emergency and neutral Ireland, 1939-1945* (Dublin, 1978), p. 142.

⁹ Gerard Fee, ‘The effects of World War II on Dublin’s low-income families 1939-1945’ (PhD thesis in history, University College, Dublin, 1996).

¹⁰ Clair Wills, *That neutral island, a history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 10.

This narrative, Wills argues, has masked the ‘material and psychic impoverishment that the war wrought in Ireland’, the effects of which it is suggested persisted like a ‘silent damage to the culture throughout the 1950s.’¹¹ Through reference to the growth in strength and confidence of women’s organisations, Wills hints at another narrative of neutrality in which social deprivation was a catalyst for positive action and change. Mary Muldowney’s cross-border oral history, *The Second World War and Irish women* presents Irish women as active as opposed to passive characters during the war.¹² Muldowney’s work is also reflective of an increasing trend in the historiography whereby formerly marginalised topics are being investigated, and the unheard are given voice. Peter Rigney’s study of trains and fuel during the Emergency, and Michael Kennedy’s history of the Coast Watching Service are other relevant examples of this trend. This is also mirrored in the broadening scope of the historiography of the Second World War to include topics peripheral to the major sites of conflict. Researchers have begun to look into the shadows to less traditional subjects. The roles played by the neutrals have been increasingly examined as have topics such as food, science and technology.¹³ Lizzie Collingham’s illustration of the central role that food policy played during the Second World War is particularly relevant.¹⁴ David Edgerton’s and Lizzie Collingham’s works are also important to this thesis both comparatively and to contextualise Ireland’s supplies difficulties within the wider narrative of production and consumption during the Second World War.

Bryce Evans’ 2014 publication, *Ireland during the Second World War, farewell to Plato’s Cave* – a product of his doctoral research – represents another substantial

¹¹ Ibid., pp 10-11.

¹² Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish women, an oral history* (Dublin, 2007).

¹³ Neville Wylie (ed.), *European neutrals and non-belligerents during the Second World War* (London, 2002); for science and technology see: David Edgerton, *Britain’s war machine, weapons, resources and experts in the Second World War* (London, 2011).

¹⁴ Lizzie Collingham, *The taste of war, World War Two and the battle for food* (London, 2011).

addition to the period's historiography.¹⁵ Through his examination of the black market and themes such as profiteering, Evans offers an alternative to the narrative of absence identified by Wills. He traces how shortages coupled with illicit activities led to the emergence of forms of moral economy, and demonstrates how the government actually evoked moral economy in an effort to buttress its policies. The phenomenon whereby the Irish government attempted to convey an impartial account of the war to the population through censorship was termed 'moral neutrality' by Donal Ó Drisceoil.¹⁶ Evans extends the idea of Irish neutrality as 'moral' into the economic realm. In a blend of high political and bottom-up analysis, Evans explores the often fraught relationships which existed between the government, the church, and the various classes. Instead of dwelling on poverty and privation, Evans focuses on the social impacts of the war economy. Evans suggests (in reference to the work of Alan Milward) that 'in doing so it reflects a shift in the broader historiography of the war, where a focus on military histories in which 'armies and navies come or go, commanded by greater or lesser figures deciding momentous historical issues' has given way to a focus on productive forces.'¹⁷ In *War, economy and society, 1939-45*, Milward argues that it was the 'productive forces' behind wars which give them meaning and make them possible.

Bryce Evans cites labour and agrarian unrest, inspectors, enforcement, the black market, compulsory tillage and coercion to illustrate the reluctance of ordinary people to comply with the Government's regulations.¹⁸ The increasing number of prosecutions for

¹⁵ Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War, farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester, 2014).

¹⁶ Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945, neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996), p. 288.

¹⁷ Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, p. 8; Alan S. Milward, *War, economy and society, 1939-1945* (London, 1977), xii.

¹⁸ Bryce Evans 'Notorious Anarchists?' The Irish smallholder and the Irish state during the Emergency, 1939-45', in William Sheehan and Maura Cronin (eds), *Riotous assemblies, rebels, riots and revolts in Ireland* (Dublin, 2011), pp 191-209.

infringements of Emergency legislation is also suggestive of this.¹⁹ Clair Wills has demonstrated how Ireland endured home front conditions without the morale-raising and economy-boosting influence of a war front. This situation existed in Britain where government controls were altogether more successful.²⁰ While Evans demonstrates how the government's attempt to stir up notions of moral economy was unsuccessful, the government's necessary revision to policies of self-sufficiency, although flawed, preserved the population and the state through the Second World War. This could have been achieved only with a certain amount of compliance, voluntary effort, and sacrifice. In providing a different narrative of neutrality, Evans like Wills, Girvin, and Fee before him has helped to demonstrate the complexity of the Emergency.

In *Health, medicine and politics in Ireland 1900-1970*, published in 1987, Ruth Barrington stated:

It is a paradox that war-time should be a stimulant to the development of health services. Like the Great War and the War of Independence, 'the Emergency' during the Second World War was the dividing line in the development of health services.²¹

During the Emergency, there was a definite divergence of health and welfare services in Ireland as new ways of thinking emerged. Under the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, passed on the 24 December 1946, separate Departments of Health and Social Welfare were established to assume the functions of the Department of Local Government and Public Health.²² This was stimulated by a general dissatisfaction with the health services and recognition that access would have to be widened. Throughout the world governments were becoming more socially aware and more concerned with

¹⁹ Bryce Evans, *Seán Lemass, democratic dictator* (Dublin, 2011), pp 137-141; Seosamh Ó Longaigh, *Emergency law in independent Ireland, 1922-1948* (Dublin, 2006).

²⁰ Wills, *That neutral island*, pp 237-2.

²¹ Ruth Barrington, *Health medicine and politics in Ireland 1900-1970* (Dublin, 1987), p. 137.

²² Mel Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland, 1922-52* (Dublin, 2003); Harold O'Sullivan, *A history of local government in the county of Louth, from earliest times to the present time* (Dublin, 2000).

the health of their citizens.²³ Mary Daly ascribes these developments in Ireland to the awareness of politicians and the public, of developments in Britain, most notably the Beveridge proposals for a welfare state.²⁴ This does not sit well with the image of the inward-looking country that springs to mind when one thinks of ‘Plato’s Cave’. Barrington also described how there was:

A great burst of administrative zeal directed at eliminating the black spots on the nation’s health, tuberculosis, other infectious diseases and infant mortality.²⁵

The increase in Ireland’s rates of both tuberculosis and infant mortality during the Emergency also bucks the idea that life in Ireland went unaffected by the Second World War. Malnutrition is a major risk factor for the progression of tuberculosis while infant mortality rates have traditionally been viewed as being amongst the most sensitive indicators of the standard of living.²⁶

Lizzie Collingham’s calorie-centric history, *The taste of war, World War Two and the battle for food*, brings the history of food to the fore, and achieves the near impossible by demonstrating a new way of thinking about the heavily-studied conflict. Collingham illustrates how the combatant governments were eager to harness the new science of nutrition to maintain the health of their armies and populations.²⁷ This enthusiasm for nutrition had its basis in developments which occurred as a result of the First World War, and even more so, the Great Depression.²⁸ In *Feast and famine: a history of food and nutrition in Ireland, 1500-1920*, Leslie Clarkson and Margaret

²³ James Deeny, *To cure and to care, memoirs of a chief medical officer* (Dublin, 1989), pp 105-4.

²⁴ Mary E. Daly, *The buffer state, historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997), p. 249.

²⁵ Barrington, *Health medicine and politics in Ireland*, p. 137.

²⁶ For the history of TB in Ireland see: Greta Jones, “*Captain of all these men of death*” *the history of tuberculosis in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland* (New York, 2001).

²⁷ Collingham, *The taste of war*, p. 10; This wide-ranging and original account examines the wartime food histories of some twenty countries including even occupied territories such as Greece, though Collingham failed to extend her examination to the neutrals.

²⁸ Peter Lang, *Coming to terms with world health* (Geneva, 2009), pp 361-94.

Crawford argue that food and nutrition should be part of mainstream history.²⁹ Beyond the work of Clarkson and Crawford however, the history of food and nutrition in twentieth century Ireland remains spectacularly under examined, especially when one takes into account Ireland's nineteenth century experience of famine.³⁰ Similarly, the history of food and nutrition in the context of the Emergency, aside from anecdotal references to the 'black bread' and the 'black tea', has remained marginalised. Various historians have referenced the existence of widespread malnutrition during the Emergency but only minor analysis is provided.³¹ Comparatively little care was also shown for the new science of nutrition by contemporaries in pre-Emergency Ireland. Yet, Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh's asserts that during the Emergency there was a noticeable increase in concern about the links between malnutrition and illness.³² The fact that Ireland's National Nutrition Survey was initiated in 1946 also seems significant.³³ These developments mirror those that took place in other countries during the interwar years and are suggestive of a growing interest in nutrition in Ireland. In 'The chemistry of famine, nutritional controversies and the Irish Famine, c.1845-7' Ian Miller contends that 'the famine opened up avenues for advocates of the social value of nutritional science to engage with politico-economic discussion regarding Irish dietary'.³⁴ Miller's work thus has similarities with this thesis, and his assertion that nutritional science became tied to anti-union sentiment (due to its ineffective application) offers an

²⁹ Leslie Clarkson and Margaret Crawford, *Feast and famine: a history of food and nutrition in Ireland, 1500-1920* (Oxford, 2001).

³⁰ For an examination of food in the context of twentieth century Irish agriculture see: Mary E. Daly, *The first department, a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002).

³¹ For maternal nutrition during the Emergency, see: Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child, maternity welfare in Dublin 1922-60* (Manchester, 2007), pp 100-2; Wills, *That neutral island*, pp 242-3; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, pp 31-2.

³² Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, *Kathleen Lynn, Irishwoman, patriot, doctor* (Dublin, 2006), p. 124.

³³ For the National Nutrition Survey, 1946-48 see: Margaret Crawford, 'James Deeny and the Irish national nutritional survey, 1946-48' in Brenda Collins, Phillip Ollerenshaw and Trevor Parkhill (eds), *Industry, trade and people in Ireland, 1650-1950, essays in honour of W. H. Crawford* (Belfast, 2005), pp 253-76.

³⁴ Ian Miller, 'The chemistry of famine, nutritional controversies and the Irish Famine, c.1845-7' in *Medical History*, lvi, no. 4 (2012), p. 444.

explanation as to why developments in nutritional science in Ireland lagged behind those of other countries.³⁵

The restrictions on imports led to an approximate twenty-five percent reduction in Ireland's industrial production during the Emergency.³⁶ This coupled with the disparity between the increases in the cost-of-living against real wages plunged many into poverty.³⁷ The Emergency put into focus the desperate living conditions in which large sections of the population lived, and the demand for aid from both the government and voluntary organisations increased. At the same time, the wind of change was in the air, but in Ireland, national health reform and the provision of social welfare proved to be contentious issues. As has been illustrated in various works, the debate was heavily influenced by advocates of the differing ideologies of Catholic Action and the welfare state.³⁸ The well-documented pitched battle between these opposing camps in the early 1950s known as the 'mother and child controversy' had its genesis in the Emergency.³⁹ The existence of poverty together with the desire to keep pace with developments in Britain heightened the appeal (for some) of Beveridge's proposals which advocated the centralisation of the welfare services. Conversely, proponents of Catholic social teachings grew in strength and confidence. Their belief in the principle of subsidiarity was at odds with the centralised welfare state.⁴⁰ Don O'Leary illustrates the popularity of vocationalism as an alternative social order among advocates of Catholic social

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 450-5.

³⁶ J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985, politics and society* (London, 1989), p. 244.

³⁷ The cost-of-living increased by 70% while real wages increased somewhere in the region of just 13% to 33%; estimates vary, see: Mary E. Daly, *Social and economic history of Ireland since 1800* (Dublin, 1981), p. 157; Emmet O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland, 1824-1960* (Dublin, 1992), p. 137.

³⁸ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, pp 90-112; Barrington, *Health medicine and politics in Ireland*, pp 137-66; Adrian Kelly, 'Social Security in independent Ireland, 1922-52' (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 1995); John Horgan, *Noel Browne, passionate outsider* (Dublin, 2000).

³⁹ John H. Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland, 1923-1979* (Dublin, 1980); Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, pp 120-44.

⁴⁰ For the agency exerted by Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, see: John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid, ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999).

teachings.⁴¹ Participation in voluntary organisations devoted to serving the welfare of the community was a core principle of vocationalism. O’Leary highlights the role played during the Emergency by parish councils and Muintir na Tíre, voluntary organisations which aspired to the vocationalist ideal.⁴² This thesis will examine the activities of voluntary organisations, both Catholic and non-denominational, which administered material aid during the Emergency. It will also critically assess welfare schemes implemented by the government in response to shortages. In doing so it will highlight the extent to which Ireland was affected by the Second World War and through the exploration of the activities of voluntary organisations it will offer an alternative narrative to that of coercion, inspection, and the black market.

The focus of this study extends beyond 1945 to include the post-war years up until 1948, or what Bryce Evans terms the ‘Long Emergency’. This is a distinguishing feature of this thesis. Evans argues that while shortages and rationing continued up until 1948, ‘the unique cocktail which Emergency measures represented had been diluted by that point.’⁴³ Censorship was lifted on 11 May 1945, and the wage restrictions were repealed in mid 1946.⁴⁴ So too was the Emergency Powers Act lifted on 2 September 1946. It was from this piece of legislation that the Emergency got its name. Spared from the destruction of the Second World War, Ireland emerged into the post-war world intact and financially stable.⁴⁵ Ireland also escaped the turmoil that engulfed much of Europe in the aftermath of the conflict.⁴⁶ In common with the rest of Europe however, life in post-war Ireland did not revert to its pre-war state upon the conclusion of the war.

⁴¹ Don O’Leary, *Vocationalism and social Catholicism in twentieth-century Ireland, the search for a Christian social order* (Dublin, 2000).

⁴² Don O’Leary, ‘Vocationalism in Emergency Ireland’ in Dermot Keogh and Mervyn O’Driscoll (eds), *Ireland in World War Two, neutrality and survival* (Cork, 2004), pp 230-43.

⁴³ Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, p. 288.

⁴⁵ Daly, *Social and economic history*, pp 158-62.

⁴⁶ Keith Lowe, *Savage continent: Europe in the aftermath of World War II* (New York, 2012), pp 3-72.

Many of the regulations enacted under the Emergency Powers Act remained in force well after it was revoked. Bread, which had not been rationed at any point during the war, was rationed for the first time in January 1947. Ireland's tuberculosis and infant mortality rates did not return to their pre-war levels until 1948 and actually spiked in 1947. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's examination of rationing, controls, and consumption in Britain extending from 1939 until the end of rationing in 1955 illustrates the extent to which rationing became an issue of political significance post-war. This highlights the importance of studying rationing beyond its original wartime context.⁴⁷

Aims and objectives

By examining the Emergency through the lens of food, rationing, and supplies, this thesis aims to demonstrate the extent to which everyday life in Ireland was affected by the Second World War. The thesis therefore stands in opposition to F.S.L. Lyon's contention that life in Emergency Ireland was akin to 'Plato's Cave', is distinct from the largely high-political histories which followed, and can be aligned with more complex narratives of the Emergency. Through the use of a bottom-up approach, public, medical, organisational, clerical, and governmental responses to shortages will be explored. By investigating the multifaceted relationships between various actors, and by demonstrating how privation fostered engagement, cooperation, and conflict, it is hoped to illustrate the complexity of Ireland's Emergency.

This thesis will seek to demonstrate the practical, political, economic, legislative underpinnings of rationing in Ireland. Ireland's supply difficulties were first and foremost a product of the international situation. Thus in an attempt to convey a clearer image of domestic issues, the thesis will contextualise Ireland's shortages within the

⁴⁷ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: rationing, controls, and consumption, 1939-1955* (New York, 2000); Also see: David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-51* (London, 2007).

international situation. While much has been made of Britain's use of economic pressure against Ireland, additional factors which influenced Ireland's negative trade position will be explored. So too the Irish government's preparations for the war in relation to supplies will be analysed.

The most critical shortages will be discussed, as will the most important controls introduced by the government to ameliorate them. While Dublin constitutes the geographic focus of the thesis, efforts will be made to illustrate the impacts of shortages and rationing in both rural and urban contexts.

Writing in 1945, Professor Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon who was well acquainted with the plight of the poor as well as rents and prices in the city estimated that it would cost an adult living in Dublin an absolute minimum of 6s. weekly, or 2s. 4d. for a child to live in Dublin at the prices prevailing at that time. This was what Dillon called the 'Starvation Standard' and it made no allowance for a nutritious and varied diet. On this allowance, one's meals would have consisted primarily of bread and spread. This sum left little for rent and did not take into account the purchase of clothing or additional expenses a family might incur in the case of illness, pregnancy, child birth or the raising of children. In order to avail of a healthy, varied diet, or to obtain what Dillon called the 'Health Standard', he calculated that the weekly expenditure necessary for a man or woman would have been 21s., 23s. for an adolescent, less than 10s. for a child under fifteen, and about 5s. for a child of five years or less. However Dillon again left the allowance for rent and other expenses at an absolute minimum.⁴⁸ Therefore, according to Professor Dillon's calculations, it would have cost £2 18s. weekly to provide a family of two adults and three children with a nutritious diet or as much as £4

⁴⁸ T. W. T. Dillon., 'The Social Services in Eire' in, *Studies, an Irish Quarterly Review*, 34(135) (Sep.,1945), p. 327.

12s. to maintain a family of two adults and five children between the ages of five and fifteen at the same standard.

In 1938 Dublin Corporation's Housing Committee examined 10,500 of city's 33,411 working class families in respect of their income. Its findings showed that twenty-five percent of the families had an income which was under £1 per week and a further twenty percent had a weekly income of under £2.⁴⁹ Even at 1938 prices, the families in Dublin who were at the bottom end of the scale, the ones dependant on state welfare (for the rates of welfare see Chapter III) and others throughout the country who were in a similar socio-economic position would have struggled. Hardship would have been especially common among larger families and Dublin was inhabited by 6,000 working class families with five or more members. It stands to reason that a great many of these would have lived an existence well below Dillon's Health Standard even before the austere living conditions of the Emergency set in.⁵⁰ However, the increase in the cost-of-living that was a product of the Emergency (see Figures 2.8 and 3.1) rendered meagre incomes totally inadequate. Indeed the Emergency was most keenly felt by the poorer classes, and Ireland's poorest were those dependent on state welfare mechanisms for their maintenance. This thesis considers the plight of those persons in particular, a large percentage of which inhabited the country's principal cities (see Figure 0.1 and 0.2).

⁴⁹ Dublin Corporation, *Report of the Housing Committee* (1938)

⁵⁰ T. W. T. Dillon., 'The Social Services in Eire' in, *Studies, an Irish Quarterly Review*, 34(135) (Sep.,1945), p. 327.

Table 0.1 Comparison between the total number of people paid Unemployment Assistance in Ireland with the figures for Dublin, Limerick, Cork and Galway, 1939-48

	UA total	Dublin	Limerick	Cork	Galway	City's % of total	Dublin's % of total
Feb. 1939*	69,262	12,410	2,653	3,987	1,910	30%	18%
Feb. 1940	83,105	14,425	2,787	4,162	1,899	28%	17%
Feb. 1941	70,771	12,070	2,579	4,374	1,195	29%	17%
Feb. 1942	60,348	11,225	1,966	3,312	2,082	31%	19%
Feb. 1943	51,825	10,255	2,123	2,968	2,112	34%	20%
Feb. 1944	43,864	9,295	1,742	2,643	1,513	35%	21%
Feb. 1945	49,879	9,568	1,791	2,622	2,014	32%	19%
Feb. 1946	48,484	8,682	1,765	2,469	2,166	31%	18%
Feb. 1947	47,056	8,746	1,733	2,439	2,227	32%	19%
Feb. 1948	50,030	7,107	1,913	2,067	2,124	26%	14%

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-49

* Note: There was considerable variation in the numbers paid Unemployment Assistance at certain times of the year due to the availability of seasonal work in rural Ireland. It is also not clear from the evidence whether or not the figures provided pertain to unemployed persons or unemployed persons and their dependents.

Table 0.2 Total numbers of people in receipt of Home Assistance in Ireland as well as well as the combined total of Home Assistance and Unemployment Assistance recipients, 1939-45

Home Assistance		Total number of persons claiming HA & UA
Mar. 1939	59,270	128,532
Mar. 1940	67,244	150,349
Mar. 1941	70,716	141,487
Mar. 1942	62,076	122,424
Mar. 1943	55,329	107,154
Mar. 1944	56,316	100,180
Mar. 1945	53,278	103,157

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45*; *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-46

* Figures for Home Assistance are for able-bodied persons and those temporarily disabled by sickness or accident along with their dependents. This table does not account for those in institutions, orphans, or those suffering from mental disorders all of which were also catered for under the Home Assistance scheme.

The economic impacts of the Emergency plunged this section of the population into an acute state of poverty and welfare dependence, and it highlighted the awful conditions in which substantial sections of the population subsisted. The existence of tailored welfare measures and the establishment of voluntary welfare organisations such as the Catholic Social Service Conference (CSSC) suggest that the Emergency entailed

significant social impacts.⁵¹ The nature of such mechanisms will be illustrated with a view to determining their success. The ‘step together’ spirit, synonymous with volunteering for the emergency services such as the army and the Local Defence Force is also apparent in the activities of voluntary and philanthropic organisations which mobilised support and expanded their activities.⁵² The role that these voluntary organisations played, with particular attention to food, fuel, and clothing provision, will be examined in this thesis. The focus on voluntary welfare schemes both Catholic and non-denominational is intended to highlight the complexity of the Emergency with a view to offering an alternative narrative to that of coercion, inspection, and the black market.

The impact of the Emergency upon levels of nutrition will be investigated. In Britain, the Second World War brought about an improvement in the nation’s diet and generated interest in the science of nutrition; this thesis aims to discover whether or not this trend was reflected in Ireland. Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh’s unsubstantiated assertion that during the Emergency there was a noticeable increase in concern about the links between malnutrition and illness will also be tested.⁵³

By extending the examination to the ‘Long Emergency’, this thesis posits that although the military, and diplomatic emergency may have ended following the cessation of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, as shortages and rationing continued beyond this date, so too did the Emergency in the popular sense. Post-war rationing is understudied; its significance has not been illustrated, and the severity or post-war austerity has not been acknowledged. This thesis aims to rectify this.

⁵¹ Within both the manuscript and published material the CSSC is referred to both the Catholic Social Service Conference and the Catholic Social Services Conference. The former will be used in this thesis.

⁵² For more on ‘Step Together’ see: Wills, *That neutral island*, pp 95-105.

⁵³ Ó hÓgartaigh, *Kathleen Lynn*, p. 124.

Sources and methodologies

This thesis is based upon both qualitative and quantitative data brought together from a variety of sources. As suggested by John Tosh, ‘historical research is not a matter of identifying the authoritative source and then exploiting it for all it is worth’, instead the best practice is to amass all the evidence possible from as wide a range of sources as is available and is practical that are relevant to the question at hand.⁵⁴ In doing so, the inaccuracies and distortions of particular sources are more likely to be revealed. Thus as all sources have their strengths and weaknesses, it is in cross-referencing them against each other, as well as seeking to understand the context of their creation, that one is more likely to reveal the ‘historical truth’. It must also be noted that while much of the manuscript material used is not unique to this thesis, having viewed it through the prism of food, rationing and shortages, new insights have been obtained.

The departmental papers held in the National Archives of Ireland and the various official publications kept in the National Library of Ireland represent the most important archival sources for this thesis. Papers created by the Departments of the Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs, Local Government and Public Health, and Supplies were consulted to provide a cross-departmental view of the Emergency. The Department of Industry and Commerce: Emergency Files which cover the period 1921-58 were particularly important to the thesis. Varied in content, the government papers provide crucial insights into how the government responded to the economic difficulties Ireland and its faced. Government surveys, inquiries, and reports demonstrate how the ordinary Irish citizen was affected by the Emergency. Likewise, associated letters, petitions, and surveys convey the grievances of interested parties. The state papers thus provide

⁵⁴ John Tosh, *The pursuit of history* (London, 2011), p. 134.

valuable top-down as well as bottom-up windows through which to analyse the period. Although not subjected to censorship, one must be mindful of a bias in preservation. Paper rationing, the use of the telephone, and poor record keeping has left the record patchy in places. Certain files also appear to have been lost. Official government publications such as the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin* and the *Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health* proved essential sources of official information. Typically rich in statistical data, such information was used to plot trends and allowed for comparison. This was of crucial importance to this thesis.

The manuscript material generated by the Catholic Social Services Conference (CSSC) held primarily in the Dublin Diocesan Archive was valuable to the thesis but also presented problems. Within the documents, titles of departments and acronyms lack uniformity. What is referred to in the thesis (and the source material) as the welfare department is also called the maternity welfare department and the pre-natal and post-natal welfare department. The use of varied terminology by the CSSC is reflective of an organisation in its infancy.

The Irish parliamentary debates are a key source for this study. They are especially vital for the years during which censorship was in force. Due to censorship, the Dáil and Seanad became important public fora where censored issues could be raised. The parliamentary debates thus provide vital insights and are used to flesh out the censored sources. The way in which the parliamentary debates provide windows through which to view issues of international, national, and local significance is also beneficial to this study. Publications referenced by deputies in their contributions sometimes proved valuable; in general this sources-based approach to the material was pursued throughout the research. The frequency of reference to topics in the houses was

also used as a barometer of their political significance with certain issue having definite valley and trough periods. Ambiguity in references to weights and measures in deputy's contributions can be problematic. One has to differentiate between statute and Irish acres when not stipulated in the debates. The lack of internationally standardised measurements for containers such as sacks and barrels also poses a problem. Cross-referencing such figures with those provided in official publications can provide clarity.

Extensive use throughout the thesis has been made of contemporary newspapers and periodicals. Daily and regional publications have been consulted in order to view the crisis from both national and local perspectives. Censorship however, diminishes the value of these sources. Introduced in September 1939, and not lifted until May 1945, the censorship forbade publication of any material which it was felt might jeopardise internal political stability. In the interest of 'keeping the temperature down', 'articles which dealt with unemployment, emigration, poverty and hunger... described as 'atrocious stories and defeatism' were often stopped by the censor'.⁵⁵ While publications such as the *Irish Times* and *The Torch* were heavily censored, other publications seem to have enjoyed greater freedom of expression. The nature of the reporting in the regional press is perceptibly less sensitive. Similarly, the suffocating influence of the censors is less apparent in journal publications. Journals such as *Studies, an Irish Quarterly Review; The Irish Journal of Medical Science; The Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland; Irish Ambulance Gazette; and the Irish Red Cross Monthly Bulletin* – in spite of their various distinctions – all offer important insights into life in Ireland during the Emergency. In any periodical, criticisms when levelled had to be discreet enough to pass the censor, but at the same time, to be effective, the message had to be obvious to the reader. Notable examples here are *Dublin Opinion* through its

⁵⁵ Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, pp 256-7.

use of the satirical cartoon and the more literary *Bell* magazine. Although some material may have slipped the censor's net, paper rationing was another limiting factor which meant that the publications themselves were far less voluminous than those printed in peacetime.

Thesis structure

This thesis is primarily concerned with the period from 1939-48, but it also acknowledges the importance of historical precedent to the narrative and therefore certain relevant pre-war developments are highlighted at the beginning of Chapters I, III, IV and V. While the period from September 1939 to the end of the war is usually described as the 'Emergency', here, the term is also applied to those immediate post-war years under examination.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first considers the political, economic and legislative underpinnings of rationing. An illustration of Ireland's special economic relationship with Britain within both the pre-war and wartime geopolitical context is provided with issues such as trade and shipping discussed. It also deals with the establishment of the Department of Supplies, and its precursor, the Emergency Supplies Branch. Chapter II explores the most significant shortages, their impacts and the government's efforts to combat them. The socio-economic impacts of the Emergency heightened the importance of both government and voluntary welfare mechanisms. The role these played in the fight against privation will be discussed in chapter III. While the effects of rationing were experienced nationwide, suffering was greatest in Dublin. Chapter IV will therefore consider the response of the Catholic Church under the aegis of the Catholic Social Service Conference to austerity in the country's capital. Through reference to infant and tuberculosis mortality, Chapter V will investigate the impact of the Emergency on nutritional standards. In order to give this material some context,

important pre-war advances in nutritional science will be illustrated as will the nature of the appreciation for the science in Ireland. The final chapter extends the analysis to the 'Long Emergency' in order to examine rationing in its post-war context. The nature and impact of continued rationing will be discussed along with the significance of geopolitical and environmental factors.

Chapter I

The practical, political, economic, and legislative underpinnings of rationing in Ireland

Upon the outbreak of the Second World War, Ireland along with many other states (including the US) adopted a policy of neutrality.¹ Ireland's population was thus largely spared from the horrors of war. Neutrality, however, did not preserve Ireland from the economic, social and political consequences of the war. Ireland's geographical proximity to and shared border with the UK along with her economic, historic and cultural ties to that country meant that the knock-on effects of the war were inescapable. In spite Ireland's attainment of independence in 1922 and Fianna Fáil's drive towards self sufficiency initiated ten years later, the country remained critically dependent on Britain for trade and shipping. Economically, Ireland was thus highly sensitive to external influences. This chapter will explore the following questions: In what way did Ireland's historic, political, and economic relationship with Britain influence the Irish government's preparations for the coming of war? To what extent was Ireland's supplies position affected by the International context?

Emergency Supplies Branch

In the years preceding the outbreak of the Second World War, the Irish government began inquiring into the security of the country's supplies position in the event of a European war. These inquiries began in 1935 under the direction of Minister Frank Aiken, head of the Department of Defence. Bryce Evans illustrates how in November 1937:

Lemass, other ministers, and high-ranking officials were informed by the British Food Department that 'complete economic control' would be exercised by the British government in the event of the outbreak of war, which would lead to the 'absence of a free market in the UK.'²

¹ Ireland was just one of twenty states that declared themselves neutral in September 1939. See: J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985, politics and society* (London, 1989), p. 242.

² Bryce Evans, *Seán Lemass, democratic dictator* (Dublin, 2011), p. 109.

This information led to the establishment of the Emergency Supplies Branch, a subsection of the Department of Industry and Commerce and the precursor to the Department of Supplies. The section proceeded to – among other things – encourage manufacturers and importers of essential goods to lay in at least six months’ reserve stocks as a security.³ Meetings to this end were held in September 1938 with representatives of organisations such as the Irish Flour Millers’ Association and the Irish Wholesale Tea Dealers’ Association, but they yielded limited results. Difficulties obtaining supplies of certain commodities were encountered while in some cases the commodities were unsuitable for lengthy storage.⁴

The to-and-fro between the Emergency Supplies Branch and the Irish Flour Millers’ Association is typical of the problems the branch encountered in its efforts to encourage importers and manufacturers to stockpile essential materials. The millers were unwilling to bear the additional cost of building a reserve. Not only would the wheat have to be purchased, there was shipping, handling, and storage costs; regular ‘turning’ while in storage was also necessary to prevent decay.⁵ Normally six to seven weeks’ supply was maintained by the millers at any one time, but the government sought the creation of a minimum six months’ reserve.⁶ The lack of storage space was the biggest problem, and the erection of new storage facilities would have been expensive. The millers wanted the government to cover the cost of the programme. They wanted guaranteed prices for their produce and insurance against loss while they argued that heavy purchasing would drive up prices for the consumer.⁷ The Irish Wholesale Tea Dealers’ Association was similarly resistant. Having regard to the

³ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, miscellaneous supplies and control of exports, 1939-45 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/3, p. 1).

⁴ *Irish Times*, 3 Sept. 1939.

⁵ Note for the minister, n.d. (suspected Feb. 1939), (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/31, p. 3).

⁶ Memo, 14 Sept. 1938 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/31).

⁷ Memo on the flour and wheat supply, 17 Sept. 1938 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/30).

widespread consumption of tea, it was one of the first commodities to be brought under review by the Emergency Supplies Branch. Between September 1938 and August 1939 representatives from the branch encouraged the Irish Wholesale Tea Dealers' Association to increase its purchases and lay in stores. Like the millers, the tea merchants raised the question of compensation against potential losses. However, between September and the end of December 1938 total stocks actually decreased by 2,000,000 lbs which showed a disregard for the wishes of the Department of Industry and Commerce.⁸ By the eve of the Emergency, the position had improved, albeit slightly, as fourteen weeks' worth of a reserve was held in Ireland.

In order to encourage Irish traders to establish stocks of essential supplies, the government arranged for credit to be offered by the banks to suitable cases. But this is where government aid ended as it was loath to provide securities to manufacturers who it had protected during the economic war.⁹ Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce was an interventionist by nature and is often depicted (justifiably) as the great moderniser, the maker of modern Ireland and the pivotal figure in the transition from the conservatism of de Valera's Ireland to a more progressive and outward looking society.¹⁰ As such one might expect that he would have acted here, intervened, however he was not infallible. As demonstrated by Bryce Evans, the decision not to cede to the demands of the Irish traders was Lemass' for he felt it was a matter of 'patriotic duty', and that the idea of granting securities to businesses he had helped nurture was unconscionable.¹¹ Perhaps both parties should have met half way as was the case in

⁸ Mr Maguire to John Leydon, Secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce, 4 Mar. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/25).

⁹ Memorandum as to the present position in regard to supplies of essential commodities, 24 Aug. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/1).

¹⁰ Brian Girvin and Gary Murphy, *The Lemass era, politics and society in the Ireland of Seán Lemass* (Dublin, 2005); Tom Garvin, *Judging Lemass, the measure of the man* (Dublin, 2009); John Horgan, *Seán Lemass, the enigmatic patriot* (Dublin, 1997).

¹¹ Evans, *Sean Lemass*, p. 110.

Belgium. During the Munich Crisis, the Belgian government stored 40,000 tons of wheat at a cost of 4,000,000 Belgian Francs. However, as the crisis was averted, it did so at a loss of 200 francs per ton. In this case the loss was split fifty-fifty between the government and the millers.¹² Critically, this reluctance to support the manufactures either rightly or wrongly hindered the stockpiling of essential supplies in Ireland. John Leydon, Secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce, was also very aware of the political implications of the government financing with taxpayers' money the stockpiling of reserves. In a letter to James McElligott, Secretary of the Department of Finance, he argued that:

The public will put up with it at the hands of the traders much more readily than they would at the hands of the government.

But added:

If, however, we have been proceeding on a wrong assumption and if the Minister for Finance is prepared to provide the necessary funds, we can consider the matter again.¹³

He knew that such expenditure would hardly find support from Finance.

Munich Agreement, 1938

Tempering the manufacturer's enthusiasm and the government's resolve for a scheme of stockpiling of essential commodities was the belief that the war could be avoided, but also that if it did take place it would be concluded quickly. Either scenario would make redundant large stockpiles of commodities leaving those who built them susceptible to loss. The idea that the war would be swift in nature was widely held. During the Anglo-Irish trade negotiations held in early 1938, the British Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, explained:

What was expected from Germany, if that country became our opponent, was an attempt to force a decision by means of a short sharp war.¹⁴

¹² Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs to the Department of Industry and Commerce, 16 Jan. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/31).

¹³ John Leydon to James McElligott, 22 Feb. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/31).

The British Home Secretary, Samuel Hoare, remarked that the war would be ‘entirely different from that of 1914/18’ adding that ‘if Germany was involved she was expected to stake everything on bringing the war to an end within a few weeks or months.’¹⁵ A letter dated 24 May 1938 from Francis Cremins, permanent representative to the League of Nations, to Joseph Walsh, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reported on a conversation Cremins had in Geneva with a Polish delegate, M. Komarnicki. According to Cremins, Komarnicki did not expect an immediate war and he felt a peaceful settlement was still possible. The signing of the Munich Agreement, 30 September 1938, reinforced the idea that war could be avoided. This act of appeasement allowed Hitler to annex the ethnically German Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia and was supported by the Irish government who believed in the principle of self determination.¹⁶ For Ireland domestically, the agreement engendered a false sense of security and did much to thwart the endeavours of the Emergency Supplies Branch to stockpile essential commodities.

In January 1939, Michael Mac White, head of the Irish legation in Italy, communicated the sense he got of the international situation to Joseph Walsh. He noted that:

Italy could not fight a long war and Germany is probably in the same situation. There are observers who are convinced that both these countries would be in the throes of a revolution within ninety days after the outbreak of hostilities.¹⁷

MacWhite obviously did not rate the ability of Germany and Italy to wage war. Conversely, he felt France was in a better position stating:

¹⁴ Minutes of a conference between representatives of the United Kingdom and Ireland, 17 Jan. 1938 (NAI, DT S10389).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Deirdre McMahon, ‘Ireland, the dominions and the Munich Crisis’ in *Irish Studies in International Affairs* i, no. 1 (1979), p. 32.

¹⁷ Michael MacWhite to Joseph P. Walsh, 4 Jan. 1939 (UCDA, P194/537).

The determined steps taken by France during the last fortnight have given the dictators food for reflection... the French have the only army in Europe that is ready for war. They have a strong reserve of material and munitions and their naval and air forces will be able to give a good account of themselves should the occasion arise.¹⁸

France had invested heavily in its defences during the inter-war period. The most striking example of this was the line of concrete fortresses, obstacles and weapons installations known as the Maginot Line constructed along its border with Germany. Put into this context Michael MacWhite's opinion is unsurprising.

Figure 1.1 British troops enter Fort de Sainghain, a fortification on the Maginot Line, 3 November 1939



Source: Troops of 51st Highland Division march over a drawbridge into Fort de Sainghain on the Maginot Line, 3 November 1939 (IWM, War Office Second World War Official Collection, O 227)

Such information reinforced the idea that the war (if it broke out) would remain far away from Ireland. As tensions continued to build, the hope that the war might be avoided remained. Just days before the German invasion of Poland, Cremins reported back to Dublin:

Practically everyone clings to the hope that, despite the measures which are being taken in Germany against Poland, and the counter-measures in other countries, the actual outbreak of war may even yet be avoided.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Francis T. Cremins to Joseph P. Walsh, 26 Aug. 1939 (NAI, DFA 219/7).

A ‘quick war’ from which France and Britain were expected to emerge victorious was expected in Ireland and elsewhere. Such a war – contested on the European continent – it was thought, would be of little consequence for Ireland and the international trade she engaged in. This perception engendered a false sense of security among the government and those members of the business class who were responsible for importing essential supplies and manufactured goods into the country. This was to the absolute detriment of the country’s pre-war stockpiling efforts and was responsible for the lack thereof.

Shipping

During the revolutionary period, Sinn Féin prioritised the establishment of an Irish merchant navy.²⁰ Yet, little was achieved in the period between independence and the start of the Second World War to make this aspiration a reality. During the Anglo-Irish Trade War (1932-38), officials from the Department of Finance warned that the dispute was a threat to Ireland’s food supply, but their fears were ignored. Even when in 1935-36 the leading company in the Irish shipping trade, the British and Irish Steam Packet Company (B&I) came up for sale, the Irish government declined its purchase.²¹ Illustrative of the official attitude towards Irish shipping was the case of the Imperial Shipping Committee which Ireland first subscribed to in 1933. When the issue of continued membership was up for review in 1938, Lemass indicated that little positive advantage had been derived from the committee adding that it ‘may have some importance from the point of view of the development of aviation.’²² Even British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain’s comment on 17 January 1938, during the Anglo-Irish trade negotiations, that trade in a time of ‘crisis’ might ‘depend on the extent to

²⁰ Bryce Evans, ‘A semi-state archipelago without ships, Seán Lemass, economic policy and the absence of an Irish mercantile marine’ in *Working Papers in History and Policy*, no. 6 (2012), p. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp 5-8.

²² Memorandum to the government by the Department of Industry and Commerce on continued membership of the Imperial Economic Committee and the Imperial Shipping Committee, 12 July 1938 (NAI, DT/S9377).

which this country [will be] allowed facilities for submarine hunting' seemed to fall on deaf ears.²³ The government, informed by the precedent of the First World War, held too high an opinion of the value of Irish agricultural produce to Britain in a time of war. Cheap chartering rates in the interwar period and the easing of tensions following the 1938 Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement enabled the government to continue on its path of blissful ignorance as far as shipping and stockpiling of supplies was concerned.

As the war approached the potential repercussions of the neglect of Ireland's shipping industry started to become clear. In early 1939, John Leydon, Assistant Secretary to the Department of Industry and Commerce, ordered the Emergency Supplies Branch to examine the extent of Ireland's dependence on other countries in connection with imports, exports and shipping. The results made for sombre reading. In 1938 there were 11,027 entries by vessels to Irish ports. Their aggregate net tonnage was 8,248,434 tons; this was the total shipping space required to carry Ireland's imports and exports for 1938.²⁴ Of these ships, thirty-two percent were of Irish nationality – meaning they were registered in Ireland – while thirty-seven percent were of British nationality. The figure of thirty-two percent included the British-owned vessels of the L.M. & S. Railway and the B&I Steam Packet companies. When these are removed, just five percent of the ships engaged in Ireland's sea trade were actually Irish-owned, while sixty-four percent were British-owned.²⁵ Ireland was also totally dependent on foreign shipping to carry bulk cargoes (wheat, maize, petrol, timber). Colliers were the most common vessels to ply their trade between the UK and the approximately 100 ports or creeks in Ireland.²⁶ Only nine of the colliers were Irish-owned and their combined

²³ Minutes of a conference, 17 Jan. 1938.

²⁴ Memorandum for government, dependence on other countries in connection with essential imports, exports and shipping, 19 Apr. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/8/89, p. 15).

²⁵ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war in 1939 and steps taken to overcome them, n.d. (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/19, p. 1).

²⁶ Éire, shipping, 1938 (NAI, INDC/EMR/8/89, p. 1).

tonnage was 1,884 tons. If they completed two trips weekly between the UK and Ireland they would have been capable of importing approximately 200,000 tons of coal to Ireland annually, but this represented just eight percent of normal requirements.²⁷

While Ireland strove for self-sufficiency, imported raw materials, manufactured goods and parts and machinery were vital to Ireland's manufacturing and agricultural industries as well as the consumer market. As summarised internally in early 1939, Ireland was very much dependent on the UK. The combined value of Irish imports for 1937 was £44,000,000, while the value of exports was £22,500,000; in 1938 approximately fifty percent of Irish imports came from the UK while ninety percent of exports were destined for the UK market (see Table 1.1).²⁸

²⁷ Memorandum for government, 19 Apr. 1939, p. 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 11-4.

Table 1.1 Source of Irish imports, and destination of Irish exports, 1938

Imports	
Country of origin	Percentage of total imports
United Kingdom	50
Belgium, Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden, Russia (together)	11
Canada & USA	11
Argentina	5
Australia	4
India	4
Other countries	15

Exports	
Destination of Irish produce	Percentage of total exports
United Kingdom	90
Germany	4
USA	1
Other countries	5

Dependence on other countries in connection with essential imports, exports, and shipping, 19 Apr. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/8/89, pp 1-2)

Table 1.2 Quantity of imports to Ireland, 1937

Commodity	Tons
Coal	2,562,999
Wheat	324,395
Maize	304,925
Fertilisers	171,436
Iron & steel	119,289
Paper pulp, paper, cardboard, etc.	90,694
Ores	39,878
Cattle feeding stuffs	39,037
Chemicals, etc.	35,973
Salt	35,137
Tea	11,273
Aluminium, copper, lead, zinc, ect.	7,278
Oil seeds, fats, etc.	7,115

Petroleum Oils	Gallons
Motor spirit	39,057,093
Lamp oil	19,162,918
Gas oil & Fuel oil	9,673,996
Lubricating oil	2,645,902

Dependence on other countries in connection with essential imports, exports, and shipping, 19 Apr. 1939 (NAI, INDC/EMR/8/89, p. 3)

The memo very clearly illustrated the precarious position in which Ireland would find herself in the event of war:

If war should break out we are very largely at the mercy of other countries, and particularly of the United Kingdom, in respect of our external trade, and the economic activities of this country could in such circumstances be completely paralysed.²⁹

Despite the bluntness of the language employed it was not seen as necessary to rectify this position. During 1938-9 Leydon made several visits to London during which he was assured that Irish interests would be treated on the same basis as their British counterparts in relation to supplies and shipping.³⁰ This served to reinforce the government's inaction in terms of preparing for the coming of a potential war.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., p. 1.

Following the outbreak of war, many of the foreign-owned vessels registered in Ireland switched over to the British registry putting themselves beyond the reach of the Irish government and into the service of Britain.³¹ This left Ireland with just fifty-six ships, but none of these were ocean-going vessels, but were instead designed for short sea trades such as those conducted between Ireland and Britain.³² On top of all of this, the British authorities refused from the outset to provide any British or British-controlled tonnage for the shipment of ‘bulk cargoes’ despite the assurances given prior to the war.³³ This did not pose too grave a problem during the Phoney War (September 1939 to early May 1940) when shipping losses at sea were minor and neutral shipping was available for charter which further reinforced the lack of urgency about supplies and shipping.³⁴ Although it was available, competition for this tonnage along with a whole host of other reasons related to the war such as the increased price of insurance ensured that this was no cheap enterprise. During early May 1940, trade negotiations were held between the Irish and British governments at the behest of the Irish. These talks were motivated by a desire to realise increased imports of fertilisers and animal feeding stuffs and to obtain a market for Irish agricultural produce at guaranteed prices. While the British would have paid almost any price for iron, copper and timber, they were not keen on importing Irish food and were adamant that they would not give Ireland prices for agricultural products equal to those they gave to their own farmers.³⁵ On shipping, the British proposed a scheme under their administration of amalgamated charters and combined purchasing of commodities in order to prevent competition for

³¹ Frank Forde, *The long watch, the history of the Irish Mercantile Marine in World War Two* (Dublin, 1981), p. 24.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., p. 1.

³⁴ Mary E. Daly, *The first department, a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002), p. 215.

³⁵ Joseph P. Walsh to Eamon de Valera, 1 May 1940 (UCDA, P150/2571); Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland 1939-45* (Dublin, 2006), p. 162.

contracts, to lower prices, and to promote efficiency.³⁶ The Irish government had little choice but to accept. Britain was increasingly tying down neutral shipping; following the invasion and fall of Norway, 8 April to 10 June 1940, a major source of neutral shipping previously available for charter was lost.³⁷ Importantly, this agreement was made just prior to the Battle of France, 10 May to 22 June 1940 and the intensification of the war in Europe. As 1940 progressed, British attitudes towards Ireland hardened, exports of essential commodities were incrementally reduced and by the end of 1940 the Ministry of Shipping ceased to provide any charters to Ireland.³⁸ Lemass considered this to be a ‘double cross’.³⁹

On 5 November 1939 US President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, signed a proclamation under the American Neutrality Act barring American ships from entering European waters north of Spain and south of Norway. This area became known as the combat zone. Pre-war trade with the US represented only a small fraction of Ireland’s total, therefore at first glance Ireland’s inclusion within the zone might seem marginal. In light of the war however, the value to Ireland of this source of trade would have increased considerably, especially considering the fact that many of the commodities imported from the US such as wheat and petrol were exactly the ones that were in short supply. Eamon de Valera therefore pressed the Irish legation in Washington to use whatever means were available to reverse the decision, also believing it would represent the fullest possible recognition by the United States of Irish neutrality.⁴⁰

³⁶ Minutes of British-Irish trade talks, 1 May 1940 (UCDA, P150/2571).

³⁷ David Edgerton, *Britain’s war machine, weapons, resources and experts in the Second World War* (London, 2011), p. 162.

³⁸ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., p. 2.

³⁹ Brian Farrell, *Seán Lemass* (Dublin, 1991), p. 61.

⁴⁰ Joseph P. Walsh to John Leydon, 18 Nov. 1939 (NAI, DFA 227/100).

Figure 1.2 Map of the area into which US shipping was barred from sailing, known as the combat zone, 1939



Source: *New York Times*, 5 Nov. 1939

Even before the demarcation of the combat zone, Robert Brennan, head of the Irish legation in Washington, voiced his concern over the proposals emphasising Ireland's neutral status and arguing that most of Ireland's seaboard was removed from the centre of European hostilities.⁴¹ With total US trade to the larger neutrals inside the combat

⁴¹ Robert Brennan to Cordell Hull, 25 Oct. 1939 (NAI, DFA 227/100).

zone (Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden) amounting to more than \$410,000,000 in 1938, this was obviously a decision that was not taken lightly.⁴² The US State Department justified the move on the basis of attacks within the area on US shipping and the fear that this might jeopardise US neutrality. Germany was also happy with Ireland's inclusion fearing the transshipment of US munitions or other contraband through Ireland to Britain.⁴³ Surprisingly, Ireland was the only neutral to express official concern at its inclusion, and the Irish legation's representations received much publicity in the American press even making front page news on 13 November 1939 of Washington D.C.'s *Evening Star*. The legation made enough of an impression to have the request considered by the US Interdepartmental Neutrality Committee, but the committee 'reluctantly' came to the conclusion that Ireland could not be excluded.⁴⁴ The act was not repealed until November 1941, but this was of no consequence to Ireland's supplies position.⁴⁵

After the fall of France on 22 June 1940, Britain's position became increasingly desperate. The landscape of the war was completely changed. While the British Expeditionary Force escaped from France largely intact from a personnel point of view, it was forced to leave much of its equipment behind. Britain's great modern army had been defeated. The Royal Navy also suffered substantial losses of armoured ships during the evacuation. During the inter-war period, Britain had invested heavily in air power and air defence.⁴⁶ This helped the RAF to emerge victorious from the Battle of Britain, 10 July to 31 October 1940.⁴⁷ The Blitz though can be counted as another

⁴² *Palm Beach Post*, 16 Nov. 1939.

⁴³ William Warnock to Joseph P. Walsh, 14 Nov. 1939 (NAI, DFA 219/4).

⁴⁴ Note for the minister, 3 Apr. 1941 (NAI, NAI, DFA/227/100, pp 1-2).

⁴⁵ W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, *British war economy* (London, 1949), p. 258.

⁴⁶ M. Kirby and R. Capey, 'The air defence of Great Britain, 1920-1940: an operational research perspective' in *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, xlviii, no. 6 (1997), pp 560-2.

⁴⁷ George Clode, *The Battle of Britain: timeline* (2010), available at Military History Monthly, Articles, (<http://www.military-history.org/articles/the-battle-of-britain-timeline.htm>) (18 January 2014).

failure. From late 1940 to mid 1941, London and many other industrial centres and ports ‘were bombed with near impunity by the Germans’.⁴⁸ Night raids rendered Britain’s air defence system useless and at the same time German bombers were equipped with electronic navigation aids which enabled them to bomb their targets successfully.⁴⁹ Luftwaffe bombers dropped some 58,702 tons of bombs on Britain during 1940-41.⁵⁰ On the economic front, the Wehrmacht’s conquest of Western Europe isolated Britain from the European market and left the country dependent on long distance trade. German U-boats acted as ‘agents of economic warfare’ sinking millions of tons of British shipping which directly affected everyday life in Britain.⁵¹ 166 Allied and neutral ships were sunk, damaged or captured by German U-boats in 1939, this figure increased to 564 in 1940 and only dropped slightly to 500 in 1941.⁵² During the course of the war, British owners lost the equivalent of 1,500 Liberty-ships at a loss of hundreds of millions of pounds. The British Merchant Navy suffered heavy losses losing about the same number of British seamen as the RAF did members of bomber command. Proportionately it lost a higher number of personnel than any of the armed services.⁵³ The early setbacks conspired to dissipate the confidence Britain and her allies had exhibited prior to the war and during the ‘Phoney War’. All of this had a very real impact upon the nature of everyday life in Ireland during the Emergency.

⁴⁸ Edgerton, *Britain’s war machine*, p. 68.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ ‘Illustration 30. Asymmetric warfare: the tonnage of bombs dropped on German Europe compared with German bombing of the UK’ in Edgerton, *Britain’s war machine*.

⁵¹ Erin M. K. Weir, ‘German submarine blockade, overseas imports, and British military production in World War II’ in *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vi, no. 1 (2003), p. 2.

⁵² ‘Ship losses by month’, available at [uboat.net](http://www.uboat.net), front page, fighting the U-boats, ships hit by U-boats, (http://www.uboat.net/allies/merchants/losses_year.html) (19 January 2014).

⁵³ Edgerton, *Britain’s war machine*, p. 163.

Figure 1.3 Contemporary Irish school map of Europe (coloured in by a pupil), August 1941



Source: August 1941 (OLC, SJ/8/3, no. 1)

For German U-boats, the occupation of the Biscay ports eliminated the long journeys to and from bases which doubled the number of U-boats in operational areas.⁵⁴ From 31 October 1940 to 2 January 1941, 157 allied and neutral vessels totalling 682,338 tons were lost to enemy attack. Of this number, 114 ships (510,736 tons) were British.⁵⁵ ‘By February 1941 Britain was losing ships three times as fast as the shipyards could build them’ and in 1940 alone almost 6,000 British, African and Indian seamen were lost at sea.⁵⁶ In total, Britain lost approximately seven million dwt (deadweight tonnage), or thirty-six percent of its merchant fleet between June 1940 and December 1941, a figure which does not take into account losses of neutral or Allied shipping under British control.⁵⁷ In December 1940, Richard Mulcahy of Fine Gael noted:

⁵⁴ Hancock & Gowing, *British war economy*, p. 250.

⁵⁵ Weekly Résumé (62-70) of the naval, military and air situation, 1940-41 (TNA, CAB 66/13/5 – CAB 66/14/26).

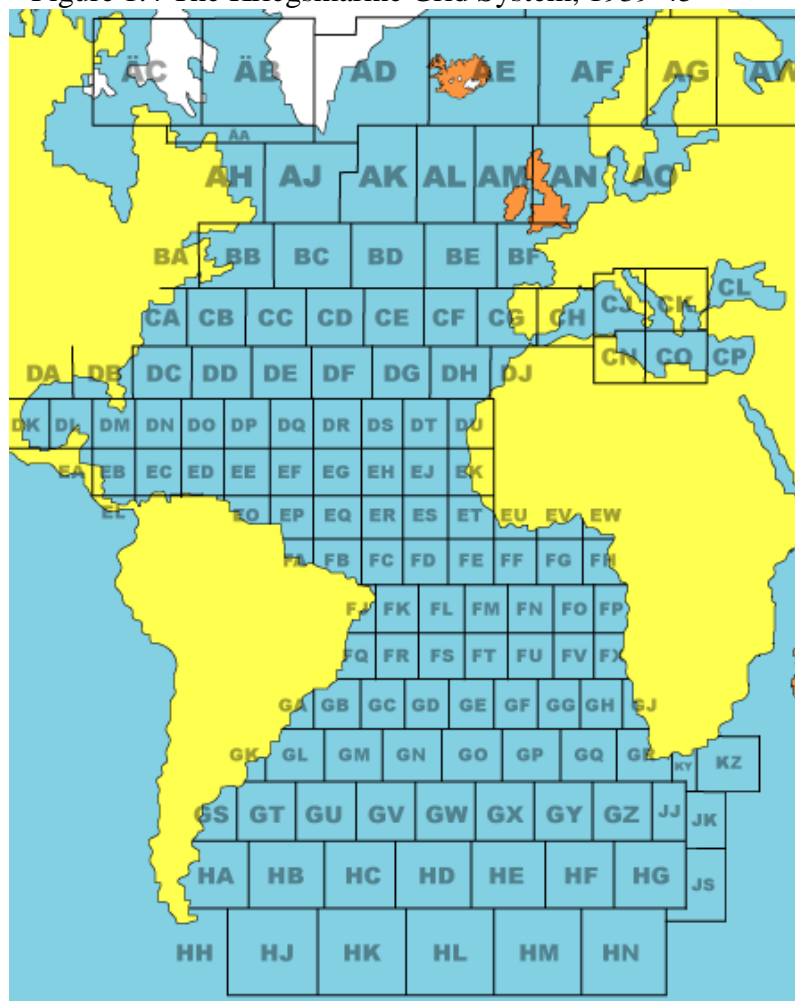
⁵⁶ Lizzie Collingham, *The taste of war, World War Two and the battle for food* (London, 2011), p. 103.

⁵⁷ Hancock & Gowing, *British war economy*, p. 250.

A large number of sinkings are taking place up and around Malin Head. This apparently is the main stream of traffic. The next largest is a widespread area about two hundred miles of the Mayo coast.⁵⁸

During the course of the war, 857 or twenty-five percent of all Allied and neutral ships that were sunk, damaged or captured (together defined as “hits”) by German submarines were done so in grid references AL, AM, BE and BF (see Figure 1.4).⁵⁹ 299 or approximately nine percent of all ‘hits’ occurred in grid reference AM.⁶⁰ Losses of the western and southern coasts of Ireland were heavier than in any other part of the world.

Figure 1.4 The Kriegsmarine Grid System, 1939-45



Source: ‘The grid system’, available at uboat.net, front page, the U-boats, the war in maps, (<http://uboat.net/maps/grid.html>) (20 January 2014)

⁵⁸ Clair Wills, *That neutral island, a history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 114.

⁵⁹ Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from: ‘Ships hit by U-boats in WWII’, available at uboat.net, front page, fighting the U-boats, ships hit by U-boats, (http://www.uboat.net/allies/merchants/losses_year.html) (19 January 2014).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

In December 1940, Churchill stated:

The decision for 1941 lies upon the seas.... It is... in shipping and in the power to transport across the oceans, particularly the Atlantic Ocean, that in 1941 the crunch of the whole war will be found.⁶¹

Churchill was quick to blame the Atlantic losses on ‘the fact that we cannot use the south and west coast of Ireland to refuel our flotillas and aircraft.’⁶² In doing so he catapulted the issue of the ports and Irish neutrality into the public and political consciousness and an intensive anti-neutrality and anti-Irish propaganda campaign commenced both in Britain and the US.

France’s capitulation left Britain reeling, the German Blitzkrieg there had been devastating and the country was overwhelmed by fears of invasion. The British government, military planners, and press looked nervously at Britain’s ‘backdoor’, Ireland. Neutral Ireland was considered to be a security threat to Britain. This was made clear to de Valera by Malcolm MacDonald, the former Dominions Secretary, over the course of several meetings they had during mid to late June 1940. MacDonald explained that the British government expected the poorly-trained and poorly-equipped Irish Army to be rapidly overrun following a German invasion with the result that Ireland could then be used as a launching pad to attack Britain.⁶³ It was in this context that Britain attempted to bring Ireland into the war on the side of the Allies. MacDonald argued that Hitler who had already shown little regard for the neutrality of countries such as Belgium would have little regard for Ireland’s neutrality. He implored de Valera to act decisively in allowing the Royal Navy to secure the ports and the Army to establish defensive positions at strategic locations throughout the country. De Valera argued that any such move in the context of partition would be divisive for a people

⁶¹ Hancock & Gowing, *British war economy*, p. 254.

⁶² Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 115-6.

⁶³ Malcolm MacDonald, ‘Note of conversation between Eamon de Valera and Malcolm MacDonald’, 23 June 1940, in Catriona Crowe, Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh, Eunan O’Halpin (eds), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, volume VI, 1939-1941* (Dublin, 2008), p. 253.

united behind neutrality and would lead to the resurgence of the IRA. He also pointed out that such an alteration of neutrality would invite aggression from Germany for which Ireland was poorly prepared. According to MacDonald, de Valera noted that:

Dublin was practically an undefended town; they had only a few anti-aircraft guns, there were not even any air raid shelters in the city and the people had not got gas masks.⁶⁴

Considering the destruction caused by Germany's bombing of Belfast in the spring of 1941, de Valera's fears were well founded.⁶⁵ Then, on 27 June 1940, MacDonald presented a most astonishing document to de Valera which is indicative of Britain's desperation at that moment in the war. Foremost among several proposals from the British government was that:

The United Kingdom would make a declaration forthwith accepting the principle of a United Ireland.⁶⁶

In previous meetings MacDonald had argued the point that the union would be best sealed by 'comradeship in arms' and co-operation on matters of joint concern would be a firm step in the direction of a united Ireland.⁶⁷ However de Valera was unconvinced by this vague offer and opted to reject the proposal.

It is true that Britain's wish to use the ports became a vital element in Anglo-Irish relations during the war, particularly so after the fall of France, and it was very much tied up in the wider issue of Irish neutrality. Bases in Ireland would have allowed Britain to project its forces farther out into the Atlantic in order to protect its convoys. Even before America's entry into the war, Robert Brennan, head of the Irish legation in Washington reported that the typical opinion of the 'man on the street' was that Britain

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 258.

⁶⁵ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ Joseph P. Walsh, Memorandum of talks between Eamon de Valera and Malcom MacDonald, 28 June 1940 (NAI, DFA/P13).

⁶⁷ MacDonald, 'Note of conversation between Eamon de Valera and Malcolm MacDonald', 17 June 1940, in *DIFP*, VI, 1939-1941, p. 238.

should have Ireland's ports.⁶⁸ There were those who felt the ports should be seized by force such as the Prime Minister of South Africa, Jan Smuts.⁶⁹ Seizing the ports would have been a relatively simple exercise, Britain's military, naval and air superiority would have ensured this. Though as Maffey latter pointed out:

We must remember, in assessing the disadvantages we shall incur from an Ireland split into violent factions, from the opening of many doors to sabotage and espionage and from a long coast line and a sky no longer held in friendly surveillance.⁷⁰

A British violation of Irish neutrality would have incited public opinion in Ireland against Britain. The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Viscount Cranborne, explained that it would 'not be very edifying' and that it would 'arouse a considerable opposition among Irish elements in the United States'.⁷¹ In Ireland it would turn the people and the government towards the IRA, and worse still might provide an invitation to Germany. 1916 illustrated how damaging unrest in Ireland could be while military operations in Ireland during 1920-21 had proved extremely difficult to conduct.⁷² If German forces were to move into Ireland with Irish support, dislodging them would have been more difficult. To prevent this, it was suggested that after capturing the ports a 'measure of control over the greater part of the country' would be required necessitating a commitment of about ten divisions.⁷³

Cranborne and Maffey appreciated the value of a neutral Ireland. Intervention in Ireland would have drained resources, holding Ireland even more so. On the other hand, in neutral Ireland the IRA was under control. The Irish intelligence service, G2, exchanged information with their British counterparts. There was a confidential working relationship between the British and Irish military commands which provided

⁶⁸ Robert Brennan to Joseph P. Walshe, 18 Dec. 1940 (NAI, DFA/P2).

⁶⁹ Girvin, *The Emergency*, p. 107.

⁷⁰ Sir John Maffey, Memorandum on Irish policy, 2 Feb. 1942 (TNA, CAB/66/21/37, p. 2).

⁷¹ Viscount Cranborne, Relations with Éire, 6 Dec. 1940 (TNA, CAB/16/14/2, p. 13).

⁷² Girvin, *The Emergency*, p. 149.

⁷³ War Cabinet Minutes, 10 Dec. 1940 (TNA, CAB/65/10/21, p. 131).

joint plans to meet a German attack upon Ireland. The Irish coast watching service notified the British of sightings of German aircraft and submarines. Most importantly, neutral Ireland existed as a source of manpower for both Britain's labour and armed forces.⁷⁴ It was widely accepted, even by Churchill, that to obtain Ireland's ports, the use of force should be a last resort.⁷⁵ Having failed to persuade Ireland to end neutrality and enter the war on the side of the Allies, the British War Cabinet altered its approach. It was proposed that Britain would subsidise Irish fat cattle exports to the tune of £500,000 annually in return for transshipment and storage facilities in Ireland. Tempting though this proposal may have been, on 24 August 1940 the Irish government rejected it not wishing to incur German reprisals.⁷⁶ The belief in Ireland that Irish agricultural produce and the Irish market was indispensable to Britain reinforced the immovable position of the Irish negotiators.

In light of Ireland's steadfast determination not to allow Britain access to the ports (for military or even transshipment purposes), the British government's attitude to Ireland hardened. On 22 November 1940 Viscount Cranborne forwarded a memorandum to Churchill which had been sent to the Dominions Office by Maffey. According to Cranborne it was:

Written by a man who Maffey describes as a hundred percent Irishman who was a rebel and who certainly believes what he says.⁷⁷

Crucially, this man suggested of Ireland that:

No country in the world will react more readily to economic pressure.⁷⁸

This unidentified person argued that if Britain took a 'firm line' with Ireland by restricting trade, massive unemployment would result which would alienate de Valera's

⁷⁴ Maffey, Memorandum on Irish policy, 2 Feb. 1942, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Girvin, *The Emergency*, p. 173.

⁷⁶ Viscount Cranborne, Trade relations with Éire, 20 Nov. 1940 (TNA, CAB/67/8/104, p. 304).

⁷⁷ Viscount Cranborne, Memorandum to Winston Churchill, 22 Nov. 1940 (TNA, CAB/16/14/2, p. 9).

⁷⁸ Memorandum, n.d. (suspected Nov. 1940), (TNA, CAB/16/14/2, p. 10).

support base and ruin his reputation.⁷⁹ The next day Churchill instructed the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton to illustrate the effect upon Britain of cutting off Irish supplies of food 'for say six months.'⁸⁰ Responding three days later on the 26 November 1940, Woolton indicated that reduced trade with Ireland would free up shipping space and reduce port congestion in Liverpool. While Woolton conceded that such a course would have only a slight impact upon the British meat ration, he concluded:

I believe that such a step would profoundly disturb Irish agriculture during the next three months as to render negotiations possible... on our terms.⁸¹

According to Cranborne, the Irish people were

Living in a world of illusion. They consider that a prosperous Éire is indispensable to Britain. They think that their products are essential to our existence, and that we are bound, in our own interest, to protect their trade, to keep them fat.⁸²

The Irish government's pursuit of favourable terms of trade for Irish agriculture while resolutely refusing to budge on Irish neutrality or the ports is evidence of this.

Cranborne suggested that:

Quietly, unostentatiously, without any public declaration of policy, we should employ every method within our power to keep her lean.⁸³

Through such a policy Cranborne argued that Ireland could be brought to her knees within a matter of months.⁸⁴

Churchill was particularly vexed when on 3 December 1940 the Irish government banned all warships from entering Irish ports, a move which in reality was aimed solely at the British. Lambasting this he stated:

Nine-tenths of her imports and exports are carried in British-controlled ships under protection of British warships and at considerable sacrifice and inconvenience to ourselves.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Winston Churchill, Memorandum to Lord Woolton, 23 Nov. 1940 (TNA, CAB/16/14/2, p. 10).

⁸¹ Lord Woolton, Memorandum to Winston Churchill, 26 Nov. 1940 (TNA, CAB/16/14/2, p. 11).

⁸² Viscount Cranborne, Memorandum to the War Cabinet, 3 Dec. 1940 (TNA, CAB/16/14/2, p. 12).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

Indeed some forty British-controlled ships of 8,000 tons each were then engaged exclusively in shipping bulk cargoes to Ireland.⁸⁶ In addition, much of Ireland's trade passed through British ports which added to congestion in those ports. Writing to US President Roosevelt on 13 December 1941, Churchill indicated that due to her own troubles that Britain would be unable to carry on favourable trade with Ireland. Careful not to portray this shift in relations as a policy of economic sanctions, he requested Roosevelt's opinion on the matter.⁸⁷ On 2 January 1941, the War Cabinet agreed to impose what Cranborne had earlier described as a set of 'silent sanctions' upon Ireland.⁸⁸ Exports to Ireland of food, animal feeding-stuffs, fertilisers, agricultural and other machinery, spare parts, iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, chemicals, electrical goods, and paper and cardboard would henceforth be subject to licences.⁸⁹ However, these licences were to be withheld by the departments concerned. Exports of food were not to be cut off all at once; rather they were to be subject to a policy of 'gradual diminution.'⁹⁰ Although a calculated policy, it was not to be revealed as such. Instead, the press was to be informed that the government viewed the measures with regret and that they were taken because the 'pressure on our own shipping space was so severe.'⁹¹ It was also decided that Britain would cease to charter ships to Ireland; however, Ireland would be made free to charter neutral shipping. At the same time, the Norwegians and Greeks were informed that they should not charter ships except to the Allies or 'co-operators.'⁹² Thus Ireland was effectively barred from chartering any ships. Again this was to be justified on the grounds of Britain's own shipping difficulties with particular

⁸⁵ Winston Churchill, Payments to Éire, 27 Dec. 1940 (TNA, CAB, 66/14/23, p. 132).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the war years* (New York, 1975), pp 80-1.

⁸⁸ Cranborne, Memorandum, 3 Dec. 1940, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Kingsley Wood, Éire, 30 Dec. 1940 (TNA, CAB/66/14/23, p. 131).

⁹⁰ War Cabinet Minutes, 2 Jan. 1941 (TNA, CAB/65/17/1, p. 5).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Kingsley Wood, Payments to Éire, 6 Dec. 1940 (TNA, CAB/66/14/15, p. 35).

reference to ‘the increasing toll on shipping by reason of enemy action.’⁹³ This was a win-win situation for Britain, for as Churchill acknowledged:

Whether or not economic pressure leads to naval and air bases or induces in Eire a greater spirit of co-operation we still stand to gain. In depriving Eire of shipping, we not only increase our own carrying capacity, but relieve our western ports of the transshipment of Éire cargoes. Moreover, less of our convoy effort will be wasted on unproductive shipping.⁹⁴

Britain’s shipping losses have often been singled out as motivation for its government’s hardening attitude towards Ireland. For example, Dwyer cites Churchill’s correspondence with Roosevelt of 8 December 1940 in which the Prime Minister depicted the Royal Navy as being stretched to its limit due to their lack of bases in Ireland.⁹⁵ This was merely a smokescreen, an excuse to justify the impending restriction on trade to Ireland. The War Cabinet had repeatedly demonstrated its sensitivities to Irish opinion in the US.⁹⁶ Mounting shipping losses were also highlighted in the British and American press which soured public sentiment towards Ireland.⁹⁷ According to Clair Wills:

The Atlantic battle had a profound effect on Britain’s war capabilities, and also on Britain’s attitude to Ireland during the war.⁹⁸

While the second part of this statement is sound, the first part is questionable. In fact recent research has demonstrated that the British economy performed very well during the war. This would suggest that the Battle of the Atlantic did not have the crippling effect upon Britain as is often suggested. Weir shows that in spite of falling imports both domestic and military production as well as calorie consumption increased during the war. Weir states:

⁹³ Cranborne, Memorandum, 3 Dec. 1940, p. 13.

⁹⁴ Churchill, Payments, 27 Dec. 1940, p. 133.

⁹⁵ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Behind the green curtain, Ireland’s phoney neutrality during World War II* (Dublin, 2009), p. 125.

⁹⁶ Cranborne, Relations with Éire, 6 Dec. 1940, p. 13.

⁹⁷ Girvin, *The Emergency*, p. 171; Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 132.

⁹⁸ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 132.

The German submarine blockade was responsible for only a small fraction of the already small impact of lost imports on British war production.⁹⁹

David Edgerton explains:

Although there were great Allied losses at sea... the British Isles were never seriously under siege by U-boats; it is quite inappropriate to think of Britain as having been blockaded, even though this is the impression that could be got from some of the literature.¹⁰⁰

While the British-flagged and British-owned fleet never recovered from the losses sustained during the war, the tonnage controlled by the British actually increased. 'In the case of tankers British-controlled DWT increased from five million in late 1939 to no less than 6.8 million by September 1941.'¹⁰¹ Replacements were on hand from the neutrals and the US. As illustrated by Weir and others, Britain's shipping performance was limited by factors other than the effects of U-boats on merchant shipping.

Of crucial importance to the way Britain approached the war was the air of uncertainty, dashed confidence and lost initiative that consumed both military and domestic planning following the fall of France.

The estimates of Britain's shipping prospects were peculiarly susceptible to the uncertainties that pervaded life in the summer and autumn of 1940. The enemy powers held the initiative. Would they concentrate their attacks against shipping? Where and in what numbers would U-boats, E-boats, aircraft and surface raiders attack? Where would mines be sown? How heavy and prolonged would the strain on the Royal Navy be? Would the east coast ports be immobilised and the west coast ports bombed? What new military demands for shipping would arise? What new help in ships and crews would come from the countries overrun by the Germans?¹⁰²

These uncertainties made it extremely tricky to determine even roughly the quantity of shipping at Britain's disposal, or its likely performance. Italy's entry into the war on 10 June 1940 complicated matters further, as it effectively closed the Mediterranean to Allied vessels. With the extension of the conflict to North Africa, men and material

⁹⁹ Weir, 'German submarine blockade', p. 36.

¹⁰⁰ Edgerton, *Britain's war machine*, p. 158.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁰² Hancock & Gowing, *British war economy*, p. 248.

destined for this theatre had to make the 20,000 kilometre journey around the Cape of Good Hope and up the Red Sea. Refrigerated ships which normally carried frozen meat and dairy products were among the fastest merchant vessels and were thus withdrawn from shipping civilian cargoes and converted into troop carriers in order to quickly ferry troops to their destinations.¹⁰³ Throughout the war British planners consistently overestimated the necessary level of stocks Britain required.¹⁰⁴ All of this increased competition for tonnage between civilian and military planners and in this context it is unsurprising that Britain became unwilling to facilitate Irish trade as she had done in normal times.

Convoying also reduced the performance of British shipping. During the First World War the British realised that losses were reduced when ships sailed in convoy. As a result the British Admiralty immediately introduced convoying upon the outbreak of the Second World War, but this strategy had its drawbacks. Convoys had to travel at the speed of the slowest ship in the group and ships were often inconveniently re-routed in order to join a convoy. Insufficiency of escorts made evasive routing a principle means of defence which also kept ships longer at sea.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Collingham, *The taste of war*, pp 105-6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Edgerton, *Britain's war machine*, p. 165.

Figure 1.5 A British convoy under the protection of Royal Air Force coastal command, 1943



Source: 1943 (IWM, Air Ministry Second World War Official Collection, C 2644)

The global nature of the conflict stretched the British Navy. It was necessary to keep sufficient forces in the home waters for defence against invasion, but British naval vessels were required all over the world in order to defend the empire. This meant that convoys became fewer and larger in order to economise on escorts, but in consequence ships had to travel longer distances to and wait for longer periods at convoy assembly points.

The most significant factor which inhibited shipping performance was congestion in Britain's ports. The ports on Britain's eastern and southern seaboard were closed, proximity to German naval and air bases made them susceptible to attack. Their closure however placed immense pressure on the ports on the western seaboard such as those on the Mersey and Clyde rivers. The diversion meant that every west coast port began to receive cargoes in much higher quantities than was normal. The discharge of unfamiliar cargoes tried port facilities; convoys arriving in bunches didn't

help matters either, and on top of all of this the western ports were subject to heavy bombing.

Figure 1.6 Aerial view of a portion of Liverpool's waterfront showing extensive damage to the commercial area, 1940-45



Source: Aerial Reconnaissance view of Liverpool, Great Britain, n.d. (IWM, Air Ministry Second World War Official Collection, C 5428)

The quays became blocked where imports lay about due to lack of storage and transport. Diversion to the western ports completely dislocated the normal channels of distribution. Prior to the war less than twelve percent of Liverpool's imports were distributed by rail, this increased to over forty percent by 1944. Normally more than half Britain's meat imports were shipped to London which possessed the bulk of cold storage accommodation. However refrigerated vans now had to be employed to transport the meat to London, and what's more, the storage facilities in London were designed to be fed from the waterfront.¹⁰⁶ Transport and storage problems prevented ships discharging their cargoes which lengthened turnaround times. Large blocks of tonnage were also

¹⁰⁶ Hancock & Gowing, *British war economy*, p. 253.

immobilised under repair as a result of enemy action which further congested the ports.¹⁰⁷

The shipping problems in Britain meant the British government sought Ireland's ports not only with defence in mind, but with an eye to transshipment facilities to relieve congestion in its own ports. During one discussion in late 1940 on a proposed trade agreement, the Department of Foreign Affairs was informed that there could be no agreement unless there was transshipment.¹⁰⁸ The comments made at a dinner on 22 April 1941 held in the American legation and attended by several Irish ministers including Lemass, demonstrates how important Irish transshipment facilities were considered to be. One Thomas Campbell, an American expert on wheat and transport and friend of President Roosevelt claimed:

Transportation was the greatest problem before Great Britain.

Going on to add that he would advise Roosevelt that:

The best way to bring stuff to England was to land it at the south-western tip of Ireland. This could be done without infringing Ireland's neutrality.¹⁰⁹

This the Department of External Affairs argued that this was unacceptable to Ireland as it was thought it would have a negative impact upon Ireland's relationship with Germany and thus lead to the end of neutrality.¹¹⁰ However, Sweden – another European country which remained neutral throughout the war – on several occasions allowed Germany to move war materials and men across its territory, an act which was not considered a breach of neutrality.¹¹¹

Britain's shipping problems extended beyond the losses caused by enemy action. With ships spending longer at sea, and ships spending longer at port, there was an

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁰⁸ Fredrick H. Boland to H. C. Brady, 19 Sept. 1940 (NAI, DFA/P25).

¹⁰⁹ Joseph P. Walsh, Memorandum on a dinner for Mr Thomas Campbell, American wheat expert, 22 Apr. 1941 (NAI, DFA/A2).

¹¹⁰ Girvin, *The Emergency*, p. 165.

¹¹¹ Girvin, *The Emergency*, p. 322.

alarming decline in shipping performance. Hancock and Gowing, authors of *British war economy* (published in 1949) stated:

The shipping positions had been foremost among the anxieties that had beset the British Government in the months between Dunkirk and Pearl Harbour.

It was crucial for Britain to adequately allocate shipping space between military and civilian requirements while at the same time endeavouring to make the most economical use of it. This was a problem for Ireland, and one that would unravel from mid 1940 onwards. Even before the fall of France, Joseph Walsh informed de Valera that the British were less keen to buy food than any other commodity.¹¹² Britain concentrated on importing dense foods; bulky cattle and other expensive Irish agricultural produce were simply not high on the list of priorities for Britain's Ministry of Food.¹¹³ A high percentage of Ireland's imports were essential supplies which could not be produced domestically. For the most part these goods were first imported to Britain, and then re-exported to Ireland. However re-exporting imports was not an economical use of shipping space and so it was reduced to a 'negligible fraction of total imports during World War II.'¹¹⁴ Importing from the nearest source was not always possible; Britain was forced to take imports from destinations to which her ships carried military supplies. 'Economies that looked valuable in terms of distance often did not [always] fit conveniently into the existing pattern of ship-routing.'¹¹⁵

Political and strategic considerations dominated Britain's decision to turn the economic screw on Ireland, yet it is also clear that practical reasons figured into this decision making process. In a letter which predated Britain's decision to pursue the policy 'silent sanctions', Fredrick Boland, Assistant Secretary to the Department of Foreign Affairs demonstrated that he understood that Britain's reduced trade with

¹¹² Walsh to de Valera, 1 May 1940.

¹¹³ Weir, 'German submarine blockade', p. 29.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Hancock & Gowing, *British war economy*, p. 419.

Ireland was out of necessity for Britain. Writing on 19 September 1940 to H. C. Brady, Private Secretary to the Minister of Defence, he explained:

The British have had already to reduce their purchases of cattle and sheep from this country, owing to the interruption of transport, distribution, and other facilities. That a similar measure has been imposed on their own producers indicates that the British action is the result of sheer physical necessity.¹¹⁶

Similarly, in October 1940 John Leydon, Secretary of the Department of Supplies was informed by a E. W. Ravenshear of the British Mines Department that:

The partial suspension of house coal shipments to Éire is due solely to internal transport difficulties in Great Britain.¹¹⁷

Both these incidents occurred while Britain remained on cordial terms with Ireland. In January 1941, John Dulanty, the Irish High Commissioner in London in a letter to Joseph Walsh illustrated some of the difficulties being faced by the governments in Britain's dominions. According to Dulanty, South Africa had been promised 30,000 tons of shipping for its fruit trade, but it received just 10,000. Britain had promised to take 140,000 tons of meat from New Zealand each year, but they took just a third of this in 1940 while their petrol ration was below that of Britain. Likewise, fifteen ships normally engaged in trade between Australia and Britain were withdrawn 'with the result that their canned food and their wine industries had been 'completely torpedoed'.¹¹⁸ At the same time Dulanty noted that the meat ration in Britain was totally inadequate even when available. The Dominion's troubles further masked Britain's true intention towards Ireland, but that they existed illustrates that the Allie's trade infrastructure was indeed under pressure. The Bengal famine in which 3,000,000 Indians died is another case in point; the British government were hostile to Indian

¹¹⁶ Boland to Brady, 19 Sept. 1940.

¹¹⁷ E. W. Ravenshear to John Leydon, 28 Sept. 1940 (NAI, DFA/P23/1).

¹¹⁸ John W. Dulanty to Joseph P. Walsh, 30 Jan. 1941 (NAI, DFA/P12/14/1).

requests for aid knowing that it would consume shipping space meant for the war effort and the British home front.¹¹⁹

Irish Shipping Limited

In Ireland, the deteriorating supplies position forced the government to address the issue of shipping and so on 21 March 1941 Irish Shipping Limited, a centrally controlled company, was founded.¹²⁰ The primary goal of the company was to obtain cargo vessels capable of making deep-sea voyages.¹²¹ Yet, as a result of the war, there was a massive global increase in the ‘demand for ships regardless of their condition, while speculation led to inflation of prices’.¹²² In fact 167 ships from various sources were inspected by the company with a view to purchase but just fifteen vessels of various sorts totalling 46,255 tons were actually obtained.¹²³ Due to market pressures it simply was a case of having to take whatever could be got and so the condition and quality of these ships often left much to be desired. Once acquired it was far from plain sailing for the vessels and crews of Irish Shipping. The poor quality ships were punished by the harsh North Atlantic weather; malfunctions were common and they constantly needed repair. This along with the difficulties finding steel and spare parts necessary for maintenance work lengthened turnaround times.¹²⁴ In April 1941, press reports on a strike by Dublin dockers in solidarity with the dismissed crew of the *Irish Elm* were censored on the request of the Department of Supplies. The Department felt it was not in the public interest’ to allow publicity to claims about the unseaworthiness of

¹¹⁹ Leo Amery, Shipment of food grains to India, 21 Apr. 1944 (TNA, CAB/66/49/16, pp 1-2).

¹²⁰ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., p. 5.

¹²¹ Sean McDonagh, ‘Irish Shipping Limited 1939-45’ (MA thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2009), p. 9.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²³ Harry Spong, *Irish Shipping Ltd., 1941-82*, World Ship Society (n. p., 1982), p. 8; Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., pp 6-7.

¹²⁴ Forde, *The long watch*, p. 61.

Irish ships.’¹²⁵ The vessels also faced the threat of belligerent activity. They were strafed by machine gun fire from belligerent aircraft and two vessels, the *Irish Pine* and the *Irish Oak* were torpedoed and sunk. In total 138 lives were lost aboard the company’s ships during the course of the Emergency.¹²⁶ Initially, Irish ships had sailed in Allied convoys but in the process they came under attack. So in early 1942 it was decided that Irish ships would be better off making their own way. Unlike belligerent merchant ships, Irish Shipping vessels sailed brightly lit at night and were painted with highly visible neutrality insignia, the most prominent being the words EIRE painted in bold white lettering and the tricolour.

Figure 1.7 The *Irish Pine* (5,621 tons) with its Irish neutrality insignia clearly displayed, 1941-2



Source: Frank Forde, *The long watch, the history of the Irish Mercantile Marine in World War Two*, (Dublin, 1981). p. 52

In an attempt to ensure their safe passage, neutral vessels were allocated particular shipping lanes through otherwise dangerous waters. These lanes, however, were a far cry from the most direct routes and so journey times were lengthened which further reduced the productivity of the fleet.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945, neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996), p. 225.

¹²⁶ Evans, ‘A semi-state archipelago without ships’, p. 13.

¹²⁷ Padhraic Ó Confhaola, ‘The Naval Forces of the Irish State, 1922-1977’ (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2009), p. 77.

Irish Shipping Ltd was a vital asset to neutral Ireland. A section of the Department of Supplies was dedicated to its management as it was imperative to make the best possible use of the small fleet. Annual inter-departmental conferences were held each September (once information was available as to harvest prospects) in order to consider the issue of shipping in relation to the supplies position. Importers applied to the Department of Supplies for shipping space and applications were considered on the merit of a priority list drawn up at the annual conference.¹²⁸ By April 1941 the wheat position had become so acute that its importation took precedence over all other supplies. By 9 July 1941 however, Irish Shipping had secured nine ships for the fleet, a greater number than expected, and so on this date the priorities list was re-evaluated.¹²⁹ Ministers were encouraged to refrain from making any public statements about the provision of shipping space for any particular commodity as such statements would inevitably give rise to an undue optimism on the part of the public. The censors were also asked to withhold reports on the arrival of cargoes.¹³⁰ While the Irish government sought to make the best use of its plucky little fleet, the Allies aimed to keep it down. From August 1940, it was required that merchant vessels possess warrants to pass through Allied waters and to enter Allied ports. These controls were introduced to ensure that any shipping not under Allied control would be restrained from engaging in trade detrimental to the war effort. Warrants were granted to Irish ships on the Irish register at the time the system was introduced.

Thereafter warrants were procured for ships which Irish Shipping Ltd. wished to acquire, only with the utmost difficulty and much concession.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., pp 8-9.

¹²⁹ Memorandum, transport of essential commodities by Irish Shipping Company: position regarding allocation of shipping space, 9 July 1941 (NAI, TAOIS/S 12574 A, p. 1).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³¹ Report on difficulties encountered on outbreak of war, n.d., p. 4.

In September 1941 it was found that the Ministry of Shipping was refusing outright to grant warrants for any vessels Irish Shipping wished to purchase such as Norwegian, Italian and German ships tied up in Mediterranean ports. However, the Portuguese were granted warrants for a number of ships in similar circumstances.¹³²

The Department of Supplies

On 1 September 1939 German forces crossed the Polish border. Two days later on 3 September both Britain and France, allies of Poland, declared war on Germany plunging the European continent into war. Back in Ireland, two days previously both the Dáil and Seanad were summoned by telegram to an emergency meeting on 2 September.¹³³ The next day Eamon De Valera declared in the Dáil that:

Arising out of the armed conflict now taking place in Europe, a national emergency exists affecting the vital interests of the State.¹³⁴

As a result of this declaration, the constitution was amended to provide that ‘time of war’ included war in which Ireland was not actually a belligerent.¹³⁵ This recognised that a regional war would affect the vital interests of the state. On the following day, Sunday 3 September 1939, the Emergency Powers Act was passed. First drafted in September 1938 and entitled ‘The Defence of the State (Emergency Powers) Act’, it was enacted by the government in order to:

Make provision for securing the public safety and the preservation of the state in time of war and, in particular, to make provision for the maintenance of public order and for the provision and control of supplies and services essential to the life of the community.¹³⁶

The act was wide in scope and granted the government dictatorial like powers that were unprecedented in the history of the Irish state. The government was empowered to make

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 45.

¹³⁴ DD, Mr de Valera, 2 Sept. 1939, Vol. 77, No. 1, Col. 19.

¹³⁵ Ibid., Col. 5.

¹³⁶ Draft heads of legislation, 20 Sept. 1938 (NAI, TAOIS/S 10834, p. 1); Emergency Powers Act, 1939 (1939 no. 28/1939) (3 Sept. 1939).

an emergency order when ever and so often as it saw fit. Considered necessary ‘for securing the public safety... [and] for the preservation of the state’, it was argued that the wide scope was needed as it was ‘impossible to foresee all the circumstances that may arise... during the progress of a European war.’¹³⁷ The act provided for the ‘control, regulation, restriction, or prohibition of the import or of the export of particular kinds or classes of goods.’¹³⁸ It granted powers to control and regulate land, currency, shipping, aircraft, travel, and the courts. It enabled censorship and empowered the authorities to search, arrest, and detain without warrant. The Emergency Powers Act remained in force until 2 September 1946.¹³⁹

To meet the problems created by the war, the government hurriedly assembled a cabinet emergency committee to streamline decision making.¹⁴⁰ Two new ministries were established; one to deal with issues concerning defence and the other with supplies. Frank Aiken was given charge of the newly created Department of the Co-ordination of Defensive Measures.¹⁴¹ The Emergency Supplies Branch, originally a subsection of the Department of Industry and Commerce was ‘upgraded to a department of state.’¹⁴² Seán Lemass was moved from his post as Minister for the Department of Industry and Commerce and was appointed Minister for Supplies. Created on 8 September 1939 under the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 1939, the department’s remit was wide ranging. It was made responsible for the regulation, control, maintenance, and provision of supplies and services considered essential to the life of the community.¹⁴³ The department was ‘empowered to control the prices, import and export

¹³⁷ EPA, 1939; DD, Mr Lemass, 2 Sept. 1939, Vol. 77, No. 1, Col. 20.

¹³⁸ EPA, 1939.

¹³⁹ Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish women, an oral history* (Dublin, 2007), p. 145.

¹⁴⁰ Mary E. Daly, *The buffer state, historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997), p. 249.

¹⁴¹ Government minutes, re-allocation of ministerial posts, 8 Sept. 1939 (NAI, TAOIS/G3/3, S.10711).

¹⁴² Evans, *Sean Lemass*, p. 113.

¹⁴³ Ministers and Secretaries Amendment Act, 1939 (1939 no. 36/1939) (8 Sept. 1939).

of all commodities' and was permitted to dictate the 'methods of treatment, keeping, storage, movement, distribution, sale, purchase, use and consumption of all goods.'¹⁴⁴

Lemass recognised that:

The most immediate difficulty that will arise for this country is that of maintaining supplies and it is evident that some of these difficulties will be incapable of being overcome... It will be the responsibility of the Government to try to minimise that effect of a European war upon our people, but it will not be possible to avoid it altogether.¹⁴⁵

At this point however Lemass deemed it unnecessary to introduce a rationing system arguing:

It is impossible to be definite on that matter because no one can foresee the way a European war will develop, or the extent to which it will interfere with the normal communications, or with the normal supplies of the country. We have only had experience of one European war, and inevitably our minds tend to conceive the conduct of this war as following closely upon the conduct of the last war. That may prove to be an entirely fallacious assumption.¹⁴⁶

In spite of Lemass' declaration, the government allowed its decision making process to be informed by historical precedent. The high opinion it held of the importance of Irish agricultural produce to Britain in a time of war allowed it to take a complacent attitude towards supplies. It was thought that Irish agricultural produce could be used as a bargaining chip in trade discussion with Britain, but this assumption proved to be false. The inextricably linked issue of shipping, another matter which came under the remit of Lemass was treated with the same degree of complacency. This complacency was in part engendered by the wide availability of neutral shipping for charter during the early months of the war. Particularly damaging to the efforts of the Emergency Supplies Branch to encourage the country's manufactures and importers of essential goods to establish reserve stocks was Lemass' refusal to offer them securities. He simply did not want to offer such incentives to the very businesses he had previously helped to nurture

¹⁴⁴ Evans, *Sean Lemass*, p. 113.

¹⁴⁵ DD, Mr Lemass, 2 Sept. 1939, Vol. 77, No. 1, Cols 21-2.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Col. 23.

feeling that it was a matter of ‘patriotic duty’.¹⁴⁷ As demonstrated here and elsewhere, this way of thinking predominated through the pre-war years, into the period of the war known as the ‘Phoney War’ and right into the latter months of 1940.¹⁴⁸ This miscalculation aside, the Department of Supplies would remain in existence until the 1 August 1945 when it was abolished and its functions transferred to the Department of Industry and Commerce with Lemass becoming minister for the said department.¹⁴⁹

Amid complaints of profiteering, on 7 September 1939, the day prior to the establishment of the Department of Supplies, the Emergency Powers (Control of Prices) (No. 1) Order was passed.¹⁵⁰ This was in effect a stand-still order which froze the price at which certain commodities could be sold by manufacturers, producers, and wholesalers or retailers by limiting the maximum retail price of the commodity to that of the 26 August 1939.¹⁵¹ The commodities to which the order applied to were regarded as being essential goods, those that were in everyday use.¹⁵² Introduced as a means to prevent rapid inflation, the original order would be amended many times throughout the Emergency and subsequent post-war years as it became necessary to bring additional items under control and to adjust the price of items already under control. Responsibility for the administration of the price control machinery along with the power to pass prices orders was vested in the Minister for Supplies, Seán Lemass.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Evans, *Sean Lemass*, p. 110.

¹⁴⁸ Daly, *The first department*, p. 215.

¹⁴⁹ Minister For Supplies (Transfer of Functions) Act (1945 no. 21/1945) (11 July. 1945); *Irish Times*, 30 July 1945.

¹⁵⁰ *Irish Independent*, 7 Sept. 1939.

¹⁵¹ *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, xiv, no. 3 (1939), p. 162.

¹⁵² The controlled commodities were tea, coffee, coco, sugar, butter, margarine, bacon, ham and other pig products, fresh meat, fresh fish, cured fish – unpacked, fresh pork, sausages and black and white puddings, lard, flour and other cereal products for human consumption, bread, fresh milk, cheese, patent and proprietary foods for infants, jams, packed, tinned and bottled foodstuffs, biscuits, ale, beer, porter, stout, wines and spirits and cider, oil-cakes and meals, maize and maize products, bran, pollard and other feeding stuffs, coal and coke, tobacco and cigarettes, hardware and ironmongery for household use, paraffin oil, candles, soap, leather, footwear of all descriptions, personal clothing and wearing apparel, see: *Irish Times*, 8 Sept. 1939.

¹⁵³ Department of Industry and Commerce memorandum on price control during the Emergency, Apr. 1947 (NAI, DFA/316/107, p. 1).

Price control machinery in the form of the Prices Commission had been in existence in Ireland since 1932, a product of the Anglo-Irish Trade War. The former Prices Commission would become the nucleus of the Prices Division of the Department of Supplies.¹⁵⁴ The stage was soon reached when all commodities were exempted from the original order, and were made subject to the control of specific orders which regulated the price of the commodity on an individual basis. The plethora of prices orders were confusing to follow for consumer and trader alike, so a second all-encompassing stand-still order was introduced in June 1944.¹⁵⁵ As regards enforcement, the government first and foremost relied on the public to report infringements of the prices orders. Though, under-counter dealings must have been fuelled by the fact that it was not made an offence to purchase goods in excess of the maximum retail price. In addition, a corps of sixty plain clothes inspectors operated throughout the country while the Garda Síochána were also tasked with reporting violations.¹⁵⁶ Although no substitute for a coherent rationing framework, it was a clear effort to ensure equitable distribution.

Ireland's historic, political, and economic relationship with Britain conditioned the nature of the government's preparations for the coming of the Second World War. Anglo-Irish relations consumed the government during the pre-war years while delusions concerning the perceived value of Irish agriculture to Britain (informed by historical precedent) lulled Ireland's economic planners into a false sense of security which was ultimately to the country's detriment. Indeed the story of Ireland's Emergency can be viewed as a series of miscalculations. It was widely assumed that the war would be a sharp one in which the Allies would not be seriously threatened. The fall of France however, and its knock-on-effects, coupled with the unexpected length of the conflict seriously wrong-footed Ireland's economic planners. The war showed how

¹⁵⁴ War-time Price Control in Eire, n.d. (NAI, DFA/241/287).

¹⁵⁵ INDC memo on price control, Apr. 1947, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Memorandum on increased cost of living and prices, 1943 (NAI, DFA/241/287, p. 4).

Britain's shipping problems were of consequence to Ireland, a reality which was brought home to the Irish people by Britain's policy of 'silent sanctions'. While diplomatic motives were undoubtedly the cornerstone of this policy, it is also clear that the British government was motivated by practical considerations. Ireland's supplies position can be seen as being tied to the Allies' fortunes during the Second World War and thus very much a part of the international context. Through the use of the allegory of Plato's Cave, F.S.L. Lyons created the impression that Ireland and its population were largely unaffected by the Second World War and as a result the social history of the period has been largely neglected. Yet the shortages experienced in Ireland were an everyday expression of the country's position within a war torn world. In spite of neutrality, Ireland was massively dependant on British trade and was totally affected by the war that waged around her. Neutrality may have spared Ireland from the worst horrors of war, but as will be shown in the following chapters, the shortages experienced fostered many social ills which in turn demanded a response.

Chapter II

Shortages and rationing in Ireland, 1939-45

We always seem to be late – we were late with coal and tea – and we are not keeping ahead of things.

Mr Jesop, Chairman of the Dublin Chambers of Commerce, *Irish Times*, 26 Feb. 1941.

In the days immediately following the start of the Second World War, the Irish government, anticipating economic dislocation on a global scale, created the Department of Supplies. It also appointed the Minister for Supplies, Seán Lemass, and a scheme of price control was put into effect. These initiatives were taken to maintain ‘supplies and services essential to the life of the community’.¹ This however, proved to be just the tip of the iceberg. As the Emergency progressed, Ireland’s supplies position grew worse, especially after the fall of France on 22 June 1940. It then became necessary to institute additional controls (including a rationing framework) to meet the supplies crisis as even basic essentials – food, clothing and fuel – became scarce. This chapter will explore the most important of these controls and will consider the following questions. What impact did rationing controls have upon life in Emergency Ireland? What were the most critical shortages, and how successfully were they ameliorated by the government? Rationing controls were introduced to ensure the equitable distribution of scarce commodities, so to what extent was the population’s experience of rationing uniform?

Price control was an integral part of the rationing framework. However, shortages, the rising price of imports, shipping costs, along with the necessity of maintaining domestic agricultural and industrial production made it impossible to preserve prices at their pre-war levels. Within the short period from August 1939 to February 1941, the cost-of-living rose from 173 to 218 points (from a base of 100 at

¹ Emergency Powers Act, 1939 (1939 no. 28/1939) (3 Sept. 1939).

July 1914), an increase of forty-five points or twenty-six percent (see Figure 2.8). Frequent appeals were made to the government for a scheme of national registration, the prerequisite of a coherent rationing system. Comprehensive rationing, it was hoped, would ensure equitable distribution and offset the impact of inflation. The Minister for Supplies, Seán Lemass, was against the introduction of wholesale rationing, believing a nationwide voluntary curtailment of consumption would suffice.² Lemass argued that such a scheme would be prohibitively expensive. Unfortunately, the deficiencies of the ad hoc system of rationing implemented in the early years of the Emergency were felt most keenly by the poor.³ This situation was highlighted in the ‘Housewives’ Petition’, signed by 640 women and delivered to the government on the eve of the budget, 5 May 1941.⁴ The petition was drafted by a group of young Dublin housewives led by Hilda Tweedy (1911-2005). Tweedy was an activist for women’s rights and consumer affairs and later would become the joint honorary secretary of the Irish Housewives’ Association upon its founding in 1942.⁵ Among the recommendations were the national registration of essential foodstuffs and the implementation of an efficient rationing scheme.⁶ The housewives were of the opinion that only serious rationing would safeguard the lot of the poorer people.⁷ This view was echoed in an editorial in *The Standard*, a weekly newspaper which reflected the attitudes of the Catholic Church.⁸ The publicity generated by the petition coupled with complaints of shortages, profiteering, and hoarding eventually led the government to carry out a scheme of national registration.

² *Irish Press*, 12 Nov. 1940; Bryce Evans, *Seán Lemass, democratic dictator* (Dublin, 2011), p. 134.

³ Clair Wills, *That neutral island, a history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), pp 243-4.

⁴ Hilda Tweedy, *A link in the chain, the story of the Irish Housewives Association* (Dublin, 1992), p. 12.

⁵ Linde Lunney, ‘Tweedy, (Muriel) Hilda’ in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Dublin, 2009).

⁶ *Irish Independent*, 7 May 1941.

⁷ *Irish Times*, 16 Sept. 1941.

⁸ *The Standard*, 2 Mar. 1941.

National Registration

The foundation of the rationing system was the national register, compiled by the Statistics Branch of the Department of Industry and Commerce with the aid of over 3,500 members of An Garda Síochána. ‘Registration night’ took place on 16 November 1941.⁹ The full name, address, date of birth, sex, and conjugal condition of each person resident in the county on that night was recorded, this information being deemed a sufficient basis to institute a general scheme of rationing.¹⁰ As it was thought the preparation and issue of approximately 3,000,000 ration books would be a difficult task, the decision to undertake it was postponed for as long as possible.¹¹ By early 1942 however, as the supplies crisis deepened, it became clear that a formal scheme of rationing would have to be introduced and so the writing of the ration books was begun. The Hospitals’ Trust was given the contract worth £17,000 to write the ration books within an eight-week period.¹² As it was not known over what period and in respect of what commodities rationing would be necessary, the coupons of the ration books were marked with letters and numbers. The books were completed and delivered to households by the end of May 1942 with an explanatory leaflet concerning their use.¹³ In 1943 a fresh register of population was carried out in order to minimise fraudulent applications and a second issue of ration books that were larger and designed to last longer than the 1942 issue was carried out in April 1944.

Petrol

Before the Emergency, petrol consumption in Ireland was growing rapidly with imports increasing by 5,500,000 gallons between 1936 and 1938. For the year ending 31

⁹ *Irish Times*, 13 Nov. 1941.

¹⁰ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, miscellaneous supplies and control of exports, 1939-45 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/3, p. 26).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹³ Rationing in Ireland, 1939-52, issue of general ration documents, n.d. (NAI, IND/EMR/3/346).

August 1939 Irish petrol consumption totalled 50,000,000 gallons, 44,500,000 gallons of which was imported directly from Britain.¹⁴ Following the outbreak of the war, petrol rationing was introduced to Ireland in October 1939. Retailers and motorists wishing to obtain supplies were forced to register with the Department of Supplies. For private motorists, the ration was fixed at twelve gallons per month for a vehicle of ten h.p. which was almost twice the amount of the British ration.¹⁵ This generous ration was maintained until the beginning of January 1941 and was made possible due to the fact that in 1940 Ireland received almost two-thirds her normal supply.¹⁶ An appreciation for the liberal petrol ration can be seen in an *Irish Times* editorial of 10 January 1941 which stated:

Although for some time past petrol has been rationed, the motorists in Éire have been far better off in respect of supplies than those of any other country in Europe. Visitors to Ireland have been astonished at the density of private motor traffic on our roads; and it hardly is too much to say that, despite the official rationing of petrol, nine motorists out of ten scarcely have felt the pinch.¹⁷

This situation was made possible in 1938 when seven 14,000 dwt German built tankers registered under the Irish flag in the ownership of Liffey Transport and Trading Co. Ltd and entered into the Irish petrol supply trade.¹⁸ When the war broke out, the Irish government allowed these ships to switch to the British registry on the understanding that they would continue the transit of petrol to Ireland.¹⁹ In late December 1940, as the British government's attitude towards Ireland hardened, Dublin was informed that in spite of the previous agreement, the delivery of petrol supplies would be cut back.²⁰ On a side note, the existence of large stocks of petrol in Ireland would have provided a

¹⁴ History of motor spirit rationing, 1952 (INDC/EMR/7/28, p. 1).

¹⁵ *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, xv, no. 1 (1940), p. 17; *Irish Times*, 14 Jan. 1941.

¹⁶ DD, Mr Lemass, 19 Nov. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 5, Col. 810.

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 10 Jan. 1941.

¹⁸ Harry Spong, *Irish Shipping Ltd., 1941-82*, World Ship Society (n. p., 1982), p. 8; Bryce Evans, 'A semi-state archipelago without ships, Seán Lemass, economic policy and the absence of an Irish mercantile marine' in *Working Papers in History and Policy*, no. 6 (2012), p. 11.

¹⁹ John Leydon to Joseph P. Walsh, 2 May 1941 (NAI, DFA/P35).

²⁰ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Behind the green curtain, Ireland's phoney neutrality during World War II* (Dublin, 2009), p. 126.

logistical advantage to the Germans in the event they invaded the country. This may also have factored into British thinking.

With the petrol supply uncertain, Lemass prohibited its delivery to retailers; petrol pumps throughout the country ran dry. Motorists who had made their way to Dublin from the country for Christmas were reportedly left stranded in the city; their petrol coupons could not be honoured.²¹ Then on 1 January 1941, 1,000,000 gallons of petrol were delivered to Ireland on account of desperate appeals made by Lemass to the British Petrol Control.²² The shipment enabled Lemass to fix the ration for private motorists of an eight h.p. vehicle at one gallon per coupon or eight gallons per month.²³

This was, as Bryce Evans illustrates:

A serious underestimation of demand and an overestimation of the extent to which people adhered to his orders. The *Irish Press* reported that garages were openly defying the order by offering one and a half gallons per coupon. Three days later stocks were exhausted.²⁴

On 9 January 1941 Lemass reduced the ration to a quarter gallon per coupon, or two gallons per month with a gallon of petrol costing the motorist 2s. 2d.²⁵ Provision was also made to grant special allowances to vehicle owners whose work was considered essential to the community. Priests, doctors, midwives, vets, and members of the Oireachtas all received a twelve-gallon monthly ration.²⁶ Taxi and commercial goods vehicle drivers were also granted a preferential allowance.²⁷

Private motorists were hit worst by the order; the two gallon ration was useless and effectively put them off the road. Worse still was the way in which the ration was cut without prior warning. Many motorists were left aggrieved, especially those who

²¹ *Irish Times*, 31 Dec. 1940.

²² Evans, *Seán Lemass*, p. 136.

²³ *Irish Press*, 2 Jan. 1941.

²⁴ Evans, *Seán Lemass*, p. 136.

²⁵ *Irish Independent*, 11 Jan. 1941.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 Jan. 1941.

²⁷ DD, Mr Lemass, 19 Nov. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 5, Col. 817.

had purchased their motor licences for 1941 which in light of the new ration were practically worthless.²⁸ Even when on 29 April 1941 the ration was raised to four gallons per month, it brought little satisfaction.²⁹ Irish business was also adversely affected by the petrol shortage and almost immediately, garages and mechanics were forced to make do with reduced trade.³⁰ The rigidity of the petrol rationing scheme and its supplementary allowances were criticised, but Lemass felt it would be impractical to examine the circumstances of individual cases.³¹ The flat rate severely curtailed the medical service, largely confining doctors to the towns; in rural areas the prevalence of diseases like diphtheria increased as children went unimmunised.³² Dispensary doctors and general practitioners received the same allowance as their counterparts who were employed in hospitals and who never had to leave the building on account of their employment. Similarly, clergy were entitled to the same allowance whether they served large rural or the geographically smaller but more densely populated urban parishes. The flat rate imposed upon commercial goods vehicle drivers contributed to shortages in rural areas as drivers attempted to make the most economical use of their ration. Sport was affected by the difficulties of road travel and the GAA's National League and National competitions were suspended.³³ The League of Ireland provincial football clubs and junior clubs throughout the country were hit particularly badly.³⁴ Sport in Emergency Ireland became a much more local affair. Even the defence forces were hampered by the fuel shortage as personnel were often forced to use bicycles for transport (see Figure 2.1).

²⁸ *Irish Independent*, 10 Jan. 1941.

²⁹ *ITJSB* (1941), p. 68.

³⁰ DD, Mr Norton, 20 Feb. 1941, Vol. 81, No. 14, Col. 2322.

³¹ DD, Mr Lemass, 19 Feb. 1941, Vol. 81, No. 14, Col. 2137.

³² *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1942-43*, p 162.

³³ Meeting of Central Council, 6 September 1941, GAA Central Council minute book, 1939-41 (GAA/CC/01/07).

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, 21 Jan. 1941.

Figure 2.1 Members of the Irish Defence Forces with bicycles parade on O'Connell Street, Dublin, 1939-45



Source: Hanley photographic collection, n.d. (MA, 090/005)

Some private motorists tried to circumvent the domestic rationing order by converting their cars and vehicles into commercial vehicles. Allowances to these persons were suspended unless they could prove that their vehicles were engaged in essential work.³⁵ Others had their vehicles fitted with gas propulsion equipment which relied on coal and charcoal fuel. This practice was objected to in the 'Housewives' Petition' and it was soon banned in light of the coal shortage.³⁶ In April 1942 private motoring was finally forbidden and it was made illegal for commercial vehicles to carry passengers.³⁷ Thus travel by bicycle and horse became common once more. As Clair Wills describes:

In some areas stagecoaches were resurrected, such as the service between Limerick and Rathkeale which began operating in May 1942.³⁸

³⁵ *ITJSB* (1942), p. 160.

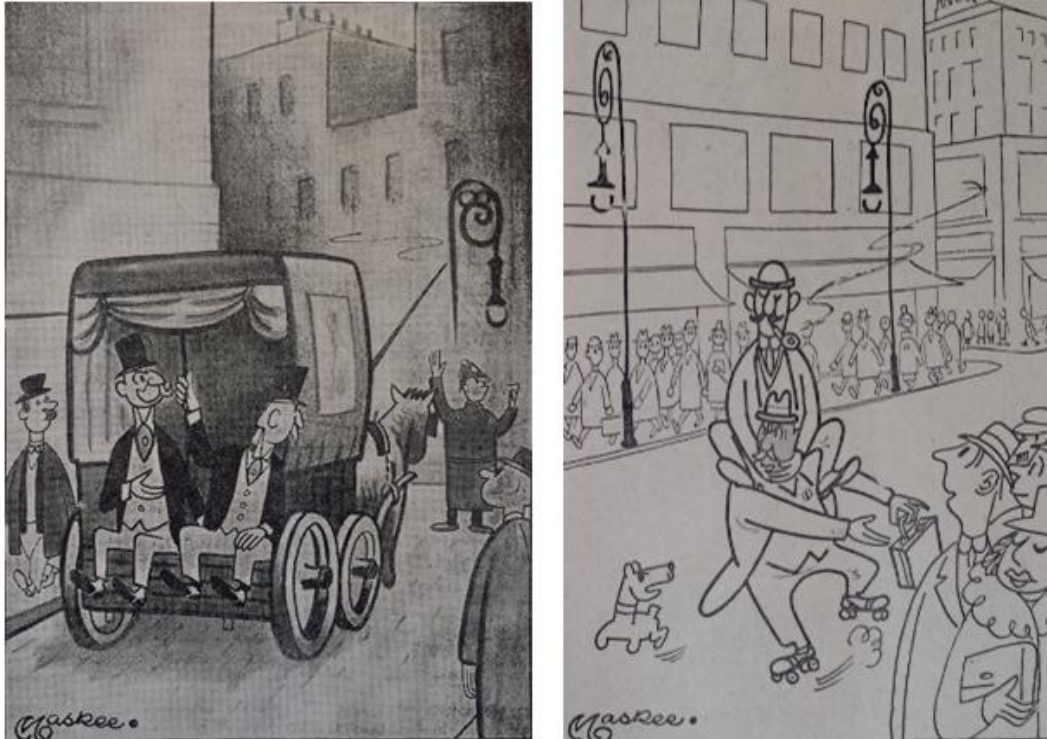
³⁶ Housewives' petition, memorandum on the food and fuel emergency, 5 May 1941 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1); *ITJSB* (1941), p. 160.

³⁷ *Irish Times*, 24 Mar. 1941; *Munster Express*, 3 Apr. 1942.

³⁸ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 251.

While many countries were engaged in an increasingly technological war, Ireland was returning to the eighteenth century in so far as transport was concerned.

Figure 2.2 The implications of the petrol shortage as depicted in *Dublin Opinion*, 1941



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Apr. 1941, p. 29; *Dublin Opinion*, Mar. 1941, p. 6

Instead of accumulating a petrol reserve following the outbreak of the war, motorists were granted a liberal ration. This made necessary the imposition of the severe 1941 ration and its eventual withdrawal in 1942; in 1941 Ireland secured just forty percent of normal requirements.³⁹ Along with rationing, the government urged economy in the use of petrol. The supplementary allowance granted to those who provided essential services along with those engaged in commercial driving were granted on the condition that it wouldn't be used for private motoring. Leading by example, Taoiseach Eamon de Valera took to walking to church on Sunday mornings.⁴⁰ In spite of rationing and the shortage of petrol, the presence of private vehicles on the roads and at public

³⁹ DD, Mr Lemass, 28 May 1941, Vol. 87, No. 3, Col. 287.

⁴⁰ *Irish Times*, 4 Mar. 1941.

places was widely reported.⁴¹ Those who had been granted supplementary allowances were clearly ignoring government orders. Then there was a rampant black market where according to Dr O’Higgins, Fine Gael Deputy for Laois-Offaly, ‘oceans of petrol’ could be bought and sold. O’Higgins felt this was in some way due to the forgery and the illegal sale of official coupons.⁴² The problem lay in the flat rate ration for commercial goods vehicle drivers:

Any man who has a lorry had merely to say “turf” and, once he said “turf”, coupons were issued.⁴³

O’Higgins also blamed:

Bogus lorry owners... bogus timber men [and] bogus hackney men.⁴⁴

Depending on the size and horsepower of their vehicles, these drivers obtained anywhere between twenty and sixty gallons of petrol monthly. Yet no account was taken of the distances they intended to travel or of the mileages they actually clocked up. This left the system wide open to abuse and abused it was with the dishonest lorry driver flogging any fuel he had to spare. So aggrieved was O’Higgins that he moved to have a select committee appointed by the Dáil that would have the power to:

Investigate and report on the position of the petrol supply, the basis of the present distribution of petrol, and to make recommendations.⁴⁵

This motion was defeated.

By May 1942 the petrol supply position had deteriorated to the extent that it became necessary to remove all non-essential private vehicles from the road. After private motoring was banned the basic allowance in respect of commercial goods vehicles was reduced by twenty-five percent and the granting of supplementary allowances restricted. Commercial travellers, drapers, painters, electricians, live-stock

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 4 Mar. 1941; DD, Mr Lemass, 19 Nov. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 5, Col. 822.

⁴² DD, Dr O’Higgins, 30 Oct. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 2, Col. 280.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ DD, Dr O’Higgins, 13 May 1942, Vol. 86, No. 15, Col. 2123.

⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 31 Oct. 1941.

dealers, plumbers, touring cinemas, hawkers, and travelling shops to name but a few were all put off the road.⁴⁶ At the same time special provision was made for vehicles engaged in the transit of essential commodities. The Controlled Area Scheme was another initiative introduced to economise on fuel. Pioneered in north county Mayo, it involved the suspension of supplementary allowances to privately-owned commercial goods vehicles. The responsibility for the transit of essential commodities to and from the railheads was transferred to the Great Southern Railway (GSR) Company. So successful was the scheme in North Mayo that it was extended to the entire county along with counties Clare, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick, Offaly, and Westmeath.⁴⁷ While this was a setback for the private hauliers, the insufficient petrol imports (see Table 2.1) necessitated this drastic measure.

Table 2.1 Petrol imports (gallons) to Ireland, 1939-45

Year	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Gallons	44,500,000	32,250,000	18,000,000	13,000,000	9,250,000	13,500,000	15,500,000

Source: History of motor spirit rationing, 1952 (INDC/EMR/7/28, p. 1)

After the introduction of the 1942 economies, little alteration was made to the petrol rationing scheme until imports began to improve in late 1945.

Coal and turf

Prior to the Emergency, Ireland burned approximately 2,500,000 tons of coal and 3,500,000 tons of turf annually.⁴⁸ While turf was produced domestically, an average of just 200,000 tons of coal was mined in Ireland every year with the remainder imported from Britain.⁴⁹ Within Ireland, there was a roughly fifty-fifty split between industrial and domestic use of coal.⁵⁰ Coal was preferred to turf in industry as it was more compact and had a higher calorific value, it fuelled Irish trains and was used by

⁴⁶ History of motor spirit rationing, 1952, pp 7-8.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁸ Note regarding fuel position, 23 Dec. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/408, p. 1).

⁴⁹ DD, Mr Lemass, 21 Feb. 1946, Vol. 99, No. 11, Col. 1331.

⁵⁰ Gerard Fee, 'The effects of World War II on Dublin's low-income families, 1939-1945' (PhD thesis in history, University College Dublin, 1996), p. 123.

the gas companies to carbonise gas. In 1939, 120,000 out of 140,000 households in the city of Dublin had a gas supply.⁵¹ Paraffin and candles provided lighting throughout the country with electric lighting common in the larger urban areas.

On 5 September 1939, just two days after the outbreak of the war, the Dublin Coal Office was forced to close at 1p.m. as a result of panic buying; by 11 September 1939 the price of coal had increased by fifty percent.⁵² This was a worrisome trend and its price was quickly fixed at its pre-war level. However, as Ireland relied on British coal, the government in reality had very little control over the price the Irish consumer was forced to pay. The price for a stone of coal increased from 4½d. in 1939 to 6¼d. in early 1941.⁵³ As the price rose there was a corresponding decline in the quality of the imported coal. The coal Britain exported to Ireland was reject coal and often contained more than fifty percent duff (fine coal or slack) which was difficult to burn.⁵⁴ The poor quality of Emergency coal was alluded to in the May 1941 edition of *Dublin Opinion* (see Figure 2.3).

⁵¹ DD, Mr Lemass, 19 Apr. 1944, Vol. 93, No. 8, Col. 1170.

⁵² Bernard Share, *The Emergency and neutral Ireland, 1939-1945* (Dublin, 1978), p. 11; Evans, *Seán Lemass*, p. 133.

⁵³ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', pp 123-5.

⁵⁴ DD, Mr Lemass, 5 Mar. 1941, Vol. 82, No. 1, Col. 12.

Figure 2.3 A satirical image from *Dublin Opinion* depicting a man who used 'Emergency coal' to put out a house fire, 1941



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, May 1941, p. 55

This inferior coal was reportedly responsible for several near-lethal gas explosions in the Dublin gasworks one of which caused damage estimated at £10,000.⁵⁵ Price increases affected the urban poor and their meagre budgets most of all, but aside from this Ireland did not experience a shortage of coal until the start of 1941. In a similar fashion to petrol, the British government began reducing exports of coal to Ireland in late 1940 which forced the Department of Supplies to introduce coal rationing on the 25 January 1941.⁵⁶ Under the Emergency Powers (Sale of Coal) Order, 1941 the ration was fixed at half a ton per month per household and it was made mandatory for consumers to register with a single fuel merchant that was licensed by the government. In early 1941 the semi-state company Fuel Importers Éire was also established and given sole licence to import coal to Ireland. It was hoped this would obviate competition for limited supplies and thus keep prices down.

⁵⁵ W. J. Grey to John Leydon, n.d. (suspected April to May 1941), (NAI, DFA/P 23/1).

⁵⁶ E. W. Ravenshear to John Leydon, 28 Sept. 1940 (NAI, DFA/P 23/1); *ITJSB* (1941), p. 13.

Table 2.2 Coal imports (tons) to Ireland, 1938-45

Type of coal	Year							
	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Household	1,570,841	1,854,075	1,624,211	483,773	53,333	7,545	2,169	9,473
Anthracite	79,325	83,413	92,434	81,797	83,818	87,546	16,052	22,229
Gas	301,820	309,329	337,870	230,466	155,462	156,487	119,363	205,612
Steam	534,379	622,956	702,803	691,747	756,023	763,793	597,070	683,259
Total	2,486,365	2,869,773	2,757,318	1,487,783	1,048,636	1,015,371	734,654	920,573

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from: *Trade and Shipping Statistics*, 1938-45

On 5 February 1941 the Slievardagh coal deposit in County Tipperary was brought into production, but Ireland's minimal coal deposits left little scope for further development.⁵⁷ The shortage of pit pipes, timber and other equipment were also obstacles to the development of untapped deposits or existing mines such as those at Arigna and Castlecomer.⁵⁸ As early as the spring of 1940 the Turf Development Board (TDB), established in 1934, began encouraging the public to produce turf.⁵⁹ The deteriorating coal position however forced the government to get serious about turf with de Valera announcing in 1941 that an extra 3,000,000 tons would have to be cut to secure Ireland's fuel needs.⁶⁰ Hugo Flinn, Parliamentary Secretary for the Department of Finance was given the charge of the TDB and was made responsible for the development of native fuels.⁶¹ He became known as the 'Fuel Controller' and his primary directive was to encourage the production of turf by any means. The TDB had been engaged in the research and development of mechanised peat production since its establishment. Although the projects proved expensive and achieved limited success, the TDB's operations at Turraun County Offaly, Clonsast County Offaly, and Lullymore County Kildare were earmarked for expansion.

⁵⁷ DD, Mr MacEntee, 5 Mar. 1941, Vol. 82, No. 1, Col. 82.

⁵⁸ *Kerryman*, 4 Oct. 1941.

⁵⁹ Donal Clarke, *Brown Gold, a history of Bord na Móna and the peat industry in Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), p. 27.

⁶⁰ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 238.

⁶¹ Hugo Flinn to the Secretary to the Government, 28 May 1941 (NAI, TAOIS/S 12417).

On 25 March 1941, Emergency Powers (No. 73) Order, 1941 was passed. This granted the local authorities compulsory powers to acquire, work and let turf banks. They were entitled to both cut turf (called national turf) for their own use (in county institutions) and to sell it to others.⁶² Counties such as Louth which had long ceased to be considered turf-producing areas were required to look to the bogs for their needs.⁶³ Provision was also made for an arbitration procedure to determine compensation. The control of these schemes was appointed to the county surveyors and was supervised by the Department of Local Government and Public Health.⁶⁴ The decentralisation of turf cutting into the hands of the county councils mirrored how the country would have been administered more generally in the event of invasion or a serious dislocation of transportation. While best placed to produce turf in their localities, granting this power to the local authorities also had a major drawback. Even though the aim of the scheme was to produce as much turf as possible, they were careful to keep costs down and avoid unnecessary risks.⁶⁵ Producing over 700,000 tons of national turf in 1941, their output would subsequently decline due to labour and transport difficulties (See Table 2.2).

Table 2.3 Quantity of turf produced by and number of persons employed in Ireland's county council turf schemes, 1941-43

Year	Production	Peak numbers employed
1941	700,000	34,000
1942	550,000	26,000
1943	417,000	22,000

Table created by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Memo from the Department of Supplies to the Taoiseach, 11 Sept. 1943 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/408); Donal Clarke, *Brown Gold, a history of Bord na Móna and the peat industry in Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), p. 54

The other side of the campaign was aimed at the production of hand-won turf by private producers, businesses, voluntary bodies, parish councils, and families residing in the

⁶² DLGPH, Acquisition and working of bog-land, 13 Mar. 1942 (NAI, TSCH/ 3/ S12762A, p. 1)

⁶³ Harold O'Sullivan, *A history of local government in the county of Louth, from earliest times to the present time* (Dublin, 2000), p. 163.

⁶⁴ DLGPH, *Report, 1941-42*, p 23.

⁶⁵ Clarke, *Brown Gold*, p. 53.

vicinity of bog land who normally purchased their fuel. These classes of fuel consumer were granted turbary rights, encouraged to become self sufficient in their fuel needs, and were guaranteed a market for any surplus they produced. The Featherbed blanket bog located in the Dublin Mountains was reportedly transformed into a hive of activity as Dubliners from diverse backgrounds and occupations worked side-by-side and helped each other to secure their fuel needs.⁶⁶ Private turf production in the Dublin Mountains averaged about 8,000 tons annually.⁶⁷ The army was also employed in turf-cutting operations (see Figure 2.4) and large numbers of soldiers spent their ‘summer months under canvas on the bogs.’⁶⁸ The turf scheme was also viewed as a means of generating badly-needed employment.

Figure 2.4 A group of Irish soldiers cutting turf, 1941-45



Source: Hanley photographic collection, n.d. (MA, 090/019)

⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 1 Aug. 1942.

⁶⁷ Methods whereby turf production can be increased, 24 Apr. 1944 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/408, pp 1-2).

⁶⁸ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 224.

In June 1941 the country was divided into turf and non-turf areas.⁶⁹ In the turf area which accounted for eighty-seven percent of the land and contained sixty-five percent of the population, the sale of coal for domestic use was banned.⁷⁰ As turf is bulky and difficult to transport the initial distribution plan was based on the general premise that the turf-producing counties would rely on turf, while imports of coal would be reserved for the non-turf area. By July it became apparent that imported coal supplies would be insufficient to maintain the non-turf area and the scheme was re-evaluated.⁷¹ Despite the sale of coal being banned in the turf area, the fuel ration for the non-turf area was fixed at a paltry quarter of a ton of coal or a half ton of turf per household per month.⁷²

The expansion of turf production in 1941 was a success. By early May there was approximately 5,000 employed on the county council schemes. This increased to 30,000 by July along with a further 15,000 under the auspices of parish councils, businesses, voluntary organisations and the army.⁷³

⁶⁹ The non-turf area included counties Dublin, Kilkenny, Louth, Wexford, Wicklow, Waterford (except certain districts in West Waterford), and Cork city and suburbs.

⁷⁰ Note regarding fuel position, 23 Dec. 1942, p. 1.

⁷¹ Turf transport, n.d. (NAI, TAOIS/ S 12641, p. 1).

⁷² *ITJSB* (1941), p. 154.

⁷³ *Irish Times*, 5 July 1941.

Figure 2.5 ‘Turf-cutters from the city’ removing turf from the bog by lorry as depicted in *Dublin Opinion*, 1941



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, July 1941, p. 103

Average production of hand-won turf per man employed was estimated at thirty tons.⁷⁴ At the peak turf cutting season, approximately 946 bogs were being cut under the county council schemes.⁷⁵ It was in counties on the western seaboard such as Kerry that the bulk of the surplus turf was produced, but herein was a problem. Special turf trains were commissioned to transport turf from the turf area to the non-turf area. The principle routes were from the west to Dublin, Kerry to Cork, and Clonsast in Offaly to Waterford and Wexford.⁷⁶ Road transport was also availed off and at its peak 2,800 lorries including 500 army lorries were involved in turf haulage. Transporting turf was expensive. The price for turf in the non-turf area, originally fixed at forty-five shillings, was increased to sixty-four shillings on 1 November 1941 for the remainder of the war.⁷⁷

Weather wise, 1941 was an exceptionally good year for saving turf; the amount of labour available was just about sufficient; although transport was a problem it was

⁷⁴ Robert N. Tweedy, *Towards a new Ireland, turf – or nothing* (1942), p. 4.

⁷⁵ *DLGPH, Report, 1941-42*, p. 23.

⁷⁶ Turf transport, n.d. (NAI, TAOIS/ S 12641, p. 1).

⁷⁷ Fee, ‘The effects of World War II’, p. 126.

not insurmountable and there was a certain patriotic enthusiasm for turf. As a result the non-turf area was sufficiently supplied for the 1941-42 winter and an iron ration (reserve stock) was established. The position was considered so favourable that the turf ration was increased to one ton per month in April 1942, although the sale of coal for domestic use was banned.⁷⁸ During 1941, in the region of 900,000 tons of turf were moved by lorry within the turf area consuming some 700,000 gallons of petrol in the process.⁷⁹ But as the petrol situation deteriorated, this proved to be unsustainable. Similarly, the lack of good quality coal crippled the trains; it reportedly took one train twenty hours to travel from Cork to Dublin.⁸⁰ In 1941 turf lorries were fitted with gas producer equipment, but the coal shortage hindered these too.⁸¹ Up until September 1941 an average of 2,000 tons of turf were transported to the non-turf area daily.⁸² Hereafter this sum declined, and the fact that turf had to compete with other commodities (namely sugar beet, wheat and coal) for wagon space on the railways exacerbated the problem. As a result of the transport difficulties faced in 1942, turf cutting operations in the remoter bog-lands such as those in West Galway, West Kerry and the Belmullet area of County Mayo were curtailed and sometimes halted. Donegal's county council scheme was completely stopped owing to the amount of 1941 turf that was left deteriorating on the bogs right into 1942.⁸³

Greater use of Ireland's canal infrastructure was proposed as a solution to the transport problem. To this end the government financed the construction of twenty-nine

⁷⁸ *ITJSB* (1942), p. 72.

⁷⁹ DD, Mr Flinn, 4 Mar. 1942, Vol. 85, No. 15, Col. 2905.

⁸⁰ *Kerryman*, 23 May 1942.

⁸¹ *Irish Press*, 14 Apr. 1941.

⁸² Turf transport, n.d. (NAI, TAOIS/ S 12641, p. 1).

⁸³ *DLGPH, Report, 1942-43*, p. 33.

horse-drawn barges called G-boats which were capable of carrying a load of forty-five tons (see Figure 2.6).⁸⁴

Figure 2.6 G-boat no. 9 being transported through Barrack Street, Carlow, 1941-45



Source: 'G-Boats' in *Inland Waterway News*, 30(4), (2003), p. 1

This fleet together with the existing private hauliers transported in the region of 40,000 to 50,000 tons of turf from the turf area to Dublin annually between 1941-45.⁸⁵ Beyond this, further expansion was impossible due to the limits of the canal system. Robert Tweedy, husband of the activist Hilda Tweedy, proposed the creation of 'road trains' improvised from the chassis of unused cars mounted with turf crates to be hauled by tractors and lorries. This he argued was the only 'practical' way of getting the turf to Dublin, though considering the nature of Ireland's roads, the poor access to the bogs, the lack of spare parts, this idea seems rather impractical. Not only did transporting turf become difficult, but so too did getting to the bogs. The rubber shortage and the

⁸⁴ Tweedy, *Towards a new Ireland*, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Gerard D'Arcy, *Portrait of the Grand Canal* (Dublin, 1969), p. 88.

resulting dearth of bicycle tyres made sure of this.⁸⁶ Throughout the Emergency there was very much more turf available in the turf areas than there was transport to carry it to where it was needed.

Turf schemes were plagued by labour problems, and as early as 1941 Hugo Flinn identified this as being the chief difficulty facing the turf drive.⁸⁷ The TDB's midland bog schemes relied upon labour attracted from other parts of the country, the majority of whom were unemployed and from Dublin and the west. This necessitated the erection of camps to accommodate the workers. Conditions at the camps however were a cause of discontent, as one worker stated:

I've worked most places... and I may tell you, when I came here I was most surprised... it's little short of slavery.⁸⁸

While the newly-erected accommodation was reasonable, the pay was considered too low and the food inadequate. In May 1941 Hugo recommended the minimum wage for turf workers be raised to 34s. for a forty-eight hour week, but this was ignored.⁸⁹ In Edenderry, the weak tea and insufficient bread ration were the main causes for complaint. Transport to and from the bogs was also an issue for the Edenderry workers; the men were expected to make a twelve mile round-trip by bicycle daily on top of a twelve-hour backbreaking shift.⁹⁰ This sort of commute was common to turf workers throughout the country. Many of the Dublin recruits were not up to the task, the work itself was hard, the countryside was alien, they were used to eating bread and not potatoes, and as a result many of them lasted less than a week taking the first train home they could. For the people of Edenderry, the Dubliners were an unwelcome addition to the area. The local parish priest Fr Killian described how when a group of them came

⁸⁶ DD, Mr Beegan, 14 Apr. 1943, Vol. 89, No. 15, Col. 2005.

⁸⁷ DD, Mr Flinn, 1 July 1941, Vol. 84, No. 5, Col. 639.

⁸⁸ Michael O'Beirne 'A month on the bog' in *The Bell*, iii, no. 6 (1942), p. 444.

⁸⁹ Hugo Flinn, Memorandum on wages for turf workers employed by the county councils, 4 May 1941 (NAI, TAOIS/S 12819).

⁹⁰ Government turf production scheme – Edenderry area, 27 May 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/ S 12820, pp 1-3).

into the town one evening they used rude language and insulted passersby including girls and young women. On the other hand he felt the behaviour of the Galway and Mayo recruits was beyond reproach.⁹¹

After the initial enthusiasm shown for turf cutting in 1941, labour proved difficult to retain and as word of the bad working conditions spread it proved equally difficult to attract new recruits. In light of the lucrative employment opportunities available in Britain, men with turf and agricultural experience were emigrating. These factors created a shortage of labour for the government schemes. In May 1942, in an attempt to stop the rot, an emigration embargo was placed upon men with three or more months' agricultural work experience.⁹² Juvenile and female labour was employed for the lighter work in order to make up the deficit.⁹³ In spite of this, the number employed in turf schemes fell as did the yields. Roscommon County Council had 300 fewer workers in 1941 than 1942 and Sligo County Council employed 962 in June 1942 as compared with 1,344 the previous year.⁹⁴ In 1943 Tipperary County Council announced that due to labour shortages it could produce only enough turf for the requirements of its institutions.⁹⁵ Robert Tweedy suggested that an extra 60,000 men were needed and that these could be sourced from the unemployed. This was hardly a revelatory idea, but such labour was often found to be unsuitable. However Tweedy's recommendation that every unemployed man and youth should be restored to 'able-bodied condition' via 'special feeding' is revealing of both the poor state of the unemployed as well as a growing appreciation for the social application of nutritional science (this last point will

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹² Employment in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1 May 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/ S 13029 A, p. 1).

⁹³ *DLGPH, Report, 1942-3*, pp 33.

⁹⁴ Mary E. Daly, *The buffer state, historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997), p. 266.

⁹⁵ *Nenagh Guardian*, 22 May 1943.

be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters).⁹⁶ In 1944, labour shortages eased in light of the travel restrictions imposed by the British government in preparation for the D-Day landings.⁹⁷

Figure 2.7 Turf cutting at Annaverna, County Louth, 1930-50



Source: Turf cutting, Annaverna, Co. Louth, 1930-50 (NLI, Valentine Photographic Collection, VAL 8428)

In 1939 and 1940 Ireland secured above-average imports of coal to the combined sum of 760,000 tons; those in a position to do so laid in stocks. By the end of 1942 there were approximately 200,000 registered turf consumers in the non-turf area. Based on the half ton ration re-implemented in June 1942, this necessitated a supply of 92,000 tons per month. In reality, however, average consumption stood around 40,000 tons per month.⁹⁸ With just 1,300 tons of turf transported daily to Dublin during the harvest, had the full ration been drawn, the supply and more precisely the transport system would have been unable to keep pace.⁹⁹ As the Emergency progressed, private stocks of fuel ran out and this coupled with gas and electricity rationing increased the

⁹⁶ Tweedy, *Towards a new Ireland*, pp 8-9.

⁹⁷ Daly, *The buffer state*, p. 268.

⁹⁸ Figures calculated using data from: Note regarding fuel position, 23 Dec. 1942, p. 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

demand for turf. For those houses without either a gas or electricity supply, the half-ton ration was a meagre one.¹⁰⁰ Though for the inhabitants of the non-turf area their biggest complaint was due not to a lack of supply, but consistently due to the quality of the turf they were expected to burn. The long strait in the Phoenix Park constituted Dublin's central fuel dump where the turf was stored in ricks or clamps to keep it dry; the strait itself became known as the 'New Bog Road.'¹⁰¹ From this fuel dump and others distributed throughout the city, the larger fuel merchants and the bellmen (smaller fuel merchants) drew their supply. These dumps were established in urban areas throughout the country but their location was often a source of contention. Galway's Eyre Square dump, established in 1941, was relocated to the outskirts the city in late 1943 as a result of complaints made about the loss of Galway Race Week revenue.¹⁰²

When a sod of turf is cut it has a moisture content of about ninety percent; before it can be removed from the bog it must be laid out to dry, turned, and then stacked (footed) to further aid drying. A combination of bad weather and time constraints meant that the turf often didn't get sufficient drying time on the bog. Wet turf handled poorly disintegrated easily, and it became more fragile if it rained when transported in open-topped wagons and when badly stacked in the dumps. On one occasion, an Independent Deputy for Dublin North East, took a sod at random from the Parnell Street dump and had it tested. The results showed water content of seventy-eight percent, forty-eight percent higher than the TDB's machine-produced turf.¹⁰³ Reports of the fuel merchants wetting the turf to increase its weight for sale were common.¹⁰⁴ One company, Tuskar Firelighters, even marketed their firelighters as being specially

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp 2-3.

¹⁰¹ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 239.

¹⁰² *Connacht Sentinel*, 29 June 1943.

¹⁰³ *Irish Times*, 5 Aug. 1943.

¹⁰⁴ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 127.

designed to burn wet turf.¹⁰⁵ On top of this, the bulky turf was difficult to burn in the typically small urban fireplaces. In light of this, the Turf Development Board issued pamphlets giving practical advice for both domestic and industrial users of turf.¹⁰⁶

Overcharging for turf was also commonplace. While the fixed price was 6*d.* per stone, 8*d.* and 9*d.* was often charged for a dozen sods which equated to £8 per ton.¹⁰⁷ As of June 1941 it was made compulsory for bellmen to hold a fuel merchant's licence. Fuel merchants however were not required to keep records of sales of quantities of four stones or less leaving those who purchased fuel in small amounts open to abuse.¹⁰⁸ All of this it seems conditioned many inhabitants of the non-turf area to use turf sparingly, or even go without. Overcharging also occurred in the turf area where the price of turf was not fixed. It had been hoped that unregulated prices would encourage people to cut their own turf, but this was not always possible. Certain areas within the turf area itself were remote from bogs. Then there was the curious case of Portarlinton where it was found difficult to secure turf supplies although the town was situated just a few kilometres from the Turf Development Board's flagship bog at Clonsast; TDB turf was destined for sale in the non-turf area. Townspeople in the turf area were often held to ransom, in 1941 it was reported that in Maynooth turf was sold for 1½*d.* per sod.¹⁰⁹ The Irish Housewives Association underlined the plight of those living in semi-rural areas in their annual report for 1943.¹¹⁰ Despite its flaws, the turf scheme tided the country over the period of the war but as will be discussed in chapter six, the fuel famine of 1947 was far worse than any shortage experienced during the war years.

¹⁰⁵ *Irish Press*, 16 Dec. 1944.

¹⁰⁶ The Turf Development Board, *The use of turf as a domestic fuel* (Dublin, c.1940); The Turf Development Board, *The use of turf in industrial installations* (Dublin, c.1940).

¹⁰⁷ *Irish Times*, 23 Jan. 1942.

¹⁰⁸ *ITJSB* (1941), p. 72.

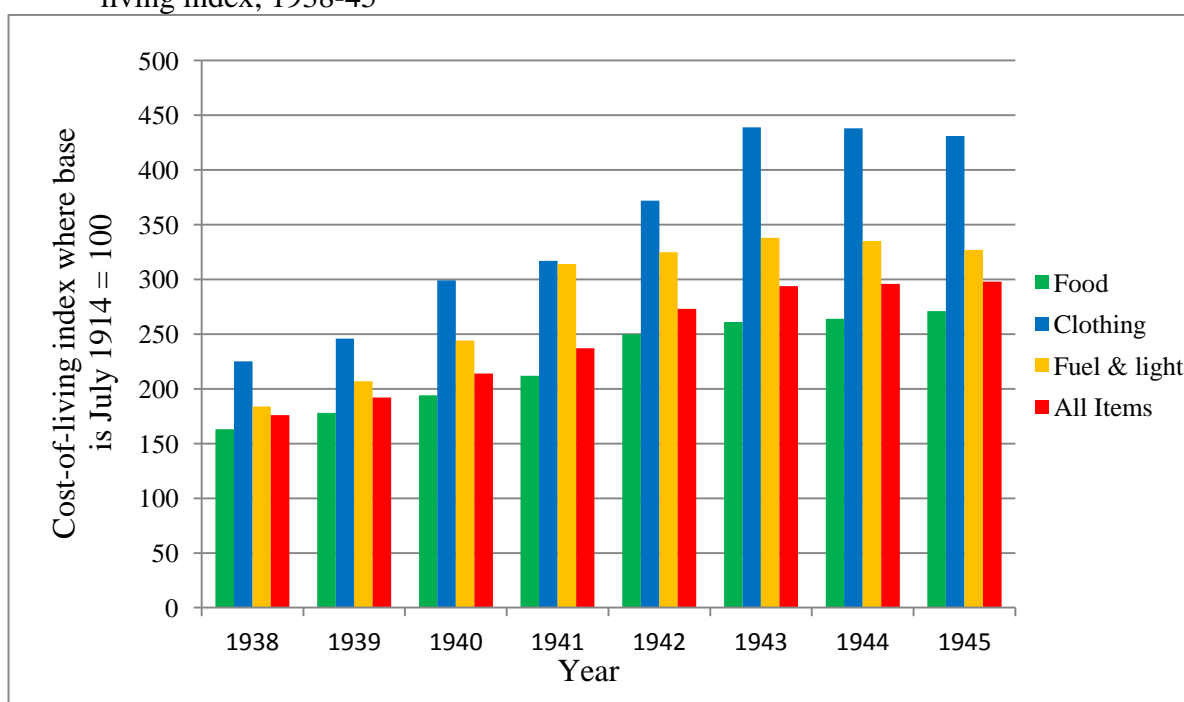
¹⁰⁹ DD, Mr Davin, 1 July 1941, Vol. 84, No. 5, Col. 707.

¹¹⁰ Irish Housewives' Committee, First annual report, June 1943 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 2).

Clothing

Cotton and wool were the most important textiles imported into Ireland for the domestic clothing manufacturing industry. Up until early 1941 no difficulty was experienced in securing these supplies with combined imports for 1940 equalling 18,000,000 lbs.¹¹¹ Britain supplied Ireland with 100 percent of her cotton needs, and the total sum of wool imported was supplemented with 4,500,000 lbs of home produced wool.¹¹² This unhindered textile supply did not prevent a rise in prices. Within the short period from August 1939 to February 1941, the price of clothing on the cost-of-living index rose from 225 to 305 points (from a base of 100 at July 1914), an increase of eighty points or thirty-six percent (see Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8 Increase in the cost of living in Ireland as represented on the cost-of-living index, 1938-45



Graph compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-45

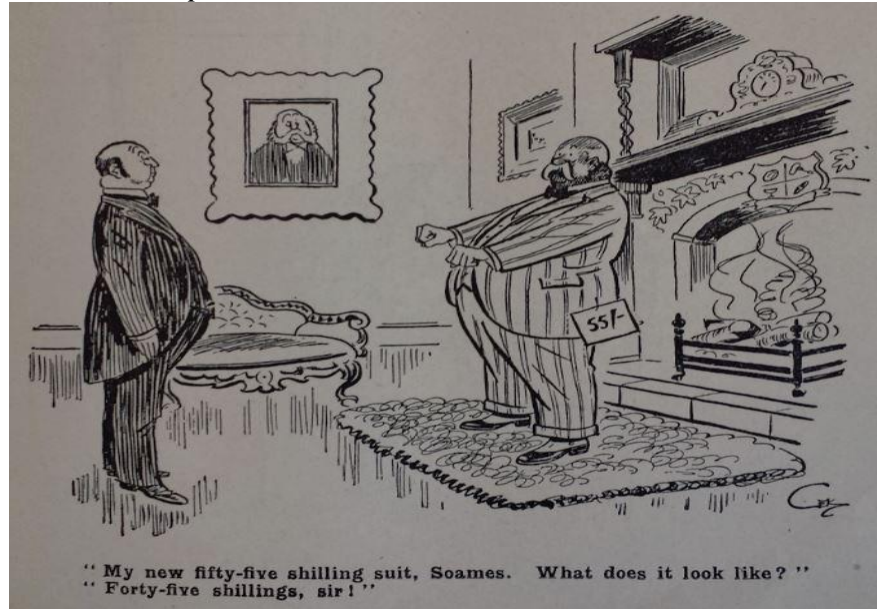
The hike was explainable by the price increase of cotton and wool on the international markets; commodities required to clothe the ever expanding armies and workforces of

¹¹¹ *Irish Press*, 12 June 1942.

¹¹² Textiles – historical survey of measures taken to control supplies during the emergency, 1939-45 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/12, p. 1).

the belligerent nations in particular. The impact of this for the Irish consumer was brilliantly illustrated in the September 1940 edition of *Dublin Opinion* (see Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9 The impact of the increased price of clothing as illustrated in *Dublin Opinion*, 1940

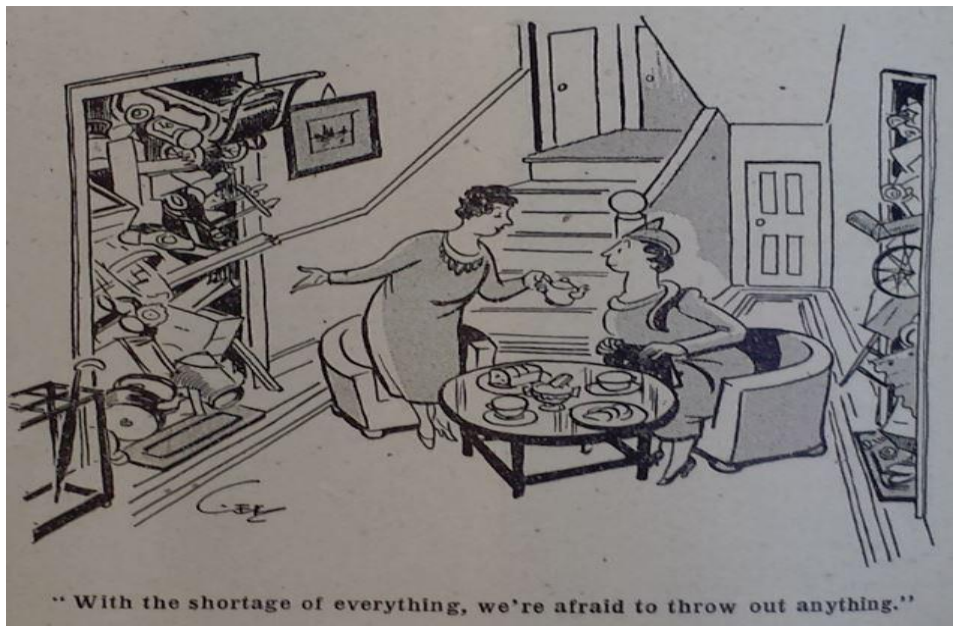


Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Sept. 1940, p. 301

As clothing became more costly, garments which in normal times might have been discarded were retained. This inclination towards hoarding as a result of shortages was alluded to in *Dublin Opinion* in December 1942 (see Figure 2.10). For the poor this was a problem as they relied heavily on second-hand clothing sourced from local markets, charitable institutions, and the spontaneous generosity of relatives, neighbours and friends.¹¹³

¹¹³ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', pp. 77-8.

Figure 2.10 Shortages led to hoarding as illustrated in *Dublin Opinion*, 1942



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Dec. 1942, p. 176

This led to pleas from organisations such as the Galway Conference of the St Vincent de Paul who appealed to:

All who have old clothes to spare, not to keep the garments uselessly in their homes, but to give them to their ill-clad fellow-citizens.¹¹⁴

Poor expectant mothers and their children were worst affected by the shortage of second-hand clothing with greatest suffering experienced during the winter months.¹¹⁵

Economies in clothing emerged. To save on the price of stockings, women adopted the ingenious practice of 'colouring the legs with a solution which looks like a cross between sunburn and silk' which had developed in Britain.¹¹⁶

Between April and August 1941, Britain reduced exports of cotton to Ireland by fifty percent of 1940 exports while textile rationing was introduced to Britain on 2 June

¹¹⁴ *Connacht Tribune*, 15 Nov. 1941.

¹¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 24 Oct. 1941.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 Sep. 1941.

1941.¹¹⁷ This figure was reduced to twenty-five percent in September 1941, and fifteen percent in January 1942.¹¹⁸

Table 2.4 Quantities of textiles imported into Ireland, 1939-45

Article	Unit of quantity	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Wool, raw greasy	Cental	5,123	2,070	2	1	32	440	42
Washed, scoured or carbonized	Cental	3,285	1,679	672	0	330	1,121	1,121
Cotton yarn	Pound (lb.)	9,526,179	11,983,754	5,541,795	3,112,284	4,286,433	3,274,270	3,223,892
Linen Yarn	Hundred-weight	12,366	6,292	451	7	1	355	1,863

Source: Gerard Fee, 'The effects of World War II on Dublin's low-income families 1939-1945' (PhD thesis in history, University City Dublin, 1996), p. 56

The reductions prompted the government to introduce clothes rationing on 8 June 1942 under the Emergency Powers (Rationing of Yarn Cloth and Clothing) order, 1942.¹¹⁹

The scheme was based on the exchange of coupons from the ration books, with each consumer having a fifty-two coupon allowance which equated to a value of approximately £8.¹²⁰ These coupons were passed from the consumer to the retailer, then to the wholesaler and finally to the Department of Supplies which granted supplies of textiles based upon the numbers of coupons received. The basic value of each coupon was one square yard of cloth.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ *Irish Independent*, 2 June 1941.

¹¹⁸ Textiles – historical survey, 1939-45, pp 1-2.

¹¹⁹ *Irish Times*, 9 June 1942.

¹²⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 13 June 1942.

¹²¹ Textiles – historical survey, 1939-45, p. 72.

Table 2.5 Coupon values under the Irish clothes rationing scheme, 9 June 1942

Article of clothing	Man	Boy	Woman	Girl
Shirt (no collar) / Blouse	13	7	6	4
Two-piece suit	37	21		
Three-piece suit	40	23		
Trousers unlined (lined)	18(20)	8(12)		
Dress / Frock unlined (lined)			13(21)	7(13)
Cardigans / jumpers	6	3	4	2 1/2
Undervest	5	3	4	2 1/2
Underpants / Knickers	2	1	2	1
Socks / Stockings	1 1/2	1	1 1/2	1
Pyjama suit	20	12	20	10
Coat / Jacket / Blazer unlined (lined)	18(24)	9(12)	16(20)	9(11)
Overcoat / Raincoat unlined (lined)	29(36)	14(18)	28(36)	14(18)
Collar / pair of cuffs	2	1		
Tie	1	1		
Hat / Scarf / Sash	1 1/2	1	1 1/2	1
Gloves	1	1	1	1
Handkerchief	1	1	1	1

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using information from the *Irish Press*, 9 June 1942; *Connacht Sentinel*, 9 June 1942

In Britain utility clothing was introduced; while this was an economic measure it led to less variety. In Ireland it was decided instead to eliminate certain decorative effects from clothing for both sexes.¹²² Men had to make do with fewer pockets while certain frills and cuffs were banned from women's dresses. Special systems were put in place for consumers whose needs could not be met by normal rationing. These included uniformed employees, hospital workers, charitable organisations, the army, government services, emergency and voluntary services, seamen, and local institutions.¹²³ In the second year of rationing starting June 1943, certain classes of consumer were, upon application, granted an additional coupon allowance (see Table 2.6).

¹²² *Irish Times*, 10 Nov. 1942.

¹²³ Textiles – historical survey, 1939-45, pp 75-7.

Table 2.6 Ireland's supplementary clothing coupon allowance, June 1943-45

Classes of consumer	Additional coupon allowance
Expectant Mothers	78
Postulants	78
Actors	35
Waiters	20
Private nurses	20
Dentists	10
Vets	10

Source: Textiles - historical survey of measures taken to control supplies during the Emergency, 1939-45 (NAI, INDC/EMR, 7/12), p. 77

Clothing rationing was introduced to eke out supplies rather than being a response to a particular shortage, but the general consensus was that it was too harsh with one draper described it as 'eyewash'.¹²⁴ The Drapers' Chamber of Trade met on 9 June 1942 to discuss the scheme. Fearing a reduction in trade by as much as eighty percent, it requested de Valera meet their deputation which he refused to do.¹²⁵ Louie Bennett of the Irish Women Workers' Union urged de Valera to scale back the scheme, citing its potential to wreak havoc upon employment levels.¹²⁶ The mounting agitation prompted the government to revise the scheme with the annual allowance increased from fifty-two to seventy-eight coupons.¹²⁷ Yet, the improvement was not enough for the drapers and on 15 June 1942 an estimated 8,000 participated in a parade through the streets of Dublin culminating in a demonstration at the Mansion House.¹²⁸ The drapers argued that they possessed quantities of supplies sufficient to negate the need for rationing. While Lemass was of the opinion that these statements were unfounded, it is hard to argue with William Cosgrave's assessment of the clothes rationing scheme.¹²⁹

According to Cosgrave:

¹²⁴ *Connacht Sentinel*, 9 June 1942.

¹²⁵ DD, Mr de Valera, 16 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 3, Cols. 997-9.

¹²⁶ Louie Bennett to Eamon de Valera, Resolution of the Irish Women Workers' Union on clothes rationing, 12 July 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/S 12861).

¹²⁷ *Irish Press*, 12 June 1942.

¹²⁸ *Irish Times*, 16 June 1942.

¹²⁹ DD, Mr Lemass, 16 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 9, Col. 1000.

The clothes rationing order was a panic order; it got panic consideration and a panic decision, and there were panic blunders and panic changes.¹³⁰

It did not take long for before a lively black-market trade in clothes coupons developed, especially in the capital. The trade was focused around the visitors from Northern Ireland, as they disembarked onto the platforms of Dublin's Amiens Street railway station.¹³¹ Single coupons were sold for as much as five shillings.¹³² As per Clair Wills:

Clothing rations... proved something of a boon to Irish women, many of whom – especially the older generation – bought few clothes at the best of times.¹³³

It was also common for the destitute poor to sell their coupons if they couldn't afford rationed clothing. The Department of Industry and Commerce's historical survey of rationing created after the war noted that the imposition of sentences of imprisonment for these offences and the use of inspectors in suspected hotspots was thought to have considerably reduced the dealings.¹³⁴ However, the practice remained relevant enough to warrant reference in the August 1946 issue of *Dublin Opinion* (see Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11 A sketch in *Dublin Opinion* of woman selling ration books outside a Great Northern Railway station, 1946



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, August 1946, p. 1

¹³⁰ DD, Mr Cosgrave, 25 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 15, Col. 1819.

¹³¹ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 240.

¹³² *Irish Times*, 14 July 1942.

¹³³ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 240.

¹³⁴ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, 1939-45, pp 40-5.

Clothes rationing put out of business the travelling outfitters who operated primarily in the remoter western districts and who sold clothing village to village and at local fairs. Their disappearance was a cause of hardship as they dealt mainly in affordable second-hand clothing and were used chiefly by the working and destitute classes.¹³⁵ In Connemara, rising prices and clothes rationing brought about a revival of the spinning and weaving industry which was encouraged by the Executive Council of the Connemara Parish Councils.¹³⁶ School attendance was also affected by the shortage of clothes. In 'People and pawnshops', Peadar O'Donnell mulled over the issue of the pawnshop where clothes were often pawned for short-term loans. Families having pawned their Sunday best on the Monday morning, might on the Thursday evening (in the event of the cupboards being bare) pawn the children's clothing for a day in order to 'take the edge off a bodies hunger' for as mothers believed, 'a day in bed won't do the kids any harm.'¹³⁷ For Britain, two years of clothes rationing saved in the region of 500,000 tons of shipping.¹³⁸ In Ireland, rationing ensured equitable distribution of available supplies, but it did not reduce clothing poverty.

Footwear

Under Fianna Fáil, a protected footwear industry experienced rapid growth and expansion between 1932 and 1936 and by 1939 the Irish tanning and footwear manufacturing industries were capable of catering for domestic needs.¹³⁹ In 1940 (which represented a normal year) 4,500,000 pairs of leather shoes and 1,000,000 pairs of rubber boots were manufactured. In terms of raw materials for these industries, Ireland's position was not so secure. Ireland imported fifty percent of the hides and 100 percent

¹³⁵ *Kerryman*, 27 June 1942.

¹³⁶ *Connacht Sentinel*, 28 Sept. 1943.

¹³⁷ Peadar O'Donnell, 'People and pawnshops' in, *The Bell*, v, no. 3 (1942), p. 206.

¹³⁸ *Irish Independent*, 20 May 1943.

¹³⁹ Charles Flynn, 'Dundalk 1900-1960, an oral history' (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2000), pp 171-1.

of the tanning materials and chemicals used in the tanning industries and was completely dependent on Britain for rubber supplies.¹⁴⁰ This did not pose a problem until March 1941 when Britain prohibited the export to Ireland of hides and chemicals and other materials used in the tanning industry. In 1942 rubber boot manufacture totally ceased owing to the rubber shortage resulting from the Japanese invasion of South-East Asia.¹⁴¹ On 16 July 1942, footwear rationing was introduced to Ireland.¹⁴² In the first year of footwear rationing a pair of men's or women's footwear could be obtained for a mere two coupons. This was a precautionary measure taken to prevent the heavy purchases being made by visitors from Northern Ireland as opposed to a critical shortage of materials.¹⁴³ The situation was also helped in mid 1942 when the British government lifted the ban on the export of leather and the associated manufacturing materials to Ireland, albeit in a reduced manner.¹⁴⁴

Table 2.7 Irish footwear rationing coupon values, 1942-45

	Man	Boy	Woman	Girl
1942	2	2	1	1
1943 onwards	8	6	4	4

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Times*, 16 July 1942; *Irish Times*, 31 May 1943

In 1943 a more stringent rationing scheme was introduced as hoarding of domestically-produced hides and the quantity of imports became acute.¹⁴⁵ The rising price of footwear put new shoes beyond the means of many of those on 'standard wages'.¹⁴⁶ Shoes soled with wood instead of leather came onto the market and proved a cheaper alternative.¹⁴⁷ Like clothes rationing, footwear rationing resulted in a restricted supply of second-hand footwear. This compounded the problem for the poor and it was

¹⁴⁰ Leather and footwear – Historical survey of production, distribution etc., during the Emergency, 1939-1945 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/13, p. 1).

¹⁴¹ Jon Press, *The footwear industry in Ireland, 1922-73* (Dublin, 1989), p. 77.

¹⁴² *Irish Times*, 16 July 1942.

¹⁴³ Leather and footwear, 1939-45, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Irish Times*, 16 July 1942.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish Press*, 28 Sept. 1943.

¹⁴⁶ *Longford Leader*, 4 Dec. 1943.

¹⁴⁷ Press, *The footwear industry*, p. 78.

the children who were worst affected. Dublin Corporation reported that out of 90,241 children attending Dublin primary schools during the 1943-44 academic year, approximately 3,650 lacked footwear.¹⁴⁸ The introduction in late 1944 of the footwear scheme for children from necessitous households eased their plight (see Chapter III).

Compulsory tillage:

The foundation upon which Fianna Fáil's Emergency food strategy was built was the policy of compulsory tillage. As has been widely documented by historians such as J. J. Lee, Fianna Fáil was ideologically committed to creating a self-sufficient Ireland. The promotion of tillage as opposed to livestock farming was central to this aim. It was hoped that increasing tillage at the expense of livestock farming would lessen dependence on the British export market and at the same time generate employment and stem emigration. Upon Fianna Fáil's rise to power in 1932, 'De Valera, believing that a tillage policy would bind a bold peasantry to the soil, introduced subsidies to encourage the production of wheat'.¹⁴⁹

In 1939, the area under tillage in Ireland was about 1,500,000 million acres. Of this, 850,000 acres was devoted to corn crops which included 235,280 acres of wheat (just 24,000 acres were under wheat in 1932).¹⁵⁰ A further 400,000 tons of wheat, 500,000 tons of animal feeding stuffs and 170,000 tons of fertilisers were also imported.¹⁵¹ High shipping costs and the imperative of ensuring the nation's food supply combined to compel the Irish government to announce on 9 October 1939 the introduction of compulsory tillage.¹⁵² First introduced for the 1940 growing season, farmers of ten or more statute acres were required to till one-eighth of their land. The

¹⁴⁸ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 81.

¹⁴⁹ J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985, politics and society* (London, 1989), p. 184.

¹⁵⁰ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, miscellaneous supplies and control of exports, 1938-45, parts IX and X (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/4); *ITJSB*, 1932-9.

¹⁵¹ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, miscellaneous supplies and control of exports, 1938-45, parts IX and X (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/4).

¹⁵² *Irish Independent*, 10 Oct. 1939.

area was increased to one-sixth for 1941 and to one-fifth for 1942.¹⁵³ In 1943 the minimum holding size was reduced to five acres and the quota increased to one quarter. The Department of Agriculture could also stipulate what section of a farm was tilled so as to prevent farmers saving their best land for pasture.¹⁵⁴ In 1944 the quota was again increased, this time to three-eighths. Lands completely unsuited to tillage farming such as ‘rough mountain, bog, sand dunes, forest and land subject to flooding were exempted’ from the order.¹⁵⁵ Cultivation of cereal crops, potatoes, roots and other green crops, flax, fruit and vegetables was permitted. To encourage the production of wheat and beet, farmers received a guaranteed price for these crops. The rate of 35s. per barrel of wheat was a considerable increase on the 27s. granted in 1938.¹⁵⁶ However, farmers who failed to comply with the orders were liable to incur fines or prison sentences and to have their land dispossessed.¹⁵⁷ From 1941-45 an average of 305 farmers were convicted annually for failing to adhere to the compulsory tillage orders.¹⁵⁸

A publicity campaign surrounded compulsory tillage, the press and radio broadcasts were used to promote it. Farmers were implored to produce wheat so that the poor could have bread.¹⁵⁹ The Catholic bishops endorsed compulsory tillage.¹⁶⁰ In 1944 the Department of Agriculture issued a booklet *Why Compulsory Tillage?* It was aimed at national school pupils who were encouraged to study it and discuss it with adults at every opportunity.¹⁶¹ Of all the facets of Emergency life experienced by the farming

¹⁵³ *ITJSB*, 1940-43.

¹⁵⁴ Mary E. Daly, *The first department, a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002), p. 226.

¹⁵⁵ Bryce Evans ‘Notorious Anarchists?’ *The Irish smallholder and the Irish state during the Emergency, 1939-45*, in William Sheehan and Maura Cronin (eds), *Riotous assemblies, rebels, riots and revolts in Ireland* (Dublin, 2011), p. 195.

¹⁵⁶ *Longford Leader*, 14 Oct. 1939.

¹⁵⁷ *ITJSB* (1939), p. 203; Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 241.

¹⁵⁸ Evans, *Seán Lemass*, p. 142.

¹⁵⁹ James Ryan, ‘A further appeal for more wheat’ in *Journal, Department of Agriculture*, xxxix, no. 2 (1942), pp 197-8.

¹⁶⁰ *The Standard*, 17 Jan. 1941.

¹⁶¹ James Patrick Mimmagh, ‘Grain mills of County Longford c.1750 –c. 1950: a historical survey’ (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2009), p. 206.

community, compulsory tillage stung the most, and farmers and their representatives in the Dáil were quick to express their opposition. At a meeting of the Kilkenny executive of the Irish Farmers' Federation on 4 November 1939, Mr E. J. Hogan of Gaulstown stated:

Compulsion must be very ugly to every Irishman. In Ireland it had been used for 700 years. In the last war I tilled up to 30 acres without any compulsion because I was paid for it.¹⁶²

During the First World War Irish produce fetched handsome prices in Britain with one commentator admitting that:

Undoubtedly, in the past we have consistently benefited from the misfortune of others.¹⁶³

In this respect Irish farmers viewed the onset of the Second World War with a 'quiet optimism.'¹⁶⁴ However, Britain's policy of price control ensured that no such bounty was enjoyed during the Emergency. Irish farmers considered it a great injustice that they were compelled to till their land following seven years of economic war with Britain (Anglo-Irish Trade War 1932-38) during which Irish farmland had been starved of fertiliser and with no prospect of improvement.¹⁶⁵ Patrick Belton, Fine Gael Deputy for Dublin County, went as far as to say:

This country this year is probably unfertile or probably less fertile than it has been during the lifetime of the present generation... There is undoubtedly a shortage of fertilisers this year, though we are asked to till one-eighth or 12½ per cent more than last year.¹⁶⁶

Indeed many farmers would have agreed with James Dillon's assertion that:

Tillage without manure is not farming. It is mining – e.g., taking the fertility out of the soil without putting anything back; and no one who is living on the land but a fool or a Fianna Fáil minister would willingly do that.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² *Kilkenny People*, 11 Dec. 1939.

¹⁶³ James Meenan, 'Impact of the war upon Irish economy' in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, xvi, no. 3 (1939-40), p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 237.

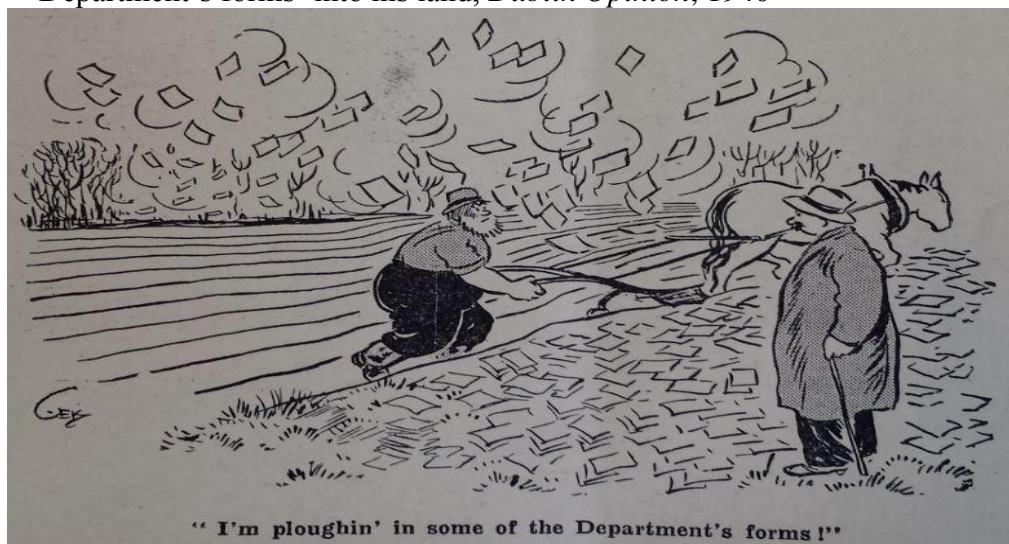
¹⁶⁵ *Irish Times*, 21 Nov. 1939.

¹⁶⁶ DD, Mr Belton, 6 Dec. 1939, Vol. 78, No. 8, Col. 1059.

¹⁶⁷ *Irish Times*, 1 Apr. 1940.

The conditions Irish farmers were facing into in late 1939 contrasted markedly with those enjoyed by their counterparts in Great Britain who were provided with credit, plentiful supplies of fertiliser and access to farm machinery.¹⁶⁸ Prior to the Emergency, superphosphate and compound fertilisers were manufactured in Ireland, but this production was almost entirely dependent on raw materials imported mainly through Britain.¹⁶⁹ In 1938 the Department of Industry and Commerce tried unsuccessfully to persuade the principle manufacturers to lay in stocks of raw materials. The manufacturers cited the lack of storage space and capital. Crucially, it was not anticipated that the area under tillage would need to be massively expanded. In October 1939, John Leydon, Secretary of the Department of Supplies, was assured by representatives of the various British departments concerned that Irish farmers would be treated on the same basis as their British counterparts. Imports for 1940 were reasonable, but in 1941 the position became critical as Britain drastically cut exports of fertilisers to Ireland to just five percent of pre-war purchases.¹⁷⁰

Figure 2.12 In the absence of fertiliser a farmer ploughs ‘some of the Department’s forms’ into his land, *Dublin Opinion*, 1940



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, May 1940, p. 483

¹⁶⁸ *Westmeath Examiner*, 28 Oct. 1939.

¹⁶⁹ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, 1939-45, p. 447.

¹⁷⁰ Daly, *The first department*, p. 238.

Ireland could no longer import phosphates, potash and sulphates of ammonia, although nitrate of soda continued to be available from Chile and Peru.¹⁷¹ The Irish government encouraged the use of natural fertilisers such as manure and seaweed but these were less efficient, and manure became difficult to obtain due to Ireland's falling livestock population.¹⁷² Some relief was provided by domestic phosphate and pyrite deposits located in counties Clare and Wicklow along with imports of phosphates from Spain and Florida, but these only scratched the surface.¹⁷³

The largest increase in tillage was recorded in those areas formerly devoted to dairying and cattle rearing where farmers were far from content to break up their rich grasslands.¹⁷⁴ In other parts of the country, farmers were forced to till land which was simply unsuitable for tillage as was alluded to in *Dublin Opinion* (see Figure 2.13).

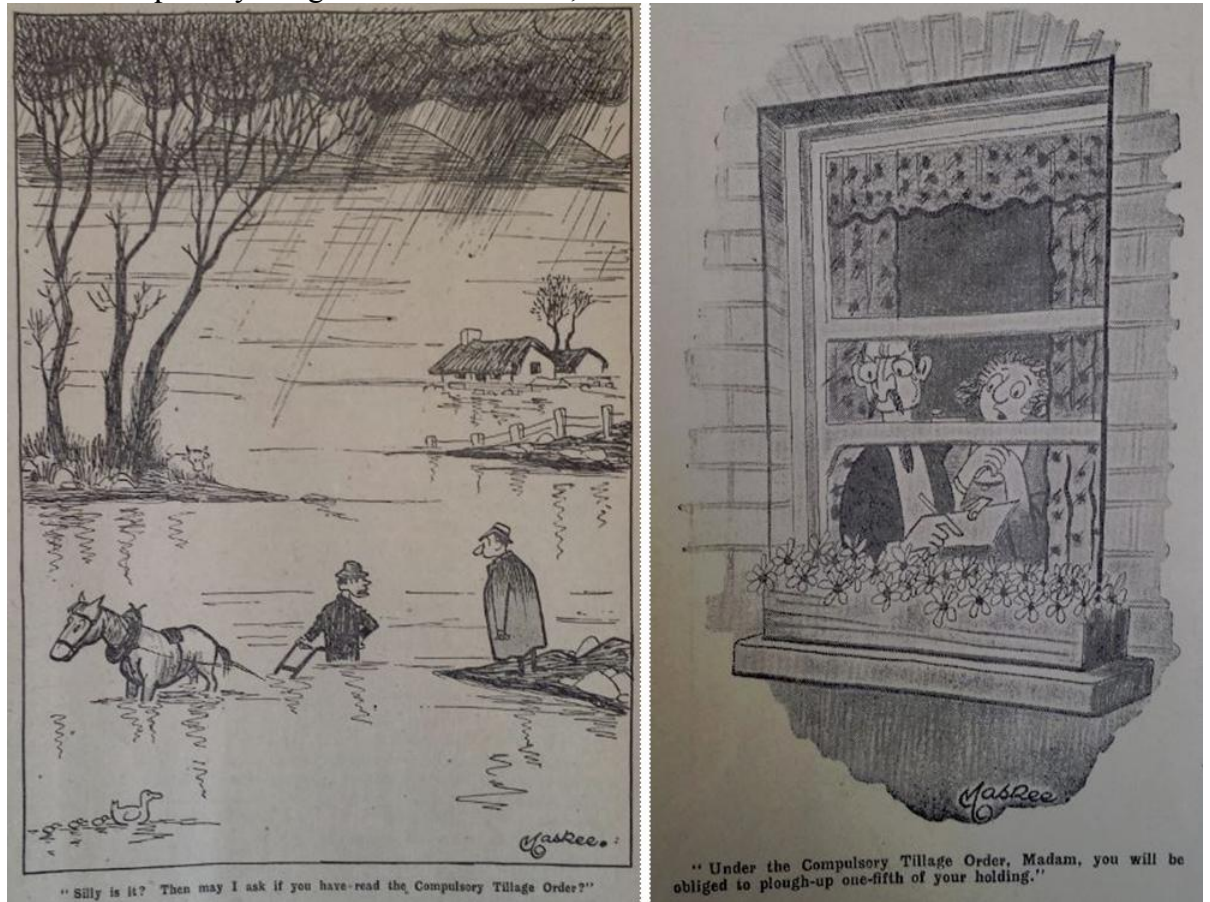
¹⁷¹ Memorandum, transport of essential commodities by Irish Shipping Company: position regarding allocation of shipping space, 9 July 1941 (NAI, TAOIS/S 12574 A, p. 7).

¹⁷² For details on Ireland's livestock population during the years 1939-45, see: *ITJSB*, 1939-45.

¹⁷³ Daly, *The first department*, pp 238-9.

¹⁷⁴ DD, Mr Belton, 6 Dec. 1939, Vol. 78, No. 8, Col. 1059.

Figure 2.13 Comic portrayals in *Dublin Opinion* of the implications of compulsory tillage for 'land holders', 1941-42



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Feb. 1942, p. 1; *Dublin Opinion*, May. 1941, p. 56

Livestock farmers often lacked the technical knowledge needed to till productively while they almost certainly were short of the necessary inputs. As Senator Patrick Baxter put it on 25 October 1939:

While they may be the best judges of stock in the world, it will be found that very few of them can handle a plough.¹⁷⁵

Perhaps the most sensational expression of opposition to the order was the case of the Meath farmer who used his own private plane to 'fly over local churches and GAA pitches on a Sunday morning dropping thousands of leaflets which carried a message opposing compulsory tillage.'¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ DD, Mr Baxter, 25 Oct. 1939, Vol. 23, No. 12, Col. 1291.

¹⁷⁶ *Irish Times*, 21 Nov. 1939; Evans, 'Notorious Anarchists?', p. 199.

By 1941, the quantities of agricultural machinery imported to Ireland had fallen sharply. In 1939, a total of 540 tractors, 211 tractor ploughs, and 105 threshers were imported from various sources. For 1941, these totals were reduced to thirty tractors, 106 tractor ploughs and seventeen threshers.¹⁷⁷ In Britain, the total area of agricultural land under tillage increased from twenty-eight percent in 1939, to forty-one percent in 1941.¹⁷⁸ This was an increase of approximately 3,700,000 acres.¹⁷⁹ This considered it is unsurprising that the British were unwilling to export agricultural inputs to Ireland. Despite the difficulties and the vociferous opposition from much of Ireland's farming community, the area under tillage was increased from 1,500,000 million acres in 1939 to almost 2,500,000 acres in 1943. Yet while the price farmers could obtain for a barrel of the highest quality wheat was increased to 50s. In 1943, the ever-increasing production costs ensured that Ireland's poorest farmers suffered the most as a result of compulsory tillage.¹⁸⁰

On 15 October 1943, the Minister for Agriculture, James Ryan, announced in a Radio Éireann broadcast that the 1944 tillage order would make it mandatory for every farmer of holdings of five or more statute acres to devote a certain portion of his (or her) land to the production of wheat.¹⁸¹ This drastic measure was taken as Ireland's total wheat acreage for 1943 of 509,000 acres was 75,000 short of the 1942 total; this according to Ryan 'left the position in regard to bread supplies precarious.'¹⁸² Ireland was divided into three districts. The wheat quota for District No. 1 was one-tenth, District No. 2 was one-sixteenth, and District No. 3 was one-twenty-fifth.¹⁸³ With rising

¹⁷⁷ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, 1938-45, pp 443-5.

¹⁷⁸ Erin M. K. Weir, 'German submarine blockade, overseas imports, and British military production in World War II' in *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vi, no. 1 (2003), p. 25.

¹⁷⁹ Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Weir, 'German submarine blockade', p. 25.

¹⁸⁰ *ITJSB* (1943), p. 113.

¹⁸¹ *Irish Times*, 16 Oct. 1944.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *ITJSB* (1943), p. 159; For the most part District No. 1 constituted the counties Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford, and parts

production costs and the lack of inputs, wheat tillage became an increasingly unattractive prospect irrespective of the government subsidy. By 1943 patience among the farming community with compulsory tillage and the government's drive for self sufficiency in wheat production was waning but while the wheat acreage declined the total acreage under tillage in 1943 increased. This indicates that many farmers opted to hedge their bets by diversifying their tillage as opposed to concentrating on wheat. As prices were not guaranteed for other crops eligible under the compulsory tillage order, farmers increasingly engaged in the local barter economy. Ryan criticised these farmers for neglecting their duty even though in many cases they were making more productive use of their land.¹⁸⁴ The compulsory wheat quota added insult to injury, but the area under wheat in 1944 was increased by approximately 130,000 acres over its 1943 level to 642,478 acres (see Table 2.8).

of Cork. District No. 2 included counties Clare, Kerry, Longford, Roscommon and parts of Galway while District No. 3 comprised Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Sligo, parts of Cork and parts of Galway.

¹⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 1 Jan. 1944.

Table 2.8 Tillage acreages, yields and yields per acre in Ireland, 1939-45

		Wheat	Corn crops total	Potatoes	Beet	Root and green crops total	Total tillage
1939	Total (statute acres)	255,280	867,943	317,169	41,661	611,766	1,492,002
	Total yield (tons)	255,280		2,998,480	410,403		
	Yield per acre	20 cwt		9.5 tons	9.9 cwt		
1940	Total (statute acres)	305,243	1,121,862	366,738	62,915	704,899	1,845,347
	Total yield (tons)	312,874		3,118,280	660,000		
	Yield per acre	20.5 cwt		8.5 tons	10.5 cwt		
1941	Total (statute acres)	463,206	1,413,196	428,146	78,390	798,571	2,211,767
	Total yield (tons)	435,414		3,689,548	719,533		
	Yield per acre	18.8 cwt		8.6 tons	9.2 cwt		
1942	Total (statute acres)	574,739	1,645,900	425,501	54,888	749,962	2,414,400
	Total yield (tons)	511,518		3,120,307	399,146		
	Yield per acre	17.8 cwt		7.3 tons	7.3 cwt		
1943	Total (statute acres)	509,245	1,662,400	407,576	83,056	782,000	2,444,400
	Total yield (tons)	435,405		3,097,578	732,471		
	Yield per acre	17.1 cwt		7.6 tons	8.8 cwt		
1944	Total (statute acres)	642,487	1,767,386	411,946	81,824	758,385	2,567,143
	Total yield (tons)	5,846,114		3,007,206	630,045		
	Yield per acre	17 cwt		7.3 tons	7.7 cwt		
1945	Total (statute acres)	662,498	1,680,300	387,507	84,522	749,800	2,430,100
	Total yield (tons)	573,061		2,983,804	735,341		
	Yield per acre	17.3 cwt		7.7 tons	8.7 cwt		

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-46

Bread

Twinned with compulsory tillage and the campaign to grow more wheat was the controls which existed around that staple of the Irish diet, bread. While official bread rationing was not introduced to Ireland until 1947, bread and flour supplies were heavily controlled to ensure equitable distribution. Foremost among the regulations were those relating to the extraction rate of flour from wheat. Pre-war weekly consumption stood at 52,000 sacks of 280lbs of flour of seventy per cent extraction which produced a white loaf with the remaining offals being used as animal feed.¹⁸⁵ As

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum for Government, Flour and Bread Prices, n.d. (NAI, INDC/EMR/3/440, p. 1).

wheat imports dwindled, higher than normal minimum extraction rates were introduced to ensure the wheat supply stretched as far as possible.

Table 2.9 Flour extraction rate from wheat in Ireland, 1939-45

Year	1939	1940	1941*	1942	1943	1944	1945
Rate	70%	75%	95%	100%	95%	95%	90%

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-45

* The extraction rate was first raised to eighty and then ninety percent in 1940 and 1941 before being set at ninety-five percent on 21 Mar. 1941.

Flour of high extraction produced a coarse loaf of a brown-grey colour and epithets like ‘black bread’ were common.¹⁸⁶ In printed material, the term ‘black bread’ or the word ‘black’ in relation to bread was banned by the censor in January 1941.¹⁸⁷ So accustomed to the taste of white bread had the Irish palate become that some consumers – in an act of desperation – purchased flour sieves to sieve the flour to make it whiter. This practice along with the sale of the flour sieves was soon made illegal, although this control like many others could have been easily ignored.¹⁸⁸ Irrespective of the minimum extraction rates, there persisted throughout the Emergency the belief that the best flour was reserved for Dublin, a notion which was completely unfounded.¹⁸⁹ Wheat supplies were stretched and economy and the consumption of substitutes such as vegetables were advised. The problem of how to supplement the bread supply with available substitutes using scanty fuel supplies was regularly considered. Recipes for potato bread, potato cakes, and potato scones which usually entailed mixing mashed potato with the wholemeal flour were widely published.¹⁹⁰ The palatability of the new loaf was not the only cause for concern. As will be discussed in Chapter V, bread produced from flour of

¹⁸⁶ *Irish Press*, 9 Jan. 1941.

¹⁸⁷ Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945, neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996), p. 256.

¹⁸⁸ *Donegal News*, 27 Nov. 1943.

¹⁸⁹ *Connacht Sentinel*, 14 Nov. 1944.

¹⁹⁰ *Kerryman*, 21 Mar. 1942.

a high extraction rate was increasingly cited as the reason for the increased incidence of rickets.¹⁹¹

Bread was a vital constituent part of the dietary for Ireland's poor; 'bread and spread' meals were often consumed three times daily by over half of Dublin's tenement population.¹⁹² Households with several children frequently ate between twenty and thirty-two pound loaves weekly.¹⁹³ The government therefore subsidised flour prices during the Emergency to the sum of approximately £2,000,000 annually in order to ensure that this basic commodity remained affordable to everyone.¹⁹⁴ Price subsidisation did not prevent a rise in the price of bread, it mitigated it.

Table 2.10 Average price of a two-pound loaf of bread in Ireland, 1939-45

Year	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Price	5 1/4d.	5 3/4d.	5 3/4d.	6 1/4d.	6 1/2d.	6 3/4d.	6 3/4d.

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-45

On the ground, the production of and the sale of flour and bread was (in theory) strictly controlled. Only under licence granted by the Department of Supplies were millers, wholesalers, bakers, and retailers permitted to produce and sell flour and bread. This facilitated the equal distribution of wheat supplies by Grain Importers (Éire) Ltd to millers based on their pre-war purchases. Grain Importers (Éire) Ltd (which was representative of millers and grain distributors) was a non-profit company established on 14 October 1939 with the sole licence to secure and purchase the country's requirements of imported wheat.¹⁹⁵ Joint purchasing through companies like Grain Importers aimed to prevent existing companies competing for the limited supplies.

¹⁹¹ Department of Local Government and Health, Memorandum for the Taoisigh, 3 May 1944 (NAI, S12064a).

¹⁹² Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, Part I, methods of dietary survey and results from Dublin investigation* (Dublin, 1946), p. 13.

¹⁹³ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 68

¹⁹⁴ Proposed subsidy for flour and bread prices, n.d. (NAI, INDC/EMR/3/440, p. 1).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

In 1941, the controls around flour and bread were intensified as was the drive to produce more wheat. Just as the minimum compulsory tillage quota was increased from one-eighth to one-sixth for 1941, the flour extraction rate from home-grown wheat was raised from ninety to ninety-five percent on 21 March 1941. The maximum amount of flour to be released by the millers was also reduced by ten percent to 48,000 sacks of 280lbs.¹⁹⁶ Other controls were also introduced to conserve flour supplies. Hotels, restaurants and clubs were banned from serving more than one portion of bread with any meal of two or more courses, or any bread dish exceeding four ounces unless a customer requested it and paid an additional charge. All menus had to bear the words 'it is illegal to serve wheaten foods with more than one course.'¹⁹⁷ In March 1941 the use of wheat, wheaten flour or wheatmeal for animal feeding was also made illegal as was the sale of wheaten foods at race meetings and other sporting events.¹⁹⁸ Despite the increasing regulation, there remained a general sense in the country that Ireland's wheat position was secure.¹⁹⁹ While government announcements urged economy, the tillage quota had been increased and foreign wheat continued to flow into the country albeit in reduced quantities.

1942 was less comfortable than 1941. On 21 February 1942, the Department of Agriculture published an announcement in the press stating that 'the flour and bread position is serious.'²⁰⁰ This development was due to the shortfall in the 1941 harvest of an estimated 100,000 tons coupled with the difficulties encountered importing sufficient wheat supplies which left the country with only enough wheat to last nine months.²⁰¹ This forced the Department of Supplies to raise the extraction rate to 100 percent. The

¹⁹⁶ Memorandum for Government, flour and bread prices, n.d., p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ *ITJSB*, xvi, no. 1 (1941), p. 12.

¹⁹⁸ History of flour and bread rationing, 1952 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/24, p. 3).

¹⁹⁹ *Meath Chronicle*, 6 Sept. 1941.

²⁰⁰ *Irish Press*, 21 Feb. 1942.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*; Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 68.

government implored the public to cut down their daily bread consumption by consuming substitutes, but generally these were more costly and difficult to prepare.²⁰² The announcement made in late February 1942 that a twenty percent reduction in bread and flour consumption was being sought caused panic buying and a run on bakers' shops.²⁰³ Worried Dubliners queued for hours to ensure they obtained their bread supply. Alfie Byrne, Independent Deputy for Dublin North-East, reported how queues outside bakeries in areas such as Boland's Mill, Marino, the Coombe, and Wexford Street containing hundreds of people formed as early as six o'clock in the morning.²⁰⁴ Some who queued were reportedly unable to obtain any bread at all.²⁰⁵ Richard Mulcahy recounted the situation of a family consisting of three adults and eight children who lived on the North side of the city and were dealt with and were known by a local baker. This family normally consumed thirty-eight two pound loaves weekly but in the week following Lemass' announcement, they succeeded in getting 'with a considerable amount of difficulty' just nineteen loaves.²⁰⁶ The poor suffered further when bakers and retailers took matters into their own hands, rationing their supplies in an attempt to serve as many as possible.²⁰⁷ At the same time those with means could purchase what flour they wanted on the black market with white flour reportedly being sold openly on the streets of Dublin for 1s. 2d. per lb.²⁰⁸

The shortages experienced in Dublin from early to mid 1942 were not in isolation. On 4 March 1942, Richard Mulcahy addressed the issue of the supply and distribution of bread in Ireland. He explained how he had received communications on the matter from places as far apart as Donegal and Tipperary. One letter described the

²⁰² *Irish Press*, 14 Feb. 1942.

²⁰³ *ITJSB* (1942), p. 17; Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 241.

²⁰⁴ DD, Mr Byrne (Senior), 26 May. 1942, Vol. 87, No. 1, Col. 5.

²⁰⁵ DD, Richard Mulcahy, 15 Apr. 1942, Vol. 86, No. 4, Col. 433.

²⁰⁶ DD, Richard Mulcahy, 4 Mar. 1942, Vol. 85, No. 15, Col. 2147.

²⁰⁷ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 68

²⁰⁸ *Irish Times*, 24 Mar. 1942.

position in Cashel where it was said ‘the poor are like hunted rats looking for bread.’²⁰⁹ Not wanting to cause a panic, the government decided to censor this debate.²¹⁰ While the national press observed the censor’s rules which barred critical assessment of Ireland’s supplies situation, the regional press was not so discreet.²¹¹ On 18 April 1942 it was reported in the *Southern Star* that the bread and flour situation in Glengarriff, County Cork was acute.²¹² The *Tuam Herald* was even more explicit citing shortages in locations including Galway, Mayo, Donegal, and Connemara. One article quoted Galway county councillors who knew cases of families who travelled up to fifteen miles to secure supplies and families who had lived for two weeks on just potatoes.²¹³ Back in Dublin, Lemass maintained that there were sufficient supplies in the city to meet the demand, and blamed any shortages that had developed on greedy consumers and unscrupulous retailers. Lemass even suggested that the queues that formed in Dublin were unnecessary citing the claims of his department’s inspectors who said that upon investigation they found that nine out of ten people were queuing not out of anxiety but because they wanted fresh bread.²¹⁴ Lemass attributed shortages in other areas to transport difficulties and responded by dispatching extra supplies of flour.²¹⁵

In spite of Lemass’ assurances to the contrary, by April 1942 a rationing scheme had been drawn up and it was anticipated that bread would be the first commodity to be rationed.²¹⁶ Prior to its introduction, imports of wheat from Britain were resumed.²¹⁷ In March 1942, Lemass banned the export of beer as a result of the scarcity of wheat. Ireland was a major exporter of beer to the UK supplying over 900,000 barrels to it in

²⁰⁹ DD, Richard Mulcahy, 4 Mar. 1942, Vol 85, No, 15. Cols. 2146-51.

²¹⁰ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 241.

²¹¹ Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland 1939-45* (Dublin, 2006), p. 87.

²¹² *Southern Star*, 18 Apr. 1942.

²¹³ *Tuam Herald*, 25 Apr. 1942.

²¹⁴ DD, Mr Lemass, 15 Apr. 1942, Vol. 86, No. 4, Col. 436.

²¹⁵ *Tuam Herald*, 25 Apr. 1942.

²¹⁶ *Leitrim Observer*, 18 Apr. 1942.

²¹⁷ History of flour and bread rationing, 1952, p. 3.

1941. ‘Faced with a thirsty garrison of American and British troops in Northern Ireland, the British agreed to release stocks of wheat and coal in return for beer’ and so bread rationing in 1942 was averted.²¹⁸

Sugar

Before the Emergency, average per capita consumption of sugar stood at one and a half pounds per week with total national consumption being approximately 100,000 tons annually.²¹⁹ Comhlucht Siúicre Éireann (the Irish Sugar Company) founded in 1933, was by 1938 catering on average for eighty percent of domestic sugar demand.²²⁰ Displacing the large amount of imported cane sugar was sugar beet both cultivated and imported. Sourced primarily from Germany and Holland, sugar beet was processed in Ireland’s four sugar factories located at Carlow, Thurles, Mallow and Tuam.²²¹ During 1938 and 1939, the Irish Sugar Company made no attempt to build up a reserve stock of sugar. The folly of this was soon exposed. After the war broke out the British government which promptly cancelled all export contracts. This left Ireland short 44,000 tons of sugar or forty percent of domestic requirements up until September 1940.²²² On the ground, there was massive panic-buying and hoarding of sugar as retailers and consumers attempted to secure their requirements.

²¹⁸ Evans, Seán Lemass, p. 125.

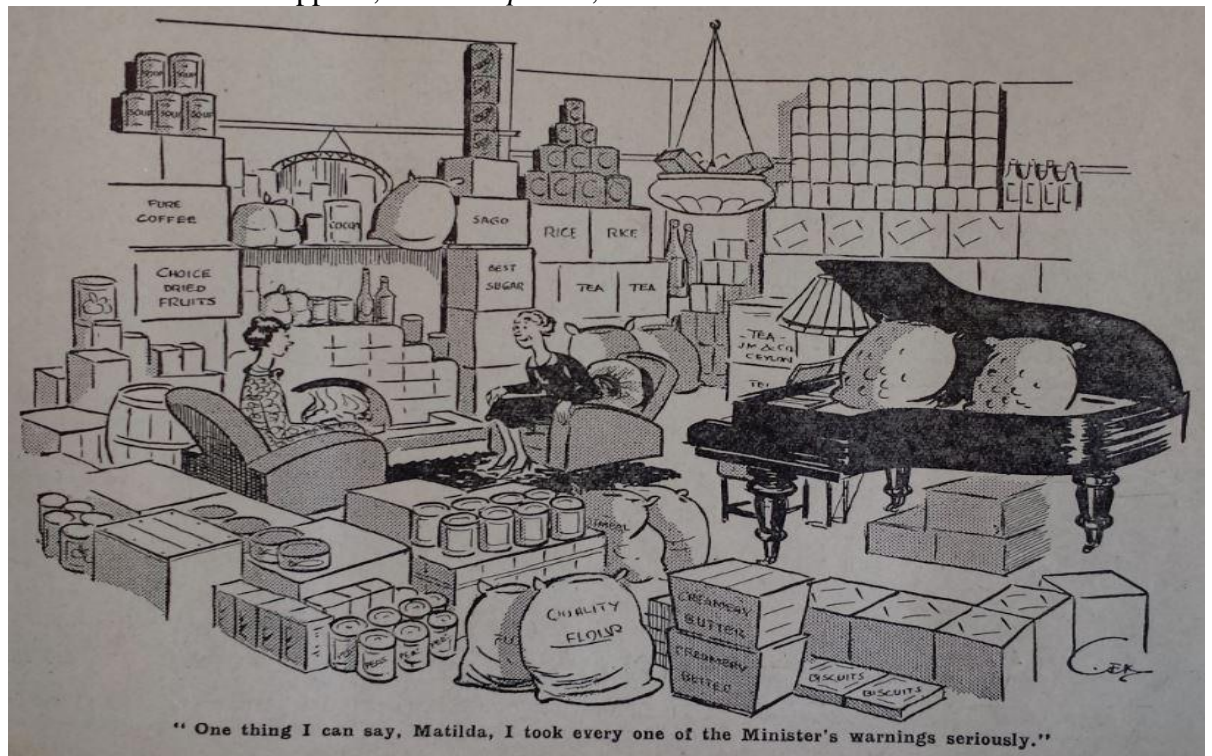
²¹⁹ Tea and sugar – maintenance of supplies and equitable distribution during the Emergency, 1939-45 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/17, p. 7).

²²⁰ Andy Bielenberg and Raymond Ryan, *An economic history of Ireland since independence* (Oxford, 2013), p. 14.

²²¹ Tea and sugar, 1939-45, pp 7-9.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Figure 2.14 A well-to-do housewife hoards on the recommendations of the Minister for Supplies, *Dublin Opinion*, 1941



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Feb. 1941, p. 1

In the worst position were the poor who were unable to afford to lay in stocks. Compounding their plight were the unauthorised rationing efforts employed by many traders typified by favouritism and over-charging. It was reportedly common for retailers to withhold sugar from consumers unless they first purchased tea.²²³ Facing a crisis, the Irish Sugar Company increased its efforts to secure Ireland's sugar supplies. In mid-October 1940 the company entered into contracts with British brokers, and with the British Ministry of Food's approval arranged for the export to Ireland of both processed and raw sugar sourced primarily from Central America. In this way the Irish Sugar Company was able to import 88,665 tons of sugar from the end of October 1940 until the end of 1941. This combined with home-grown sugar beet was sufficient to meet domestic requirements.²²⁴ While the short-term security of Ireland's sugar supply

²²³ *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1939.

²²⁴ Tea and sugar, 1939-45, pp 16-7.

was assured, it proved impossible to keep the price of sugar down. Fixed at 3*d.* in September 1939, it was increased by fifty percent to 4 ½*d.* in early November 1939 on account of the rise in prices more generally.²²⁵

Table 2.11 Average price of sugar (per lb.) in Ireland, 1939-45

Year beginning Feb.	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Price	3 1/4 <i>d.</i>	4 3/4 <i>d.</i>	4 3/4 <i>d.</i>	4 3/4 <i>d.</i>	5 <i>d.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-45

Other than wheat, sugar beet was the only other crop for which Irish farmers were guaranteed a price during the Emergency. Its cultivation was encouraged under compulsory tillage and the area under beet rose from 41,611 statute acres in 1939 to 78,390 statute acres in 1941 (see Table 2.8). There appeared to be plentiful supplies of sugar in Ireland. Aside from its price being controlled, the sale of sugar was largely unregulated; the government and Comhlucht Siúicre Éireann encouraged the public to ‘lay in stores’.²²⁶ This lax attitude towards the sugar supply led to substantial losses to the black market and encouraged the smuggling of sugar to Northern Ireland. Rationed in Britain in January 1940, sugar, along with butter and bacon, was one of the first foods to be brought under control.²²⁷ North of the border black-market sugar could fetch two to four times the price it could in the south.²²⁸ All of this culminated in serious over-buying of sugar. The knock-on effects of this was soon felt with one Dublin retailer claiming that he was receiving only twenty-five percent of his normal supplies. Another commenting on the cross-border black-market trade said:

Granted we are getting flour and tea in exchange... but it is no good telling that to a customer who is looking for sugar. He cannot get the tea, and the price of smuggled white flour is prohibitive so far as the ordinary artisan is concerned. As always, the rich can get what they want.²²⁹

²²⁵ *Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1939.

²²⁶ *Connaught Telegraph*, 7 Dec. 1940.

²²⁷ Jules Backman, *Rationing and price control in Great Britain* (Washington, 1943), p. 25.

²²⁸ Tea and sugar, 1939-45, p. 104.

²²⁹ *Irish Times*, 25 July 1941.

Complaints of shortages spurred the government to introduce a quota-based rationing system. Wholesalers and retailers were licensed; consumers were registered with retailers and on 9 August 1941 the ration was fixed at one pound per person weekly (amounting to eighty percent of normal consumption).²³⁰ Then retailers and wholesalers forwarded monthly purchases to the Department of Supplies who granted allocations based on the submissions.²³¹

In 1942 the total acreage sown with sugar beet was 23,502 acres short of the 1941 figure (see Table 2.8) although the area under corn crops increased by 200,000 acres. Average beet yields per acre steadily decreased from 1938, profits were falling, fertiliser was in short supply, and un-mechanised beet tillage was hard work. All of this made beet tillage unattractive. Anticipating a shortage, the Department of Supplies reduced the sugar ration to three-quarters of a pound per person from 4 April 1942, but problems with the quota rationing system meant losses continued.²³² As deliveries to traders were based on previous requirements as opposed to actual needs, surpluses could be sold on the black market.²³³ The slack regulations around the issuing of sugar to catering establishments which were determined by the wholesalers and retailers were wide open to abuse and susceptible to favouritism.²³⁴ Coupon rationing was thus introduced on 1 August 1942. All the way up the supply chain from the consumer to the Department of Supplies, allocations were based upon the submission of coupons. Institutions and catering establishments could obtain sugar on the basis of the number of residents or the average number of guests. In 1942, there were approximately 21,000 retailers, 430 wholesalers, 10,157 catering establishments, and 1,436 institutions

²³⁰ Table showing the position regarding foodstuffs which were rationed during the period between 1939 and 1945 (NAI, INDC/EMR/8/54, p.1).

²³¹ Tea and sugar, 1939-45, p. 29.

²³² Table showing the position regarding foodstuffs, 1939-45, p.1.

²³³ Tea and sugar, 1939-45, p. 35.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

registered with the Department of Supplies handling a combined monthly average of 12,500,000 coupons.²³⁵ This system ensured that the quantities of sugar granted corresponded to actual requirements, but in spite of the new scheme, just a month later the ration was reduced to a half a pound per person weekly.²³⁶

So grave was the sugar beet shortage following the harvest of 1942 that Tuam sugar beet factory almost closed down. Only under the strenuous efforts of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, Dr Walsh, and Fianna Fáil Deputy, Mark Killilea, was the factory kept open. The farmers felt the price they were getting for beet was too low, but the lack of fertiliser was a major problem. To increase yields, farmers in coastal areas often substituted seaweed for imported fertilisers, but in late 1942 the *Connacht Tribune* reported that there was very little seaweed available as it had been consistently cut in the previous years. The point was made that there was insufficient supply for the locals therefore implying that transport of seaweed to inland areas was totally out of the question. The Emergency caused a shortage of many commodities, but the fact that seaweed was in short supply is astonishing. According to reports, seaweed was in such high demand by the spring of 1942 that a load was being sold for more than the price of a load of turf.²³⁷ As seaweed was not regulated under price control it is a perfect example of what happened to commodities that went unregulated. To tackle the sugar beet problem in the northwest, a joint committee of Tuam Parish Council and Tuam Town Commissioners suggested that manure should be distributed by the Irish Sugar Company; the price of manure controlled; manure merchants be registered, and the weekly export of seaweed from Galway to Britain be stopped.²³⁸ Not a single one of these recommendations was implemented as they would have proven impossible to

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 32-48.

²³⁶ *Irish Press*, 1 Sept. 1942.

²³⁷ *Connacht Tribune*, 7 Nov. 1942.

²³⁸ *Tuam Herald*, 9 Jan. 1943.

regulate. The total area under beet expanded during the 1943, 1944 and 1945 growing seasons when the price offered to farmers was improved (see Table 2.8). This situation coupled with the imposition of the coupon system and the half-pound ration brought stability to Ireland's sugar supply.

Table 2.12 Ireland's principal rationed foodstuffs, 1941-45

Commodity	Ration Period	Amount of ration
Sugar	9 Aug. 1941	1 lb. per head per week
	4 Apr. 1942	3/4 lb. per head per week
	29 Aug. 1942	1/2 lb. per head per week
	5 June. 1943	3/4 lb. per head per week
	4 Aug. 1945	1/2 lb. per head per week
Butter	19 Sept. 1942	3/4 lb. per head per week in the metropolitan area
	31 Oct. 1942	1/2 lb. per head per week in the metropolitan area
	19 Dec. 1942	3/4 lb. per head per week in the metropolitan area
	2 Jan. 1943	1/2 lb. per head per week in the metropolitan area
	5 June. 1943	1/2 lb. Per head per week applied to entire state
	8 Jan. 1944	6 oz per head per week
	4 Nov. 1944	1/2 lb. Per head per week
3 Feb. 1945	6 oz per head per week along with 2 oz. Of margarine	
Tea	5 Apr. 1941	1 oz per head per week
	19 Apr. 1941	1/2 oz per head per week
	18 Oct. 1941	1 oz per head per week
	3 Jan. 1942	1/2 oz per head per week
	5 Dec. 1942	1 oz per head per week
	3 Apr. 1943	3/4 oz per head per week
	1 July. 1944	1/2 oz per head per week
	2 Dec. 1944	3/4 oz per head per week
	28 Apr. 1945	1/2 oz per head per week

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Statement showing the position regarding foodstuffs which were rationed during the period between 1939 and 1945 (NAI, IND/EMR/8/54)

Butter

Two types of butter were produced in post-independence Ireland, namely creamery and farm butter. The heavily-salted manually-produced farm butter was one of Ireland's largest exports to Britain for two or three centuries before 1900 though it was

often criticised for its inconsistent quality.²³⁹ Creamery butter was an innovation of the late nineteenth century; its manufacture involved the mechanised separation of cream from milk which was achieved at much higher proportions than the traditional farm butter. A uniform product, it tasted different to farm butter because of its lower salt content.²⁴⁰ Ireland had a long history of exporting dairy produce, especially to the British market; domestic shortages of dairy products were therefore not anticipated during the Emergency.²⁴¹ At the same time, dairy products like butter and milk were essential commodities, staples of the Irish diet. Like the other essentials then, the maximum retail price of butter was quickly brought under control by the Department of Supplies, increasing by only 1*d.* per pound between November 1939 and November 1941 (See Table 2.13).

Table 2.13 Average price of creamery butter (lb) in Ireland, 1939-45

Year	Nov. 1939	Nov. 1940	Nov. 1941	Nov. 1942	Nov. 1943	Nov. 1944	Nov. 1945
Price	1 <i>s.</i> 6 1/2 <i>d.</i>	1 <i>s.</i> 7 1/2 <i>d.</i>	1 <i>s.</i> 7 1/2 <i>d.</i>	2 <i>s.</i> 1/2 <i>d.</i>	2 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i>	2 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i>	2 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i>

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1938-45

Creamery butter, and the cheaper margarine were consumed largely in urban areas with combined consumption for 1939 equalling 563,556 cwt.²⁴² Added to this was an annual production of approximately 300,00 cwt of farm butter, most of which was consumed in the localities in which it was produced and rarely sold outside these areas.²⁴³

²³⁹ Cormac O Gráda, 'The beginnings of the Irish creamery system, 1800-1914' in *Economic History Review*, xxx, no. 2 (1977), p. 285.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 286-7.

²⁴¹ Daly, *The first department*, p. 248.

²⁴² Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Historical survey - butter and margarine rationing, part I, 1942-5 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/25, p.1).

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.2.

Table 2.14 Production, export, import and consumption of creamery butter and margarine (cwt) in Ireland, 1938-43

	Butter				Margarine			
	Production	Exports	Imports	Consumption	Production	Exports	Imports	Consumption
1938	766,460	327,636	5,753	435,288	103,238	11,246	38	92,037
1939	718,419	223,501	2,200	452,512	116,395	5,392	50	111,053
1940	657,956	241,988	111	477,936	123,008	1,221	45	121,832
1941	663,787	104,856	28	466,221	75,910	nil	21	75,931
1942	614,994	1,149	nil	612,743	nil	nil	169	169
1943	599,650	nil	nil	607,457	nil	nil	170	170

Source: Historical survey - butter and margarine rationing, part I, 1942-45 (NAI, Department of Industry and Commerce: Emergency Files, 7/25), p. 1

In 1942, a number of factors combined to place the security of Ireland's butter supply into doubt. The bulk of Ireland's creamery butter production was conducted in the rich dairying counties of Limerick, Kerry, Cork and Tipperary where the majority of the country's 168 central creameries were located.²⁴⁴ Coincidentally, the largest increases in the area under tillage took place in these counties which lacked a tradition of tillage. In counties such as Tipperary, compulsory tillage consumed land formerly devoted to dairying. In a similar fashion to wheat, the price farmers could obtain for their milk of 7d. per gallon was considered an insufficient incentive to encourage them to produce milk for the butter industry.²⁴⁵ Farmers even opted to feed their calves on their cows as opposed to selling their milk.²⁴⁶ The scarcity of imported feeding stuffs damaged yields, while rising labour and transport costs made it uneconomic to produce milk in large quantities.²⁴⁷ Of a more serious nature was the temptation to divert butter to the black market where it could fetch higher as much as 7s. 6d. a pound north of the border.²⁴⁸ While it is impossible to ascertain just how much butter was sold on the black market, prosecutions for the illegal trafficking and sale of butter were frequently reported and Louie Bennett was 'told on good authority that quantities [of butter] were going across

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ *Irish Times*, 8 May 1942.

²⁴⁶ *Irish Independent*, 19 Mar. 1943.

²⁴⁷ 'Butter' in *Irish Monthly*, lxxvi, no. 898 (1948), p. 149.

²⁴⁸ DD, Dr Hannigan, 14 Apr. 1943, Vol. 89, No. 15, Col. 1939.

the border all the time.²⁴⁹ Poor weather also hampered production and rather than pay the extra transport costs to Dublin, creameries increased their business closer to the source of production.²⁵⁰ These factors contributed to bring about a decline in production of creamery butter (see Table 2.14). Added to this was Irish margarine production which ceased in 1942 owing to the lack of raw materials (primarily vegetable oils) and was not revived in Ireland until 1945 (see Table 2.13).²⁵¹ The lack of margarine and other fats boosted demand for butter; consumption increased from 452,512 cwt in 1939 to 612,743 cwt in 1942 (see Table 2.13).

In 1941 the butter shortage really began to manifest itself, particularly in Dublin. With demand for butter increasing and the supply decreasing, creameries, wholesalers, and retailers took it upon themselves to ration their supplies. The impact that this was having was illustrated when Labour Deputy for Carlow-Kildare, William Norton, described the case of one Dublin shopkeeper, whose shop was situated in a built-up working-class area. In 1940, the shopkeeper's purchases of butter amounted to 144 lbs. per month, but in January 1941 the shopkeeper secured just 45 lbs., an amount which dropped to 12lbs. in February 1941.²⁵² At the same time, Irish creamery butter continued to be exported with 104,856 cwt leaving Irish shores in 1941 (see Table 2.13). In 1942 the butter shortage deepened. The Department of Supplies required butter sales to be reduced by twelve and a half percent, but in reality creameries, wholesalers, and retailers rationed supplies at their own discretion.²⁵³ The inequality of distribution was apparent in Galway where it was reported that one shopkeeper, Mr Lenihan of Eyre Square, received eighty-five percent of his normal order, but in contrast Mr

²⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 17 July 1942.

²⁵⁰ Historical survey - butter and margarine rationing, part I, 1942-45 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/25, p. 2).

²⁵¹ *Irish Times*, 30 Dec. 1944.

²⁵² DD, Mr Norton, 13 Mar. 1941, Vol. 82, No. 5, Cols. 627-8.

²⁵³ *Irish Times*, 27 Feb. 1942.

McCambridge of Shop Street, received just one-eighth.²⁵⁴ On 21 April 1941, Independent Deputy for Dublin South, Dr Joseph Hannigan, described the situation in the capital:

Butter has practically completely disappeared from shop windows. We have now not alone the depressing spectacle of bread queues, but the spectacle of butter queues as well.²⁵⁵

Alfie Byrne depicted a scarcity which affected both the poorer and more affluent parts of the city. While some could obtain about a quarter of their normal supplies, he explained that in the tenements not even the smallest quantity of butter could be got, going on to add:

There is no dripping... no lard, no margarine.²⁵⁶

It was the poor and casually employed with small wages who suffered the worst hardships. The shortage of other fats forced them onto the more expensive butter which further depleted their budgets. Then they were faced with the problem of having to obtain butter from shopkeepers in whose interest it was to serve their regular customers first. The more affluent classes could turn to the black market, the poor were not so fortunate, and yet it was they who were most reliant on 'bread and spread' meals.

The summer of 1942 brought with it a seasonal increase in the butter supply and thus a brief respite, but towards its end as creamery butter started to become scarce once more it became apparent that it would have to be rationed. The scheme introduced on 19 September 1942 applied to the County Borough of Dublin, the Administrative County of Dublin, and the Urban District of Bray. It was reasoned that rationing need not be extended further as the rest of the country would be able to draw on supplies of farm butter. Wholesalers and retailers were licensed and consumers instructed to register at a single retailer with the domestic ration being fixed at three-quarters of a pound per

²⁵⁴ *Connacht Tribune*, 28 Mar. 1942.

²⁵⁵ DD, Dr Hannigan, 21 Apr. 1942, Vol. 86, No. 6, Col. 787.

²⁵⁶ DD, Mr Byrne, 21 Apr. 1942, Vol. 86, No. 6, Col. 788.

person per week.²⁵⁷ Just over a month later the ration was reduced to a half pound per week.²⁵⁸ From 25 November 1942 it was made illegal to serve butter at lunch or dinner in catering establishments and it had to be indicated as such on the menu.²⁵⁹

Once butter rationing was introduced to Dublin and Bray, the complaints made throughout the country about the shortage of creamery butter increased. On 6 February 1943, the *Nenagh Guardian* reported that there had been no butter in Killaloe county Clare for two weeks, while Fine Gael Deputy for Meath-Westmeath, Captain Giles, stated in the Dáil on 10 March 1943 that it was common for agricultural workers to eat dry bread.²⁶⁰ The case of Killaloe situated on the Clare/Tipperary border is interesting; here was famine in the midst of plenty for Tipperary was a rich dairying county. Rationing and the transportation of creamery butter to Dublin transplanted scarcity from Dublin to the rest of the country. It left those living outside Dublin in the smaller towns who depended on creamery butter between a rock and a hard place. It was reported in the *Connacht Sentinel* that one disgruntled worker stated:

All the talk about the equality of sacrifice is all eyewash. Little wonder that the working class are trying to escape this hypocrisy and a pale ghost of a democracy.²⁶¹

Due to mounting pressure, rationing was extended to the whole of the country on 5 June 1943 with the ration fixed at half a pound. Persons who produced their own butter or purchased butter direct from farmers were prohibited from registering. By the end of November 1943, 2,500,000 consumers were registered with retailers while 1,000,000 were availing of the un-rationed farm butter. Due to the increased demand, the creamery butter ration was dropped to six ounces per person per week from 8 January 1944; this

²⁵⁷ Historical survey - butter and margarine, 1942-45, p. 3.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁵⁹ *ITJSB* (1943), p. 68.

²⁶⁰ *Nenagh Guardian*, 6 Feb. 1943; DD, Captain Giles, 10 Mar. 1943, Vol. 89, No. 9, Col. 1167.

²⁶¹ *Connacht Sentinel*, 13 Apr. 1943.

was maintained until 4 November 1944 when it was increased to a half a pound once more.²⁶²

Tea

Tea was another of the foodstuffs to be rationed in Ireland during the Emergency. Regarded by the Irish not as a luxury but a necessity, Ireland ranked second highest for tea consumption in the world per head of capita with an average consumption of two and a half ounces weekly, or eight to nine pounds of tea per head annually.²⁶³ Total yearly consumption of tea averaged around 25,000,000 lbs with consumption in Britain averaging 435,000,000 lbs.²⁶⁴ Tea was imported into Ireland from British India (seventy-seven percent), the Dutch East Indies (eighteen percent), and other countries (five percent) via brokers based in London.²⁶⁵ It was then distributed to the retail trade by Ireland's principle wholesalers who were organised into the Irish Wholesale Tea Dealers' Association. As discussed in Chapter I, tea was one of the first commodities to be brought under review by the Emergency Supplies Branch, but for various reasons already outlined, the Branch's efforts to establish a reserve achieved limited results. Following the outbreak of war the British Ministry of Food proposed to make itself responsible for the entirety of Ireland's tea requirements in order to preclude competition with Irish tea importers for valuable shipping space. The Department of Supplies agreed to the offer in April 1940.²⁶⁶ The introduction of tea rationing to Britain on 6 July 1940 was a worrisome development for Ireland.²⁶⁷ Yet Mr H. Broadley, of the Ministry of Food, was quick to allay any fears informing the Department of Supplies that Ireland would continue to receive tea supplies equivalent to 100 percent of the

²⁶² Historical survey - butter and margarine, 1942-45, p. 10.

²⁶³ Control of Supplies, tea, 20 Sept. 1938 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/25, p. 1).

²⁶⁴ Ibid.; *The Times*, 8 Apr. 1940.

²⁶⁵ Part II, Tea and sugar, 1939-45, p. 4.

²⁶⁶ Mr D. Shanagher of the Department of Supplies to Mr H. Broadley of the Ministry of Food, 29 Apr. 1940 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/25).

²⁶⁷ Backman, *Rationing and price control*, p. 25.

country's normal purchases.²⁶⁸ With this knowledge the government encouraged consumers to purchase tea in excess of their normal requirements if it was possible for them to do so.²⁶⁹

In spite of Britain's promise regarding tea Ireland's tea allocation, British exports to Ireland did not fully cover requirements and took no account of the supplies formerly imported from the Dutch East Indies and other countries. Then on 16 January 1941, without any warning, the British government cut exports of tea to Ireland to eighty-five percent of normal requirements which was in line with the reduction in Britain. The quota was reduced to sixty percent in February, fifty percent in March, and twenty-five percent in April.²⁷⁰ Ireland was left with twenty-five percent of normal requirements while Britain continued to have eighty-five percent of her normal supply.²⁷¹ Britain's sudden turn around forced the Department of Supplies to move hastily to implement a rationing scheme. The wholesale, retail and catering trades were brought under control in March 1941 with 21,000 retailers licensed. Registration cards were delivered to consumers by the Local Security Force and they then registered with retailers.²⁷² Approximately 650,000 households registered prior to the implementation of rationing on 5 April 1941.²⁷³ In February, it had been envisaged that a weekly ration of two ounces per head would be granted, but the rapidity with which the British government scaled back tea exports to Ireland meant that soon after the implementation of the scheme the ration had to be fixed at just half an ounce.²⁷⁴ Irrespective of the British Ministry of Food's assurances, the government's lack of foresight severely

²⁶⁸ Mr H. Broadley of the Ministry of Food to Mr D. Shanagher of the Department of Supplies, 13 July 1940 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/25).

²⁶⁹ *Irish Press*, 11 Oct. 1940.

²⁷⁰ DD, Mr Lemass, 4 Dec. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 8, Cols. 1290-1.

²⁷¹ Mary E. Daly, *Social and economic history of Ireland since 1800* (Dublin, 1981), p. 156.

²⁷² Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War, farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester, 2014), p. 47.

²⁷³ Part II, Tea and sugar, 1939-45, pp 11-5.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

worked to Ireland's detriment and made necessary the imposition of the half-ounce ration. In the Dáil, on 16 January 1941, Fine Gael Deputy for Laois-Offaly, Thomas O'Higgins (Snr.), summarised the government's announcements made in 1940 and 1941 in relation to the tea supply. His statement illustrated the inconsistencies in the Department of Supplies' policy:

Buy and hoard—the advice nine months ago; three months ago, the advice is that there are ample supplies and no necessity for rationing; ten days later the commodity has run out and famine is ahead... You cannot expect to have confidence behind an Administration that is constantly contradicting itself. We asked the public to follow the Government. To follow the Government in which direction?²⁷⁵

Tea rationing was not without its problems. The allocation of tea from wholesalers to retailers on the basis of a percentage of the retailer's purchases for the datum year ending June 1939, as opposed to per number of customers served, was problematic. Retailers who sold more tea than they purchased in the datum year were left short following the establishment of rationing; this translated into shortages on the ground.²⁷⁶ Then there was the issue of the travelling shops – motor vans from which tea and other groceries were sold door to door – that were forced out of business by petrol rationing. Once a common sight, particularly in the remoter western districts, their disappearance was problematic as it forced their patrons onto retailers who were unable to cater for the larger volume of customers.²⁷⁷ A rampant black market developed where unscrupulous traders and dishonest speculators could fetch extortionate prices for tea; eighteen to twenty shillings for a pound was reportedly the going rate throughout the country.²⁷⁸ This was well in excess of the controlled price of tea which at its highest in February 1945 reached four shillings per pound (See Table 2.15).

²⁷⁵ DD, Mr O'Higgins, 4 Apr. 1941, Vol. 82, No. 11, Cols. 1563-8.

²⁷⁶ Part II, Tea and sugar, 1939-45, p. 19.

²⁷⁷ DD, Mr Moran, 4 Dec. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 8, Col. 1285.

²⁷⁸ *Tuam Herald*, 18 Apr. 1942.

Table 2.15 Average price of tea (per 1lb.) in Ireland, 1939-45

Year beginning Feb.	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Price	2s. 8d.	2s. 9d.	2s. 10d.	3s. 3d.	4s.	4s.	4s.

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-45

Tea was by far the most profitable commodity to deal in on the black market and a thriving economy grew up around it, especially among women who were desperate to supplement the meagre ration.²⁷⁹ Cross border smuggling was rife with butter and bacon being sent north while tea and flour were sent south. But what was passed off as tea on the black market was not always the pure article; mixtures of herbs, tea alternatives, and even sawdust were reportedly mixed with tea to increase margins.²⁸⁰

Following the introduction of tea rationing in January 1941, the once served ‘mug of tea...became a cup’ and alternative hot beverages were increasingly marketed.²⁸¹ The most notable was COFF-O-ERA, a native-produced barley and herb blend the taste of which was supposed to resemble coffee.²⁸² Among the more bizarre alternatives was Ash and Hawthorn leaf tea, the instructions for the preparation of which were published in the *Kerryman* on the 2 August 1941.²⁸³ Carrot tea was also recommended.²⁸⁴ Such substitutes were widely derided for their unpalatability, a point which was not missed in *Dublin Opinion* (see Figure 2.15).

²⁷⁹ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 239.

²⁸⁰ *Westmeath Examiner*, 4 Nov. 1944.

²⁸¹ Michael Burke, ‘Eating in Dublin’ in *The Bell*, ii, no. 3 (1941), p.13.

²⁸² *Irish Press*, 28 Mar. 1941.

²⁸³ *Kerryman*, 2 Aug. 1941.

²⁸⁴ *Connaught Telegraph*, 9 May 1942.

Figure 2.15 Unpalatable tea alternatives as depicted in *Dublin Opinion*, 1941



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Apr. 1941, p. 34

Not long after the imposition of the tea ration, the Department of Supplies realised the potential of coffee as a substitute for tea and encouraged greater imports of the commodity. Coffee was one of the first commodities to become scarce on the continent due to the blockade resulting in a surplus on the international market.²⁸⁵ The Coffee Importers' Association, seeing a chance to increase profits was more than willing to oblige the Department. Normal consumption amounted to just 672,000 lbs annually.²⁸⁶ By March 1943, the association had imported almost 9,000,000 lbs (primarily from South America) which was close to thirteen and half years' normal supply.²⁸⁷ During the year ending November 1942, 4,500,000 lbs or just over six years' normal supply of coffee was sold representing an exceptionally brisk demand. Following the increase in the tea ration to one ounce in December 1942, the demand for coffee dropped to around twice that of its pre war demand.²⁸⁸ Had greater demand existed it would have been

²⁸⁵ Keith Lowe, *Savage continent: Europe in the aftermath of World War II* (New York, 2012), p. 34.

²⁸⁶ Memorandum of the Coffee Importers' Association Ltd, February 1942 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/33, p. 2).

²⁸⁷ Mr D. Shanagher to John Leydon, 12 Mar. 1942 (NAI, INDC/EMR/5/33, p. 1).

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

possible to increase imports as South American coffee was freely shipped to Europe via Lisbon, a port that was serviced by the vessels of Irish Shipping Ltd. While consumption of coffee did increase in Ireland during the Emergency, its potential was not fully realised. Along with the other substitutes, it failed to make a real impression upon consumption habits in Ireland as tea was king. The many instances in which persons of limited means were willing to pay greatly inflated prices for tea underlines the unassailable position that it held as the staple beverage of the community.

In order to address the tea shortage that developed in 1941, another state-sponsored company, Tea Importers Éire, was founded on 8 June 1941. Getting off to a quick start, between July 1941 and February 1942 the company sourced and purchased approximately 12,000,000 lbs of tea in Calcutta.²⁸⁹ This equated to nearly half a normal year's supply. Owing to restrictions on shipping space, it was arranged that the tea would be transported from Calcutta to the US on US ships. 7,000,000 lbs of tea made the journey this way, but following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and the subsequent entry of the US into the war it proved impossible to ship the balance. As a result Tea Importers Éire was forced to sell the remaining 5,000,000 lbs but did so at a profit of £46,000.²⁹⁰ The remaining tea was transported in trucks from New York to Montreal for delivery to Ireland in Irish vessels and was fully shipped to Ireland by the 31 October 1942. The lengths to which Tea Importers and the Department of Supplies went to secure additional tea for Ireland reflects the seriousness with which the shortage was viewed by the public. At the same time, the fact that the shortage of tea was one of the country's principle worries compares very favourably with the wartime experience in many other parts where populations suffered hunger, starvation and famine.

²⁸⁹ DD, Mr Lemass, 4 Dec. 1941, Vol. 85, No. 8, Col. 1291.

²⁹⁰ Part II, Tea and sugar, 1939-45, pp 25-26.

Coinciding with the arrival of Tea Importer's shipments was the introduction of a coupon rationing system for tea. Consumers were required to re-register with their retailers; however the total number who registered was less the number to which tea was being granted under the previous scheme. Tea rations were being drawn by households on account of family members who had emigrated or joined the army.²⁹¹ In any case, the savings made by the introduction of the coupon scheme along with the extra tea procured in Calcutta enabled the reintroduction of the one-ounce ration in December 1942.²⁹² In April 1943 the ration was reduced to three quarters of an ounce in order to eke out the Calcutta shipment for as long as possible.²⁹³ The half-ounce ration was introduced in the spring of 1944 owing to the fact that the supply of Indian tea had run dry and the ration was not increased again until after the end of the war.²⁹⁴

The rationing of essential commodities precluded the liberty of choice for consumers, retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers centralising it in the hands of the government. Licensing controls, registration policies, quotas, and the use of coupons changed the methods of production and distribution. Shortages fundamentally altered the consumer-retailer / retailer-wholesaler relationship. Altogether the controls represented an unprecedented level of state intrusion into the domestic realm. Yet the shortage and rationing of foodstuffs in Ireland during the war years was never so critical to as to pose a serious threat to the wellbeing of the population. The tea ration was austere but tea has little nutritional value and the sugar ration was greater than that granted in Britain. The butter ration was adequate and compulsory tillage maintained the bread supply and forestalled the introduction of rationing. While the increasing price of these commodities contributed to a falling standard of living, critical shortages were

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁹² *Irish Times*, 3 Dec. 1942.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1943.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1944.

brief and most could supplement their diets with alternative foodstuffs. Conversely, the fuel shortage had the potential to cripple the country, and it illustrated the extent of Ireland's reliance on Britain in terms of external trade. The petrol and coal shortages brought Irish transport to a snail's pace with the population reverting to the bicycle and horse-drawn transport. The coal shortage threw the entire country onto turf but transport difficulties were so serious that that it nearly derailed the largely successful turf drive. In this respect Ireland was fortunate that the trade relationship with Britain remained favourable up until 1941. This allowed private individuals to accumulate reserve stocks of fuel which cushioned Dublin from the worst of the fuel shortage right into 1943. At the same time the 'Phoney War' was a missed opportunity. More could and should have been done to create a petrol reserve and had the stringent rationing of fuels and other imported materials been introduced as soon as the war began much hardship would have been forestalled. Some of the measures introduced were more successful than others, but almost all of the successful policies were introduced several years too late. The government's decision to stall on the introduction of a comprehensive scheme of full rationing was a critical error. The lack of such a scheme in the early war years led to hoarding, shortages, rising prices, and it helped to foster the black market. This in turn affected public health as will be alluded to in the following chapters.

In spite of rationing, the experience of everyday life in Emergency Ireland was not a uniform one. On the one hand there were those with means who could obtain almost anything they liked on the black market and who had some self-sufficiency in food and fuel, and on the other there were the poorer classes, the politically marginal, who had to make do with less or simply go without. While the level of poverty was greatest and most visible in Dublin, serious hardships were also faced in the remoter western districts and in urban areas throughout the country. While it is difficult to put a

figure on the number of those who remained comfortable due to the unavailability of such data (to the writers knowledge), one can say with certainty that it was a struggle for those who relied on state welfare mechanisms for their survival (see Figures 0.1 and 0.2 on p. 15).

Chapter III

State and voluntary welfare mechanisms, 1939-45

Shortages had a profound impact upon everyday life in Ireland during the Emergency. In spite of the various economic controls introduced, the government remained unable to prevent the rise in prices due to the lack of foreign imports, raw materials and finished goods that Ireland was able to secure. Unfortunately, Irish industry and agriculture was acutely dependent upon these imports, many of which came from Britain. Ireland thus found itself totally at the mercy of Britain's economic planners and due to the British government's decision to apply an economic screw upon Ireland (see Chapter I) the cost-of-living in rose by approximately seventy percent during the years 1939-45. Wages however were not permitted to rise at the same rate and this led to an decrease in the standard of living, a trend which compared unfavourably with that of Britain (see Figure 3.1).¹ Worst affected by this were the most disadvantaged sections of Irish society, the urban poor and the rural landless labouring classes. These were parts of the community who even before the Emergency were heavily dependent on both state welfare and philanthropy. This chapter will explore the following questions: What were the most important welfare mechanisms in place in Ireland prior to the Emergency? How did the Emergency impact on welfare provision? Finally, how did the state and voluntary organisations respond to the crisis? Throughout the analysis will centre upon those mechanisms that worked or were put into motion to help alleviate the food, fuel and the clothing shortages. As for the Dublin-centric character of the chapter, it may be justified by the fact it was Ireland's largest centre of population, unemployment and poverty were greatest in the capital, and by the fact that

¹ The cost-of-living increased by 70% while real wages increased somewhere in the region of just 13% to 33%; estimates vary, see: Mary E. Daly, *Social and economic history of Ireland since 1800* (Dublin, 1981), p. 157; Emmet O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland, 1824-1960* (Dublin, 1992), p. 137.

the most important work of organisations such as the St John Ambulance Brigade was conducted there.

Poor Law

The Irish poor law instituted in 1838 provided for by the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1837 was the foundation upon which independent Ireland's welfare system was built.² Derived from the English poor law, it was 'dominated by the utilitarian canons of efficiency, centralisation, uniformity and accountability.'³ The cornerstone of Ireland's poor law was the workhouse system of indoor relief and the division of the country into poor law unions within which there was at least one workhouse. Initially there were 130 unions which served the main market towns and their catchment areas.⁴ Due to the Great Famine (1845-52) the number increased to 163 by 1850.⁵ Each union was governed by a board of guardians, which was made up of partly elected, partly appointed ex officio members.⁶ 'Subject to the overall supervision of the United Kingdom Poor Law Commissioners,' each board was responsible for the administration of the poor law in the union and the levying of a poor rate to finance the poor relief.⁷ In Ireland, outdoor relief was forbidden, only indoor relief granted in the workhouse was permitted. Described by Mary Daly as the 'all-purpose relief agency', the workhouse accommodated the infirm, the elderly, disabled persons, lunatics, children, orphans and the unemployed able-bodied.⁸ This system was in place almost nation-wide by the mid 1840s.⁹ The Famine however plunged Ireland into crisis and placed the workhouse system under unexpected strain. At its height over one million people were dependent

² Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1837 (1 & 2 Vic., c. lvi).

³ Mary E. Daly, *The buffer state, historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997), p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵ Séamus Ó Cinnéide, 'The development of the Home Assistance service' in *Administration* xvii, no. 2 (1969), p. 291.

⁶ Mel Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland, 1922-52* (Dublin, 2003), p. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Daly, *The buffer state*, p. 12.

⁹ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, p. 11.

on the Poor Law for their maintenance.¹⁰ This forced the British government to rethink its position on outdoor relief for Ireland and so was passed the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1847.¹¹ This act allowed for the granting of outdoor relief to certain specified classes at the discretion of the board of guardians. In addition, the supervisory functions of the United Kingdom's Poor Law Commission were transferred to a separate body, the Irish Poor Law Commission.¹² This was important as it made the relief of the poor a 'statutory obligation of the boards of guardians; the 1838 act had been permissive in this regard.'¹³ In 1872 the Local Government Board was instituted to replace the Poor Law Commissioners. Later, under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, administrative counties with county councils were created which took over the rate-levying functions of the boards of guardians. Crucially for the development of outdoor relief, the 1898 act made mandatory the provision for those in exceptional distress.¹⁴

The early twentieth century saw the first major break with the Poor Law in the shape of the social welfare reforms introduced by the Liberal government. First was the Old Age Pensions Act, 1908 followed by the National Insurance Act, 1911. Under the Old Age Pensions Act, pensions of up to 5s. per week were granted to persons over 70 years of age whose means did not exceed a certain threshold.¹⁵ The Old Age Pensions Act was particularly advantageous to Ireland given that the rates were set at a uniform basis for the entire United Kingdom in spite of the fact that the cost-of-living was much lower in Ireland. Furthermore, Ireland had 'proportionately twice as many old-age pensioners as England, Scotland or Wales.'¹⁶ This was due to the outflow of young people since the Great Famine, and the fact that the registration of Irish births did not

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

¹¹ Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1847.

¹² Ó Cinnéide, 'The development of the Home Assistance service', p. 292.

¹³ Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, pp 19-20; Daly, *The buffer state*, p. 41.

begin until 1864 which enabled some claimants to falsify their age.¹⁷ The National Insurance Act, 1911 set up a scheme for state-administered social insurance. It provided for sickness benefit of 10s. for men and 7s. 6d. for women per week for 26 weeks, and 5s. disablement benefit per week thereafter.¹⁸ Contributions were paid by both the employer and the employee while the state took to pay two-ninths of all benefits and insurance costs.¹⁹ After just one year in operation, 700,000 people in Ireland were insured under the scheme.²⁰ Irrespective of the susceptibility of the Old Age Pension to fraud, the 1906 Act addressed one of the major causes of poverty in Ireland, while the National Insurance Act tackled the pressing issues of unemployment, sickness and disability.²¹

In pre-independence Ireland, the Poor Law and its reform was a highly politicised issue. That reform of the Poor Law was identified in the Democratic Programme that was read and adopted at the first Dáil, 21 January 1919, underlines the weight which Sinn Féin attached to the issue. The programme noted that:

The Irish Republic fully realises the necessity of abolishing the present odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law System, substituting therefore a sympathetic native scheme.²²

In 1921 and 1922 county schemes were drawn up to replace the Poor Law. These schemes and their method varied from county to county as a consequence of the confused times in which they were created.²³ Typically though the workhouses were replaced with a central county home and hospital, outdoor relief was granted in favour

¹⁷ Daly, *The buffer state*, p. 41.

¹⁸ Ó Cinnéide, 'The development of the Home Assistance service', p. 295.

¹⁹ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, pp 19-20.

²⁰ Ó Cinnéide, 'The development of the Home Assistance service', p. 295.

²¹ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, pp 19-20.

²² DD, Democratic programme, 21 Jan. 1919, Vol. F, No. 1, Col. 23.

²³ Ó Cinnéide, 'The development of the Home Assistance service', p. 298.

of indoor relief, and power was transferred from the boards of guardians to the local authority.²⁴

Once independence was achieved, the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1923 was passed to legalise the various schemes previously instituted.²⁵ In June 1923, through ‘ministerial regulation’ Earnest Blythe, then minister for the Department of Local Government and Cumann na nGaedheal TD for Monaghan, amended the county schemes to bring them into uniform order.²⁶ Each scheme was to make provision for the separate treatment of the sick from poor relief, the treatment of the elderly and infirm in county homes, and to make special arrangements for ‘mental defectives’, unmarried mothers and children.²⁷ All restrictions on outdoor relief were abolished, and assistance delivered to able-bodied adults and children unable to provide for themselves was henceforth referred to as home assistance (HA).²⁸ Blythe stipulated that each county board of health was to appoint assistance officers, to examine applications for assistance, which would then be submitted to the Health Board for review.²⁹ The Unemployment Assistance Act passed in October 1933 provided for the maintenance of the able-bodied who were involuntarily unemployed and without means. Up until this point unemployment insurance (UI) was the only form of poor relief available for the unemployed, but it excluded agricultural labourers and those in the private domestic service. UI was claimable only for a maximum of twenty-six weeks, and thereafter HA was the only form of poor relief available. This was problematic as HA could be highly arbitrary. Seán Lemass, then Minister for Industry and Commerce, illustrated this in the Dáil on 27 September 1933 arguing:

²⁴ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, p. 26.

²⁵ Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1923 (1923 no. 9/1939).

²⁶ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, p. 34.

²⁷ Charles Eason, *Report of the Irish Poor Law Commission* (Dublin, 1928), p. 17.

²⁸ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, p. 34; Eason, *Report of the Irish Poor Law Commission*, p. 17.

²⁹ Cousins, *The birth of social welfare in Ireland*, pp 34-5.

The assistance given by the local authorities varies from one area... to another, and is in most cases altogether inadequate.³⁰

Finally, the Public Assistance Act, 1939 reaffirmed the principles contained in the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1923 regarding the county schemes but it also introduced an important change of terminology as ‘Public Assistance’ became synonymous with ‘Poor Relief.’³¹

State welfare mechanisms, 1939

On the eve of the Emergency, Ireland’s most important public assistance schemes were the National Unemployment Insurance scheme (UI), the Home Assistance scheme (HA), and the Unemployment Assistance scheme (UA). Under UI, everyone over the age of sixteen (bar agricultural and domestic service workers) was compulsorily insured against unemployment through a system of mandatory contributions.³² UI would continue until one’s stamps were exhausted or up to a maximum of twenty-six weeks.

Table 3.1 Rates of unemployment insurance in Ireland, 1939–45

Beneficiary	Rate per week	
	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Men	15	
Women	12	
Boys (16-18 years of age)	7	6
Girls (16-18 years of age)	6	

Additional benefits for dependants		
Beneficiary	Rate per week	
	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Dependent Wife	7	6
Dependent Husband	7	6
Dependent Housekeeper	7	6
Dependent Children	2	6

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Social Workers Handbook* (Dublin, 1942), pp 39-40

³⁰ Adrian Kelly, ‘Social Security in independent Ireland, 1922-52’ (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 1995), pp 118-9; DD, Mr Lemass, 27 Sept. 1933, Vol. 49, No. 14, Col. 1652.

³¹ Public Assistance Act, 1939 (1939 no.27/1939).

³² Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Social Workers Handbook* (Dublin, 1942), p. 39.

The purpose of HA as administered by the local authorities, was to relieve destitution caused by unemployment and other factors such as sickness and to supplement unemployment assistance, widow's pensions, National Health Insurance and other services when inadequate.³³ The income one could get from HA was usually the same as that of the UA rate for the district, though this was not always the case. Necessitous cases were sometimes provided with clothing, mattresses, food vouchers and a fuel allowance while TB cases were dealt with more generously.³⁴ UA was issued once UI ran out and to those not covered by UI such as agricultural labourers. Unlike the UI scheme, UA was means tested. The means of an applicant for UA was not to exceed £52 per annum if living in a county borough or the Borough of Dun Laoghaire, and £39 if living elsewhere in Ireland.³⁵ In the case of a person whose means exceeded £1 per week, the appropriate rate was reduced by 1s. for every shilling by which their income exceeded £1 per week.³⁶

³³ SVP, *Handbook*, p. 58.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ The Local Government (Ireland) act 1898 created county boroughs in Ireland. Under the act, four former counties corporate (Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford) became county boroughs. The Borough of Dun Laoghaire was a local authority in County Dublin which was independent of the Dublin County Council.

³⁶ SVP, *Handbook*, p. 42.

Table 3.2 Unemployment assistance: rates of benefit for men and women, 1942-48

	Dependents	Rate per week	
		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Man	None	10	6
	Dependent wife	15	
	Wife and one other	16	6
	Wife and two others	18	6
	Wife and three others	20	6
	Wife and four others	22	
	Wife and five others	23	
Widow	None	8	6
Spinster	None	8	6
Married woman	Dependent husband	12	6
	Dependent husband and one other	14	6
	Dependent husband and two others	16	
	Dependent husband and three others	18	
	Dependent husband and four others	19	6
	Dependent husband and five others	20	6

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Social Workers Handbook* (Dublin, 1942), p. 42

The state also operated the National Health Insurance scheme, Widows and Orphans Pensions, Blind Pensions and Allowances, the Old Age Pensions, and the Blind Welfare and Child Welfare schemes.

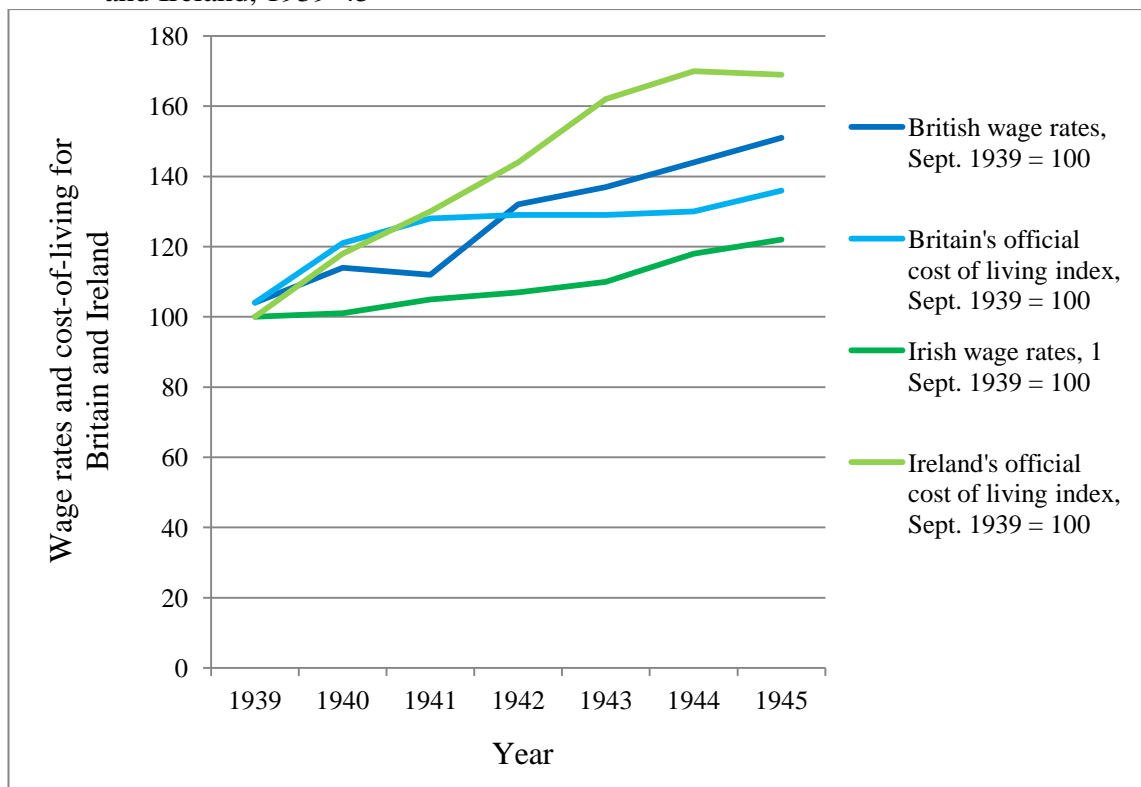
Voluntary Welfare Schemes

Even prior to the Emergency, there was a long tradition of charitable relief work in Ireland, the geographical focus of which lay naturally in Dublin. One of the best known, the lay Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP), founded in Paris in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam had been operating in Dublin since 1844.³⁷ By 1939 the SVP was well established in Ireland; the Council of Dublin alone was responsible for ninety

³⁷ Máire Brigid Ní Chearbhaill, 'The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Dublin, 1926-1975' (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2008), pp 1-5.

conferences.³⁸ The poor relied heavily on the society to provide clothing, footwear and bedding, items that were beyond their means to purchase.³⁹ For example, in Guineys 1939 winter sale, overcoats for men retailed at 15s. 11d., while unemployment assistance began at just 10s for a single man.⁴⁰ However, due to the increased cost of living during the Emergency, which did not compare favourably with Britain, voluntary organisations like the SVP found it increasingly difficult to cater for those who needed their services.

Figure 3.1 A comparison between the wage rates and cost-of-living in Britain and Ireland, 1939-45



Graph compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from *The Second World War and Irish women, an oral history* (Dublin, 2007), p. 217

Charitable dining halls, popularly known as ‘penny dinners’ distributing free or cheap meals to the needy also operated in Dublin.

³⁸ Gerard Fee, ‘The effects of World War II on Dublin’s low-income families 1939-1945’ (PhD thesis in history, University College, Dublin, 1996), p. 12.

³⁹ Ní Chearbhaill, ‘The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Dublin’, p. 46.

⁴⁰ *Irish Press*, 6 Feb. 1939.

Table 3.3 Dublin's 'penny dinners', 1941

St Brigid's Penny Dinners, Holles Row
Little Flower Penny Dinners, Meath Street
Meath Street Dining Rooms, Meath Street
St Anthony's Penny Dinners, Seville Place
Lourdes House, Upper Buckingham Street
Mendicity Institute, Ushers Island
Sandwith Street Penny Dinners, Sandwith Street
St Joseph's Penny Dinners, Cumberland Street

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using information from the *Irish Times*, 11 Aug. 1941

The 'penny dinners' run by the Bon Secours nuns at Holles Row convent had been operating since 1932. For a penny the diners could purchase a meal of beef and vegetable stew, bread pudding, a cup of cocoa or tea and a slice of bread; meals were provided for free to the destitute. Funded by voluntary subscriptions, as many as 500 people were fed daily. In 1935 the Women's Christian Abstinence Union took over the Meath Street dining rooms from a small committee of ladies, who had set it up in 1900.⁴¹ Unlike Holles Row, Meath Street Dining Rooms provided two meals a day, breakfast and dinner while dealing with similar numbers. Diners were charged between 3*d.* and 5*d.* depending on the portion size for a breakfast consisting of tea, porridge, fried bread and 'bread and spread'. Stew followed by a bread or cereal pudding was served for dinner at a cost of between 5*d.* and 7*d.* In the same Liberties district was the Little Flower Penny Dinners which was run by a guild of voluntary workers. Some 400 diners were served in the dining room each day while a further 250 were provided for with meals in take home-cans. Diners were charged 1*d.* for a meat and vegetable stew and a further 1*d.* for bread with jam and a cup of tea.⁴²

The St John Ambulance Brigade was another organisation which administered aid to Dublin's poor by means of communal feeding. Established by the surgeon Sir

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 11 Aug. 1941.

⁴² *Ibid.*

John Lumsden in 1904, it had its origins in the UK's St John Ambulance Association, 1877.⁴³ Originally concerned with training people in first aid, the brigade was very active during 1913-23 when its members tended casualties of the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the 1916 Easter Rising, the War of Independence, and the Irish Civil War.⁴⁴ In 1920, the scope of the brigade's activities widened. A Welfare Department which began issuing food and milk vouchers to at-risk poor expectant mothers was established.⁴⁵ The department soon altered its approach as:

Experience showed the committee that the giving of food to an invalid in a destitute home did very little to help the invalid, as the food was shared... In families where there is great poverty the mother denies herself... The result of this is that babies born are starved and have very little chance to grow up healthy.⁴⁶

The secretary of the Welfare Department, Miss G. M. Barrington thus proposed the setting up of communal feeding centres where the mothers would be fed under the eye of brigade volunteers.⁴⁷ Crucially, the multid denominational St John Ambulance Brigade set itself apart from other charitable organisations as it defined itself as a welfare organisation. Furthermore, the brigade felt that the relief of distress should be considered an act of social significance which was to the benefit of society and removed from religion rather than an act of charity which had much to do with religious sanctification. Its classification as a welfare organisation along with its ideological stance on welfare would later result in the organisation being viewed with suspicion from members of the Catholic hierarchy such as John Charles McQuaid.

⁴³ St John Ambulance Brigade, *Golden jubilee 1904-1954, official souvenir handbook* (Dublin, 1954), p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund* (n.d., suspected 1942), p. 6.

⁴⁵ E. F. Blanford, 'Welfare work of the St John Ambulance Brigade' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, iv, no. 3 (1925), p. 61.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ St John Ambulance Brigade, Commissioner Report for 1924 (Apr., 1925), p. 123. (Private collection, Patrick Plunkett, Commissioner St John Ambulance Brigade of Ireland); G. M. Barrington held a Certificate of Social Service from Alexandra College, see: Blanford, 'Welfare work of the St John Ambulance Brigade' (1925), p. 61.

The St John Ambulance Brigade opened its first welfare dining room in 1925 close to the National Maternity Hospital at No. 40 Merrion Square. Here, pre and post-natal mothers could receive a ‘course’ of dinners free of charge; twenty malnourished mothers sat down to the first meal provided in this way.⁴⁸ Initially, the course lasted three months, though it was extended to five months in 1927.⁴⁹ While laid up, each mother received milk vouchers and a parcel containing oatmeal, rice, sugar and cocoa and before she gave birth she was given a set of baby clothes and a nightdress for herself.⁵⁰ For an extra penny the mothers were given a half pint of soup to take home to each of their children.⁵¹ The numbers served increased rapidly. In 1927, 9,744 dinners were served to just over 100 mothers, a number which was almost doubled to 19,256 a year later.⁵² In January 1928 a second hall was opened in the north inner city at the Brigade Hall, Great Strand Street. Two years later a third dining hall was opened to the west at Keogh Square, Inchicore, and in 1931 a fourth at Unity Hall, Marlborough Street, and a fifth at number 27 Mountjoy Square in 1937.⁵³ Although both the Marlborough Street and Inchicore dining halls were closed down in 1936 and 1938 respectively, the three remaining dining halls made a substantial contribution to the alleviation of poverty in Dublin. Together, in 1938 they served 73,617 meals to a total of 893 mothers while a further 52,581 pints of soup, 8,597 pints of milk, 578 baby bundles and 1,230 sets of baby clothes were issued.⁵⁴ On average between 260 and 300 mothers received a balanced meal every day in the brigade’s dining halls.

⁴⁸ St John Ambulance Brigade, *St John Ambulance Brigade in Ireland: Welfare Department, 15 years of work, 1920-1935*, xii (Dublin, 1935), p. 2.

⁴⁹ G. M. Barrington, ‘Welfare Department, sixth annual report, 1927’ in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, vii, no. 1 (1928), p. 13.

⁵⁰ Blanford, ‘Welfare work of the St John Ambulance Brigade’ (1925), p. 61.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² ‘Welfare Department, Sixth annual report, 1927’ in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, vii, no. 1 (1928), p. 13; ‘Welfare Department, seventh annual report’ in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, viii, no. 2 (1929), p. 31.

⁵³ SJAI, *St John Ambulance Brigade in Ireland*, p. 2; ‘The Welfare Department’ in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xvi, no. 2 (1937), p. 50.

⁵⁴ ‘The Welfare Department’ in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xix, no. 2 (1940), p. 13.

Figure 3.2 The St John Ambulance Brigade's dining hall at Merrion Square, 1924-25



Source: 'Welfare Department' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, 4(2), (1925), p. 34

In 1929 the work of the brigade in the realm of maternity and child welfare was recognised as part of Dublin Corporation's Child Welfare Scheme.⁵⁵ The brigade began receiving an annual grant from the corporation for the provision of meals to the mothers referred to it by the corporation. In 1929 the sum granted to the brigade stood at £100, but this figure increased to £2,200 by 1937.⁵⁶ The system of referral was highly organised. Mothers were first referred to a maternity hospital by a corporation medical officer whence the referral was approved by a doctor who stamped and signed a St John Ambulance Brigade welfare pre-natal card (see Figure 3.3).

⁵⁵ Both the corporation's Public Health Section and its Child Welfare Committee were responsible for the general administration of the corporation's maternity and child welfare schemes.

⁵⁶ Department of Local Government and Public Health, Dublin County Borough, maternity child welfare, grants to voluntary bodies etc, 1943 (NAI, HLTH/M/34/7/Vol.2, p. 5).

Figure 3.3 St John Ambulance Brigade, welfare pre-natal card, 1935-45

St. John Ambulance Brigade in Ireland.
WELFARE PRE-NATAL CARD.

Name and Address _____
Date sent to Hospital _____
Name of Hospital _____
Date of expected Confinement
with initials of Dr. _____
Date Examined _____
Date (if any) to report again _____

Hospital Stamp or Dr.'s Signature :— _____

Source: St John Ambulance Brigade, Welfare pre-natal card (NAI, HLTH, M 34/7/Vol.2)

The mother returned the card to the medical officer who then referred her to one of the brigade's dining rooms. Recommended mothers were required to present another card at the dining room before being put on the meals list (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 St John Ambulance Brigade Welfare Department meals card, 1935-45

Source: St John Ambulance Brigade, Welfare Department meals card (NAI, HLTH, M 34/7/Vol.2)

It was estimated that the corporation grant covered approximately sixty percent of the Welfare Department's costs.⁵⁷ On 4 February 1937 the *Irish Press* claimed that this scheme was the first of its kind in Europe.⁵⁸ Whether or not this was the case, it was held in high esteem by Dublin's medical professionals with one doctor quoted as saying:

No form of social effort so important or so far reaching in its effects as that of giving meals to necessitous, expectant and nursing mothers.⁵⁹

There were several other organisations such as parish clothing guilds which dispensed welfare to the very poor both in Dublin and elsewhere. Many religious sodalities and parish committees had a social outreach. These groups would undertake small-scale and short-term acts of charity, such as the distribution of clothing at Christmas. The Sodality of the Children of Mary attached to the Convent of Mercy Cork, would each Christmas purchase material to be made into articles of clothing for distribution amongst Cork City's poorest.⁶⁰ Similarly, the Children's Clothing Society (Police Aided), a lay organisation which worked out of Pearse Street Garda Station supplied the poor children of Dublin with clothing it made throughout the year.⁶¹ The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) on the other hand purchased finished articles of clothing to be distributed in Dublin via the Poor School Children's Clothing Fund.⁶² Some philanthropic organisations were more casual operations than others, but they were usually affiliated to one of the major churches.

⁵⁷ 'The Welfare Department, annual general meeting' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xxiii, no. 1 (1944), p. 9.

⁵⁸ *Irish Press*, 4 Feb. 1937.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Sister M. Enda to the Department of Supplies, 10 Sept. 1942 (NAI, IND/EMR 15/14).

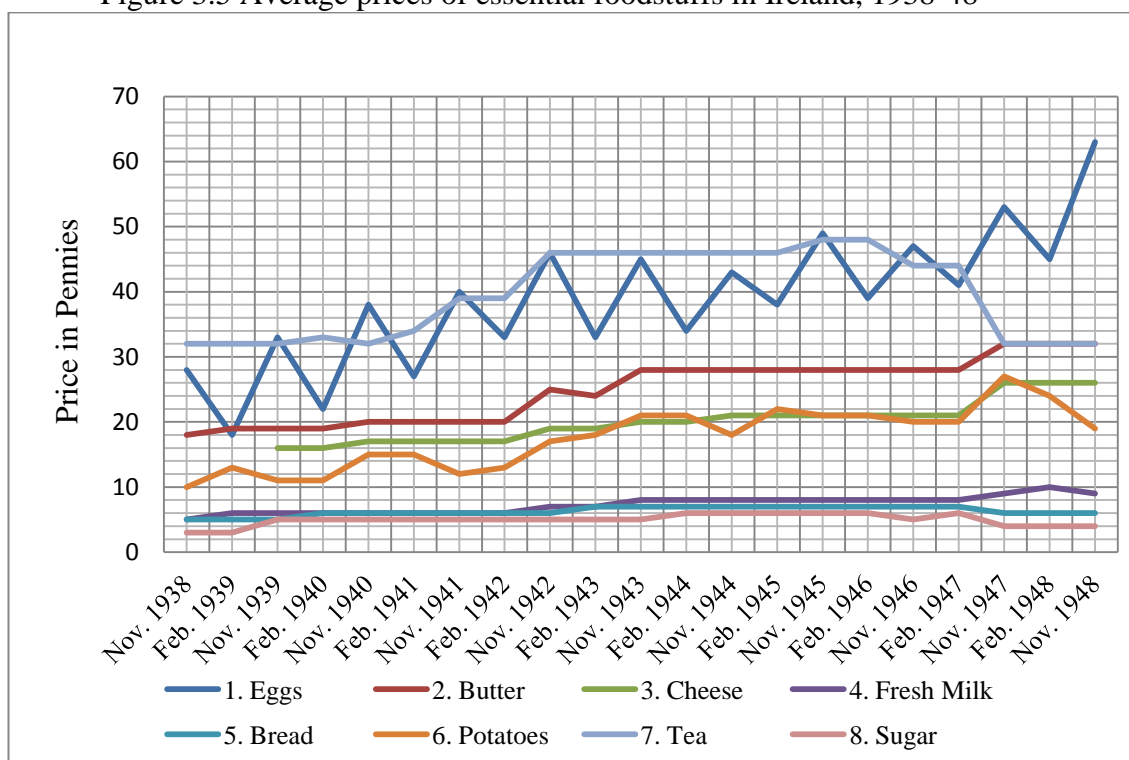
⁶¹ Mable D'Alton to Seán Lemass, 13 Oct. 1942 (NAI, IND/EMR 15/12).

⁶² P. M. Donnell to John Leydon, 31 July 1942 (NAI, IND/EMR 15/17).

Welfare mechanisms during the Emergency

Ireland's supplies difficulties had pronounced social and economic consequences from a very early stage during the Emergency. Price control mechanisms proved unable to keep prices down while shortages led to reduced industrial output.

Figure 3.5 Average prices of essential foodstuffs in Ireland, 1938-48



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1939-49

Factories producing less exacerbated the supplies situation and at the same time employment fell. The government's failure to institute a coherent rationing system exacerbated the problems of rising prices and shortages which together led to a rise in Ireland's cost-of-living (see Figure 2.8). In mid 1941 the government introduced two pieces of legislation that would greatly influence the standard of living experienced throughout the Emergency. These were the Wages Standstill Order and the Trade Union Act. The Wages Standstill Order, introduced to counteract inflation, prevented wage increases while the Trade Union Act stopped workers striking for higher pay by

removing the legal protection of the Trade Disputes Act from such strikes.⁶³ The existence of the Wages Standstill Order was, in light of rising prices, a great source of discontent throughout the Emergency. Worst affected was the lowly paid blue or white collar worker with a large family. For those already living in poverty prior to the Emergency; the unemployed or underemployed; the necessitous classes; the rise in the cost of living was even more serious. Many families' finances as afforded to them by the government's welfare schemes were already stretched to the maximum. With little disposable income and few assets, they were extremely sensitive to changes in the market. One British commentator described how he felt:

The most unhappy thing about the way in which the price and scarcity pattern has developed in the twenty-six counties has been its differential incidence on the poor.⁶⁴

As the cost of living rose, there was an ever-increasing gap between the needs of the poor and the ability of state welfare schemes to meet them. Due to the inability of the price control machinery to keep prices down, harsh criticism was levelled at the government. As early as 29 September 1939, Alfie Byrne, independent TD for Dublin North East, suggested that welfare allowances, on account of the decreasing purchasing power of the pound should be increased in proportion with rising prices.⁶⁵ Similarly, James Hickey, Labour TD for Cork Borough, urged that the weekly rate of pension be raised in order to offset the decreasing purchasing power of the pound.⁶⁶ On 28 November 1940, Jeremiah Hurley, Labour Deputy for Cork South East, argued that:

⁶³ Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish women, an oral history* (Dublin, 2007), p. 36.

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 9 Mar. 1944.

⁶⁵ DD, Mr Byrne Senior, 29 Sept. 1939, Vol. 77, No. 4, Col. 566.

⁶⁶ DD, Mr Hickey, 19 Oct. 1939, Vol. 78, No. 6, Col. 819.

Nobody can claim that even the maximum amount which is allowed under the Unemployment Assistance Act is sufficient for a man with a wife and five children... Nobody can say that at the present time such a sum is any way adequate...They were regarded...as bearing some relation to the cost of living at that time, but they do not in any way bear any relation to the cost of living now.⁶⁷

It is clear that Ireland's poor were from a very early stage in the Emergency adversely affected by its economic consequences. In spite of this, the government did little to rectify this position until late 1941.

As well as the rise in prices, shortages of particular commodities caused problems. One scheme directly affected by shortages was the National Free Milk Scheme, in operation since 1932 and under which free milk was made available to children from necessitous families.⁶⁸ An annual grant of £90,000 was earmarked for the scheme for the scheme. The quantity of milk granted to each family was as follows:

Table 3.4 National Free Milk Scheme scale, 1932-45

Number of children	Pints of milk
1	1 pt
2	1.5 pt
3	2 pt
Malnourished children	1 pt each

Source: *Department of Local Government and Public Health, report, 1943-44*, p. 60

Throughout the country milk was distributed to the homes of the poor via volunteers.⁶⁹ In Dublin which accounted for one third of the consumption, Dublin Corporation's Child Welfare Department recommended families to the Dublin Infant Aid Society which administered the scheme in the city.⁷⁰ On average the Infant Aid Society visited 4,600 homes each month, and during the year ending 31 March 1941, 46,892 visits were

⁶⁷ DD, Mr Hurley, 28 Nov. 1940, Vol. 81, No. 6, Col. 898.

⁶⁸ Eligible children included those under five years of age whose parents were recipients of Home Assistance; children whose parents could not provide them with milk and children between the ages of five and fifteen years who were certified by an official of the Department of Local Government and Public Health as being in need of milk.

⁶⁹ *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1943-44*, p. 60.

⁷⁰ SVP, *Handbook*, p. 4.

made.⁷¹ Owing to rising prices and the increase in unemployment, the society's annual report for 1940-41 noted that this sum was no longer adequate.⁷² The annual report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health explained that the difficulties normally encountered securing fresh milk in rural areas was accentuated 'by reason of the increasing consumption of milk as a result of the scarcity of other commodities such as tea.'⁷³ In response the local authorities were empowered to buy supplies of dried milk where fresh milk was unobtainable, though this did little to quell calls for a more comprehensive system of emergency welfare.⁷⁴

The Maternity and Child Welfare Schemes (another service designed to safeguard the health of mothers and their children) were also affected by shortages. The schemes existed throughout the country, the most important being operated by the local authorities in the four county boroughs. The way they were affected by the Emergency reflects the impact of the war upon Ireland more generally. Dublin County Borough's Maternity and Child Welfare Scheme, run by the Child Welfare Committee in conjunction with the Dublin Corporation's Public Health Section was the country's largest. In 1944 it had a full-time staff of thirty-two, whereas in Cork, the second largest scheme had just three full-time staff.⁷⁵ The focal points of the schemes were the child welfare clinics or babies clubs. Born out of the Women's National Health Association's (WNHA) campaign in 1908 to lower infant mortality, they offered an array of services to mothers and their children and by the Emergency were well established in Dublin bridging the divide between state and voluntary organisations.⁷⁶

⁷¹ DLGPH, grants to voluntary bodies etc, 1943, pp 5-6.

⁷² *Irish Times*, 10 June 1941.

⁷³ *DLGPH, Report, 1941-42*, p. 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 48-9.

⁷⁶ Ella Webb, 'The story of the Dublin baby clubs' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xi, no. 4 (1932), p. 49.

Table 3.5 Dublin's babies clubs, 1942

Club	Address
Sláinte	6 Blackhall Street
Carnegie Centre	Lord Edward Street
Carnegie Centre, St Patrick's	Lord Edward Street
Carnegie Centre, St Monica's	Lord Edward Street
St Andrew's	Lower Mount Street
Crumlin-Kimmage	202/204 Cashel Road
St Joseph's Clinic, St Joseph's Flats	Killarney Street
Gordon	The Coombe
A.O.H. Hall	Newbridge Avenue, Sandymount
St Brigid's	Keogh Square
Rathmines Dispensary	Rathmines Road
St Anthony's	Temple Street Hospital

Source: Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Social Workers Handbook* (Dublin, 1942), p. 4

Clinical examinations, dental treatments and classes in nutritional instruction and hygiene were all performed at the clubs. Other activities conducted included classes in cookery, sewing, and first-aid while fuel, clothing and communal feeding schemes were common.⁷⁷ The shortage of petrol impeded the schemes in some areas.⁷⁸ Attendances at the Waterford clinic for mothers and children dropped from 1,036 and 5,724 in 1938 to 773 and 2,635 in 1944.⁷⁹ As a result efforts were made to:

Compensate for the situation by an increase in the quantity of literature distributed and by the distribution of extra supplies of cod liver oil, etc., to delicate and under-nourished infants.⁸⁰

Conversely, the numbers attending the Dublin scheme for mothers and children increased from 32,024 and 34,217 in 1938 to 52,465 and 56,062 in 1944 as a result of higher demand.⁸¹

Voluntary organisations were perhaps in a better position to respond more quickly to the crisis, yet shortages and rationing rendered the delivery of welfare along former lines problematic. At the very least, the existence of the government's controls

⁷⁷ DLGPH, grants to voluntary bodies etc, 1943, pp 1-6.

⁷⁸ *DLGPH, Report, 1944-45*, p. 49.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1938-44.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁸¹ DLGPH, grants to voluntary bodies etc, 1943, p. 2.

added to the burden of bureaucracy; in the worst case scenario, it hindered their ability to deliver aid altogether. The introduction of the Rationing of Yarn Cloth and Clothing Order, 1942, is a case in point (see chapter II). Initially the position of charitable organisations within this framework was undefined.⁸² Various organisations such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) were quick to highlight this to the Department of Supplies and the urgency with which they did so is illustrative of the importance they attached to their work.⁸³ The Department's oversight here lends weight to William Cosgrave's assessment of the clothes rationing order. As previously quoted in Chapter II, Cosgrave argued that it was:

A panic order; it got panic consideration and a panic decision, and there were panic blunders and panic changes.⁸⁴

The problem of how to reconcile the clothes rationing system with the desire of charitable organisations to grant rationed articles to the poor was quickly addressed. Charitable organisations were instructed to collect the appropriate number of coupons in respect of the garments issued.⁸⁵ Others who wished to purchase material to be made into clothing were granted licences by the department to do so.⁸⁶ The bureaucracy however was somewhat at odds with realities on the ground. In one instance the department queried the quality and type of material which the Dublin's Children's Clothing Society sought. Its secretary, Miss Mabel Dalton, replied 'I am afraid it will be a case of take whatever you are lucky enough to get hold of.'⁸⁷ In 1943, following discussions held between representatives of Supplies and the main charitable

⁸² Part II, Rationing, Historical survey, rationing miscellaneous supplies and control of exports, 1945 (NAI, IND/EMR/7/3, p. 71).

⁸³ Donnell to Leydon, 31 July 1942.

⁸⁴ DD, Mr Cosgrave, 25 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 15, Col. 1819.

⁸⁵ Department of Supplies to Mable D'Alton, 30 Sept. 1942 (NAI, IND/EMR/15/12).

⁸⁶ Department of Supplies to Sr. M. Bernardine, 16 Oct. 1942 (NAI, IND/EMR/15/15).

⁸⁷ D'Alton to Lemass, 13 Oct. 1942.

organisations, the whole procedure was formalised.⁸⁸ The coupon exchange facility was intended to guard against the black market. As it was common practice for poor families to sell their coupons, the lag between the introduction of clothes rationing and the introduction of the special facilities may have been problematic. If families had already sold their coupons, they would have excluded themselves from receiving the free clothing from the charitable institutions.⁸⁹

Communal feeding

The negative implications of shortages and rising prices upon the ability of philanthropic organisations to deliver clothing to the needy was a worrisome issue, however it was trumped by the prospect of widespread food poverty. The *Irish Times*' 'Community Kitchens' series published in late 1941 highlighted this growing anxiety. The series argued that as a result of the Emergency, communal feeding schemes were necessary to improve the general standard-of-living. The preliminary article to the series even went so far as to suggest that:

Even if no emergency existed, the economic argument in favour of community kitchens would be strong. In the circumstances of today, it seems to be overwhelming.⁹⁰

At the heart of this argument was the principle of economy as catering for large numbers economises on food and energy, economies which were considered to be equally important. It was within the context of a worsening fuel position (see Table 2.2) and the approach of winter that the 'Community Kitchens' series was published. The *Irish Times* argues that the communal feeding issue was of the utmost importance, so much so that it was stated to be in 'the national interest'.⁹¹ Noting that the numbers visiting the existing charitable dining halls were increasing, the idea was put forward

⁸⁸ Part II, Rationing, Historical Survey, 1945, p. 75.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁰ *Irish Times*, 9 Sept. 1941.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

that a community feeding scheme that did not rely on voluntary subscriptions or charity should be instituted.⁹² The article went on to state that:

The distinction between filling and feeding must be considered - the hungry man prefers to be filled, the expectant mother and her children must be fed. Dietary, therefore, must be examined carefully. There is too little food and too little fuel for hit-or-miss methods.⁹³

Drawing on the work of the professor of biochemistry at Trinity College Dublin, William Fearon, the piece indicated that incidence of malnutrition and anaemia which was already common among Dublin's mothers was likely to increase.⁹⁴

Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund:

The Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund – the chairman of which was the young Dublin paediatrician Robert Collis – was a communal feeding project initiated in response to growing poverty.⁹⁵ In 1939, Collis wrote the play, *Marrowbone Lane*, which was performed in the Gate Theatre in the summer of 1939, and was revived for the Gaiety in 1941 due to popular demand.⁹⁶ Due to the controversy it caused, *Marrowbone Lane* focused public attention on the slum question, reportedly alerting 'large numbers of the better-to-do sections of the population' to the appalling conditions in which 'the other half' were living.⁹⁷

⁹² *Irish Times*, 9 Aug. 1941.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Dr Robert ('Bob') Collis (1900-75) was born in Killiney Dublin and educated in Bray, Rugby Public School, Oxford and Yale and was a prominent paediatrician with a strong social conscious. In 1932 he returned to Dublin and soon after was appointed as a physician to the National Children's Hospital and was made director of paediatrics at the Rotunda. He also played a key role in the founding of the Irish Paediatric Club of which he was elected honorary secretary and was a founding member of the Citizens' Housing Council. At the end of WWII he joined the Red Cross and was among the first group of physicians to treat survivors of Belsen concentration camp. He immediately established a children's hospital there from which a number of orphans were sent to Ireland, two of whom he adopted. In 1957 he moved to Nigeria where he was made professor of paediatrics in several schools, set up several child health institutes and paediatrics departments. He also authored many works including his own autobiographies, *The Silver Fleece* and *To be a pilgrim*. See: Frances Clarke, 'Collis, (William) Robert Fitzgerald ('Bob')' in *Dictionary of Irish biography* (Dublin, 2009); Fee, 'The effects of World War II', pp 58-9.

⁹⁶ Clair Wills, *That neutral island, a history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 261.

⁹⁷ *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 2.

Figure 3.6 The final scene of *Marrowbone Lane* as produced by the Gate Theatre Dublin, 1939



Source: *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund* (n.d., suspected 1942), p. 2

Like many others, Collis sought to address the complacency in Irish society which he felt was hindering medical and social improvement. To those who might, as Collis put it, ‘feel... that... the back of the slum problem has already been broken’ he pointed out that there were 17,759 condemned houses in Dublin, while in 1914 there had been 13,106.⁹⁸ Dublin Corporation’s 1938 Report of the Housing Commission revealed that the number of families living in dwellings unfit for human habitation such as the tenement depicted in *Marrowbone Lane* numbered almost 20,000.⁹⁹ Collis was quick to capitalise on the uproar the play generated, calling a public meeting the week after it opened to consider the severity of living conditions in the tenements. The *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund* was thus launched and fundraising began in earnest.¹⁰⁰ Collis’ motives were clear. In 1941 following a performance of the play in the Gaiety he stated that he believed there were in the region of 40,000 people in Dublin with no more than 6d. a day for food or fuel adding ‘I am tired of giving medicine to children who really need

⁹⁸ *Irish Press*, 19 Oct. 1939.

⁹⁹ Robert Collis, *Marrowbone Lane, a play in three acts* (Dublin, 1943), p. 13; Dublin Corporation, *Report of the Housing Committee* (1938), p. 32.

¹⁰⁰ Wills, *That neutral island*, p. 261.

food.’¹⁰¹ The plight of the poor was further compounded by the decreasing value of their real income (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 A comparison between Ireland’s wage rates, the cost of living and the value of real income, 1939-45

	Irish wage rates, 1 Jan. 1939 = 100	Ireland's official cost of living index, Sept. 1939 = 100	Real income
1939	100	100	n/a
1940	101	118	-17%
1941	105	130	-25%
1942	107	144	-37%
1943	110	162	-52%
1944	118	170	-52%
1945	122	169	-47%

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from *The Second World War and Irish women, an oral history* (Dublin, 2007), p. 217

Among the patrons of the multid denominational Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund were the socially conscious TDs James Dillon, Sean Moylan, Alfie Byrne, and William Norton; the writer Sean O’Faolain and the President of the Irish Women’s Workers Union (IWWU), Miss Louie Bennett, were also listed.¹⁰² The focus of the fund was to address the suffering of the city’s most necessitous classes, those being the poor expectant or nursing tenement mother of the unemployed husband and her children. Aid aimed at the mothers was delivered through the St John Ambulance Brigade’s maternity welfare programme as this was considered to be the most efficient channel.¹⁰³ Miss G. M. Barrington, secretary of the brigade’s Welfare Department was also a Marrowbone Lane committee member. The funds donated to the brigade enabled the feeding of an additional fifty mothers daily.¹⁰⁴ The position of the patrons of the fund held regarding maternity welfare was underlined in the organisation’s pamphlet which stated:

¹⁰¹ *Irish Times*, 25 Mar. 1941.

¹⁰² *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

This work is of such absolute national importance that there is no doubt that it should not be treated in any way as a charity. Every expectant mother should be able to obtain as her right a proper balanced meal a day, the necessary funds being supplied by an organized society (i.e., the City or Central Health body).¹⁰⁵

The idea that maternity welfare – and thus communal feeding – was too important to be left to philanthropy was at odds with the position of the Catholic hierarchy and more particularly that of the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid. McQuaid welcomed state funding for social service initiatives once they were under denominational control; he opposed what he judged to be excessive or unnecessary state intervention on moral grounds. Collis was known to the Catholic hierarchy who from 1935 to 1937 blocked his efforts (along with that of others such as Kathleen Lynn, Dorothy Price and Ella Webb) to create a national children's hospital through the proposed amalgamation of the Harcourt Street and St Ultan's children's hospitals.¹⁰⁶ In 1936 when McQuaid was still headmaster at Blackrock College he expressed his contempt for Collis' plan to the then Archbishop of Dublin, Edward Byrne, when he noted:

It appears that a new hospital is to be built in Crumlin at the insistence of Dr Collis for chronic rheumatic children. Such an institution in non-Catholic hands is the very negation of all that Your Grace has worked for.¹⁰⁷

The hierarchy's opposition to the involvement of non-sectarian secular organisations in maternal and child welfare was heightened in the following years as was evidenced by the development of Catholic Social Service Conference. An alternative Catholic

¹⁰⁵ *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ Lynn, Price and Webb were three Protestant paediatricians who worked in St Ultan's. Like Collis they could be described as being socially conscious. Interestingly, both Lynn and Price had republican backgrounds while Webb was a prominent member of the St John Ambulance Brigade and had been so since the early years of the organisation in Ireland.

¹⁰⁷ Clara Cullen & Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh (eds), *His Grace is displeased, select correspondence of John Charles McQuaid* (Dublin, 2013), p. 82.

children's hospital, Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, was not opened in Crumlin until 1956.¹⁰⁸

The other side of Collis' communal feeding scheme was aimed solely at the children of the unemployed which made it distinct from other feeding initiatives. The proprietors of Bewley's Cafe were approached who granted the Marrowbone Lane Fund use of their premises on Westmoreland Street while staff of the café volunteered to work for the fund. Commencing on 24 April 1941, an average of 200 children were fed at the café each evening in two groups, one at 6.45pm and the other at 7.15pm.¹⁰⁹ Meals distributed to the children were free of charge. As was common with other feeding centres, a meat and vegetable stew was the staple dish served. It was followed by a 'cereal pudding (tapioca, oatmeal, biscuit), "reinforced" with raw eggs, and a half-pint of milk'; a meal that equated to almost 1000 calories and included all the essential vitamins.¹¹⁰ However, so malnourished were some of these children when they first arrived that they were unable to eat a full portion while some of the mothers who brought their children 'had themselves collapsed from hunger, and admitted that they had not eaten for two days.'¹¹¹ It also proved necessary to mince the ingredients of the stew such as peas, carrots, beans and the meat as the children were inclined not to eat those foods to which they were not accustomed.¹¹² Of the 200 children, 100 were drawn from Dublin's hospitals. These children were identified 'as definitely needing extra nourishment' and were put on the fund for two months, or for a longer period if the physician recommending the case wished it. Small grants were also made available to give immediate relief to especially needy cases met at the hospitals. While the hospitals are not named, Collis being the chairman of the fund would suggest that the majority of

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, *Kathleen Lynn, Irishwoman, patriot, doctor* (Dublin, 2006), p. 114.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 2 Aug. 1941; *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 13 Aug. 1941; *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 4.

¹¹¹ *Irish Times*, 9 Sept. 1941.

¹¹² *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 5.

the children were or had been patients of either Harcourt Street or St Ultan's children's hospitals. The remaining 100 children (aged between 5-11 years) were drawn from families of the unemployed men of the Inchicore area. The way in which the feeding of this group was conducted illustrates how the fund took a scientific approach to its work. To start, the height, weight and haemoglobin levels of each child was measured. It was found that the children were approximately five inches shorter and eight pounds lighter than normal children of the same age group while their haemoglobin levels showed a thirty percent degree of anaemia. Then the effect of being on the meals was measured against a control group. It was found that in the space of ten months these children on average gained an extra pound in weight and grew a half inch higher than those not on the meals which is a strong indication of the value of Collis' work.¹¹³

The Cooked Meals Service

The publication of the 'Community Kitchens' series in the *Irish Times* in August 1941 highlighted the hardships experienced by the urban poor, underlining the severity of the situation they were facing into in the winter of 1941. The government's response to this pressure was swift. On 21 August, the day following the publication of 'Community Kitchens – X' (the last article in the series), Dublin Corporation announced to the press that it would:

Take immediate steps to provide meals [from community kitchens] for the needy during the coming winter.¹¹⁴

This pledge was backed up by legislation which took the form of the Emergency Powers (No. 109) Order, 1941. This order empowered the local authorities of the county boroughs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford, along with the borough of Dún Laoghaire and the urban district of Dundalk 'to organise if necessary, centres for

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 22 Aug. 1941.

supplying cooked meals.’¹¹⁵ It was also stipulated that the local authorities were entitled to work with established bodies to provide for the poor. The Department of Local Government and Public Health guaranteed ‘all authorised capital expenditure’ for both newly-erected municipal and voluntary communal feeding kitchens.¹¹⁶ However, as Ireland’s rural population was not considered to be at risk of starvation or fuel poverty, local authorities governing rural areas were not permitted to institute communal feeding projects.

Dublin Corporation’s scheme was named ‘The Cooked Meals Service’, and although it was intended to supplement the work of the voluntary organisations the name was designed to disassociate it from philanthropy and the stigma of pauperism.¹¹⁷ It was hoped that this would make the scheme amenable to the ‘new poor’; families with an annual income of around £250 or £300 who increasingly found it difficult to make ends meet. By the end of 1941 such families had seen their real income decrease by twenty-five percent, and if the main breadwinner was to fall ill with TB for example it would have left them in real trouble (see Table 3.6). The Cooked Meals Service centred on the distribution of meals from several kitchens, the most important being the Hospitals Trust Canteen at Ballsbridge and that of the Mansion House. It was planned that the pre-cooked meals would be transported in suitable containers by motor van to various distribution centres established throughout the city. For organisational purposes the city was to be divided into thirty-one districts depending on population; each district was to have one to three distribution centres.¹¹⁸ The corporation estimated that it would be possible to provide a total of 100,000 meals daily in this way if required.

¹¹⁵ *DLGPH, Report, 1941-42*, pp 21-2.

¹¹⁶ *Irish Times*, 30 Aug. 1941.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1941.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1941.

Table 3.7 Planned daily source of meals for Dublin Corporation's cooked meals service, 1941

Institution	Meals
Existing organisations	3,000
Grangegorman Mental Hospital	12,000
Dublin Board of Assistance	8,000
Vocational Education Committee	6,000
Goodwill Restaurants	12,000
Other firms and canteens	2,000
Hospitals Trust Canteen	45,000
Mansion House	12,000
Total	100,000

Table constructed by Ciarán Bryan using information from the *Irish Times*, 4 Oct. 1941

The plan acknowledged the primacy of family life as dictated in Catholic social teachings. Opting to provide meals that the family could take home was seen as preferable to having them eat in communal dining rooms. It also illustrated how ‘souperism’, that is, the use of material inducements to Catholics to convert to Protestantism, that had been such a scandal in mid nineteenth century Ireland was still feared.¹¹⁹ For example on the 1 October 1941, the Protestant tradition University of Dublin (TCD) offered its catering facilities to the Cooked Meals Service (although it did not offer its dining facilities). This move was followed by UCD on the 8 October 1941.¹²⁰

In spite of the government’s pronouncements regarding the establishment of the Cooked Meals Service, and campaigns designed to encourage the government to open communal feeding centres by the likes of the Irish Housewives Association, the scheme was not put into practice.

¹¹⁹ Miriam Moffitt, *Soupers and jumpers: the Protestant missions in Connemara, 1848-1937* (Dublin, 2008).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1941, 8 Oct. 1941.

Figure 3.7 Members of the Irish Housewives Association campaigning in Dublin, 8 Mar. 1942



Source: Andree Skeffington, 'Milestones' in *The Irish Housewife* (1948), p. 19

According to James Hurson, Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, this was because:

There are strong moral and social reasons for refraining as far as possible from interfering even in very difficult circumstances with the normal family regime of the people.¹²¹

The government played the moral card. Whether or not this was a general sentiment held among Government officials, it suited both the central and local government not to incur the expense that the provision of such a scheme would have entailed. Hurson also added:

¹²¹ James Hurson, School meals, 19 Jan. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256, p. 1).

While government is fully alive to the distress which may exist and has taken such steps as are in its power to relieve it, its policy has been based on the principle that there will be as little interference as possible with family life and custom and accordingly it will only be under the compulsion of very exceptional circumstances such as a more drastic curtailment of fuel supplies than has hitherto been experienced, that it will sanction a resort to a public system of cooked meals.¹²²

Hurson's appears to be very much a Catholic and middle class interpretation of the supplies crisis in Dublin, yet this viewpoint was not unique to the Department of Local Government and Public Health. Over nine months earlier in April 1941, James Hickey, a Labour TD, argued against communal feeding because he felt it was important to 'maintain the status of the family'.¹²³ It is also possible that the government bowed out of the field due to direct pressure from the Catholic hierarchy. In 1943, Dr Francis Constantine Ward, parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Local Government and Public Health wrote to McQuaid to inform him that he wished the Catholic Social Service Conference (CSSC) to 'get both credit and probable money-grant for such services' as the Catholic approach to such problems was 'more necessary and desirable'.¹²⁴ The fact that equipment earmarked for 'The Cooked Meals Service' was later granted to the CSSC, the organisation which became the dominant player in the arena of communal feeding is also suggestive of this. However, there exists no evidence of such a discussion between the government and the hierarchy. While everyone including those with disposable income suffered from the fuel shortage, distress caused by the rising price of everyday foodstuffs was largely unique to those vulnerable to rising prices. It is for this reason that the 'Cooked Meals Service' was seen first and foremost as a means to combat a critical fuel shortage, as opposed to one designed to feed the masses. This sentiment illustrated by Hurson also underlines a lack of

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ DD, Mr Hickey, 3 Apr. 1941, Vol. 82, No. 10, Col. 1414.

¹²⁴ Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child, maternity welfare in Dublin 1922-60* (Manchester, 2007), p. 103.

appreciation at the highest level in the department of the importance of proper nutrition and a failure to truly understand the plight of the poorest.

School Meals

An energetic campaign aimed at making mandatory the provision of a hot midday meal by the state for national school children formed an important part of the debate on communal feeding. The Education (Provision of Meals) (Ireland) Acts 1914 to 1930 and the School Meals (Gaeltacht) Acts 1930 to 1934 allowed the local authorities to provide meals to school children in their areas and to recoup half of the expense from a state grant.¹²⁵ In 1938, 533 national schools throughout the country were participating in the scheme and a total of 7,823,248 meals were served (see Table 3.8). Typically the children were given a third of a pint of milk, and a fruit bun or a plain bun with jam. In a few cases, soups or meat and vegetable stews were provided. During the Emergency however, in light of the increased prevalence of malnutrition and the rise in the cost-of-living, the milk and bun meal became the subject of criticism. The establishment or re-establishment of a proper midday meal for school children was one of the measures suggested in the ‘Housewives’ Petition’ (sent to the government on 5 May 1941) to safeguard the poor and unemployed against the rise in the cost-of-living (see Chapter II).¹²⁶ Louie Bennett, president of the Irish Women Workers’ Union was amongst the early signatories of the petition. In October 1941, the Council of Action, established by the Dublin Trades Union Council, convened to consider the problems arising out of the Emergency with special regard to the supply of food and fuel.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ The schools were located in four county boroughs, forty-one urban districts and seven towns. The Gaeltacht scheme applies to counties Cork (West), Donegal, Galway, Kerry and Mayo. See: *DLGPH, Report, 1939-40*, pp 46-7. For the applicable district electoral divisions within the Gaeltacht see: School Meals (Gaeltacht) Act, 1930 (1930 no. 23).

¹²⁶ Housewives’ petition, memorandum on the food and fuel emergency, 5 May 1941 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 3).

¹²⁷ The Council of Action was originally formed by the Dublin Trades Council and the Dublin constituencies council of the Labour Party in opposition to the Trade Union Act, 1941. See: Donal Ó

Attended by representatives of eighty-three organisations, one of the proposals strongly supported was the provision of a hot midday meal for necessitous school children.¹²⁸ A campaign in support of the school meals proposal was thus begun. On 12 December 1941, Dublin Corporation's School Meals Committee received a deputation from the Council of Action and a delegation from the Dublin Branch of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation. A sub-committee was appointed as a result of this meeting to investigate matter and concluded that the hot school meal should indeed be introduced. This position was endorsed by the School Meals Committee and was subsequently approved by Dublin Corporation which on 2 February 1942 appointed a deputation to wait on the Taoiseach to request use of the Cooked Meals Service's facilities at the Mansion House to supply meals to 'citizens and their children urgently in need of the same.'¹²⁹ Using the Mansion House kitchens would have allowed meals to be provided in schools that lacked the necessary facilities.

The position by March 1942 was that the Schools Meals Committee, Dublin Corporation, various medical officers for health, the Dietetic Council of the Irish Medical Council, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Dublin Trade Unions Council, the Council of Action (representing eighty-three organisations), the Irish Women Workers' Union, the St John Ambulance Brigade, the Infant Aid Society, the Irish Countrywomen's Association, and a number of Dublin TDs from various parties were all in favour of the proposal to supply a hot midday meal to national school children.¹³⁰ In spite of this broad based support, the Department of Local Government

Drisceoil, 'Whose Emergency is it?' wartime politics and the Irish working class, 1939-45' in Fintan Lane and Donal Ó Drisceoil (eds), *Politics and the Irish working class, 1830-1945* (Dublin, 2005), p. 269.

¹²⁸ Summary of meeting held on 12 March 1941 between Eamon de Valera, Seán McaEntee, and a deputation from the Council of Action, n.d. (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256, p. 1).

¹²⁹ P. J. Hernon to Eamon de Valera, 11 Feb. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256).

¹³⁰ The TDs, all members of Dublin City Council, included Alfred Byrne, Independent Deputy for Dublin North-East; Joseph Hannigan, Independent Deputy for Dublin South; Thomas Kelly, Fianna Fáil Deputy for Dublin South; Eamon Cooney, Fianna Fáil Deputy for Dublin North-West; Cormac Breathnach, Fianna Fáil Deputy for Dublin North-West; Peadar S. Doyle, Lord Mayor and Fine Gael Deputy for

and Public Health would not sanction the proposal. In a note on school meals by James Hurson, secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health dated 19 January 1942, the department's position is outlined. Hurson stated that:

No encouragement... should be given to a proposal by which any of the children's ordinary meals in the family home would be generally replaced by meals provided in the school or elsewhere. The family meals constitute an important element in the filial relationship between parents and children which it would be socially disastrous to weaken in any way. It should certainly not be interfered with except in circumstances of the most extreme need.¹³¹

When on 12 March 1942, Dublin Corporation's deputation of five including Louie Bennett and James Larkin Jnr met the Taoiseach and Minister Seán MacEntee, its proposals were rejected. De Valera felt that Mansion House facilities should be retained for their original purpose, while MacEntee, citing the existence of the Food Allowance Scheme, argued that the 'position of the poor man was not worse today than a year or two ago.'¹³² The deputation did not agree with this assessment. Bennett accused the government of not understanding the poor, referring to the existence of the 'new poor', 'there was an Emergency – a great one' she exhorted.¹³³ Speaking from experience the deputation argued that poverty had increased in the city especially among working class families who managed before the war on small incomes, but during the Emergency 'found it impossible to do so and were in actual want and suffering from lack of sufficient food.'¹³⁴

A government memorandum on school meals agitation suggested that in light of the various government and voluntary welfare mechanisms that 'there can be no real destitution or hardship' and where malnutrition existed, it was due to the 'wrong choice

Dublin South, Patrick Belton, Fine Gael Deputy for Dublin County; Ernest E. Benson, Fine Gael Deputy for Dublin Townships. See: P. J. Hennon to Eamon de Valera, 9 Feb. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256).

¹³¹ Hurson, School meals, 19 Jan. 1942.

¹³² Summary of deputation, 23 Mar. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256, p. 1).

¹³³ Summary of meeting held on 12 March 1941, p. 3.

¹³⁴ Summary of deputation, 23 Mar. 1942, p. 2.

of food'.¹³⁵ There was also evidence to suggest that the existing community kitchens weren't being fully utilised and this reinforced the government's position. In letters sent to the *Irish Times*, published on 9 and 12 March 1942, representatives of both the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Guild of Goodwill noted that their facilities were underused.¹³⁶ This was supported by Robert Collis who estimated that not more than one-fifth of Dublin's community kitchens were working at full capacity, which he felt had nothing to do with 'Protestant soup' having a bad name as most of the kitchens 'were Catholic'.¹³⁷ However, for the kitchens such as those operated by the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Guild of Goodwill it is likely that the denominational issue figured in the minds of the potential attendees, a conclusion also drawn by Lyndsey Earner-Byrne.¹³⁸ As for the poorer than expected uptake in both the secular and Catholic kitchens in general, James Larkin Jnr suggested that it was because the 'new poor' were too proud to ask for charity while Collis argued that the people of Dublin needed to be 'educated to take a good meal'.¹³⁹ While the lack of education may have been a problem, there was clearly an aversion to communal feeding among the public. Louie Bennett's claim that the mothers did not themselves desire communal feeding, but did so for their children, supports this idea.¹⁴⁰ One could argue that the demand didn't exist because there wasn't a need for the service, however the infant and tuberculosis mortality statistics would suggest otherwise (see Figure 5.2). Thus while the demand may not have been apparent in the existing centres, did this not obviate the need for school meals. The introduction of a substantial school meal would have been an economical way to

¹³⁵ School meals agitation, 26 Feb. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256, pp 1-2).

¹³⁶ *Irish Times*, 9 Mar. 1942, 12 Mar. 1942.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 May. 1942.

¹³⁸ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 105.

¹³⁹ Summary of deputation, 23 Mar. 1942, p. 3; *Irish Times*, 14 May. 1942.

¹⁴⁰ Summary of meeting held on 12 March 1941, p. 1.

combat the increased cost-of-living; it would have benefitted the entire family, and would have nullified the stigma of pauperism.

The general consensus – even expressed by Louie Bennett – was that the ideal situation was for the children to go home and have dinner with their families.¹⁴¹ Owing to the difficulties encountered in cooking with limited supplies of substandard fuel, this was not always possible. This situation was compounded by the fact that many families simply could no longer afford to purchase sufficient food. When gas rationing, a product of the coal shortage, was announced in Dublin on 3 March 1942, the dual session in schools from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. was introduced. The longer lunch break was instituted to allow pupils to return home to have a meal with their families as the restrictions on the gas supply rendered the provision of a hot meal at the end of the school day impossible.¹⁴² Gerard Fee suggests this helped to diffuse the debate on school meals, but it also highlighted the plight of many poor school children who were forced to wait outside the gates of locked schools as there was no point in returning home.¹⁴³ Many families were reliant on turf as by late 1941 Dublin Gas Company stopped taking on new customers.¹⁴⁴

In spite of the Department of Local Government and Public Health's resistance to the proposals, agitation for school meals continued. In April 1942 Galway County Council passed a resolution asking the government to extend the School Meals Scheme nationwide.¹⁴⁵ On 12 October 1942, Dublin City Council adopted the resolution submitted by Alfie Byrne that:

In view of the serious malnutrition in Dublin, the council urge the immediate provision of hot school dinners from the municipal kitchens.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Louie Bennett to the Private Secretary of the Taoiseach, 27 Feb. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256).

¹⁴² *Irish Press*, 4 March 1942.

¹⁴³ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 74.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish Times*, 29 Apr. 1942.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 Oct. 1942.

Also in October 1942 the issue was pressed in a joint open letter to government by women's organisations; the Irish Housewives Association was among their number.¹⁴⁷

Almost a year later in August 1943 the *Torch* called on Labour Party members and workers' organisations to focus on the issue:

This bun and milk business is entirely inadequate. England can feed its school children... it can be done here... we have a responsibility to all children to see that they are properly fed.¹⁴⁸

The continuing agitation however derived a certain amount of success as the number of children taking meals in schools increased and in some instances there were improvements in the type of meals served. In February 1942, 21,000 children in Dublin were being given some sort of meal in school.¹⁴⁹ By 1944 this number had increased to 32,000.¹⁵⁰ Between 1938 and 1945, the number of schools in urban areas throughout the country distributing a midday meal increased from 214 to 352 (see Table 3.8). There was also a slight improvement in the meal served in Dublin as from 1943 a sandwich with cheese and butter three times a week and a jam sandwich twice a week was substituted for the bun meal.¹⁵¹ In Mayo, salad and in season vegetables were given with the cheese and butter sandwich on the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer for Health. The numbers fed in urban areas increased by almost 100 percent between 1938 and 1945, and expenditure of the scheme by 300 percent during the same period. In the Gaeltacht however, the numbers decreased as difficulties were sometimes encountered due to supply issues. The IHA felt that this subject had continued relevance during the post-war years in both rural and urban contexts with one contributor to the 1946 edition of the *Irish Housewife* commenting:

¹⁴⁷ Irish Housewives' Committee, first annual report, June 1943 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 5).

¹⁴⁸ *Torch*, 28 Aug. 1943.

¹⁴⁹ School meals agitation, 26 Feb. 1942, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ *DLGPH, Report, 1943-44*, p. 69.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

There is room for every sort of effort, both voluntary and charitable, and state organised. The first thing is to admit that children must be fed, whether they live in the town or the country.¹⁵²

Table 3.8 Statistics relating school meals schemes in Ireland, 1939-45

School meals						
Year	Total schools	Schools participating	Total meals supplied	Average daily number fed	Total cost	Average cost of food per meal*
1938-39	n/a	214	5,174,663	29,321	£29,443	1.4d.
1939-40	n/a	227	5,204,801	31,867	£31,230	1.44d.
1940-41	n/a	267	6,127,798	34,662	£34,147	1.4d.
1941-42	n/a	315	8,320,361	45,934	£46,737	1.35d.
1942-43	n/a	331	9,129,881	48,530	£61,182	1.79d.
1943-44	n/a	346	9,805,603	54,256	£87,440	2.43d.
1944-45	n/a	352	9,986,224	57,020	£115,312	2.7d.
School meals (Gaeltacht)						
Year	Total schools	Schools participating	Total meals supplied	Average daily number fed	Total cost	Average cost of food per meal*
1938-39	325	317	2,648,585	n/a	£20,096	1.8d.
1939-40	316	313	2,661,682	n/a	£18,595	1.7d.
1940-41	311	309	2,711,005	n/a	£20,705	1.8d.
1941-42	308	300	2,401,011	n/a	£18,937	1.9d.
1942-43	308	301	2,342,101	n/a	£17,218	1.8d.
1943-44	308	307	2,313,732	n/a	£25,033	2.6d.
1944-45	308	304	2,219,868	n/a	£19,903	2.15d.

* Cost given in decimalised pence in original source. Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45*

St John Ambulance Brigade

The endeavours of the St John Ambulance Brigade's Welfare Department received positive review in the third article of the 'Community Kitchens' series.¹⁵³ The hot meal was in itself an extremely valuable asset at a time when home cooking was both expensive and difficult due to fuel scarcity. The distinguishing feature of the brigade's scheme was the fact that since at least 1935 the meals were designed by the

¹⁵² O. H. A. Hughes, 'The need for meals for school-children in rural areas' in *Irish Housewife*, i (1946), p. 28.

¹⁵³ *Irish Times*, 12 Aug. 1941.

expert dietician and professor of biochemistry at TCD, William. R. Fearon.¹⁵⁴ One such meal was outlined in the Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund pamphlet:

The dinner consists of (1) stew made with a little meat (minced), cereals (chiefly lentils and pulses), carrots and onions on a bone stock, potatoes and green vegetables; (2) Baked rice pudding to which beaten-up eggs are added after cooking, with hot milk poured over each helping; (3) Half-a-pint of milk is given to each mother to drink with her dinner. Owing to the scarcity of rice, sago mixed with oat flour is used on alternative days. This is a properly balanced diet for expectant and nursing mothers.¹⁵⁵

This meal would have constituted a massive boost to the deficient dietary of the mothers who were fortunate enough to be put on the list. Interestingly, it is possible to see how the menu was influenced by shortages as sago mixed with oat flour was used as a substitute to make up for the shortage of rice. Not only did the brigade feed the mothers, but just before giving birth each mother was granted clothing for both herself and the baby, a packet of oatmeal and a pint of milk for fourteen days after her confinement.¹⁵⁶ The provision of clothing was an important facet of the brigade's work, a point was highlighted by the tenement dweller Mrs. K. who considered the problem of how to clothe her family as being her greatest worry.¹⁵⁷

Shortages and rising prices hampered the ability of the St John Ambulance Brigade to deliver welfare along former lines. In 1940 the Welfare Department was forced to reduce the length of the course of meals from six to five months.¹⁵⁸ Difficulties persisted. As early as July 1941 it was noted in the *Ambulance Gazette* that:

¹⁵⁴ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 97; SJAI, *St John Ambulance Brigade in Ireland*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 6; Sago is a starch extracted from the spongy centre of various tropical palm stems and is a major staple food for the lowland peoples of New Guinea and the Moluccas.

¹⁵⁶ *Marrowbone Lane Samaritan Fund*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Compiled, 'Other peoples incomes - 3' in *The Bell*, vii, no. 2 (1943), p. 60.

¹⁵⁸ M. J. Russell to the Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, 12 Nov. 1940 (NAI, HLTH, M 34/7/Vol.2).

The committee find it increasingly difficult to maintain a suitable balanced diet, as many of the ingredients originally in the dinners are now unobtainable. The committee are anxious about the immediate future which holds two especial problems – the scarcity of the normal foodstuffs and the rise in prices which is faced without a corresponding increase in the annual income.¹⁵⁹

The fuel shortage also caused difficulties. Up until the winter of 1941, the brigade granted the mothers a 5s. fuel parcel, though henceforth this was replaced with a 5s. food voucher as fuel was unobtainable.¹⁶⁰ The rising price of fuel forced the caterers to employ fuel economies; hay boxes were used to complete the cooking of par cooked soups and to keep dishes warm.¹⁶¹ Off cut pieces of wood sourced from timber merchants as far afield as Portarlinton were used to fire boilers though irrespective of such economies, overall operational costs increased.¹⁶² The impact of the rise in prices was borne out in the Welfare Department's annual reports published in the *Irish Ambulance Gazette*. In 1938 the three-course meal provided to the mothers cost the brigade 6d. per head, 7d. by the end of 1939, 8½d. in 1942, and as much as 10d. in 1944.¹⁶³ Such was the increase, in 1944 the brigade closed down its dining room at Merrion Square so as to maintain standards in its two other dining rooms at Mountjoy Square and Great Strand Street.¹⁶⁴ Up until this point the brigade had been feeding an average of 1,000 mothers per year since 1939 which equated to an average of 75,000 dinners and 85,000 pints of soup.¹⁶⁵ Following the closure of Merrion Square these figures were reduced by more than fifty percent.

The closure of Merrion Square did not result in a general regression of the communal dining facilities present in the city. As will be explored in the following

¹⁵⁹ 'The Welfare Department' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xx, no. 3 (1941), p. 58.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xxi, no. 1 (1942), p. 22.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42; A hay box usually consisted of a tin or wooden box lined with hay for insulation into which could be placed a pot containing a liquid meal such as soup or stew which had been brought to the boil. Once sealed shut the food within the box would cook in its own heat.

¹⁶² 'Cooked food distributing centre' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xxi, no. 4 (1942), p. 61.

¹⁶³ Annual Reports of the Welfare Department, in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, 1938-44.

¹⁶⁴ 'Welfare Department' in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xxiii, no. 1 (1944), p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Annual Reports of the Welfare Department, in *The Irish Ambulance Gazette*, 1938-45.

chapter, a new organisation, the Catholic Social Service Conference (CSSC) had since 1941 made significant strides into the area. By 1944 the CSSC was operating seventeen maternity welfare centres in Dublin which offered an almost identical service to that provided by the St John Ambulance Brigade. The CSSC even transformed the former St Brigid's Penny Diner on Holles Row which was in close proximity to the Merrion Square dining hall into a CSSC food centre designed to feed large numbers. Lindsey Earner-Byrne argues that the closure of Merrion Square was 'very much a question of territory' as the location of the CSSC centre forced the Catholic patrons to choose.¹⁶⁶ Denomination aside, the fact that the course of meals offered by the CSSC ran for six months, a month longer than that provided by the brigade, must have been a key consideration for the mothers. In a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, a Catholic member of the brigade, Hilda Nolan, admitted that a number of the mothers were being fed at the CSSC dining hall at Holles Street, and that this factored into the brigade's decision to cease operations at Merrion Square.¹⁶⁷ The other factor at play which was not mentioned by Earner-Byrne was financial. Hilda Nolan explained to McQuaid that:

The cost of maintenance is, of course, increasing and has been causing considerable anxiety to the [Finance] Committee

In this respect, the brigade's first instinct was to close down the dining hall on Great Strand Street. This centre, however, located in the north inner city was remarkably isolated from other communal dining facilities. In contrast, three CSSC food centres were located within half a kilometre of Merrion Square, the closest being Holles Row. In order to balance the books the brigade was always going to close down one of its

¹⁶⁶ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 105.

¹⁶⁷ Hilda Nolan to McQuaid, 17 Oct. 1943 (DDA, McQuaid Papers, AB8/B/XIX).

dining halls, but it was the existence of competition which sealed the fate of Merrion Square.

Government welfare mechanisms, the Food Allowances Scheme

In light of shortages, the increasing cost-of-living and calls for the control of prices, the government began to seriously consider the issue of the standard of living in Ireland. The Food Allowances Order was introduced on 1 September 1941 to address the issue. The order made provision:

For the granting of a weekly allowance of food to eligible persons of certain classes who are resident in specified urban areas.¹⁶⁸

The following classes of persons were entitled to participate in the scheme

- 1) Dependants (up to a maximum of six) of a person in receipt of unemployment assistance.
- 2) Old age pensioners.
- 3) Blind pensioners.
- 4) Dependent children under sixteen years of age of blind pensioners.
- 5) Recipients of disablement benefit under the National Health Insurance Acts who are in necessitous circumstances.
- 6) Widows, children and orphans who are beneficiaries under the Widows' and Orphans' Pensions Act.¹⁶⁹

The specified urban areas included county boroughs, city boroughs, urban districts, and towns governed by commissioners.¹⁷⁰ The quantity of food to be granted to each eligible dependant included three and a half pints of milk, a quarter of a pound of creamery butter, and two pounds of (batch) bread per week.¹⁷¹ For the purposes of the order a man with a wife was considered to have one dependant while each additional child would count as another dependant up to a maximum of six dependants. Reportedly based on a sample survey of the dietary of the necessitous classes, the intention of the voucher scheme was 'to make good, in part at least,' deficiencies in 'nutritive

¹⁶⁸ *Southern Star*, 6 Sept. 1941.

¹⁶⁹ SVP, *Handbook*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁰ *Connacht Sentinel*, 9 Sept. 1941.

¹⁷¹ *Limerick Leader*, 15 Sept. 1941; In September 1942 the bread allowance for dependants was increased by 50% due to rising prices. See: Fee, 'The effects of World War II', p. 72.

elements.¹⁷² The first issue of food vouchers was made on the 4 September 1941 for dependants of unemployment assistance recipients while vouchers were issued to the remaining eligible classes on the 5 September 1941.¹⁷³ Vouchers were valid for a week commencing from the date of issue and were issued on a weekly basis along with the appropriate payment of unemployment assistance, pensions, etc. In that first year a sum of £600,000 was provided to meet the cost of the food vouchers, £200,000 of which was earmarked for allocation by the boards of assistance to necessitous persons above the amount normally granted under home assistance.¹⁷⁴

The Food Allowances Scheme, did not have the effect of putting the beneficiaries in a better economic position than they were prior to the Emergency, rather it went some way to meeting the effects of the increased cost-of-living. This was reflected in the *Bulletin* of the Society of St Vincent de Paul which noted:

At first sight it would seem that most of... [the recipients] would cease to be in need of assistance from our Society. We ought to be slow, however, to jump to this conclusion, because a large proportion of the increase in benefits or allowances has been accounted for already by the rise in the price of certain commodities which has take place since the beginning of the emergency.¹⁷⁵

Although enacted to secure the wellbeing of approximately 119,000 people, there was opposition to the order from some quarters.¹⁷⁶ The scheme was criticised for being an undue infringement upon the natural liberties of those entitled to avail of it. Prior to its introduction, Labour TD and leader of the party William Norton argued that a cash sum rather than vouchers should be granted, adding that the scheme would bestow the stigma of pauperism upon the claimants.¹⁷⁷ While the case was made by the opposition and the Labour deputies in particular that the poor were as capable of spending cash as

¹⁷² School meals agitation, 26 Feb. 1942, p. 1.

¹⁷³ *Southern Star*, 6 Sept. 1941.

¹⁷⁴ DD, Mr Lemass, 7 May. 1942, Vol. 86, No. 13, Col. 1796.

¹⁷⁵ *Bulletin*, lxxxvi, no. 11 (1941), Nov. Supp., p. 15, cited in, Ní Chearbhaill, 'The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Dublin', p. 43.

¹⁷⁶ Sum of 119,000 calculated using data from: *Leitrim Observer*, 26 July. 1941.

¹⁷⁷ DD, Mr Norton, 7 May 1941, Vol. 83, No. 1, Col. 68.

anyone else, providing relief in voucher form guarded against a situation whereby cash may have been spent unwisely. As the results of the Dublin section of the *National Nutritional Survey* illustrated, families didn't always spend their income to the best nutritional advantage with the report recommending better food education to rectify this.¹⁷⁸ Guaranteeing a weekly food allowance in exchange for vouchers also ensured that in spite of the increasing cost-of-living, the family would gain the same amount of food every week, something which would have been impossible to achieve had a fixed cash sum been granted. These points vindicate the government's decision to introduce allowances in voucher as opposed to cash form.

The voucher system provided a guaranteed domestic market for Ireland's agricultural produce which benefited wheat and dairy farmers in particular. At the same time, families residing outside the scheduled urban areas who were in receipt of state welfare were not entitled to the food vouchers. In Ireland's rural areas there existed poverty and unemployment, especially among members of the rural labouring landless class. This fact was pointed out in the Dáil on 14 May 1941 by Labour Deputy for Wexford, Richard Corish.¹⁷⁹ There were also necessitous families inhabiting small towns and villages which were not governed by a commissioner or defined as an urban district or city borough. This was true of the densely populated Cork city hinterland where in areas such as Glanmire and Blackrock resided a great many industrial workers who commuted to their workplace in the city on a daily basis. Such areas were classified as rural areas even though they were situated less than three kilometres from the city and contained an industrial working population who owned little land. In these districts, unemployed members of the population were entitled to the same amount of Unemployment Assistance (fourteen shillings) as the better off rural dwelling labouring

¹⁷⁸ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part I, methods of dietary survey and results from Dublin investigation* (Dublin, 1946), p. 15.

¹⁷⁹ DD, Mr Corish, 14 May. 1941, Vol. 83, No. 3, Col. 402.

family who lived in Kildare countryside for example. In Kildare, it was typical of such families to possess an acre or two of their own land, labour for larger farmers, catch rabbits, make jam, keep some pigs or poultry and cut their own turf. Their self sufficiency placed them in a better position to cope with the hardships caused by the Emergency. In April 1944, supplementary cash benefits were made available for recipients of widows, orphans, old age and blind pensions who lived outside of the scheduled areas.¹⁸⁰ This went some way towards correcting the insufficiencies of the 1941 order. The maximum allowance of this scheme was 2s. 6d. per week in the case of a blind or old age pensioner or recipient of disablement benefit, and 1d. 6s. a week for each of their dependent children.¹⁸¹ For the year 1944-45, total expenditure on the scheme amounted to £190,434.¹⁸² Counties Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Limerick and Mayo accounted for over fifty percent of this amount (see Table 3.9). Though in the end, the granting of Food Vouchers along with Cash Supplements had largely ceased by July 1947 while Food Vouchers for recipients of Home Assistance continued until March 1948 and some cash supplements were granted as late as 1949.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Kelly, 'Social Security in independent Ireland', pp 143-4.

¹⁸¹ *DLGPH, Report, 1944-45*, p. 88.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁸³ Kelly, 'Social Security in independent Ireland', p. 145.

Table 3.9 Expenditure by the local authorities on Supplemental Cash Allowances, 1944-45

Public Assistance Authority	Expenditure		
	£	s.	d.
Carlow	4,138	15	6
Cavan	2,951	14	0
Clare	4,123	8	6
Cork, North	9,561	16	6
Cork, South	11,096	13	0
Cork, West	9,647	7	9
Donegal	24,119	12	6
Dublin	12	15	0
Balrothery	149	15	6
Rathdown	Nil		
Galway	10,716	18	0
Kerry	18,136	9	6
Kildare	4,236	2	0
Kilkenny	5,323	6	0
Laois	4,023	17	6
Leitrim	1,654	15	6
Limerick	13,003	0	0
Limerick, C.B.	Nil		
Longford	1,363	17	0
Louth	1,063	10	0
Mayo	14,920	18	0
Meath	2,320	14	0
Monaghan	1,650	18	6
Offaly	2,869	16	6
Roscommon	4,373	4	0
Sligo	1,313	6	4
Tipperary, N.R.	5,288	2	0
Tipperary, S.R.	5,620	11	6
Waterford	5,768	1	0
Westmeath	4,269	10	6
Wexford	11,343	11	6
Wicklow	5,372	1	6
Total	190,434	8	9

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1944-45*

Cheap fuel for necessitous households

The Food Allowance Scheme introduced in September 1941 went some way to addressing the increased cost-of-living for residents of urban areas, but it was not until November 1942 that the government introduced a scheme to tackle the problem of fuel

poverty among these households. This had much to do with the fact that up until early 1941, Ireland remained cushioned from the worst effects of a fuel shortage due to a combination of stockpiling and greater than normal imports.¹⁸⁴ This however was of no benefit to the poor who owing to their meagre incomes were unable to buy in bulk, a situation which left them vulnerable to rising prices. Robert Collis' address delivered to the audience at the Gaiety following a performance of *Marrowbone Lane* is demonstrative of the nature of the suffering experienced in light of fuel poverty. He described how the previous day a mother brought her baby to the Rotunda Hospital:

The child felt cold to touch. I had its temperature taken. It did not register on the ordinary thermometer. I got a sub-normal thermometer. It registered 85°F – 13°F below normal, 98.4°F. I asked the mother, who was a quite nice looking young woman – ‘Why?’ She told me that for the last ten days they had no fire in the room. It was freezing February weather. We took the baby in, but we could not resuscitate it. It had frozen to death.¹⁸⁵

In late 1942, as the pinch began to be felt more widely and with fuel poverty among the poorer classes becoming acute, the fuel scheme was introduced. The scheme provided for a sum of £100,000 annually to ensure a regular supply of cheap fuel for necessitous households in the non-turf areas during the winter months.¹⁸⁶ Relevant households were each week entitled to collect one hundredweight (cwt) of turf from government fuel depots. They did so upon the exchange for a voucher purchased for a nominal fee unless they were in receipt of Home Assistance (see Table 3.10).

¹⁸⁴ Fee, ‘The effects of World War II’, p. 123.

¹⁸⁵ *Irish Times*, 25 Mar. 1941.

¹⁸⁶ The scheduled non-turf area included the counties Dublin, Kilkenny, Louth, Wexford, Waterford (except certain districts in West Waterford), and Cork city and suburbs while the cities of Galway and Limerick were also included. See: ‘Fuel Supplies’ in *ITJSB*, 1945-48; *DLGPH, Report, 1942-43*, p. 32.

Table 3.10 Winter fuel scheme for necessitous households in Ireland, 1942-47

Persons in receipt of	Price for one cwt
Home Assistance	Free
Old age pensions	6d.
Blind pensions	6d.
Widows pensions	6d.
Unemployment assistance (with dependants)	1s.
Persons on low incomes	2s.

Source: *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1942-43*, p. 32

For the months of April to October a flat rate of 1s. per half hundredweight was charged.¹⁸⁷ Dublin's fuel depots were often located in open spaces such as parks and were supplied from the city's central fuel dump in the Phoenix Park where during the years 1942-47 over half a million tons of turf were delivered from the turf area.¹⁸⁸ In Galway a fuel depot was located at Eyre Square. One major point of criticism levelled at the scheme was that it didn't cover necessitous households resident in the turf-area.¹⁸⁹

In October 1941, Dubliners were reportedly charged 6d. for a stone for wet green timber cut too large for their fireplaces, whereas just a year later, pensioners for example could obtain eight stone of turf for the same price under the winter fuel scheme.¹⁹⁰ The impact of the scheme was immediate. Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Seán MacEntee, reported in the Dáil on 10 December 1942 that a weekly average of 1,200 tons of turf was being distributed in Dublin benefitting as many as 24,000 households.¹⁹¹ By May 1943, approximately 29,000 Dublin households

¹⁸⁷ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', pp 134-5.

¹⁸⁸ Donal Clarke, *Brown Gold, a history of Bord na Móna and the peat industry in Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), p. 50.

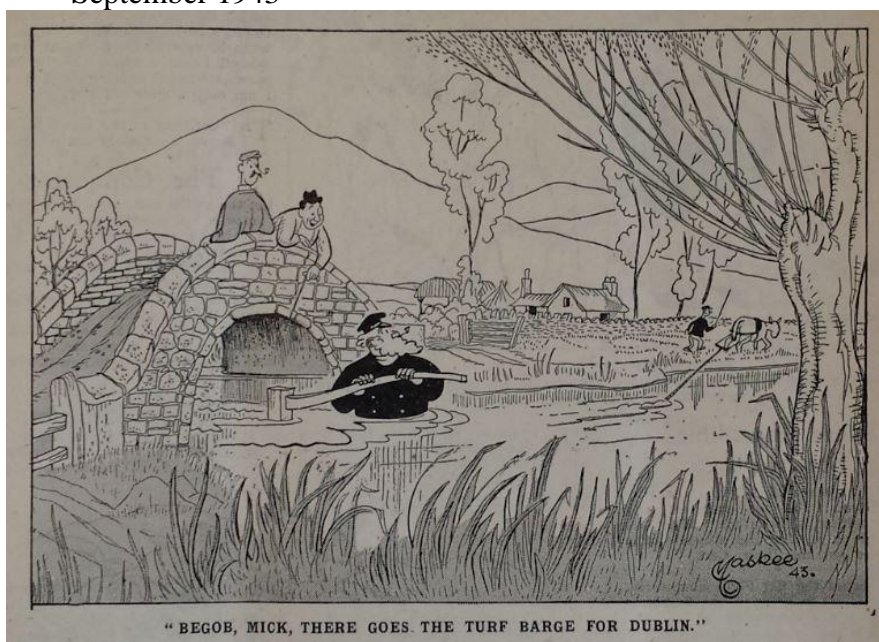
¹⁸⁹ Irish Housewives' Committee, first annual report, June 1943 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 2).

¹⁹⁰ DD, Mr Byrne, 30 Oct. 1941, Vol. 88, No. 2, Col. 360.

¹⁹¹ DD, Mr MacEntee, 10 Dec. 1942, Vol. 89, No. 2, Col. 193.

were benefitting from the scheme.¹⁹² It provided cheap fuel to households who desperately needed it. This solution was not without its problems. The turf sent to the non-turf area was often derided for being too wet. Labour TD William Norton lamented ‘its quality is such that a decent horse would not lie down in it for bedding.’¹⁹³ This issue is brilliantly captured in an illustration in the September 1943 edition of *Dublin Opinion* (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8 ‘The turf barge for Dublin’ as depicted in *Dublin Opinion*, September 1943



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Sept. 1943

Some households refused to take their allowance due to its poor condition, a point which is unsurprising when one considers the difficulties families encountered obtaining their supplies. Unlike rationed fuels which were often delivered to one’s doorstep by bellmen, fuel scheme turf was distributed from depots. Due to high demand, beneficiaries of the scheme were forced to queue at the depots often long before they opened in environments that offered little shelter. Unruly crowds were commonplace. Depots were short-staffed and the employees often unsympathetic. To make matters

¹⁹² Figure calculated using data from: Fee, ‘The effects of World War II’, p. 139.

¹⁹³ DD, Mr Norton, 11 Mar. 1943, Vol. 89, No. 10, Col. 1293.

worse, the recipients had to provide their own sacks and means by which to bring the turf home be it makeshift handcarts, trolleys and even prams. Those who refused the turf often elected to sell their vouchers and do without rather than go through the trouble of getting the turf from the depots.¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, this scheme received far less criticism than that of the food voucher scheme.

Footwear for children

The Footwear Scheme for children from necessitous households launched by the Department of Local Government and Public Health late in 1944 is another example of a scheme introduced to ensure that the poorer classes were able to obtain a particular article that was in short supply.

By arrangement with the Department of Supplies the manufacturers of children's footwear produced official footwear of a strong and durable type bearing the distinguishing mark "C.P." (Cúnamh Poiblí) on the sole, close to the heel.¹⁹⁵

The boots were then distributed to retailers all over the country through the normal distribution channels either to be exchanged for vouchers or sold at fixed prices.

Table 3.11 Footwear retail prices under the footwear scheme in Ireland, 1944-45

Sizes	Price
7 to 10 (small)	10s. 6d.
11, 12, 13 and 1	13s.
2, 3, 4, and 5	14s. 2d.
6 and 7 (large)	16s.

Source: *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1944-45*, p. 88

The administration of the scheme was entrusted to the public assistance authorities as part of their administration of Home Assistance. The local authorities examined applications from eligible persons, determined the cases to be assisted, and issued vouchers exchangeable for footwear to these cases. Recipients of Home Assistance were entitled to free footwear under the scheme, however, in all other cases contributions

¹⁹⁴ Fee, 'The effects of World War II', pp 135-9.

¹⁹⁵ *DLGPH, Report, 1944-45*, p. 88.

were determined by means.¹⁹⁶ It was on these grounds that the scheme was most often criticised. As pointed out by Labour Deputy James Larkin (Junior), families supported by Unemployment Assistance (particularly larger ones) were in many cases unable to avail of the scheme even when granted vouchers due to the fact that they were unable to afford to pay the contribution.¹⁹⁷ The scheme was also susceptible to abuse; Independent Deputy, James Dillon, questioned the legitimacy of claims made in rural Ireland.¹⁹⁸ The *Irish Press* reported that in Kerry applications for boots were made by one in nineteen of the county's population with the result that the local authority opted out of the scheme altogether considering most requests to be made by 'chancers'.¹⁹⁹ This however, would have denied those who genuinely required the aid. Alluding to the Catholic social principle of subsidiarity, the article proposed the governance of the scheme be handed over to smaller local bodies, i.e. the Parish Councils.²⁰⁰ Nevertheless the public assistance authorities continued to administer the scheme with the Dublin Board of Assistance issuing 45,000 pairs of shoes in 1945.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ *Irish Times*, 1 Dec. 1944.

¹⁹⁷ DD, Mr Larkin (Junior), 18 Apr. 1945, Vol. 96, No. 20, Col. 2053.

¹⁹⁸ DD, Mr Dillon, 18 Apr. 1945, Vol. 96, No. 20, Col. 2053.

¹⁹⁹ *Irish Press*, 26 Mar. 1945.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Irish Independent*, 5 Sept. 1946.

Table 3.12 Expenditure on and the number of vouchers granted by the local authorities in Ireland for the footwear scheme, 1944-45

Public Assistance Authority	Expenditure			Total No. of Vouchers allocated
	£	s.	d.	
Carlow	137	5	0	917
Cavan	315	3	2	2,558
Clare	206	8	8	3,438
Cork, North	387	13	6	2,750
Cork, South	Nil			7,500
Cork, West	345	9	2	4,125
Donegal	274	15	10	2,750
Dublin	6,231	17	4	37,500
Balrothery	68	11	2	544
Rathdown	285	19	0	2,750
Galway	250	16	4	3,438
Kerry	462	3	8	4,812
Kildare	Nil			1,556
Kilkenny	247	18	0	2,099
Laois	118	9	4	962
Leitrim	102	9	4	1,375
Limerick	1,008	9	8	5,500
Limerick, C.B.	243	9	8	3,000
Longford	Nil			1,326
Louth	260	14	2	1,071
Mayo	294	1	8	2,750
Meath	113	3	0	1,771
Monaghan	119	16	10	1,004
Offaly	83	13	1	1,282
Roscommon	94	5	0	468
Sligo	249	5	4	1,771
Tipperary, N.R.	124	2	6	1,085
Tipperary, S.R.	691	19	0	4,812
Waterford	380	0	10	3,344
Westmeath	164	3	6	822
Wexford	255	9	0	3,190
Wicklow	488	19	11	2,009
Total	14,027	11	8	114,279

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1944-45*

Case Study: The experience of ‘Mrs. K.’ The mother of a ‘typical’ tenement dwelling family

The case of ‘Mrs. K’, the mother of a necessitous tenement family, as portrayed in *The Bell’s* ‘Other people’s incomes’, 1943, offers insights into the value of aid administered to the poor by both the government and voluntary organisations. Here was a family of eight including an unemployed husband and six children aged between ten months and thirteen years. The family’s accommodation was typical of Dublin’s tenements, their flat comprising a mere two rooms, there was no gas or running water, and the toilet which was in an outhouse in the yard was shared with five other families. The man of the house, an unemployed labourer, was granted 27s. 6d. Home Assistance per week as well as six food vouchers which were valued at one 1s. 9½d. each.²⁰² The vouchers were given in addition to the monetary aid under the Home Assistance scheme. The six vouchers represented the maximum assistance a family was entitled to although the husband had seven dependants including his wife.²⁰³ Every second week six additional loaves could be claimed on the basis of the vouchers which came to the value of 3s. 3d. thus bringing the average weekly value of the vouchers to 12s. 4½d. This gave the family an average total weekly income of 39s. 10½d.

²⁰² Compiled, ‘Other people’s incomes - 3, p. 58.

²⁰³ SVP, *Handbook*, p. 58.

Table 3.13 Expenses of an average Dublin tenement dwelling family, 1943

Expenses	s.	d.
Rent	7s.	0 d.
Society	1 s.	6 d.
Bread (21 loaves at 6 1/2d.)	11 s.	4 1/2 d.
Milk	3 s.	9 1/2 d.
Tea	2 s.	0 d.
Sugar	2 s.	6 d.
Cigarettes (for himself)	1 s.	9 d.
Butter	4 s.	0 d.
Soap		5 d.
Potatoes (1/2 stone for Sunday)		9 d.
Fat pieces for dripping		6 d.
Cocoa		6 d.
Fuel	2 s.	0 d.
Total	38 s.	1 d.

Source: Compiled, 'Other peoples incomes - 3' in *The Bell*, 7(2), (1943), p. 59

Under the fuel scheme the family could purchase four stones of turf for a shilling during the summer, and two stones during the winter.²⁰⁴ As can be seen from Table 3.12, almost every incoming penny was accounted for by the week's end. The remaining 1s. 9½d. was used to buy matches, mending materials, paper and pencils for the children, a candle a week in the winter, and was put towards Sunday dinner.²⁰⁵ This left precariously little room for emergencies such as the sickness of a family member or other unplanned expenses that inevitably arise when raising a large family.

Welfare dependence was a facet of daily life that was very common to Ireland's poorest and one that was accentuated by the pressures of living during the Emergency. Although two thirds of the family's income was spent on food, the difference between total weekly income and expenditure was negligible. A quick glance at Table 3.12 indicates that the amount of food purchased was not nearly enough to feed two adults and six growing children for a week, least of all maintain them in good health. It was

²⁰⁴ Compiled, 'Other peoples incomes - 3', p. 61.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

this fact which made Mrs. K.'s family and families in a similar position so dependent on the free food and meals offered by voluntary organisations. Only on a Sunday was a cooked meal eaten in Mrs. K.'s household. For the rest of the week the entire family got their dinner from a nearby food centre. Normally they would have been expected to pay a penny per head for each meal, but the women who ran the centre were not 'sticklers for payment.'²⁰⁶ The meal itself typically consisted of a stew followed by a milk pudding or bread and jam. It was the substance between the two 'bread and spread' meals consumed by the family every day. At a rate of eight meals daily costing two penny per meal the family would have made a saving of 8s., a sum which amounted to almost forty percent of what Mrs. K. was spending on food each week. However the expense incurred producing the meals in communal feeding kitchens was often greater than the price charged for the meal.²⁰⁷ Either way the nutritional value of this meal cannot be overstated for without it the family would have had little to no intake of vitamins, minerals and protein in their diet.

The school-going children, of which there were four got 'a good drink of milk at school' although Mrs. K. admitted that the amount of milk she bought was not nearly sufficient for the family's needs.²⁰⁸ As was normal with the tenement dwellers, this family also availed of aid offered by the 'Vincens-man'.²⁰⁹ Interestingly, it seems that the family and Mrs. K. in particular, fared best during and just after her pregnancies. In the three months preceding and following the birth of a child, Mrs. K. attended a maternity welfare centre. By 1943 the Catholic Social Service Conference maternity welfare programme was in operation and offering a six-month-long course of meals. Here she availed of well-cooked, balanced and healthy meals. Mrs. K's admission that

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Meals served by the Catholic Social Service Conference (CSSC) cost diners 2d. although it actually cost the CSSC in the region of 6d. to produce each meal. See: *Irish Times*, 15 Aug. 1941.

²⁰⁸ Compiled, 'Other peoples incomes - 3', p. 62.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

she missed the meals when taken off them suggests that her family was closer to hunger than she would have liked to admit.²¹⁰

The effects of the Emergency rendered existing government welfare schemes inadequate and hindered the ability of philanthropic organisations to deliver aid along former lines. Indeed the ways in which these welfare schemes were affected reflects the impact of the Emergency more generally. The necessitous classes were the first to feel the effects of the increased cost-of-living, and while the government was slow to respond, the aid provided to the poor by voluntary organisations helped to alleviate poverty in the interim. The vital role played by voluntary organisations underlines the inadequacy of the state-sponsored schemes and the extent to which the Second World War affected everyday life in Ireland. The case of Mrs K demonstrates the valuable contribution made by voluntary organisations to the economy of the very poor. It also highlights the importance of communal feeding initiatives and the crucial role they played in Dublin. The Food Allowance Order, 1941, and the cheap fuel scheme for necessitous households, 1942, were the most significant welfare mechanisms introduced by the government as a direct result of shortages and the increased cost-of-living. However, the government's efforts were often criticised. Typically labelled as being insufficient and limited in scope by the opposition and advocates of the poor, the Catholic hierarchy and proponents of Catholic social teachings perceived them to be an undue intrusion into family life. The government's decision not to put into operation the Cooked Meals Service can be seen as a failure, especially in light of the success of similar initiatives in Great Britain where levels of nutrition were greatly raised. By February 1945, an estimated 1,650,000 quality school dinners were served to pupils in England and Wales, in July 1940 the corresponding figure had been 130,000; one child

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

in three was fed at school in 1945 as opposed to one child in thirty in 1940.²¹¹ Undoubtedly motivated by financial pragmatism, Catholic social principles were employed to justify the government's position. Importantly, the Emergency highlighted the inadequacy of the state's welfare system and forced the government to rethink its approach to health. The biggest testament to this fact was the introduction of the Children's Allowance in 1944, and the establishment of separate departments for welfare and health in 1947.

²¹¹ Richard M. Titmuss, *Problems of social policy, history of the Second World War series* (London, 1950), p. 510.

Chapter IV

The Catholic Social Service Conference, 1941-48

War-time conditions created problems beyond the scope of existing charitable organisations. In January 1941, just six weeks after his appointment as Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid called together a group of representative Catholic lay men and women to consider what he saw as a solution to the crisis.¹ The primary aim of this meeting was to:

Devise a national solution, in accordance with Catholic principles, sufficiently adequate to meet the situation caused by the rapidly increasing poverty and distress... and to consider the need for the cooperation of all social welfare activities.²

What exactly McQuaid had in mind was the formation of a Catholic umbrella organisation to coordinate and extend the work of the various independent Catholic organisations and charities.³ With McQuaid's approval, a provisional committee of fourteen was appointed to establish the organisation's structure and modus operandi. McQuaid hoped that the existence of such an organisation would enable the existing charities to become more effective and efficient. While the promotion of cooperation was a fundamental objective of the organisation, so too was the stipulation that each participating organisation maintain its individual status.⁴ According to the *Standard* the intention was not to interfere, but to provide leadership and 'unity of effort'.⁵ The organisation was first named Catholic Social Welfare Conference, but this was soon changed to the Catholic Social Service Conference (CSSC).⁶ While the initial aim may have been to devise a 'national solution', the work of the CSSC was confined to the

¹ Appeal, Catholic Social Service Conference, Sept. 1941 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

² Owen Cowley to Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, 31 Mar. 1941 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

³ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1941.

⁴ CSSC, History article, 1945 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 1).

⁵ *The Standard*, 23 May 1941.

⁶ The Catholic Social Service Conference was the official and popular term used to describe the organisation as indicated by the evidence, See: *Irish Independent*, 20 Sept. 1943. However, the use of 'services' in the title of Mary Purcell's book is understandable as the organisation itself was a collection of charities which conducted work in the arena of the social services.

Archdiocese of Dublin, and more particularly, the city of Dublin. This chapter will therefore examine the role played by the CSSC in the alleviation of distress in Dublin. Attention will be focused on the CSSC's efforts to alleviate food and clothing poverty, and an attempt will be made to shed light on how the approach of the CSSC was in accordance with Catholic principles.

At the start the provisional committee identified the problems which in its opinion were most affecting the nature of poverty in the city; Mr E. J. Duffy, President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul who was well acquainted with the issue of poverty in Dublin was a committee member.⁷ During a two-day assembly held in Ely House on the 12 and 13 March 1941 which was attended by Duffy, the structure of the organisation was established.⁸ The provisional committee considered the five most urgent needs of Dublin's poor to be food, fuel, clothing, housing and employment and as a result a sub-committee was established to deal with each of these issues. According to an un-authored and undated CSSC document entitled 'A review of the activities of the CSSC', each committee was coordinated by volunteer experts from appropriate fields, many of whom came from corporation or government departments.⁹ The CSSC's position on welfare was apparent from the start. In the invitation to the inaugural meeting to be held on 17 April 1941 which was sent to approximately forty Catholic charities and organisations, the provisional committee pledged the CSSC to 'act in the closest cooperation with, and give loyal support to the State and Local Authorities in their efforts to solve' the issue of poverty.¹⁰ The objective was to create a key role for the Catholic Church in welfare provision. While McQuaid had a definite agenda

⁷ Mary Purcell, *50 Years of the Catholic Social Services Conference* (Dublin, 1991), p. 2.

⁸ Ely House, headquarters of the Knights of St Columbanus is located in the south inner city in close proximity to St Stephens Green.

⁹ A review of the activities of the CSSC, 28 Sept. 1945 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 1).

¹⁰ CSSC, invitation to Catholic organisations to participate in the conference, 17 April 1941 in the Oak Room, the Mansion House, Dublin, 10 Apr. 1941 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

regarding the CSSC and the role of the church in the provision of welfare, the organisation was also created with a view to alleviating problems then arising or ones which might transpire during a potential crisis. Following the fall of France in June 1940, tensions increased in Ireland. The threat of invasion by one or the other of the belligerents was seen as a real possibility. In 1941 the government estimated that at the height of a potential crisis as many as 400,000 persons or fifty percent of the country's workforce would become unemployed; an approximate 300 percent increase over the actual level of unemployment at that time.¹¹ In such a scenario, it was hoped that local voluntary organisations acting on their own initiative would be able to maintain essential services in the event of central government becoming paralysed. The creation of parish councils for this purpose was actively encouraged by the government and the establishment of the CSSC can be seen as part of this trend.¹²

The CSSC aimed to address immediate problems arising out of the Emergency and also to position itself as an organisation capable of coordinating welfare schemes in the event of a breakdown of central government. According to the president of the CSSC, Owen Crowley, the CSSC also intended to construct long-term social policy based upon Catholic principles.¹³ The publication of papal encyclicals on social issues, the most important being *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* crystallised these principles and provided the ideology of 'Catholic Action'.¹⁴ As Máire Ní Chearbhaill explains, Catholic Action had several meanings:

It could describe any action by a lay person inspired by faith, or it could define a lay group that had been mandated by the local bishop for a specific task; it could

¹¹ Gerard Fee, 'The effects of World War II on Dublin's low-income families 1939-1945' (PhD thesis in history, University College, Dublin, 1996), p. 18.

¹² Don O'Leary, 'Vocationalism in Emergency Ireland' in Dermot Keogh and Mervyn O'Driscoll (eds), *Ireland in World War Two, neutrality and survival* (Cork, 2004), pp 232-5.

¹³ Crowley to McQuaid, 31 Mar. 1941.

¹⁴ Adrian Kelly, 'Catholic Action and the development of the Irish Welfare State in the 1930s and the 1940s' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 53 (1999), p. 109.

also be used in the sense of defending the Church from its enemies, or in working to improve the prevailing working and social conditions.¹⁵

The ideology of Catholic Action heavily influenced the approach of the Irish Catholic Church to matters of social welfare while ‘McQuaid gave teeth to Catholic Action in Dublin’.¹⁶ *Quadragesimo Anno* in particular stimulated interest in social issues among educated Catholic laity, and prompted the Catholic hierarchy to influence the development of Irish social welfare policy. The ideology of Catholic Action was intended to restore Catholic power and influence especially in Europe where it had lost ground in light of industrialisation and the spread of socialism.¹⁷ As such it was adopted by Ireland’s Catholic hierarchy and proved to be fundamental to the development and approach of the CSSC.

Underpinning ideologies

Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical of 1891, *Rerum Novarum* or ‘On the condition of the worker’ was the papal response to the process of ‘modernisation’ experienced since the onset of the industrial revolution.¹⁸ The document reaffirmed the right of the individual to private property, rejected socialism and unchecked capitalism, and at the same time offered recommendations as to how the ‘misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class’ might be checked.¹⁹ On the state, it advised that the foremost duty of its rulers ‘should be to make sure that the laws and institutions...shall be such as of themselves to realize public well-being and private

¹⁵ Máire Brighid Ní Chearbhaill, ‘The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Dublin, 1926-1975’ (PhD thesis in history, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2008), p. 94.

¹⁶ Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child, maternity welfare in Dublin 1922-60* (Manchester, 2007), p. 91.

¹⁷ Kelly, ‘Catholic Action and the development of the Irish Welfare State’, p. 109; Don O’Leary, *Vocationalism and social Catholicism in twentieth-century Ireland, the search for a Christian social order* (Dublin, 2000), p.11.

¹⁸ Kelly, ‘Catholic Action and the development of the Irish Welfare State’, p. 110; The encyclical was the preferred method of bringing important papal statements to public notice.

¹⁹ *Rerum Novarum*, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on capital and labour, 15 May 1891, para 3.

prosperity.²⁰ Crucially, it vehemently opposed the socialist idea of the interventionist state. In relation to this, the encyclical stated its outright opposition to the contention that ‘civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family household.’²¹ The encyclical also underlined the importance of Christian charity which it stressed was useful, efficient, and well established and pointed out that a ‘system of relief organized by the State’ would never ‘make up for the devotedness and self sacrifice of Christian charity.’²²

Quadragesimo Anno, encyclical of Pope Pius XI on ‘The reconstruction of the social order’ was published in 1931 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Like Leo XIII, Pius XI commissioned *Quadragesimo Anno* in response to the pressing social and economic issues of his day, namely, the end of the industrial revolution and the onset of the Great Depression. Together both documents can be viewed as a response to the successive waves of modernisation that had swept away the traditional social and economic order. However, unlike Leo XIII who considered the plight of the worker, Pius XI placed greater emphasis on the moral implications of the economic and social order recommended that society be arranged according to Catholic social principles.²³ Essentially, *Quadragesimo Anno* advocated vocational organisation which would entail the grouping of employers and employees into industry-specific corporations in order to foster communication, efficiency, and most importantly to promote their common interests.²⁴ There had been a widespread loss of confidence in capitalism following the Wall Street Crash in 1929 and as a result cooperation as opposed to competition was to be the cornerstone of the new economic system.²⁵ It also

²⁰ Ibid., para 32.

²¹ Ibid., para 14.

²² Ibid., para 30.

²³ Kelly, ‘Catholic Action and the development of the Irish Welfare State’, p. 110

²⁴ O’Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism*, pp 17-8.

²⁵ O’Leary, ‘Vocationalism in Emergency Ireland’, p. 230.

urged ‘solidarity’ advocating that the individual must take account of the common good and that special attention must be paid to the weak and poor.²⁶ Pope Pius XI’s encyclical also underlined the importance of the principle of subsidiarity which emphasised that individuals should be allowed to act freely and with dignity in order to utilise their initiative to the benefit of the common good. This principle would prove particularly significant for the development of Catholic Action in Ireland.²⁷ Not only applicable to the individual, subsidiarity was considered relevant to organisations also.²⁸ Subsidiarity warns states and large organisations or institutions against assuming too much power and control over society, while the guiding principle of subsidiarity is that activities or functions must be carried out by the smallest organisation or on the most local level possible. The encyclical also noted that ‘no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist.’²⁹

The message expressed in both encyclicals was fundamentally the same: social harmony and the rejection of communism were paramount, yet at the time of their publication the encyclicals were not equally received in Ireland. While *Rerum Novarum* fostered interest in social Catholicism in Europe, in Ireland it was not so warmly embraced.³⁰ The geopolitical instability of the early twentieth century experienced on both the national and international stages consumed the attentions of those in Ireland who otherwise might have engaged with the developments in social Catholicism.³¹ On top of this, the very issues which prompted Leo XIII into publishing *Rerum Novarum* (the successive waves of industrialisation and the existence of a disenfranchised working

²⁶ On solidarity, see: *Quadragesimo Anno*, 15 May 1931, para 25, para 49, para 57.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Today the EU is resolved to establish conditions for the application of the principle of subsidiarity, as laid down in Article Five of the Treaty on European Union. In the context of the European Union, subsidiarity is applied to ensure that decisions are taken as closely to the EU citizen as possible. See: European Union, *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union* (1 Nov. 1993).

²⁹ *Quadragesimo Anno*, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on reconstruction of the social order, 15 May 1931, para 120.

³⁰ O’Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism*, pp 21-5.

³¹ O’Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism*, p. 32.

class) were not so apparent in the Irish context. However, much had changed in Ireland by the time *Quadragesimo Anno* was published in 1931. Many of the inhibiting factors which had militated against the development of a socially-conscious Catholic class had either receded or had been settled.³² Ireland had become more industrialised, its urban working class had increased in number, and the labour movement had grown. This made it increasingly difficult for the church and government to ignore issues of a social and economic nature. Add to this the new found strength of the Irish Catholic Church coupled with the growing number of socially active educated Catholics and it becomes clear why Ireland of 1931 was more receptive to the social teachings of the papacy than Ireland in 1891. A comparison of the content of the ‘Ecclesiastic Register’ – a piece published annually in the *Irish Catholic Directory* – in the years following 1891, with that of its content in the years after 1931 is telling.³³

The encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* prompted the Irish Catholic Church to examine topics of social and economic significance, and it is obvious that it received a warmer reception than *Rerum Novarum* had forty years earlier. This however did not translate into wholehearted enthusiasm for its application. As an answer to the ills of modernisation, *Quadragesimo Anno* stressed the value of the corporatist or syndicalist models of political, economic and social organisation (or vocationalism as it would become known as in Ireland).³⁴ For the most part in Ireland, there was little appetite for the further social upheaval that embracing the corporatist model would have entailed. Yet had the Catholic hierarchy pressed for change along the lines advocated in the

³² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³³ The register summarised important church events and recorded sermons, speeches and pastorals that were made by the hierarchy. In this way it can be viewed as a barometer of the preoccupations of the Catholic hierarchy. Circum 1891, notices of churches built littered the pages of the register while within the 1892 to 1894 issues of the *Catholic Directory* not a single reference was made to *Rerum Novarum* or social Catholicism. This was in stark contrast to the material recorded in the years after 1931. See: *Irish Catholic Directory* (1932), p. 601, p. 615, pp 621-3, p. 624; *Irish Catholic Directory* (1937), p. 578.

³⁴ *Quadragesimo Anno*, para 95.

encyclical, they undoubtedly would have been set on a collision course with the government. Instead, valuing its newfound privileged position, the bishops preferred to take a more conservative approach to the document thus maintaining the status quo. The question of personal morality was always their primary worry. Dances, foreign music, cinema and the foreign secular press were identified as causing ‘a great lowering of the moral tone.’³⁵ One contributor to the *Irish Monthly*, a Mr Wilfred Parsons summed up the attitude of the Irish Catholic hierarchy to *Quadragesimo Anno* in April 1941 when he said ‘we have gone to other things, and now the whole business looks like a fad.’³⁶ However, just over two years previously in January 1939, de Valera conceded to the demands of the vocationalist lobby when permitted the establishment of the Commission on Vocational Organisation. The commission, chaired by the Bishop of Galway, Dr Michael Browne, was to examine and report on the most efficient means of promoting the creation of vocational organisations in Ireland.³⁷ This decision is reflective of Catholic influence on the government and suggests that some bishops, such as Bishop Browne, saw the vocationalist model as a viable alternative to the existing structures. Clearly then the response to *Quadragesimo Anno* was a mixed one.

One sphere in which *Quadragesimo Anno* caught the imagination of Ireland’s socially conscious educated Catholic laity and allowed them to find common ground was in the realms of subsidiarity, Christian charity and Catholic Action. In this regard, Pius XI’s teachings on social policy in *Quadragesimo Anno*, which emphasised the importance of Christian charity, and rejected state-centralised welfare schemes, were of fundamental importance to the development of the CSSC. The state was perceived by vocationalists to be a dangerous force; this was underlined in *Rerum Novarum* which

³⁵ *Irish Catholic Directory* (1938), p. 604.

³⁶ Wilfred Parsons, ‘Democracy’ in *The Irish Monthly*, lxix (1941), p. 201

³⁷ O’Leary, ‘Vocationalism in Emergency Ireland’, pp 230-1.

warned against states appropriating too much power.³⁸ Such fear in an era of totalitarianism was unsurprising. ‘But it was taken so far that the social welfare system of a liberal country such as Ireland, based on the British model, was looked upon with suspicion.’³⁹ The character of state charity was also despised, as evident on an address on 30 April 1933 by Dr Byrne, Archbishop of Dublin. Speaking at the centenary celebration in Dublin of the founding of the St Vincent de Paul, Archbishop Byrne stated:

The system of poor relief which they had imported from England was a soulless one, under which the poor were treated like animals huddled in workhouses or given a little help to keep body or soul together. The dole had very little Christianity behind it either.⁴⁰

Archbishop Byrne went on to add:

Never was the Society of St Vincent de Paul more necessary than today. Catholic Action was the hope of Ireland, and the Society was the greatest element of Catholic Action in their midst.⁴¹

Both the imperative of Christian charity and the danger of totalitarian government appropriating too much power were aspects of the encyclicals that the Irish Catholic hierarchy latched onto. Catholic Action and Christian charity were considered bulwarks against the advances of socialism and communism.

The inaugural meeting of the CSSC took place on 17 April 1941 in the Oak Room of the Mansion House, Dublin, with over 150 persons attending; the Central Catholic Library, 75 Merrion Square, would subsequently become the CSSC’s meeting place.⁴² The attendees included official representatives from almost forty Catholic organisations with Owen Crowley, a teacher, presiding in the absence of the archbishop.

³⁸ *Rerum Novarum*, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labour, 15 May 1891, para 14.

³⁹ O’Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ *Irish Catholic Directory* (1934), p. 603.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 603.

⁴² The Mansion House, the residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin is situated on Dublin’s Dawson Street; Purcell, *50 Years of the Catholic Social Services Conference*, p. 2; Ní Chearbhaill, ‘The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Dublin’, p. 184.

Noteworthy was the inclusion of vocationalist organisations including the Knights of St Columbanus, the Catholic Yong Men's Association, and the Catholic Truth Society.⁴³ The choice of the Catholic Library, which had been a centre for the distribution of Catholic social teachings since its foundation in 1922, as the official meeting place of the CSSC is indicative of the importance of these principles to the fledgling organisation. Even the venue for CSSC's formative meetings held in the previous months at Ely House, the HQ of the Knights of St Columbanus, is telling; the Knights were very much a pro vocationalist and pro Catholic Action organisation.

The courage of McQuaid to take on such an unprecedented and unwieldy project so soon after his appointment as archbishop is noteworthy. As a Holy Ghost priest McQuaid was only all too well aware of how limited religious orders were in terms of co-operation. While there existed within religious orders of the Catholic Church a tradition of independent autonomous good works, united effort and pooling of resources was rare. Parish charities were also similarly standalone in their efforts to meet the needs of the poor. The entrenched tradition of independence went even further as co-operation between congregations, even among houses of the same order, was limited and as such they often existed in perfect independence and practiced complete self-sufficiency. Although the St Vincent de Paul had a central organ of administration, each conference like a parish concerned itself with the welfare of its own. It was this tradition which made McQuaid's move to unite Dublin's various charitable organisations under one umbrella organisation so ambitious. The ideology provided by Leo XIII and Pius XI in the form of Catholic Action coupled with the needs of the time galvanised the various religious orders into action. Foremost among the immediate concerns of the Conference were problems associated with unemployment and the supply of food and fuel to

⁴³ CSSC, Organisations invited to attend the conference, 10 Apr. 1941 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

Dublin's poor. Remedies for unemployment and the extension of facilities for cheap feeding and distribution of fuel through existing charitable organisations were identified as objectives of the utmost importance.⁴⁴

Food centres

The CSSC's Food Committee got to work almost as soon as it was founded. It identified existing centres and convents which distributed 'penny dinners' and an effort was made to supply them with food and better equipment. The expansion of communal feeding services was seen to be the most effective and efficient way of ensuring that as many needy people as possible were provided with the nourishment they so desperately required. The Food Committee concentrated on the establishment of adequately-equipped food centres in parishes in the city and diocese where in its opinion distress was most keenly felt and relief most urgently needed.⁴⁵ In a similar way to both the St Vincent de Paul and Muintir na Tíre, the Catholic parish was taken as the unit of administration. Within the parish the parish priest was made responsible for the work of the CSSC.⁴⁶ Once a parish was identified as being in need of a food centre, the Food Committee with the help of the parish clergy identified a suitable building for the purpose. The building was then connected to the electricity and water supply if these services were absent while the necessary alterations were made to transform it into a food centre. The food centre was then equipped with electrical and turf boilers; preparation counters; potato peelers; washing-up apparatus such as sinks and all the other minor equipment and utensils that were necessary to run an industrial kitchen. If dining facilities were to be provided, the adjoining hall was fitted out with tables, chairs

⁴⁴ Cowley to McQuaid, 31 Mar. 1941.

⁴⁵ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Muintir na Tíre (People of the Land) was a rural Catholic organisation was founded by Fr John Hayes, in Castleiny, County Tipperary in 1931. See: O'Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism*, p. 42.

and cutlery. The total cost of equipping these food centres varied from £100 to £700.⁴⁷ Dublin Corporation also loaned the CSSC electric and turf boilers originally secured for the Cooked Meals Service (see Chapter III).⁴⁸

Once the food centre was furnished with the necessary equipment, a sister from one of the religious orders in the city was appointed to run the centre; the CSSC's flagship food centre, the Henrietta Lane centre was opened on 3 November 1941 under the management of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul.⁴⁹ While the sister superintendent was an unsalaried position, she was granted authority to hire a number of paid lay workers to carry out work under her supervision. Nuns were seen as especially suited to working in the food centre environment. Some were accustomed to dealing with the poor (as would have been the case with the Sisters of Charity) and had experience of working in large institutions such as hospitals where they would have attended the needy and infirm and catered for large numbers. Some sisterhoods were solicited to supervise centres not attached to their convents, and in the case of certain sisterhoods the work was totally foreign.⁵⁰ This was a new departure. Additionally they constituted a free source of labour who took orders, and who could easily be replaced if their performance was judged to fall short of expectations of the CSSC's hierarchy. The sharp distinction made with the degrading poor law system and the squalor of soup kitchens of the famine era is clear. Not only were the volunteers and paid staff who operated the food centres trained, but the centres were equipped with quality cooking and cleaning apparatus. As can be seen from Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, the kitchens and dining halls appear to be modern, respectful and clean spaces (note the whitewashed walls, clean floors and neatly-covered preparation tables). Also the way in which the

⁴⁷ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 2.

⁴⁸ CSSC, *Handbook of the Catholic Social Service Conference* (Dublin, 1945), p. 17.

⁴⁹ *The Standard*, 7 Nov. 1941.

⁵⁰ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 18.

women in Figure 4.3 can be seen sitting down to their meal – in an orderly manner with the proper utensils – cannot be more at odds with the engrained populist images of the Great Famine’s soup kitchens as depicted in the *London Illustrated News*. Such images more often than not portray scenes of chaos, humiliation, filth and general degradation.

Figure 4.1 The kitchen area of a CSSC food centre in the Archdiocese of Dublin, 1941-45



Source: Mary Purcell, *50 Years of the Catholic Social Services Conference* (Dublin, 1991), p. 17

Figure 4.2 The kitchen area of a CSSC food centre in the Archdiocese of Dublin, 1941-45



Source: Mary Purcell, *50 Years of the Catholic Social Services Conference* (Dublin, 1991), p. 9

Figure 4.3 Diners eating at the Henrietta Lane food centre, Dublin, 1941-45



Source: Mary Purcell, *50 Years of the Catholic Social Services Conference* (Dublin, 1991), p. 9

By September 1942, twenty-three food centres had been established in the Archdiocese of Dublin under the auspices of the Food Committee of the CSSC.⁵¹ According to CSSC records there food centres were capable of producing anywhere between 500 to 1,500 meals per day.⁵² Figures available in September 1942 for eighteen of these food centres reveal that they were serving as many as 121,000 meals on average per month.⁵³ The enormity of this feat of organisation becomes clear when it is taken into consideration that the first meeting of what would become the provisional committee of the CSSC was held less than eighteen months previously in January 1941. By 1943, the CSSC had in operation a further four food centres taking the total number of food centres in the Archdiocese of Dublin to twenty-seven which were producing as many as 250,000 meals per month or 3,000,000 meals per year.⁵⁴

Table 4.1 Statistics relating to the CSSC's food centres for the twelve months ending in September during the years 1943-48

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
No. of centres	27	27	25	25	24	23
Total meals served	3,000,000	2,500,000	2,700,000	2,706,613	2,579,947	2,107,657

Table created by Ciarán Bryan using data from: CSSC, Annual general reports, 1943-48 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292)

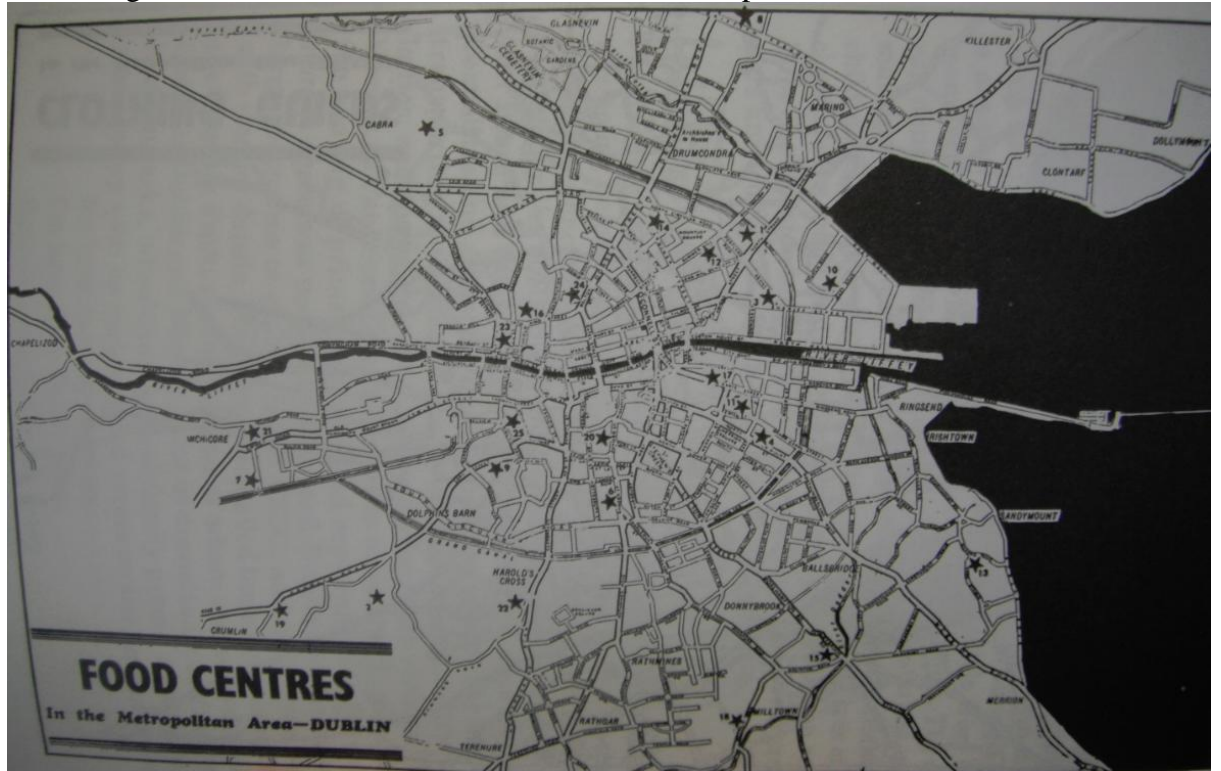
⁵¹ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1942, p. 1.

⁵² A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 3.

⁵³ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1942, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Figure 4.4 CSSC food centres in the Dublin metropolitan area, 1944



Source: Appeal, Catholic Social Services Conference, Sept. 1944 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 4)

The sit-down meals enabled by the dining facilities such as those illustrated in Figure 4.3 were normally reserved for women and children under the CSSC's maternity welfare scheme; this scheme will be discussed later in the chapter. In addition, the CSSC also provided a take-home meals service. In Figure 4.5 a nun can be seen passing food through a window to a mother and her children, while in Figure 4.6 lay staff are pictured working behind a counter while a group of women and children wait to be served on the opposite side of the counter with various sorts of receptacles at the ready. Those who availed of the take-home meals sometimes provided their own containers; the woman in the right-foreground of Figure 4.6 is seen holding a jug. The CSSC's second food centre opened in South Crumlin was exclusively for take-home meals.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 17.

Figure 4.5 A nun passes a take-home meal to a mother with her children at a CSSC food centre in Dublin, 1941-45



Source: CSSC, *Handbook of the Catholic Social Service Conference* (Dublin, 1945)

Figure 4.6 CSSC lay staff pictured serving takeaway meals to a group of women and children at a food centre in Dublin, 1941-45



Source: CSSC, *Handbook of the Catholic Social Service Conference* (Dublin, 1945)

Each take-home meal was estimated to constitute sufficient feeding for two or three persons with the result that by 1943 the CSSC was producing between 6,000,000 to 8,000,000 meals per year.⁵⁶ The take-home meal therefore had additional value although once the food was taken home it could not be guaranteed that those who needed it most received it. Except under the maternity welfare scheme diners were expected to pay 1*d* for an average portion, or 2*d* for a substantial one; these prices compared favourably with those charged in other communal feeding centres (see Chapter III).⁵⁷ The diner's contribution went some way to covering the cost of the meal, but those unable to afford to pay for the meals were not turned away.⁵⁸ For the twelve months ending September 1944, the total cost of the CSSC's operations amounted to £38,771. Of this amount, £28,707 was spent on the running of the food and maternity welfare centres. An estimated eighty percent of this sum was spent on the food while the remainder covered the cost of food, wages, and equipment and so on.⁵⁹ This showed remarkably efficient use of limited resources.

An important aspect of the CSSC's communal feeding work, the take-home meal, was partly a product of necessity (as some of the food centres lacked dining hall facilities), but it also had much to do with the CSSC's underpinning ideology. The CSSC's adherence to Catholic social teachings is especially apparent in the workings of the take-home meals service. Enabling the poor to eat in their own homes as opposed to in a communal dining hall was considered to be less disruptive to normal family life.⁶⁰ The opposition to communal feeding in regards to the family is crystallised by the comments made in the Dáil on 3 April 1941 by Labour TD for Cork Borough, James Hickey, who stated:

⁵⁶ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Compiled, 'Other peoples incomes - 3' in *The Bell*, vii, no. 2 (1943), p. 60.

⁵⁹ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1944, pp 1-2.

⁶⁰ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 17.

I am opposed to communal kitchens. I believe in feeding the people in their own homes... I am not trying to make little of anybody's efforts to help the poor but I am very keen on maintaining the status of the family.⁶¹

By taking their meals home, families could avoid the stigma of pauperism associated with dining among other poor families in a communal dining hall. The departure from the degrading nature of the indoor poor relief system of the Great Famine era is clear. The CSSC emphasised its respect for the dignity of the family and expressly distinguished its work from that of state-run or secular welfare schemes. According to Lindsey Earner-Byrne this was an attempt to 'characterise the CSSC as the appropriate method of family support rather than a bureaucratic state version.'⁶²

In terms of finance, the food centres received grants from the CSSC and Dublin Corporation in addition to the diner's contributions.⁶³ The CSSC also made frequent appeals for voluntary subscriptions both financial and otherwise. The value of benefit in kind and personal services rendered in this way was said to be immense.⁶⁴ As discussed in Chapter III, the Department of Local Government and Public Health guaranteed 'all authorised capital expenditure' for both newly-erected municipal and voluntary communal feeding kitchens.⁶⁵ Funding voluntary communal feeding initiatives was a cost-effective way for the government to increase the welfare services available to the poor. It also underlines the fact that the government considered the work to be important. This begs the question, if both local and central government were willing to patronise the CSSC and other organisations such as the St John's Ambulance Brigade, why did the authorities not undertake their own communal feeding projects? Poverty throughout the country was increasing and in Dublin it was particularly evident. In Dublin, the

⁶¹ DD, Mr Hickey, 3 Apr. 1941, Vol. 82, No. 10, Col. 1414.

⁶² Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 99.

⁶³ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 3.

⁶⁴ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 12.

⁶⁵ *Irish Times*, 30 Aug. 1941.

corporation had put into place the Cooked Meals Service (see Chapter III), but the scheme wasn't given the green light. To put it simply, the CSSC offered the cheapest solution to the crisis. It received voluntary subscriptions and its centres were mostly operated by volunteers, religious sisters and members of the clergy. Even before the Emergency and the formation of the CSSC, Catholic organisations in Dublin were operating communal feeding centres or 'penny dinners' such as the one at Holles Row (see Chapter III). This tradition was something Dublin Corporation lacked. The CSSC's unit of administration, the parish, was also suited to the task at hand. Being a well-defined and bounded unit of administration with a community consciousness, it constituted the ideal organisational division. It seems plausible that the government may have assumed the position of patron while allowing the CSSC to take a central role in the field due to pressure from McQuaid although there exists no documentary evidence to this effect. Nevertheless, the CSSC was eager to position itself as the appropriate instrument of family support and the fact that the Cooked Meals Service was put into place by the government but not used appears to be significant. Whatever the reason, in the CSSC the government was presented with a cost-effective response to the crisis which also appealed to Catholic sensibilities and proponents of Catholic social teachings.

By highlighting the cost-effective nature of the work conducted by the CSSC in its food centres, one could be forgiven for assuming the meals provided were of little nutritional value. The evidence however, suggests otherwise. For their *1d* or *2d* contribution, diners could avail of substantial and well-balanced meals such as those described in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Typical meals served in CSSC food centres, 1941-45

Mains	Vegetable and meat stew Corn beef, cabbage and potatoes Rabbit soup and potatoes Rabbit soup and colcannon Fish, potatoes and vegetables
Sweet	Bread pudding and jam Rice and jam Tapioca and jam
Followed by	A cup of tea, bread and butter

Source: A review of the activities of the CSSC, 28 Sept. 1945 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 3)

So long as the food centres maintained this standard, and varied the meals they served, the meals would have constituted an invaluable source of nourishment in terms of vitamins and minerals that were otherwise largely absent from their starvation diets. However this might not always have been possible, as the chairman of the Food Committee, Ernest Cullen, noted in October 1941:

The twenty-seven food centres working under the auspices of the Conference are doing good work. They supply over 250,000 meals per month and they are endeavouring to provide a varied meal.⁶⁶

Clearly Cullen wasn't as confident in the ability of the CSSC to ensure its diners always received a varied meal. The Maternity Welfare Department's annual report for 1946-47 noted that owing to high prices the maintenance of varied meals was a 'very difficult problem'.⁶⁷

An invaluable aspect of the work conducted by the CSSC was in the area of human nutrition and the way in which it made practical use of the science of dietetics. In October 1941 a booklet which was sponsored by the CSSC – *Food supplies – food and dietetics* – was published. Its author was Professor Edmund J. Sheehy who was first and foremost an agricultural scientist who specialised in animal nutrition, but had obviously kept pace with developments in the field of human nutrition. Evidence of this

⁶⁶ Ernest Cullen, Food Department – monthly report, CSSC, 27 Oct. 1943 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

⁶⁷ CSSC, Annual general report, departmental reports, Maternity Welfare Department, 1946-47 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292, p. 1).

lies in the booklet itself and in an appendix (which he also authored) to William Fearon's important article, *The National problem of nutrition*.⁶⁸ Commenting on the 'inadequate and incomplete diet' of the poor, the booklet noted:

Examination of the food budgets of these families, aided by our numerous charitable organisations, reveals an alarming state of affairs. Bread, tea or cocoa, sugar, and margarine constitute the principle items of their daily food. Vegetables and eggs are practically unknown quantities in these households.⁶⁹

Joseph Reilly writing in *The Standard* was full of praise for this publication recommending that every household should have a copy. Reilly hoped that the booklet would draw attention to the 'social evil' of malnutrition so that surveys concerned with living standards and consumption habits might be produced in order to reveal the extent of the problem among Ireland's poor.⁷⁰ In the 1941 report of the Food Committee, it noted that enquiries were being made into the possibility of arranging a series of lectures on dietetics.⁷¹ Whether or not this series materialised, on 10 February 1943 a lecture which advocated the importance of a balanced diet was delivered by Dr Oliver Fitzgerald M.Sc. to representatives of the CSSC's food centres. A copy of this paper is attached to the 'Draft Constitution' of the CSSC which indicates that the organisation's hierarchy credited the issue of nutrition with a degree of importance.⁷² Several months earlier on 18 October 1942, as arranged by the Maternity Welfare Department, D. K. O'Donovan delivered a lecture on diet in relation to pre and post-natal care. It was in this field, where the work of the Food Committee and the Maternity Welfare Department overlapped, that the CSSC was particularly strong.⁷³

⁶⁸ William Fearon, 'The national problem of nutrition' in *Studies*, xxvii (1938), pp 26-8.

⁶⁹ Edmund J. Sheehy, *Food supplies – food and dietetics* (Dublin, 1941), p. 28.

⁷⁰ *The Standard*, 6 Feb. 1942.

⁷¹ CSSC, Report of the Committee on Food, 21 Oct. 1941 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 1).

⁷² Oliver Fitzgerald, Balanced diet, Mar. 1943 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

⁷³ D. K. O'Donovan, Diet in relation to pre and post-natal care, 18 Oct. 1942 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

Maternity welfare

Closely connected to the work conducted in the food centres was the CSSC's maternity welfare programme. Owing to Emergency conditions, unemployment, rising prices, etc., the number of Dublin mothers in necessitous circumstances had risen considerably. This fact was reflected in the increasing infant mortality statistics (see Figure 4.7). To address this issue, Archbishop McQuaid personally requested the creation of the Maternity Welfare Department to cater specifically for the needs of mothers and their children.⁷⁴ While some preliminary work in the area of maternity welfare was carried out in late 1942, the Maternity Welfare Department was officially established in 1943.⁷⁵ The department's objective was to set up maternity welfare centres throughout the city where services and facilities would be provided to promote the health of expectant and nursing mothers. During the preliminary stages the aim was to attach one maternity welfare centre to each of the twenty-seven food centres.⁷⁶ For the CSSC:

The most important function of the maternity department is taking care of poor expectant mothers who often with large families are under-nourished for the sake of their children... Sending mothers here [to the centres] is to ensure that they really do get the needful food. At home their maternal instinct might be to divide it on the children.⁷⁷

The key aspect of the scheme was a supervised sit-down meal granted for a total of nine months, three months before and six months after birth. The CSSC's handbook noted:

The health of the newborn infant depends very much on the mother's condition, and this depends largely on a proper diet.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Within the source material generated by the CSSC, the Maternity Welfare Department is sometimes referred to as the Pre and Post-Natal Welfare Department.

⁷⁶ Dublin Corporation, Public Health Department to Owen Cowley, 7 Sept. 1943 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 1).

⁷⁷ CSSC, History article, 1945, p. 1.

⁷⁸ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 23.

The CSSC very clearly recognised the correlation between good health and proper nutrition. For the nine months the mothers received for six days of the week, free of charge, a pint of milk and what was described as ‘a nourishing meal’. They were instructed in topics such as hygiene, feeding, nutrition and hours of rest.⁷⁹ Before giving birth they were provided with clothes for themselves and the newborns, they were also encouraged to go to the hospital for the birth of their children, and breastfeed. The CSSC understood that:

A baby born of a mother cared for in this way will be substantially more healthy and better developed at birth, thus giving him a better chance to resist disease in childhood and consequently a better start in life.⁸⁰

In a similar fashion to the CSSC’s food centres, the maternity welfare programme was put into action relatively quickly. By the end of December 1942, while maternity welfare scheme was in its preliminary stages, some 150 mothers were being fed daily in the CSSC’s six welfare centres which were attached to existing food centres. The scheme was not cheap however. The cover cost of each meal was 4*d.* and the meals were served free of charge to the mothers. At this rate the CSSC’s president, Owen Crowley, estimated that it would cost £250 annually to feed the mothers, a sum which was exclusive of the other services provided.⁸¹ At this early stage cost was identified as a factor which might limit the programme. It was with this concern that in February 1943 the CSSC applied to Dublin Corporation for funding along the same lines as that granted to the St John Ambulance Brigade (see Chapter III), but with corporation funding came regulation. Under the scheme mothers were required to comply with Dublin County Borough’s Maternity and Child Welfare scheme which involved regular visits to the maternity hospitals and the Dublin Corporation’s child welfare clinics which were known as the babies clubs (see Table 3.5). At the clinic the mother was

⁷⁹ CSSC, Annual general report, 1942-43 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292).

⁸⁰ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, pp 4-5.

⁸¹ Owen Cowley, pre-natal and post-natal care, 15 Jan. 1943 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 2).

issued with a card which she had to produce at the maternity hospital for stamping.⁸² Stamping had to be repeated weekly, and was put in place to ensure the mothers received the meals for no longer than they were entitled to. The CSSC was also expected to submit lists of attendance on a weekly basis to the corporation's Public Health Department.⁸³

Government bureaucracy was a source of dissatisfaction for the CSSC. The religious sisters who represented the mothers at monthly meetings of the food and maternity welfare centres reported that they found fault with the card system. At the March 1944 meeting, the Crumlin clinic's opening times were described as being inadequate. The clinic opened only twice weekly for a two hour period, and when open just the first thirty mothers were attended to. This meant that if a mother was late, or if she was unable to attend the clinic, her course of meals would have been interrupted. It was also pointed out that mothers were often kept waiting in the maternity hospitals for long periods of time, so much so that they might miss their daily meal, as would any of their young children that they brought along with them. In an attempt to rectify this problem a duplicate letter was produced by the department, signed by the sister in charge of the centre, and then given to the mothers to be presented to the matron of the hospital in the hope that they would be given priority of treatment.⁸⁴ The prevalence of this issue is not recorded, but considering the clinic in question, was situated in a suburb of Dublin, its opening hours are unsurprising. Whether or not this move had the desired effect has not been recorded, but it illustrates that the relationship between the CSSC and the authorities was not always a harmonious one. In all of this, the undertones of Catholic social teachings are perceptible, and it correlates with Lindsey Earner-Byrne's

⁸² SVP, *Handbook* (Dublin, 1942), p. 2.

⁸³ Dublin Corporation City Manager and Town Clerk to Owen Cowley, 7 Oct. 1943 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

⁸⁴ Connor Martin, Monthly report, Pre and Post-Natal Welfare Department, 20 Mar. 1944. (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

thesis that the CSSC's aim was to present itself as the appropriate instrument of family support.⁸⁵

The meals provided to the mothers were described as being 'generous, well balanced... [and] prepared in accordance with medical advice.'⁸⁶ It was noted in the history article that each day the mothers were given a:

Special meal...planned by a dietician... Fried liver, chops etc. are to be had. Hot sweets follow with a large glass of excellent milk.⁸⁷

For mothers who typically lived on a diet of bread and tea, this course of meals would have represented a considerable boost. Whether or not the dietician who planned this meal appreciated the importance or even existence of the vitamins it contained, they were most definitely aware that it was rich in fat, protein, iron and calcium, and understood the role of these nutrients and minerals in the human dietary.

An important aspect of the work conducted by the CSSC's Maternity Welfare Department was in the realm of dietetics, that is, the part of medicine that relates to the regulation of diet. The dissemination of information relating to nutrition, healthy eating and optimal cooking formed an integral part of the department's initiative to improve the health of the mothers and their children. A surviving draft of a lecture presented by Dr D. K. O'Donovan, dated 18 October 1942, entitled, 'Diet in relation to pre and post natal care' is evidence of this. However, the technical nature of this particular lecture and the type of language used suggests that O'Donovan delivered his piece to a well educated group, perhaps at a monthly meeting of the sisters in charge of the food and maternity welfare centres rather than to a group of mothers themselves. Such lectures were delivered with the intention that the information would be passed on to the

⁸⁵ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 99.

⁸⁶ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1944, p. 2.

⁸⁷ CSSC, History article, 1945, p. 6.

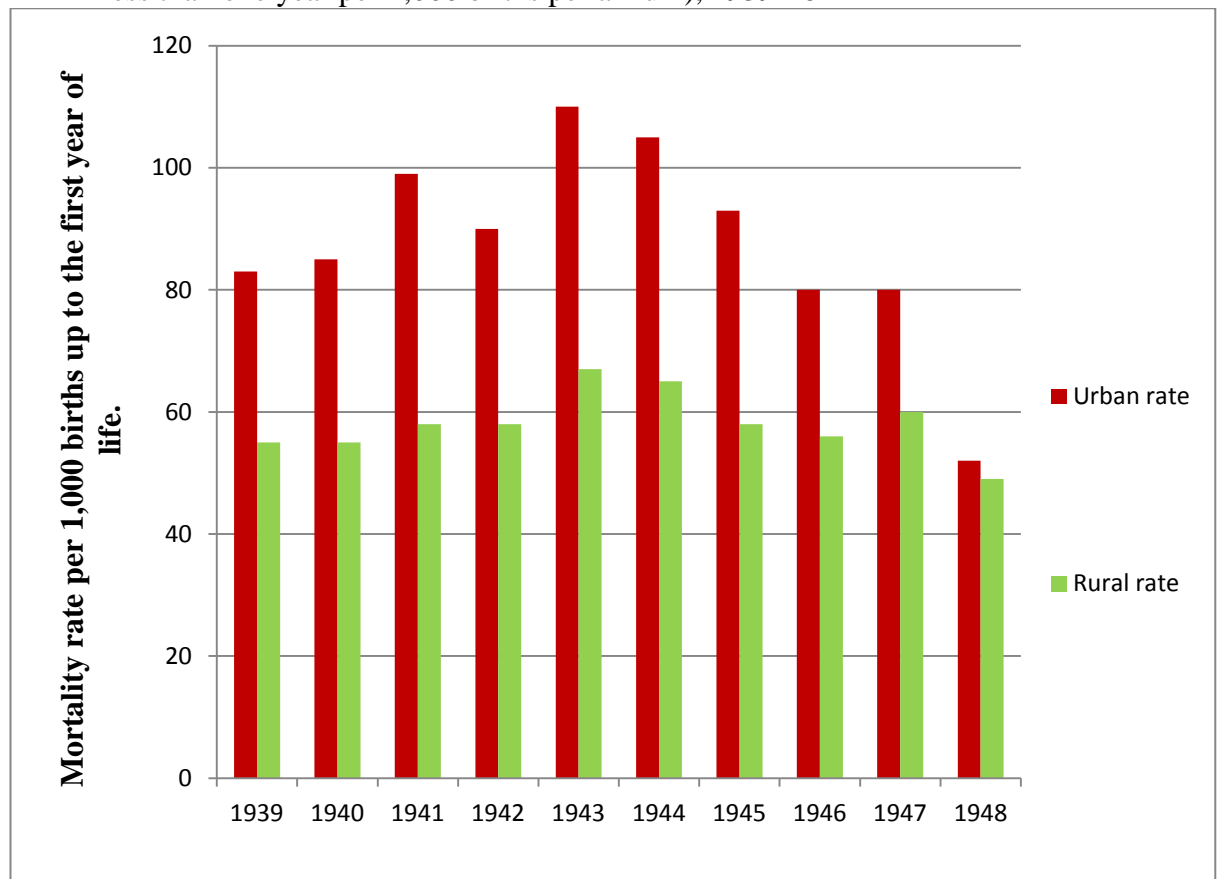
mothers, and it underlines the importance credited to the subject by the CSSC.

O'Donovan was so convinced of the importance of good nutrition that he stated:

The proper diet for pregnant and nursing mothers is so necessary that this aspect of social welfare should take precedent over any other dietary schemes for other groups of the population.⁸⁸

O'Donovan understood that poor nutrition during this critical phase of life resulted in higher rates of infant mortality. According to O'Donovan, the rate in particular parts of Dublin was as high as 160 per 1,000 live births during the first year of life.⁸⁹ This was almost double the average rate for Ireland's urban areas and almost three times higher than the average rate for rural areas for 1942 (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 Irish urban and rural infant mortality rates, (deaths of infants aged less than one year per 1,000 births per annum), 1939-48



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45*; *First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*

⁸⁸ Fitzgerald, *Balanced diet*, Mar. 1943, p. 1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Dr Oliver Fitzgerald's lecture delivered to the representatives of the food centres also highlighted the importance of proper nutrition for expectant and nursing mothers. Together both Fitzgerald's and O'Donovan's lectures show a clear understanding of the role and importance of the various constituent parts of the human dietary. For example O'Donovan's lecture on 'Diet in relation to pre and post-natal care' delivered to the welfare department, explained with accuracy how:

A high intake of iron is particularly necessary during the later months of pregnancy... If the mother's diet lacks iron she will therefore develop a severe anaemia during this period, and this may be exaggerated by blood lost during the birth of the baby.⁹⁰

This was something that O'Donovan correctly identified as being especially detrimental to the health of expectant and nursing mothers. Similarly, Oliver Fitzgerald painted a bleak picture of the health of middle-aged female Dublin slum dwelling mother whose diet was typically deficient in Iron. Fitzgerald described how:

A very common sight in the Dublin dispensaries is the poor slum mother, about forty years of age, with pale face and colourless lips – tired and lifeless. She frequently lives on a diet consisting of tea with a small amount of milk in it, and possibly bread dipped in drippings.⁹¹

Such a diet was obviously deficient in the constituent parts needed to ensure proper health. Iron is also poorly absorbed from wheat, and drinking tannin containing beverages such as tea is now known to inhibit iron absorption, a fact which was not discovered until the mid 1970s.⁹² In spite of this, both O'Donovan and Fitzgerald realised that Dublin's poorest mothers should have been consuming more meat, eggs and fresh vegetables such as spinach.⁹³

From 1944, another valuable service provided for the mothers was the maternity ambulance. Expectant mothers could avail of the service if they needed to attend one of

⁹⁰ O'Donovan, Diet in relation to pre and post-natal care, 18 Oct. 1942, p. 2.

⁹¹ Fitzgerald, Balanced diet, Mar. 1943, p. 2.

⁹² P. B. Disler et al., 'The effect of tea on iron absorption' in *Gut*, xvi, no. 3 (1975), p. 199.

⁹³ Fitzgerald, Balanced diet, Mar. 1943, p. 3.

the city's maternity hospitals and were encouraged to do so if they had long distances to travel. On average, some forty cases used the ambulance each month which was the first of its kind in the city.⁹⁴ The reality of petrol rationing and the circumscribed public transport added value to the maternity ambulance service. This service, which was free in necessitous cases, saved many pregnant women a long uncomfortable walk to the maternity hospitals. In June 1945, the CSSC began operating another ambulance, the general ambulance. This ambulance was put at the disposal of the dispensary doctors who could call upon it in urgent cases where it proved impossible to get an ambulance from elsewhere. This ambulance mostly operated within the area extending from Clontarf to Booterstown.⁹⁵ It was intended to supplement the Dublin Corporation's existing ambulance service, not to replace it. Again, this service was free in necessitous cases. During the year 1947-48 the general ambulance dealt with 832 cases while the maternity ambulance saw to 616 mothers.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ CSSC, History article, 1945, p. 6.

⁹⁵ CSSC, Annual general report, 1944-45.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Figure 4.8 Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid blessing the CSSC's maternity ambulance, 8 July 1944



Source: CSSC, *Handbook of the Catholic Social Service Conference* (Dublin, 1945)

The CSSC decided to locate its maternity welfare centres alongside existing food centres. The administrative, technical and practical framework on the individual food centre level was already in place making them ideal sites for the maternity welfare centres. The sisters needed to run the centres had already been appointed, the kitchens were staffed with teams of cooks who had received technical training in efficient cooking and dietetics or were at least supervised by a sister who had such experience. This was the most efficient course of action to take and as a result it did not take long for the CSSC to expand the maternity welfare scheme. By 1945, seventeen maternity welfare centres had been established in those parts of the city where they were most needed.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 5.

Table 4.3 List of CSSC maternity welfare centres, 1945

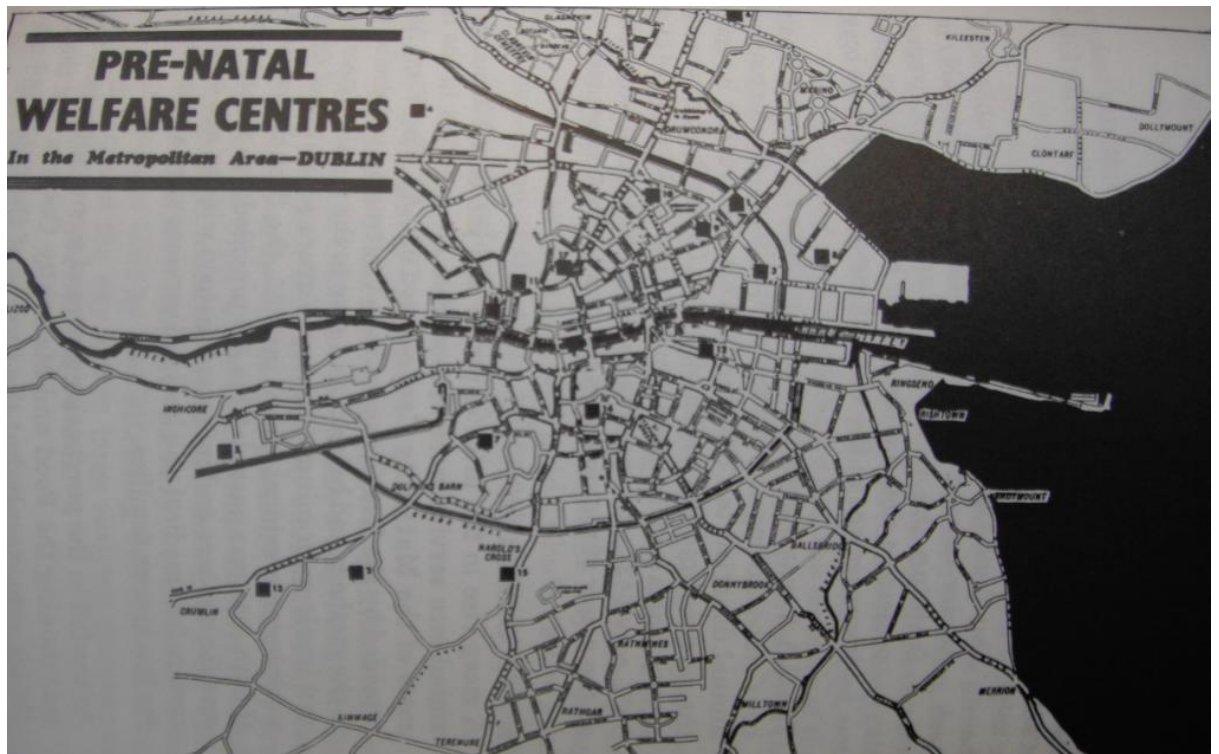
St Vincent's, Henrietta Lane.
Matt Talbot, Townsend Street.
Lourdes House, Buckingham Street.
St Anthony's, Seville Place.
St Joseph's, Brickfield Lane, Cork Street.
Holy Child, Ellenfield, Whitehall.
St Paul's, Queen Street.
Our Lady of Good Counsel, Carrow Road.
Convent of Mercy, Goldenbridge.
St Agnes', Crumlin.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Longford Street.
St Agatha's, North Clarence Street.
Our Lady of the Rosary, Harold's Cross.
Sisters of Charity, Upper Gardiner Street.
St Joseph's, Church Road.
Christ the King, 10/12, Faussagh Lane, Cabra West.
Mater Dei, North Brunswick Street.

Source: CSSC, Annual general report, departmental reports, Pre-Natal, 1942-43 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292, p. 5)

At any one time, a monthly average of over 700 mothers attended the CSSC's maternity welfare centres, and during the twelve months ending September 1944, 200,000 meals and 200,000 pints of milk were served to expectant and nursing mothers.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ CSSC, Annual general report, 1943-44, p. 1.

Figure 4.9 CSSC maternity welfare centres in the Dublin metropolitan area, 1945



Source: Appeal, Catholic Social Services Conference, Sept. 1945 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX)

The total of seventeen centres working in 1945 was still ten short the original target of twenty-seven, or one for each of the CSSC's food centres in the city. The cost of the scheme coupled with the existence of other commitments all drawing on limited funds was the reason for the shortfall. In fact so inhibiting was the expense of the scheme that in May 1943 the period for which the meals was given was reduced from nine to six months.⁹⁹ Though, at the end of the day, in spite of the CSSC's high expectations, the establishment and operation of seventeen maternity welfare centres in so short a space of time was still a remarkable feat.

⁹⁹ Connor Martin, Monthly report, Pre and Post-Natal Welfare Department, 18 May 1944 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

Table 4.4 Statistics relating to the CSSC's maternity welfare centres for the twelve months ending in September during the years 1943-48

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
No. of centres	16	17	17	17	17	17
Average no. of mothers served daily	480	700	700	712	778	702
Total meals served	NA	200,000	185,284	186,295	193,667	175,569
Pints of milk issued	NA	200,000	175,897	184,675	186,584	169,324

Table created by Ciarán Bryan using data from: CSSC, Annual general reports, 1943-48 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292)

The basic blueprint for the seventeen welfare centres was the same, as were the general methods employed. In acknowledgement of the principle of subsidiarity, the CSSC also encouraged the use of initiative and independence of action among the individual centres. In the Welfare Department's monthly report for March 1944, the chairman of the Welfare Committee, Connor Martin, recorded how the sisters at one of the centres (which he did not identify) held sewing classes two nights a week where mothers were taught to cut out and make garments. So popular were the classes they were attended by as many as fifty to sixty mothers each night. The sisters also established a thrift account into which the mothers could pay to purchase the garments. So impressed was the chairman with what the sisters achieved that he suggested it should be extended to all of the CSSC's welfare centres. Similarly, the needs of some of the centres were greater than others. In the annual general report for 1944 to 1945 the centres in North and South Crumlin and Cabra, were identified as being the busiest; their resources stretched the most. As a result the CSSC pledged to improve the service and expand the facilities in these areas where possible.¹⁰⁰ Crumlin and Cabra, the sites of new housing estates built to re-house the overcrowded tenement population, were a locus of poverty in their own right. The cost of living in these areas was higher than in the city slums, they lacked essential services and possessed a young population with large families given preference in the allocation of accommodation. These factors bred

¹⁰⁰ CSSC, Annual general report, 1944-45.

poverty, for instance the TB mortality rate for Crumlin was four times greater than the average for the city and five times the national average in 1942.¹⁰¹

In the CSSC's 1944 appeal for funds which was sent to the various parishes throughout the diocese, it was noted how:

Doctors in the maternity hospitals have spontaneously testified to the immense benefit conferred on both mother and baby.¹⁰²

While this may have been a slight exaggeration, recognition of the value of the work conducted by the CSSC in the realm of maternity welfare is evident in the correspondence sent to the CSSC by members of both Dublin Corporation and the Department of Local Government and Public Health. The CSSC's work with and ability to contact what were known as extern patients or mothers who gave birth to their children in their own homes was particularly valued. These mothers were often the least likely to receive instruction in matters relating to both their health and that of their child's. The department, recognising this, encouraged the CSSC (whose help they described as being invaluable) to impress upon the mothers the 'imperative necessity of breast-feeding the newly-born.'¹⁰³

The issue of maternal and child welfare was brought into focus by the Emergency, but as Lindsey Earner-Byrne demonstrates, McQuaid's interest in the area predates the period. In March 1939, Fr. McQuaid wrote to then Archbishop of Dublin, Edward Byrne, to express his anxiety regarding the lack of a Roman Catholic presence in the area of maternity and child welfare. He also warned Byrne of the activities of non-sectarian secular organisations within the field. Earner-Byrne suggests that this is revealing of the future Archbishop McQuaid's motives regarding the establishment of

¹⁰¹ Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon, 'Tuberculosis: a social problem' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xxxii, no. 126 (1943), p. 165; *Irish Independent*, 30 Oct. 1943.

¹⁰² Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1944, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Dr O'Meara, Chairman of the committee investigating the incidence of diarrhoea and enteritis in Dublin, Department of Local Government and Public Health to Rev. John Charles McQuaid, 9 June 1943 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 5).

comprehensive social services in the 1940s for Dublin mothers and their children. Earner-Byrne argues that the primary motivation behind McQuaid's entry into the field of welfare was to counteract the influence of 'non-sectarian' organisations.¹⁰⁴ In relation to matters of health and welfare provision, McQuaid demonstrated on numerous occasions his propensity for denominationalism. In 1935 he wrote to de Valera to note his opposition to plans for an amalgamated children's hospital which he believed would:

For generations to come, hand over the Catholic children to an almost exclusively non-Catholic control.¹⁰⁵

He was deeply suspicious of TCD, and in 1943 he blocked the non-denominational Anti-Tuberculosis League (see Chapter V). Earner-Byrne also suggests that the 'extreme conditions created by the Second World War and the fact that the existing services were not sufficient' was used as a 'pretext' by McQuaid for setting up the CSSC.¹⁰⁶ However, the work conducted by the CSSC was important and necessary. Between August 1939 and February 1941 the price for all items as represented on the cost-of-living index had increased by twenty-six percent, by February 1943 this figure had increased to fifty-eight percent (See Figure 2.8). The conditions created by the Second World War were extreme, and owing to the increase in the cost-of-living the existing services weren't sufficient, this much is demonstrated in Chapter III. In addition, it must be remembered that one of the CSSC's aims was to position itself as an organisation capable of coordinating various welfare schemes in the event of a breakdown of central government.¹⁰⁷ During late 1940 to early 1941 when the threat of invasion from one or the other of the belligerents was a possibility, the potential for such a breakdown was very real. Therefore while it is obvious that denominational

¹⁰⁴ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁵ McQuaid to de Valera, 11 May 1935 (UCD, DVA 1440/2) quoted in John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid, ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p. 89.

¹⁰⁶ Earner-Byrne, *Mother and child*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁷ Cowley to McQuaid, 31 Mar. 1941.

concerns ranked high for McQuaid, other issues were at play and to suggest that McQuaid used the Second World War merely as ‘pretext’ to enter the field is an unfair assessment.

Clothing committee

The CSSC considered the provision of clothing for the poor, especially children, to be one of the most ‘urgent problems of the Emergency’.¹⁰⁸ The Clothing Committee was thus established to address this issue. Due to the expense of readymade clothing, and the unavailability of second hand clothing, the committee decided to mobilise voluntary workers to make clothes. The handbook of the CSSC noted that this voluntary approach ‘fitted in perfectly with the Conference’s [CSSC’s] fundamental idea.’¹⁰⁹ The committee first set about organising one or more clothing guilds in each of the diocese’s parishes; this was achieved with the permission of the parish priest. The committee’s task was facilitated by the fact that a tradition of clothing charity already existed in the city, it just lacked co-ordination. Clothing guilds were usually attached to parish halls or sodality rooms. The connection to the parish infrastructure simplified the process whereby the CSSC incorporated the guilds into the framework of the organisation. The guilds provided the opportunity for lay persons to engage in Catholic Action. While such action had not been sought by the sodalities and confraternities in the pre-emergency period due to the existence of charitable associations such as the St Vincent de Paul, the sodalities provided the perfect platform for the CSSC’s clothing scheme. In the sodalities the CSSC was presented with an existing infrastructure, a loyal membership and a fundraising network that utilised initiative.¹¹⁰ Organisations that already had a proven record in the area of clothing charity, most notably the SVP, were

¹⁰⁸ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Colm Lennon and Robin Kavanagh, ‘The flowering of the confraternities and sodalities in Ireland, c.1860-c.1960’ in Colm Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland; charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), pp 76-7.

also incorporated into the CSSC's scheme. Once an existing guild had been brought under the CSSC's umbrella, or once a new guild was established, it was run by a committee consisting of a member of the parish clergy as well as representatives of the co-operating organisations in the parish.¹¹¹ In addition to setting up the guilds, the Clothing Committee was charged with buying whatever material and second-hand clothing was available to be manufactured into clothing; visiting the guilds regularly; holding quarterly meetings of representatives of the guilds and reporting monthly to the CSSC.¹¹²

The guilds both pre-existing and newly-established were mainly sewing and knitting groups. Unlike the food centres, they were often located in wealthy parishes or in convent schools where students and past pupils were recruited.¹¹³ The Clothing Committee played a key role in procuring equipment for the guilds which included cutting-out tables, sewing machines, and wardrobes. Typically, guild members would meet in these workrooms once or twice a week where they would knit, sew, mend, and alter garments.¹¹⁴ By 23 October 1941, twenty-four clothing guilds were operating under the guidance of the CSSC in the Archdiocese of Dublin; a month later this number had increased to sixty-three.¹¹⁵ The majority of these guilds were organised among the Sodalities of the Children of Mary.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ CSSC, History article, 1945, p. 3.

¹¹² CSSC, Executive report, 18 Mar. 1942 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX, p. 3).

¹¹³ Purcell, *50 Years of the Catholic Social Services Conference*, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 45.

¹¹⁵ CSSC, Clothing Committee report, 25 Nov. 1941 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

¹¹⁶ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 21.

Figure 4.10 A CSSC clothing guild meeting, most likely of the Sodality of the Children of Mary, 1941-45



Source: CSSC, *Handbook of the Catholic Social Service Conference* (Dublin, 1945)

The particular value of the CSSC to the guilds lay in its ability 'to procure considerable stocks of materials otherwise unprocurable by the guilds' coupled with the financial assistance it offered.¹¹⁷ The Clothing Committee also purchased whatever finished articles (both new and second hand) it could procure; boy's and girl's clothing of all sorts such as suits, shirts and jerseys, were gathered while footwear was particularly prized.¹¹⁸ Each week, the Sub-Committee for Distribution would meet to consider how best to distribute the limited supplies which was done so every Thursday night from the central clothes store at number one Cavendish Row.¹¹⁹ The CSSC subsidised the allocations to the extent of fifty percent which enabled the guilds to make new clothes for a total outlay of one half the cost of the material used. Guilds raised money through

¹¹⁷ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1943.

¹¹⁸ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ CSSC, Clothing Committee report, 26 Mar. 1942 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

local fundraising exercises such as concerts, whist drives, raffles, dances, carol singing, and any other legitimate means that could be used to generate income.¹²⁰ Beyond the prescription of a general plan and purpose, the CSSC's handbook noted that the guilds were allowed to develop according to local circumstances and requirements.¹²¹ This was in acknowledgement of the principle of subsidiarity.

With the activities of the St Vincent de Paul geared towards adults, the majority of the guilds concentrated on the production of children's clothing.¹²² While the guilds produced thousands of garments each year, no single type of garment was mass produced. The majority of items were unique and this was something the CSSC prided itself upon.¹²³ The production of the three piece layettes or sets of baby clothing for the maternity welfare department was a case in point.¹²⁴ They were described as often displaying different patterns, embroidered and stitched in different colours. A core objective of the CSSC was the promotion of efficiency, yet it was 'it was part of the policy of the guilds to avoid uniformity and flatness.'¹²⁵ In Britain utility clothing was introduced, uniformity was pursued in the interests of efficiency.¹²⁶ Some articles were even produced by the guild members in their own homes; all of this was completely and intentionally at odds with how aid would be delivered by the centralised state. Once completed, the garments were distributed through various channels, most notably the St Vincent de Paul. The SVP already possessed a developed clothing distribution infrastructure. Some guilds sent senior members to visit families recommended for help in order to assess their needs. In a two-year period, one guild made 152 visits, helped seventy families and distributed 1,860 garments; some families were helped on as many

¹²⁰ A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 8.

¹²¹ CSSC, *Handbook*, p. 21.

¹²² A review of the activities, 28 Sept. 1945, p. 9.

¹²³ CSSC, History article, 1945, p. 4.

¹²⁴ The layettes were given to the mothers prior to them giving birth.

¹²⁵ CSSC, History article, 1945, p. 4.

¹²⁶ *Irish Times*, 10 Nov. 1942.

as five occasions.¹²⁷ Baby clothes, in contrast, were distributed through the maternity welfare centres. Sometimes garments were distributed through the schools in order to ensure they reached those who needed them most, and to prevent them being sold or pawned. With the cultural and economic practice of black-market trade being so firmly established in Emergency Ireland this would have been a real temptation.¹²⁸

September 1942 can be judged as the height of the CSSC's clothing charity work. At this point eighty-four guilds were operating under the umbrella of the organisation.¹²⁹ A year later, the initial enthusiasm had been replaced by the reality of rising prices and inflation and the number of guilds fell to sixty-five.¹³⁰ Austerity was beginning to bite, and it limited the ability of the CSSC to deliver its charity. The drop-off is unsurprising when it is taken into account that the cost of clothing as represented on the official cost-of-living index increased by approximately thirty-six percent between August 1942 and August 1943. The Clothing Committee's annual report for 1942 to 1943 noted that:

Owing to the great scarcity of material, boots and shoes the Committee found it difficult to cope with the demands of the guilds.¹³¹

In spite of the setbacks the CSSC and the guilds did not give up. Reflecting this was the Chairman of the Clothing Committee, P. K. Conway's statement in March 1944 that:

We are quite pleased with the amount of goods secured despite the gradual shrinkage of supplies generally.¹³²

The sixty-five clothing guilds continued to work into 1948. The levelling out of clothing prices after 1943 likely facilitated their efforts (see Figure 4.11).

¹²⁷ CSSC, *Handbook*, pp 45-6.

¹²⁸ Bryce Evans, *Seán Lemass, democratic dictator* (Dublin, 2011), p. 137.

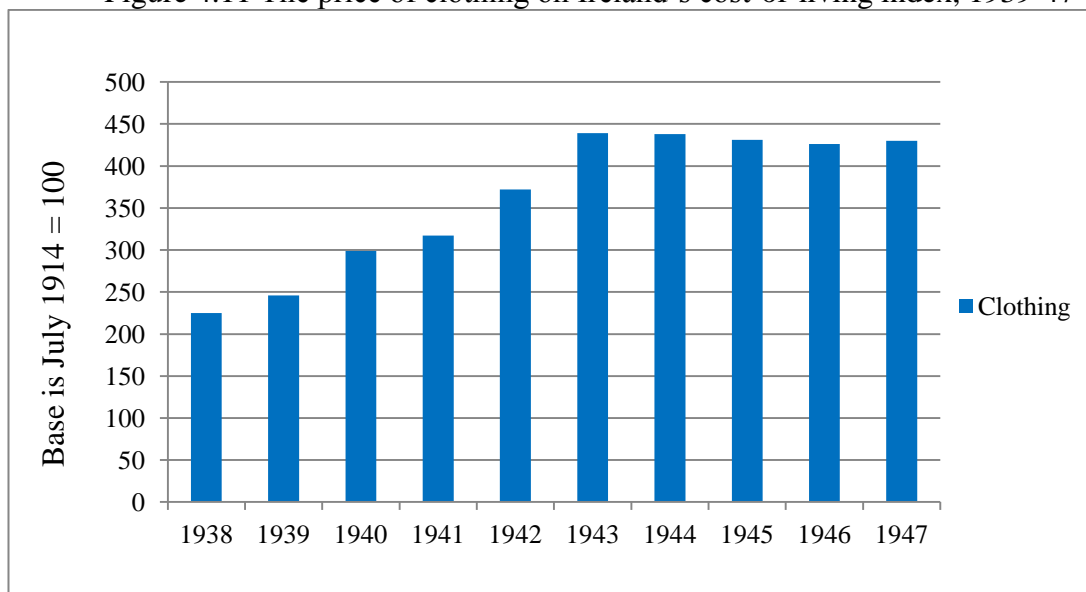
¹²⁹ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1942.

¹³⁰ CSSC, Annual general report, 1942-43.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² P. K. Conway, Clothing Committee report, Catholic Social Service Conference, 21 Mar. 1944 (DAA, AB8/B/XIX).

Figure 4.11 The price of clothing on Ireland's cost-of-living index, 1939-47



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin* (1947)

During the Emergency the Clothing Committee of the CSSC and the guilds it coordinated stimulated local effort in a way that is impossible to measure. Nevertheless, this good work was not overlooked. The annual report for 1947-48 noted that:

The exact extent and excellence of the work done each year, by the Clothing Department and its associated guilds, is one of the outstanding features of the work of the Conference. Literally thousands of garments are made and distributed each year by the guilds. The workers in the guilds deserve the highest praise for the many varied and beautiful garments they have made available for the children of the poor.¹³³

While records pertaining to the total number of garments produced do not exist, records of expenditure provide some insight into the extent of the CSSC's contribution in this area. Between September 1943 and September 1944, the CSSC spent almost £6,000 on clothing and material.¹³⁴ This amounted to almost a sixth of the CSSC's entire expenditure for that period. This sum does not include the expenditure of the individual guilds. Aside from the financial contribution, the labour input involved in such an undertaking was necessarily considerable. While a handful of cooks with the proper equipment could literally feed hundreds, it could take a single craftsperson several hours

¹³³ CSSC, Annual general report, 1947-1948.

¹³⁴ Appeal, CSSC, Sept. 1944, p. 1.

to produce just one garment. This further underlines the extent of the operation and the degree to which the CSSC contributed to easing the serious issue of clothing poverty in Dublin during the Emergency.

Armed with the ideology of Catholic Action which was primed by Catholic social principles such as subsidiarity, solidarity and Christian charity, the CSSC provided a vital service to the poor of the Archdiocese of Dublin. It proved impossible for the CSSC to address all of the issues it had pinpointed in early 1941 as contributing to poverty in the city; the unemployment problem was insurmountable and the housing shortage could not be tackled due to a lack of building materials. In terms of food and clothing provision, areas which were suited to the skill set of the CSSC's volunteers and voluntarism in general, the organisation excelled. The suitability of the nuns to catering work coupled with their knowledge of nursing and experience of caring for the poor and infirm meant they were the ideal workforce for use in the food and maternity welfare centres. Their efforts were complemented by the practical application of the science of dietetics which made the work of the CSSC in the food and maternity welfare centres particularly efficient. The meals provided constituted an important source of nourishment for the diners, many of whom availed of them on a daily basis. The clothing guilds granted clothing to many children who otherwise would have only had mere rags to wear. This aspect of the CSSC's work gave lay persons who might not have previously had an opportunity to volunteer, a chance to engage in Catholic Action. The CSSC was very much a Catholic response to austerity and in some respects, its success lay in its adherence to Catholic social teachings. The parish was an efficient unit of administration for the food centres but the ability of the CSSC to attract volunteers to its cause in the name of Catholic Action was its single biggest asset. The volunteers, the subscriptions of money and material, and its ability to tap into a pre-existing charitable

framework, all of this made the organisation an extremely cost-effective welfare mechanism. First and foremost, the CSSC was established in response to the increasing austerity that was brought about by the Second World War; the establishment of an umbrella organisation to unite traditionally fiercely independent Catholic organisations was in itself a massive feat. Nevertheless, the actions of the Catholic hierarchy in Dublin, Ireland's capital and most important city were as much motivated by a fear of what the suffering of Dublin's population could produce, as by the desire to curtail the suffering itself. Fear of the spread of communism, or the state expropriating too much power, were ever-present motivating forces.

Chapter V

Nutritional science and its social application, 1912-48

Even the daily press is beginning to realise that medicine is news.¹
Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon (Dec., 1943).

During the 1940s, some of Ireland's most pressing public health issues were addressed. This was achieved through the mobilisation of the existing public health machinery, and where necessary, the implementation of newly-designed structures. Great advances were made in the war against tuberculosis; the Tuberculosis (Establishment of Sanatoria) Act was introduced in 1945. The Mental Treatment Act was passed in 1945, the Health Act in 1947, and on 22 January 1947 – the Department of Health – a department of state charged solely with the administration of the health services was established. The execution of the National Nutrition Survey in Ireland between 1946 and 1948 also represented a significant national milestone for this particular branch of medicine. If the severity of the TB crisis along with the public and political uproar stimulated change, what caused the government to enquire into the nutritional state of the Irish population?

During the Second World War the combatant nations were eager to harness the new science of nutrition to maximise efficiency of production and ensure the health of their armies and populations. As Lizzie Collingham points out:

Obscure nutritionists suddenly found themselves in positions of power within government and the military and were able to exert varying levels of influence on food policies.²

The British rationing system is often celebrated. Using the science of nutrition, the Ministry of Food managed to feed the British population with limited resources. To

¹ Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon, 'The future of Irish medicine' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xxxii, no. 128 (Dec., 1943) p. 457.

² Lizzie Collingham, *The taste of war, World War Two and the battle for food* (London, 2011), p. 10.

what extent were these trends evidenced in Ireland? Finally, to what extent did rationing, shortages, and rising prices affect public health?

In the developed countries of Western Europe, by 1939, diseases such as typhus³ and cholera⁴ had been almost completely eliminated and the prevalence of what were termed zymotic⁵ diseases had diminished greatly. This feat was achieved in the main by utilizing preventative sanitary and hygienic measures which aimed to improve general hygiene, living conditions, and the environments within which diseases thrive. As these diseases were being eradicated, it was also realised that certain bacterial diseases were immune to such measures. The idea that the improvement of man's resistance was equally as important as improving his or her general hygiene thus began to gain traction as did the concept that to raise one's resistance to disease it was necessary to be properly nourished.⁶ Prior to the start of the so-called 'Chemical Revolution' in France in 1785, no systematic work relevant to nutrition had been carried out.⁷ The work on scurvy was the one exception to this.⁸ Nutritional science, begun as a sub-discipline of

³ 'Epidemic typhus is an acute rickettsial disease transmitted by lice' that is caused by *rickettsia prowazekii*. It thrives in cold climates and epidemics peak in winter and subside in spring. This cycle reflects the conditions which are most favourable for lice multiplication. Typhus flourishes when people crowd together in unsanitary conditions, where fuel supplies are limited, and where people are forced to wear the same clothing for long periods of time. The first contemporary accounts of the disease appear in the fifteenth century, by the early nineteenth century typhus increased dramatically. Today, outbreaks of typhus are most commonly confined to regions that are characterized by cold weather and poverty. See: Victoria A. Harden, '154. Typhus, Epidemic', in Kenneth F. Kiple (eds.), *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease* (London, 2003), pp 352-5.

⁴ 'Cholera is an acute diarrheal disease usually accompanied by vomiting and resulting in serious dehydration or water loss and its consequences. The disease is caused by a comma shaped bacterium, *vibrio cholera*.' The disease has long been endemic in India and Bangladesh where it has spread in periodic epidemics to Asia and other parts of the world. Seven pandemics have occurred since its initial spread in 1817 when the modern history of the disease outside India began. The most recent pandemic began in 1961 and is only now receding. The bacterium spreads as a consequence of contamination of food and water supplies by sewage and fecal waste. See: Reinhard S. Speck, '28. Cholera', in *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease*, pp 74-8.

⁵ This is an obsolete term in medicine that was used to describe contagious diseases.

⁶ Robert C. Cummins, 'An enquiry into some food and dietetic difficulties and deficiencies' in *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, xiv (1939), p. 209.

⁷ Kenneth J. Carpenter, 'History of nutrition - a short history of nutritional science: part 1 (1785-1885)' in *Journal of Nutrition*, cxxxiii, no. 3 (2003), p. 638.

⁸ Carpenter, 'History of nutrition: part 1 (1785-1885)', p. 643; Scurvy is a dietary deficiency disease, arising from the lack of vitamin C. See: Roger K. French, '129. Scurvy', in *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease*, pp 295-8.

chemistry in the late eighteenth century, had developed greatly by the twentieth century, and the numbers engaged in nutritional work had grown enormously.⁹ The importance of food to one's health was obvious, but with the discovery of micronutrients in the twentieth century the health aspect became both more identifiable and scientifically attractive.¹⁰ In 1912, the first vitamin (vitamin E) was discovered; diseases such as rickets (1922) were shown to result from nutritional deficiencies, and generally there was a growing consensus that health depended upon the quantity and quality of satisfactory food.¹¹ By the start of the Second World War all the major constituent parts of the human dietary had been discovered and their role in the human body was known.¹²

In 1938 professor of biochemistry at Dublin University, William R. Fearon, published *The national problem of nutrition*.¹³ In this paper, Fearon noted (with a hint of pride) how the first study which computed a 'nation's actual food supply, imported and home-produced, in terms of proteins and calories' was carried out in Ireland in 1912 by Professor William Thompson, also of Dublin University.¹⁴ He went on to add:

Since then, knowledge of the science of nutrition has been advanced enormously, and Thompson's pioneer work has been pursued in every civilised country – though least of all in his own.¹⁵

Sir William Henry Thompson, born in Granard, County Longford in 1860, was a passenger aboard the mailboat RMS *Leinster* that departed Dún Laoghaire on 10

⁹ Carpenter, 'History of nutrition: part 3 (1912-1944)', p. 3023.

¹⁰ Peter Lang, *Coming to terms with world health* (Geneva, 2009), p. 380.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; Rickets is primarily related to the abnormal metabolism of vitamin D and secondarily to calcium and phosphate metabolism. Dietary vitamin D deficiency and the activation of vitamin D precursors by sunlight and the kidneys are of the many causes, by far the most important. See: Ted Steinbock, '121. Rickets and Osteomalacia', in *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease*, pp 280-2.

¹² For a concise chronology on the science of nutrition, see: Kenneth J. Carpenter, 'History of nutrition - a short history of nutritional science: part 1 (1785-1885)' in *JN*, cxxxiii, no. 3 (2003), pp 638-45; Part 2, in *JN*, cxxxiii, no. 4 (2003), pp 975-84; Part 3, in *JN*, cxxxiii, no. 10 (2003), pp 3023-32; Part 4, in *JN*, cxxxiii, no. 11 (2003), pp 3331-42.

¹³ William Fearon would represent Trinity College Dublin in Seanad Éireann from 1943.

¹⁴ William Fearon, 'The national problem of nutrition' in *Studies*, xxvii (1938), pp 21-2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

October 1918 and which was sunk by a German U-boat. Thompson was one of the 501 casualties of the incident and his untimely death was undoubtedly a great loss to the development of nutritional science in Ireland.¹⁶

The study of nutritional science may have stalled in Ireland, but internationally great strides were being made in the field. Inadequate nutrition was highlighted as one of the immediate consequences of the Great Depression, but firm, internationally applicable data and models were lacking.¹⁷ In England and elsewhere the Depression stimulated a plethora of studies and surveys into nutrition and their findings increasingly filtered down into the popular knowledge.¹⁸ During the 1930s, the most important nutritional studies were made by Dr Hazel Steibling for the USA (1933), the British Ministry of Health (1934, 1937), and the Health Committee of the League of Nations (1936-37).¹⁹ These works advocated the basic nutritional requirements for people in terms of their age, gender and type of employment. While the American findings recommended slightly more generous standards, the results of the Ministry of Health's study and those of the League of Nations correlated very closely. In 1937, the British Advisory Committee on Nutrition, appointed by the British Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland, published its first report.²⁰ This ground-breaking work, directed by Sir John Boyd Orr, constituted the UK's National Nutritional Survey.²¹ It drew the conclusion that despite the recent advances in nutritional science, there was not sufficient food produced in, or imported into the country to ensure

¹⁶ The Royal College of Surgeons England, 'Thompson, Sir William Henry (1860-1918)' (2012), available at Plarr's Lives of the Fellows Online, Biographical entry (<http://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/biogs/E003262b.htm>) (25 March 2015).

¹⁷ Paula Lopes, 'The economic depression and public health' in *International Labour Review*, xxix (1934), pp 789-800.

¹⁸ Charles Webster, 'Healthy or hungry thirties' in *History Workshop*, xiii (1982), pp 112-5.

¹⁹ Fearon, 'The national problem of nutrition', p. 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²¹ James Deeny, *To cure and to care, memoirs of a chief medical officer* (Dublin, 1989), p. 41.

everyone an adequate diet.²² This study was unprecedented in both scope and scale as it involved a wide survey of food supplies, diets and the state of the population's nutrition. The League of Nations report was also significant. It analysed the connection between food prices and income upon levels of nutrition. It underlined the importance of education as a factor for determining eating habits. It also stressed the need for different countries to adapt their dietary recommendations to meet their geographical, social, and economic peculiarities. Wallace Aykroyd, an Irish man educated in TCD was the driving force behind this study.²³ In relation to Ireland, Robert C. Cummins noted in a paper published in 1939 and entitled 'An enquiry into some food and dietetic difficulties and deficiencies' that:

Although thirty different countries have appointed nutritional committees to carry out exhaustive and valuable researches in conjunction with the Central Council at Geneva... Éire does not appear to have joined this world movement for extending man's knowledge of food deficiencies and improving his nutritional standards.²⁴

In the epilogue to Fearon's *Nutritional factors in disease*, published in 1936, he foretold (in what was a classic statement of 1930s medical radicalism) that governments would increasingly become more concerned with ensuring that their populations would obtain a sufficient diet.²⁵ Prior to the war, Ireland's nutritional discourses were limited to a very small medical circle. Pre Emergency Dáil debates in which nutrition was a topic of discussion were almost always related to animal rather than human nutrition. When on the odd occasion human nutrition was mentioned, what the TDs had to say was for the most part constructive and in tune with the research that was being conducted elsewhere in the world. On 11 November 1925 T. J. O'Connell, Labour Deputy for Galway, made reference to the 1921 report of Sir George Newman, the chief

²² Fearon, 'The national problem of nutrition', p. 21.

²³ Lang, *Coming to terms with world health*, p. 380; Kenneth J. Carpenter, 'The work of Wallace Aykroyd: international nutritionist and author' in *JN*, cxxxvii, no. 4 (2007), p. 873.

²⁴ Cummins, 'An enquiry into some food and dietetic difficulties', p. 209.

²⁵ William R. Fearon, *Nutritional factors in disease* (London, 1936).

medical officer for the British Board of Medication.²⁶ This report illustrated the general poor health of British school children of which as many as two per cent suffered from malnutrition. According to O'Connell, Newman was interested to know the comparative figures for Irish children.²⁷ Of course such data did not exist for Ireland, and no attempt would be made to get figures of a similar nature until James Deeny's National Nutritional Survey was begun in 1946. This was in spite of the fact that, as O'Connell put it:

Anyone who is in touch with the schools in cities especially, and even in the country, must know, from even casual observation, that our schools are not very greatly different from the state of affairs mentioned in the report.²⁸

While the relationship between disease and malnutrition was acknowledged in the April 1924 issue of the *Irish Ambulance Gazette*, such information was rarely disseminated beyond the major medical publications.²⁹

During the late 1930s there seems to have been a revival of interest in Ireland in matters of nutrition. Evidence for this lies in the Dáil debates but also in a number of articles published in academic journals during the decade. This was Ireland's response to the international advances in nutritional science. Fine Gael Deputy for Monaghan, James Dillon, felt that the British government's policy commitment to conform to the recommendations of the Commission on Nutrition was potentially of great economic advantage to Ireland especially if a trade agreement could be reached with Britain. According to Dillon, the commission proposed that:

If the health of the British people is to be maintained, and their physique developed, greatly increased quantities of butter, eggs, milk products, and proteins in the form of fresh meat or bacon must be made available to the masses of the people.³⁰

²⁶ T. J. O'Connell was a teacher and the general secretary of the Irish National Teachers' organisation (INTO) from 1916-48.

²⁷ DD, Mr T. J. O'Connell, 11 Nov. 1925, Vol. 13, No. 2, Col. 203.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Irish Ambulance gazette*, iii (1924), p. 42.

³⁰ DD, Mr Dillon, 21 Apr. 1937, Vol. 66, No. 10, Cols 1380-1.

At the same time, the British government was increasing the amount of money it was spending on armaments which increased employment and thus the spending power of the labour force. In 1939, almost fifty percent of Britain's budget, or ten percent of national income was assigned to defence.³¹ In this context Dillon saw an opportunity for Irish agriculture.

James Dillon showed an appreciation for nutrition beyond its economic and agricultural application. Demonstrating an awareness of its social application, Dillon argued that dietetics should be a matter of consideration for the Department of Local Government and Public Health. On 1 April 1938 Dillon suggested that the then Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Seán T. O'Kelly, should:

Establish a division in his Department concerned with dietetics where experts would be available... local institutions and public bodies could seek the assistance of that division with a view to bringing the diets provided for the inmates of public institutions and prisons and other places of that kind into line with modern dietetical knowledge.³²

Dillon then highlighted the importance of education in the arena of dietetics and the impact that a poor grasp of the subject was having upon the health of the population and in particular, Irish children.³³ He pointed out that a good deal of poverty in the country was due to the Irish housewife's poor understanding of domestic science. This was a problem which he felt was common in the poorer and more affluent households alike.

Regarding the Irish housewife and her children, he said:

She has no knowledge of dietetics, no knowledge of the kind of food which is best for the child and, with the best will in the world, she gives the child what she thinks is luxurious food but...it does not provide the child with the essentials for proper nutrition.³⁴

³¹ John H. Williams, 'The preservation of democracy: America's preparedness', in *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, xviii (1939), p. 75.

³² DD, Mr Dillon, 1 Apr. 1938, Vol. 70, No. 11, Cols 1416-7.

³³ Dietetics is the science or art of applying the principles of nutrition to the diet.

³⁴ DD, Mr Dillon, 1 Apr. 1938, Vol. 70, No. 11, Col. 1417.

Despite this criticism, Dillon stressed that it was up to the government to bring home to Ireland's poor the merits of a diet which consisted of green vegetables, milk, eggs and brown bread as opposed to the more expensive luxury foods that were ultimately less nutritious.³⁵

During the pre-war years, when shortages were not a problem, the merits of informing the people on dietary matters were appreciated by only a few. These few however exhibited a similar trail of thought. Like James Dillon, Robert Cummins, professor of medicine at UCC, felt that nutrition was:

A matter of state concern... [and that] a campaign for better nutrition should be an integral part of national policy.³⁶

The importance of education also loomed large. In the comments section that followed Fearon's article *The national problem of nutrition*, George O'Brien, professor of economics at UCD, argued that instruction in dietetics was necessary for consumers and emphasised its importance for parents and teachers.³⁷ Similarly, Cummins felt education was important stating:

The community itself should receive education on diet, particularly the women... efforts should be directed to compulsory teaching in the schools what is known of balanced diet and economic food values and proper cooking.³⁸

While making this point, Robert Cummins took the opportunity to have a sideways jab at the political attention that was paid to the Irish language going on to add:

For the future health of the community compulsory dietetics would be of far greater importance than is compulsory Gaelic!³⁹

However the idea that it was the government's responsibility to educate women, children, families in matters relating to their health and wellbeing was a contentious

³⁵ DD, Mr Dillon, 1 Apr. 1938, Vol. 70, No. 11, Col. 1417.

³⁶ Cummins, 'An enquiry into some food and dietetic difficulties', p. 218.

³⁷ George O'Brien, 'Comments on the foregoing article' in Fearon, 'The national problem of nutrition', p. 24.

³⁸ Cummins, 'An enquiry into some food and dietetic difficulties', pp. 218-9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

one, especially for members of the Catholic hierarchy. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid was particularly anxious to position the Catholic Church as the appropriate method of familial support.

On 29 April 1939, representatives of the Department of Local Government and Public Health attended the ‘National conference on the wider aspects of nutrition’ held in British Medical Association (BMA) House, Tavistock Square, London, along with officials from across the British Empire. E. T. J. McWeeny, head officer of the Tuberculosis Schemes reported on the proceedings. He noted that due to economic reasons along with ‘apathy and ignorance’ malnutrition existed in Ireland’s urban areas.⁴⁰ Robert Fearon and Gerald Dockery’s survey of ante-natal nutrition in Dublin, published in the February 1939 issue of the *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, was more explicit. Small though their sample may have been (just sixty women who were in attendance at the ante-natal clinic of Dublin’s Rotunda Hospital were examined) their findings still painted an alarming picture of the pre-war nutritional state of Dublin’s poor. Just eight percent of the women examined consumed an adequate amount of calories (cal). The Health Committee of the League of Nations in 1936 recommended a daily consumption of 2,600 cal to 3,000 cal per day; the average intake for the Dublin women examined was just 1,359 cal.⁴¹ The women’s average spend on food per head per week was just 3s. which was approximately half that recommended by the British Medical Association’s Committee on Nutrition in 1933.⁴² Many of these women were subsequently referred to the St John’s Ambulance Brigade’s Maternity Welfare Scheme. Fearon and Dockery, while acknowledging the value of the SJA’s work, stressed that

⁴⁰ E. J. T. McWeeny, Report on the proceedings of a national conference on the wider aspects of nutrition, 10 July 1939 (NAI, HLTH/B160/10, p. 63).

⁴¹ Gerald Dockery and Robert Fearon, ‘Ante-natal nutrition in Dublin: a preliminary survey’ in *IJMS*, xiv (1939), p. 82.

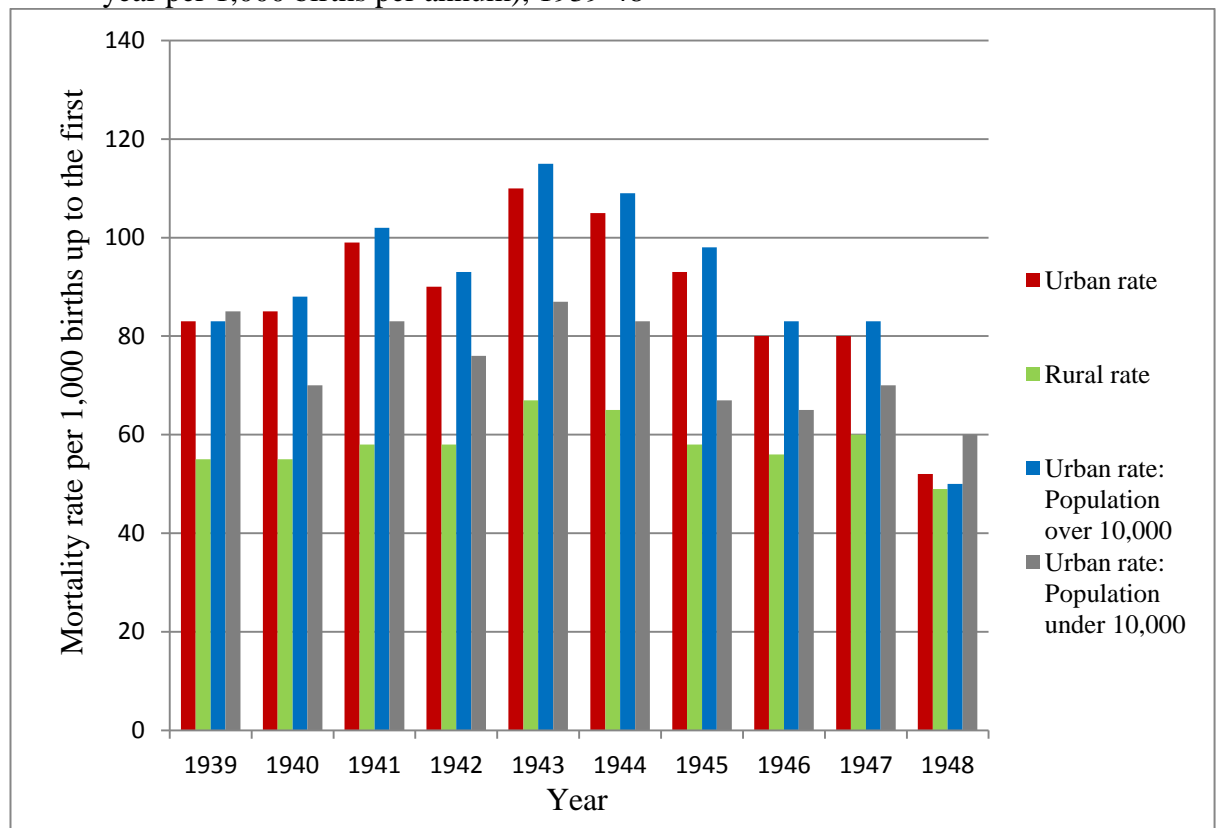
⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

the whole problem which involved economic and political questions ‘requires the attention and resources of the government to deal with edaciously.’⁴³

The Emergency – Infant and Tuberculosis mortality

Infant mortality rates have traditionally been viewed as amongst the most sensitive indicators of the standard of living.⁴⁴

Figure 5.1 Ireland’s infant mortality rate (deaths of infants aged less than one year per 1,000 births per annum), 1939-48



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45; First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*

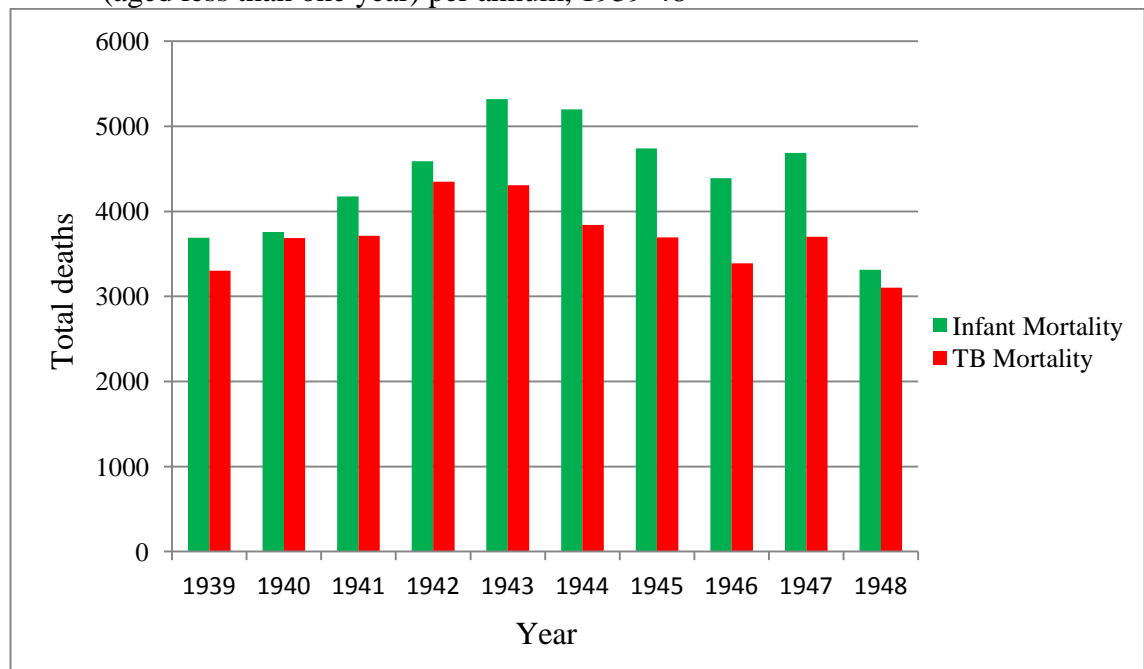
Ireland’s rate for 1940 remained the same as that for 1939, 66 per 1,000 births. Although there was a slight increase in urban areas with a population over 10,000, it was matched by a corresponding decrease in urban areas with a population fewer than 10,000 (see Figure 5.1). The populations of the larger urban areas were clearly more sensitive to the increase in the cost-of-living; the price for all items rose by

⁴³ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁴ Webster, ‘Healthy or hungry thirties’, p 111; Anne-Marie McGauran, ‘Infant and child mortality in European cities, 1880-1902’, in McCabe Desmond (ed.), *European urbanisation, social structure and problems between the eighteenth and twentieth century* (London, 1995), p. 40.

approximately twenty-four percent between August 1939 and November 1940 as recorded on the official cost-of-living index (see Figure 2.8). While the infant mortality rate remained stable, there were approximately twelve percent more deaths in Ireland from the infectious disease, tuberculosis, in 1940 than there had been in 1939 (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Deaths from tuberculosis (all forms) in Ireland and total infant deaths (aged less than one year) per annum, 1939-48



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45*; *First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*

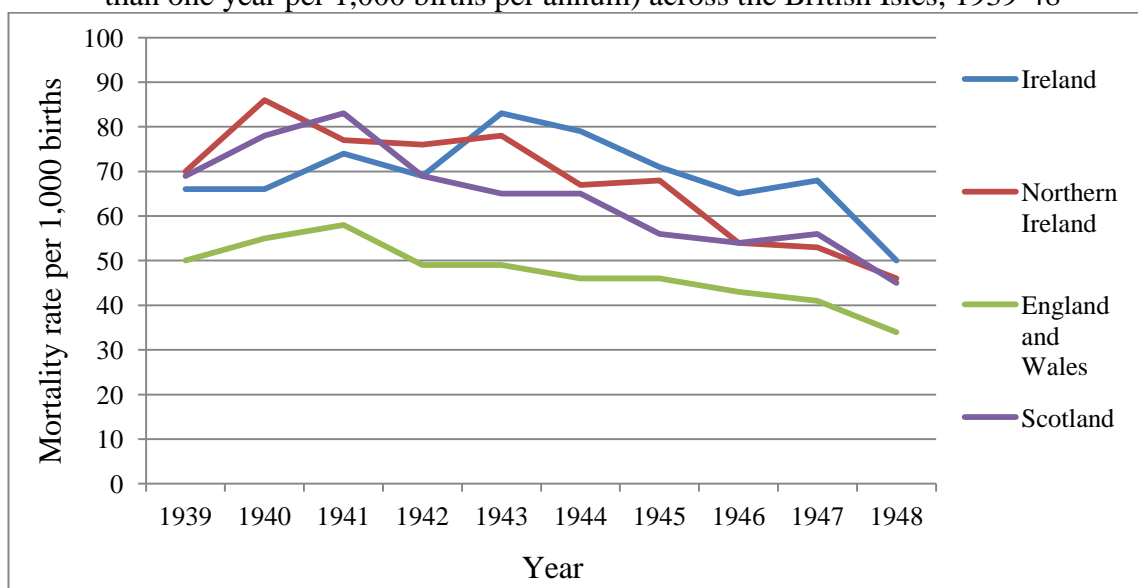
The reports of the medical inspectors for 1939-40 and 1940-41, appended to the Department of Local Government and Public Health's annual reports, demonstrate little negative impact upon public health as a result of Emergency conditions. More concerned were the inspectors with the lack of extension of the public health services.⁴⁵ Several county medical officers of health (CMOH) however, reflecting back on the 1940 increase in their annual reports for 1941, attributed the growth to the 'the difficulty found by the poor people in purchasing adequate supplies of the protective foodstuffs'.⁴⁶ Dr E. T. J. McWeeny also noted that one CMOH (whom he did not identify) recorded a

⁴⁵ *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1940-41*, p. 148.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1941-42, p. 177.

decrease in the weight of the school children in all age groups from 1939 onwards.⁴⁷ However, calls to the government such as that made by Cork Corporation to establish a ‘standard needs for the masses of the people’ in consultation with medical men and other experts to ‘estimate the minimum requirements of healthy living’ remained uncommon.⁴⁸ By late 1940, the worsening tuberculosis figures were drawing political attention. Meath County Board of Health passed a resolution calling on the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, to set up a commission to inquire into the whole question of TB in Ireland.⁴⁹

Figure 5.3 A comparison of infant mortality rates (deaths of infants aged less than one year per 1,000 births per annum) across the British Isles, 1939-48



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45*; *First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*

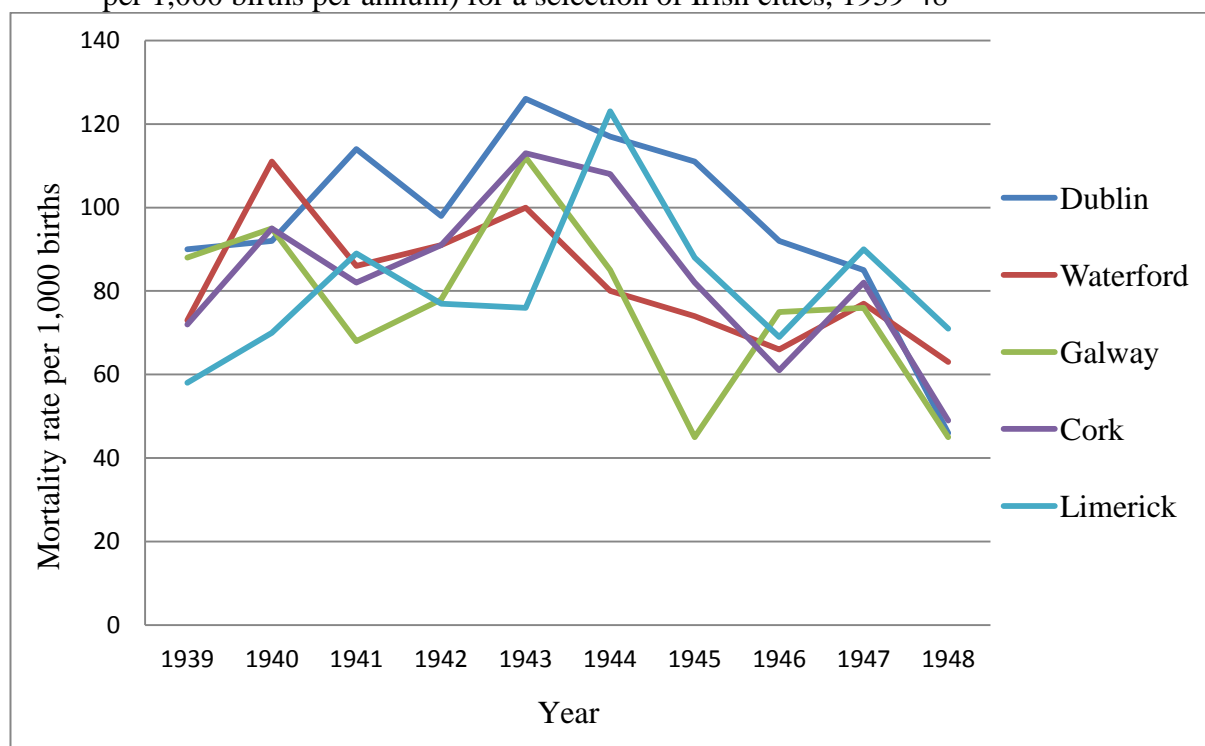
Labour Deputy James Hickey’s summary of the CMOH’s reports for 1940 delivered to the Dáil on 16 June 1942 was much more alarming than those appended to the Department of Local Government and Public Health’s annual reports. While the infant mortality rate for the country was 66 per 1,000 births, the rate in Dublin for 1940 was 92 and rate for Cork jumped from 73 in 1939 to 95 per 1,000 births in 1940.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cornelius Harrington to Eamon de Valera, 3 Sept. 1940 (NAI, DTA/S121131).

⁴⁹ *Irish Press*, 11 Oct. 1940.

Figure 5.4 The infant mortality rates (deaths of infants aged less than one year per 1,000 births per annum) for a selection of Irish cities, 1939-48



Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45; First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*

Table 5.1 Ireland's infant mortality rate (deaths of infants aged less than one year per 1,000 births per annum), 1939-48

Year	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
Rate per 1,000 births	66	66	74	69	83	79	71	65	68	50

Graph constructed by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report, 1939-45; First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*

Of 40,868 children examined in Dublin during 1940, over 1,000 were found to be suffering from malnutrition.⁵⁰ The Limerick CMOH felt that part of the problem lay in the fact that:

People are not horrified at the sight of malnourished children [as] artificial respectability has destroyed our sense of the real.⁵¹

In Louth, of 2,680 children examined, 100 were found to be in a state of 'sub-nutrition'.

Mr Hickey, the chairman of the County Louth Board of Health was of the opinion that tuberculosis had never been so prevalent in the country.⁵²

⁵⁰ DD, Mr Hickey, 16 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 9, Cols 1061-2.

⁵¹ Ibid., Col. 1064

The statement of Dr Shipsey of Waterford city was particularly striking, as quoted by Hickey:

The poverty existing in that city is appalling and that the hospital was never so full, full of people who are not so much sick as hungry, and who come to the hospital mostly to get fed.⁵³

People were also going hungry in Tramore. Hickey quoted Dr Nicholas Purcell who said that there were:

Quite a number of people in and around Tramore suffering from defective nutrition amounting in some cases to semi-chronic starvation.⁵⁴

Hickey's sample paints a sombre picture of the state of the health in Ireland's urban areas in 1940, a picture which is quite at odds with the more moderate data presented in the appendices to the Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health.

The increase in the prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) was a worrisome trend. Tuberculosis or *tubercles bacillus* is an ancient disease which is caused by the bacillus *mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Typically it affects the lungs but any organ or tissue is susceptible. The disease itself is spread among humans via droplets generated in the respiratory systems of people who have the disease.⁵⁵ While its genesis is unclear, it is thought that people first became infected when they started living in close proximity to cattle during the agricultural revolution in the Neolithic period.⁵⁶ Despite the uncertainty surrounding the beginnings of the disease, what is certain is that TB remained one of the leading causes of death throughout history. By the nineteenth century, improving living conditions, advances in medicine, and a better understanding of the disease led to a

⁵² Ibid., Cols 1065-6.

⁵³ Ibid., Col. 1066.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Col. 1066.

⁵⁵ *Tuberculosis* available at: World Health Organisation, Health topics, <http://www.who.int/topics/tuberculosis/en/> (10 November 2010).

⁵⁶ Dennis Pringle, 'The resurgence of tuberculosis in the Republic of Ireland: perceptions and reality' in *Social Science and Medicine*, lxxviii (2009), p. 620.

decline in mortality rates in developed countries (although they still remained significant until the advent of antibiotic treatments). Up until the mid-nineteenth century Ireland's TB mortality rate was actually lower than Britain's. This however was reversed during the second half of the nineteenth century when Ireland's TB mortality rate started to rise and rates in Britain and elsewhere in Europe fell.⁵⁷ During the first half of the twentieth century, Ireland's TB mortality rate decreased, although the improvement did not match that experienced elsewhere in Europe; in fact, Ireland's rate relative to other countries actually worsened (see Table 5.2). It was suggested that this was due to the reorganisation of the anti-tuberculosis services which had taken place in some countries during the inter-war years. Professor Theo Dillon hypothesised that this was one key difference between Éire and Northern Ireland.⁵⁸

Table 5.2 Annual average tuberculosis mortality rates for a selection of European states per 100,000 persons, 1911-37

Country	Annual Average			Ann. Av % Decline 1912-27	Ann. Av % Decline 1926-36
	1911-13	1925-27	1935-37		
Ireland	211	150	121	2.1	1.9
N. Ireland	230	145	102	2.4	3.3
Scotland	173	104	74	2.8	2.9
Austria	279	171	103	3.9	4
Italy	157	152	88	0.8	3.9
Spain	152	147	112	0.2	3
Norway	218	172	107	1.7	4.2
Average excluding Ireland	201.5	148.5	98	2	4

Source: J. E. Counihan and T. W. T. Dillon, 'Irish tuberculosis death rates, a statistical study of their reliability, with some socio-economic correlations' in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, 97, (1943), p. 173

⁵⁷ Greta Jones, *'Captain of all these men of death' the history of tuberculosis in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland* (New York, 2001), p. 2.

⁵⁸ Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon, 'Statistics of tuberculosis' in *IJMS*, xvii (1942), p. 224.

Figure 5.5 Dr William Robert Fearon, 1941

It was in 1941, following the British government's decision to apply a policy of 'silent sanctions' upon Ireland, that the country was hit by a true measure of wartime adversity (see Chapter I). Shortages of some essential commodities appeared for the first time, while privately-held stocks dwindled (see Chapter II). Inflation continued; the price for all items on the cost-of-living index had by November 1941



Source: *Irish Times*, 27 Dec. 1941

increased by a further fourteen percent up to thirty-seven percent over its August 1939 level (see Figure 2.8). The introduction of the Wages Standstill Order in May 1941, in light of continued inflation, led to a fall in wages in real terms and voluntary organisations noticed increased demand for their services (see Chapter III). It was claimed that between one fifth and a sixth of Dublin's population 'subsisted on a deficiency diet' of bread and tea.⁵⁹ As the crisis deepened, increasing attention was paid to the nation's diet and health. In April 1941, a deputation of social workers and members of the medical profession with an interest in nutrition was made to government. Led by Dr William Fearon, its objective was to draw attention to the nation's food supply in light of the Emergency. Recommending price subsidisation and communal feeding, the deputation argued that proper nutrition should be considered on the same basis as education, housing and the medical services.⁶⁰ The deputation also warned that the steadily rising prices were 'bound to have serious consequences for large numbers of our people.'⁶¹ In a memorandum to the Department of the Taoiseach on the food supply, Seán Lemass, conscious of Ireland's food security and the reduced trade with Britain urged that:

⁵⁹ John Hawkins, *The Irish question today* (London, 1941), p. 25.

⁶⁰ William Fearon, Memorandum on deputation, n.d. (suspected 1941), (NAI, HLTH/B106/15).

⁶¹ William Fearon, Suggestions for memorandum, 9 Apr. 1941 (NAI, DTA/ S121131).

As a matter of great urgency that a committee of qualified people, including experts in human and animal nutrition, should be set up to survey the whole question of our present and future food supplies and to make recommendations for their most economic use.⁶²

Lemass felt this committee should seek to render practical application to the recent advances in nutritional science.⁶³ Later, on 24 October 1941, the executive committee of the Medical Association of Eire appointed a Dietetic Council.⁶⁴ Its aim was to:

Pool their knowledge of foods and diets and experiment on ways and means of aiding the people's nutrition under wartime conditions, paying special attention to children's diet.⁶⁵

Dr William Fearon was among its members and its activities were regularly recorded in the *Journal of the Medical Association of Eire*.

The government's response to the deputations and recommendations regarding the nutrition of the population was to publish *A simple guide to wholesome diet* in June 1942. A Department of Local Government and Public Health publication, it argued that in light of threat to the food supply, there should be:

A much wider understanding of nutritive value of the various foods generally in use, and of the close relationship between the daily diet and the maintenance of health.⁶⁶

The guide explained the function in the body of the constituent parts of the human dietary (fats, proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins) and illustrated their primary food sources. It recommended a balanced diet comprised of proportionate amounts of the essential foodstuffs was the key to good health and lambasted the all-too-common diet of 'bread and spread' supplemented with tea and the occasional potatoes and a little meat.⁶⁷ The guide also noted:

⁶² Seán Lemass, Memorandum on the food supply, 9 May 1941 (NAI, DTA/ S121131).

⁶³ Untitled, memo suggesting establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee of Inquiry, 12 June 1941 (NAI, HLTH/B160/15, p. 1).

⁶⁴ 'The Dietetic Council' in *Journal of the Medical Association of Eire*, ix, no. 17 (1941), p. 34.

⁶⁵ *Irish Press*, 17 Oct. 1941.

⁶⁶ DLGPH, *A simple guide to wholesome diet* (Dublin, 1942), p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 9-10.

Malnutrition does not necessarily result solely from inadequate or imperfect diet. It may be due to lack of knowledge of the essentials of good diet, or to faulty methods in the cooking of the food.⁶⁸

Emphasising the importance of education and re-education, the Department of Local Government and Public Health was quick to blame the consumer for his or her own poor nutritional state as opposed to say, economic factors.

Infant mortality increased in 1941, and while the mortality rate for TB remained unchanged, Dr E. T. J. McWeeny, CMOH for the TB schemes felt that this was merely a brief arrest (see Figure 5.2).⁶⁹ In March 1941, the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland (RAMI) set up a special sub-committee to investigate the Irish TB issue.⁷⁰ Reporting back to RAMI's executive council in late June 1941, the committee concluded that:

A scheme to provide for the detection, treatment, cure and prevention of pulmonary tuberculosis must be built around certain essential elements... A central tuberculosis dispensary. A centre or centres for different diagnosis and early treatment. A well equipped modern sanatorium. Efficient after care in the patient's home.⁷¹

The article emphasised that the construction of a modern, well-equipped sanatorium should be the 'essential pivot of the scheme.'⁷² That same month, an article published in the *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, authored by Dr Dorothy Price, a paediatrician at St Ultan's Hospital for infants, Dublin, illustrated a theory which was becoming increasingly popular. Based on a study of 1,121 cases of tuberculin children conducted by the Irish Paediatric Association in 1938, the link was made between the prevalence of TB with deficient nutrition, and inadequate family income.⁷³

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *DLGPH, Report, 1941-42*, p 177.

⁷⁰ *Irish Press*, 5 Mar. 1941; Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon was secretary of the committee.

⁷¹ Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland, 'Tuberculosis in Dublin, report of the Tuberculosis Committee appointed by the Council of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland' in *IJMS*, xvi (1941), p. 256.

⁷² *Irish Independent*, 27 June 1941.

⁷³ Dorothy Price, 'Report of a tuberculin survey amongst children in Dublin hospitals made by the Irish Paediatric Association' in *IJMS*, xvi (1941), pp 241-55.

Figure 5.6 Dorothy Price (on the left) with a nurse and young patient, 27 May 1947



Source: Photograph of Dorothy Price with a nurse and patient, possibly at St Ultan's Hospital, 29 May 1947 (TCD MS 7537/208)

During the 1930s, a degree of pessimism existed regarding the possibility of combating tuberculosis successfully while complacency was encouraged by the decreasing mortality rate. The dominant policy bias among Irish medical authorities and the government was that the best way to combat TB was through the expansion of public treatment facilities namely the public sanatorium infrastructure and the tuberculosis dispensaries which in addition to referring patients to sanatoria attempted to replicate sanatorium treatment in patient's homes.⁷⁴ The twentieth century sanatorium movement had commenced in Germany in 1854 when Hermann Brehmer established his tuberculosis treatment facilities at Gomersdorf and was further developed when his former assistant Peter Dettweiler founded a tuberculosis sanatorium at Falkenstein in 1876. The treatment regime they established was further enhanced when Otto Walther founded his tuberculosis sanatorium at Nordrach-im-Baden, in the German Black Forest in 1888. His methods provided the most popular treatment model for sanatoria which

⁷⁴ Jones, *'Captain of all these men of death'*, pp 159-61.

sprang up all across Europe.⁷⁵ The dispensaries were modelled on the ‘Edinburgh Scheme’ developed by the Scottish physician Robert William Philip, wherein a central tuberculosis dispensary effectively acted as a clearing house for tuberculosis patients determining the most appropriate forms and location of treatment.⁷⁶ Ireland’s first purpose-built sanatorium in Newcastle County Wicklow was established in 1896, modelled on the Ventnor Sanatorium in the Isle of Wight with suitable adaptations to incorporate the best architectural features from the German sanatoria, its treatment regime was according to ‘Nordrach principles’.⁷⁷ The medical regime of the sanatoria was based on the curative effects of fresh air treatment. Patients were exposed to fresh air as much as possible. Windows were kept open. Patients’ beds were wheeled out onto verandas accessible from the wards or into the grounds themselves. Bed rest followed by graduated exercise, good food, educating patients regarding hygiene and the disposal of sputum were also important. It was this perspective which informed government policy as well as the conclusions of the RAMI’s TB sub-committee in 1941. This in-vogue bricks-and-mortar solution, a palliative measure, was by its very nature a way of dealing with the effects as opposed to the fundamental causes of the problem. While certain medical professionals understood this, the sanatoria solution remained the cornerstone of anti-tuberculosis schemes in Ireland and elsewhere.

Anti-Tuberculosis League

In 1942 there were a total of 4,347 recorded deaths from TB, approximately thirty-two percent more than there had been in 1939.⁷⁸ On 19 November 1942, at a

⁷⁵ Frederick Rufenacht Walters, *Sanatoria for consumptives; a critical and detailed description, together with an exposition of the open air or hygienic treatment of phthisis* (2nd ed., London, 1902). Available at www.archive.org

⁷⁶ Robert Philip, ‘The actual place and function of the tuberculous dispensary in the tuberculosis scheme’ in *BMJ*, ii, no. 3418 (1926), pp 55-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁷⁸ Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from *DLGPH, Report, 1939-45; First report of the Department of Health, 1945-49*.

meeting held in the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin, which was attended by medical profession from across the island, plans for the formation of a National Anti-Tuberculosis League were approved.⁷⁹ International anti-tuberculosis leagues had been in existence since the late nineteenth century with the first league established in Pennsylvania in the US in 1882.⁸⁰ The aim of the Irish league as outlined by Dr Kevin Malley was to ‘unite all classes of society in a nation-wide campaign... against tuberculosis.’⁸¹ Unlike the sanatoria movement, the league sought to devote more attention to the prevention of the disease as opposed to its treatment.⁸² A non-denominational organisation co-founded by Dr Dorothy Price, its membership was open to all citizens. It sought to consolidate the sporadic efforts made by different bodies under one organisation. The ultimate aim was to establish branches of the league nationwide, and to affiliate the organisation with the International League Against Tuberculosis. It was hoped that the mortality rate could be lowered through education, propaganda, early detection aimed at risk groups (such as adolescents), nutrition surveys, increased sanatorium accommodation, aftercare and rehabilitation. The role of socio-economic factors such as housing and nutrition were to be examined while compulsory notification, teaching, and legislation would be sought.⁸³ TB was a young person’s disease. Approximately fifty percent of all deaths among those aged between fifteen and thirty-five years were due to TB.⁸⁴ The league appreciated the interconnectedness of the issues of TB and nutrition. It was noted in the league’s initial programme that it would be necessary to ‘carry out an investigation into the nutritional

⁷⁹ *Irish Times*, 20 Nov. 1942.

⁸⁰ Anne Mac Lellan, ‘That ‘preventable and curable disease’: Dr Dorothy Price and the eradication of tuberculosis in Ireland, 1930-1960.’ (PhD thesis in history, University College, Dublin, 2011), p. 91.

⁸¹ Kevin Malley, ‘The Irish National-Anti Tuberculosis League and its aims’ in *IJMS*, xviii (1943), p. 48.

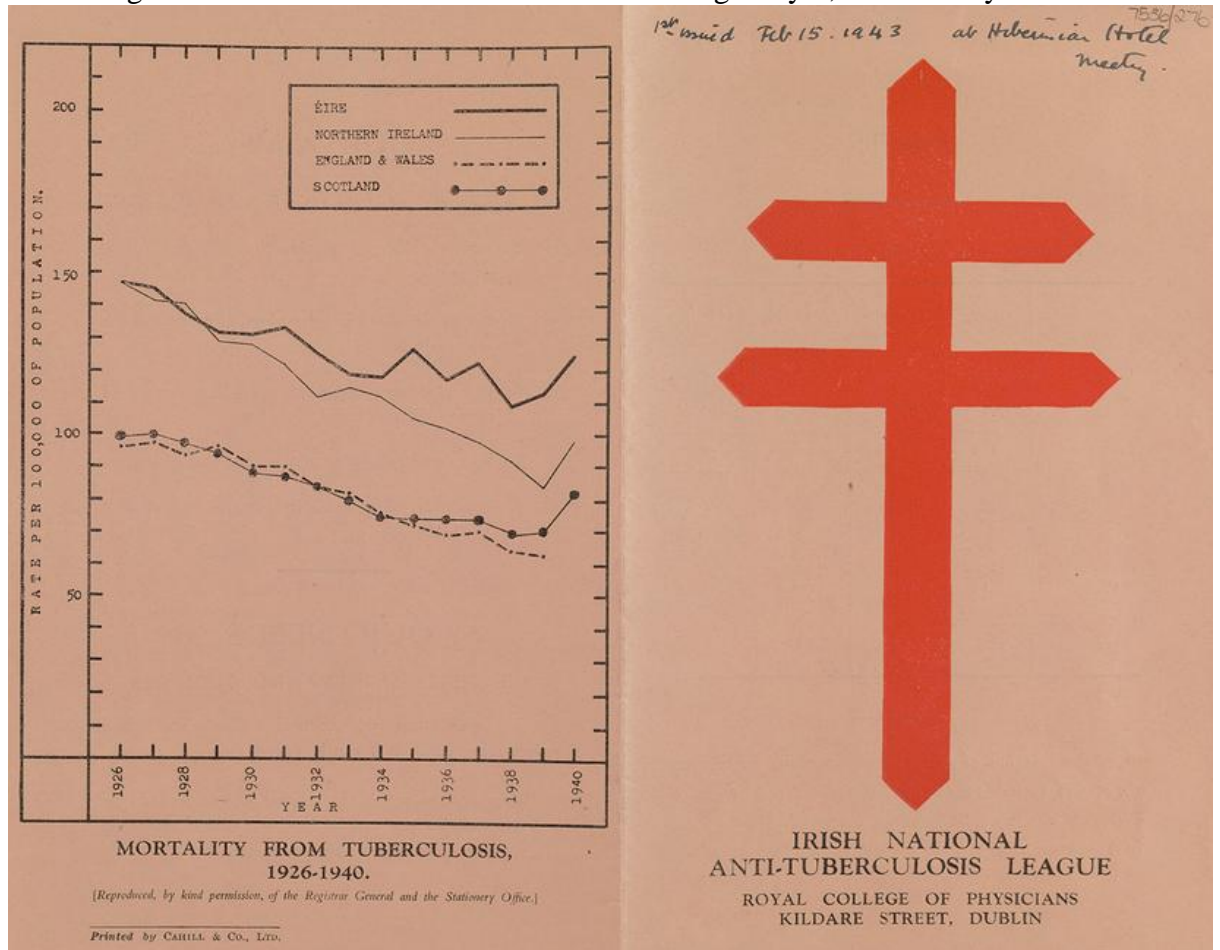
⁸² *Irish Times*, 16 Sep. 1942.

⁸³ Mac Lellan, ‘That ‘preventable and curable disease’, p. 103.

⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 4 Nov. 1942.

problem of tuberculosis.’⁸⁵ The league’s different approach aside, the publicity it created catapulted the TB issue into the national spotlight.

Figure 5.7 Irish National Anti-Tuberculosis League flyer, 15 February 1943



Source: Flyer for the Irish National Anti-Tuberculosis League, 15 Feb. 1943 (TCD, MS 7536/276)

The Anti-Tuberculosis League however, did not even get off the ground. On 15 February 1943, at a meeting held in the Hibernian Hotel, Dublin, to officially launch the league, John Charles McQuaid, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, had a letter read aloud by his representative Monsignor Molony to block the initiative.⁸⁶ McQuaid was of the opinion that the nationwide campaign envisaged by the provisional committee of the Anti-Tuberculosis League, could:

Succeed only under government patronage. It is my definite opinion that such a campaign can be carried through in Éire only by the Red Cross Society. That

⁸⁵ Malley, 'The Irish National-Anti Tuberculosis League' (1943), p. 49.

⁸⁶ John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid, ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p. 164.

society enjoys government patronage, is in fact nationwide, and has a large membership of trained workers.⁸⁷

Dr Theo Dillon proposed the motion that the Anti-Tuberculosis League be founded; however, the chairman Dr R. J. Rowlette ruled that the motion could not be put to the meeting on account of McQuaid's expressed wishes.⁸⁸ McQuaid's intervention was seen as an act of sabotage by the provisional committee viewing as he did the organization as 'Trojan horse for the expansion of the powers of the state'.⁸⁹ Informed by Catholic social teachings (see Chapter IV), Ireland's Catholic hierarchy opposed state intervention into family life and had consistently demonstrated their willingness to block non-denominational projects on moral grounds which was ultimately to the detriment of those who needed help most. Thus was formed the Anti-Tuberculosis section of the Irish Red Cross. Public disapproval was expressed by General Richard Mulcahy while the events made front page news of the following day's *Irish Times* which was sympathetic to the provisional committee.⁹⁰ The provisional committee was of the opinion that the Irish Red Cross, in spite of its large membership, trained as they were in little more than first aid, did not constitute the appropriate organisation to take on a successful national campaign against TB.⁹¹ The league's provisional committee was not completely frozen out however as it merged with the Red Cross' own tuberculosis committee to form the Irish Red Cross Anti-Tuberculosis Committee. While the new committee was comprised of fifteen members - eight Red Cross and seven from the provisional committee - just two were Protestant, Dr Price and Dr Rowlette.⁹² Yet in spite of the reservations of the league's provisional committee, within less than a month the patronage of the Department of Local Government and

⁸⁷ John Charles McQuaid quoted in: *Irish Independent*, 16 Feb. 1943.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Henry Patterson, *Ireland since 1939, the persistence of conflict* (Dublin, 2006), p. 89-90.

⁹⁰ Mac Lellan, 'That 'preventable and curable disease', p. 91; *Irish Times*, 16 Feb. 1943.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 16 Feb. 1943.

⁹² Mac Lellan, 'That 'preventable and curable disease', p. 119.

Public Health had been secured. The department issued a circular to all the local authorities to bring to their attention the Red Cross' anti-tuberculosis campaign. While the role played by diet in building up the resistance of the TB patient was stressed, the circular stopped short of attributing the increased incidence of TB to deficient nutrition.⁹³ The department also authorised the various local authorities to make grants of food and sometimes clothing to tuberculosis patients.⁹⁴

Tuberculosis and nutrition

Today tuberculosis is properly understood and the link between poverty, malnutrition and the prevalence of the disease is readily accepted. Malnutrition itself is considered to be a 'major risk factor for the progression of tuberculosis.'⁹⁵ The durability of the bacillus *tubercle bacilli* is fully appreciated. For instance it is now known that the bacillus is so resilient it can 'remain viable throughout the host's lifetime'.⁹⁶ After entering the body, infection then depends on several factors such as age and gender along with environmental factors including overcrowding, nutrition, and working conditions. Furthermore, numerous studies have indicated that income is a major factor which determines the impact of the disease as income dictates living standards. As a result lower income groups suffer most from the disease and as income rises tuberculosis mortality is greatly diminished.⁹⁷

Pre-Emergency Dáil debates that considered TB almost always focused on the building of sanatoria, the provision of more hospital beds, and the adequacy of the milk supply; the role of nutrition was rarely considered.⁹⁸ As the Emergency wore on however, and the prevalence of the disease increased, the relationship between

⁹³ 'The Anti-Tuberculosis' Section' in *Irish Red Cross Monthly Bulletin*, iv, no. 8 (1944), p. 242.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, iv, no. 3 (1944), p. 77.

⁹⁵ Kenrad E. Nelson and Carolyn Masters Williams, *Infectious disease and epidemiology: theory and practice* (Washington, 2007), p. 386.

⁹⁶ Kenneth F. Kiple, '150. Tuberculosis', in *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease*, p. 338.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Bovine tuberculosis can be contracted through the consumption of milk infected with the TB bacillus.

malnutrition and TB was increasingly made. Deputy James Hickey, Labour TD for Cork Borough quoted a statement made in 1940 by the chairman of the Louth Board of Health who said that:

TB cases will not be cut down by any brick and mortar policy alone or by the mere building of a sanatorium or a tuberculosis hospital... it is more food, better living conditions... that are the primary necessities.⁹⁹

An even more revealing statement made by Kildare's assistant CMOH was relayed to the Dáil by William Norton, Labour TD for Kildare and party leader. The assistant wished to have the scale of home assistance increased believing that it was 'impossible to maintain good health whilst people were living in a state of starvation or semi-starvation.'¹⁰⁰ She estimated that ninety percent of tuberculosis cases came from the poorest families and pointed out that the death-rate would be lower if the people had more to eat. The assistant went on to add that her primary aim was to prevent tuberculosis but for a time her principle duty had been the 'signing of death certificates.'¹⁰¹ Dr Bastible, CMOH for Donegal, reported a death within the county every second day to TB and noted that malnutrition and overcrowding acted like 'ancillary impediments to stemming its ravages'.¹⁰² While Dublin with its higher mortality rate (in 1935-37 the mortality rate for the city was as high as 151 per 100,000 of the population as opposed to the national average of 121 per 100,000) constituted the geographical focus of the TB debate, the TB problem was very much a national one.¹⁰³

In 'Tuberculosis: a social problem', published in *Studies* in 1943, Professor Theo Dillon reasoned that, of the factors connected with poverty that were having an unfavourable effect upon the TB mortality rate, insufficient food and overcrowding were the most harmful. He added that 'it is probable that, of the two, insufficient food is

⁹⁹ DD, Mr Hickey, 16 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 9, Cols 1065-6.

¹⁰⁰ DD, Mr Norton, 16 June 1942, Vol. 87, No. 9, Col. 1099.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² 'The Anti-Tuberculosis' Section' (1944), p. 243.

¹⁰³ *Irish Independent*, 30 Oct. 1943.

the more important.’¹⁰⁴ Theo Dillon emphasised that it was Ireland’s poor, unemployed, city dwelling adolescents that were most likely to become infected with TB and that their susceptibility to the disease was being accentuated by malnutrition.¹⁰⁵ Dillon was of ‘no doubt that the best way to deal with tuberculosis would be to solve the great problems of unemployment, urbanization and malnutrition.’¹⁰⁶ When RAMI’s tuberculosis sub-committee (of which Theo Dillon was the chairman) published its report in June 1941, it had come to the conclusion that a bricks and mortar policy would prove the best course of action.

All are agreed that a well equipped modern sanatorium is the central pivot of any efficient scheme.¹⁰⁷

Two years later in 1943, Theo Dillon was arguing that the aim should be to address the root of the problem as opposed to trying to deal with its effects. This approach was arguably all the more practical as the expansion of the sanatoria infrastructure had almost completely halted by 1941 owing to the shortage of building materials.¹⁰⁸ On 29 October 1943, at a meeting of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (SSISI), Dillon went further stating that ‘nutrition was more important than medical facilities in curing the disease’.¹⁰⁹ Dr John Duffy (a founding member of the Anti-Tuberculosis League) was also in no doubt as to the connection between undernourishment and TB. Citing various studies and using examples from WWI, Duffy argued that it would be ‘dangerous to reduce expenditure on food relief for the purpose of improving housing conditions.’¹¹⁰ At a time when there were ‘many poor women starving in Dublin’ and when the numbers suffering and dying from TB throughout the

¹⁰⁴ Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon, ‘Tuberculosis: A social problem’ in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xxxii, no. 126 (1943), p. 165.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁰⁷ RAMI, ‘Tuberculosis in Dublin’, p. 258.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, ‘*Captain of all these men of death*’, p. 177.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 30 Oct. 1943.

¹¹⁰ John Duffy, ‘Some social factors in tuberculosis’ in *IJMS*, xviii (1943), p. 222.

country were rising, it was becoming harder to overlook the relationship between the two.¹¹¹

As the Emergency progressed, malnutrition was increasingly identified as a major contributory factor to the increased prevalence of TB. However, there was by no means a consensus on this point. Seán MacEntee, Minister for Local Government and Public Health, was loath to acknowledge the correlation between the two. To admit that a section of the Irish population was malnourished, or indeed starving, would have been a political embarrassment. This denial had a precedent in both France and the UK. In 1935, Parisot, a French member of the League of Nation's Health Committee, approached his counterpart in the British Ministry of Health in an attempt to gain a binational consensus to obstruct, or at least restrict nutritional surveys to outside Europe. The possibility of having one's population pronounced malnourished caused real anxiety.¹¹² Lynda Bryder also shows how in Britain in the 1930s, there was an 'official denial' of the relationship between malnutrition and TB with Sir Arthur MacNalty, chief medical officer of the Ministry of Health, being particularly culpable.¹¹³ In Ireland, various reasons both in isolation of and in relation to malnutrition were identified as being causative factors. MacEntee was quick to point out that disagreement existed even among the experts. A 1942 survey of the opinions of thirty-one CMOH on the subject demonstrated this lack of agreement. Aside from malnutrition, they cited various reasons for the increase including:

- 1) Overcrowding.
- 2) There being a more rapidly fatal form of the disease present.
- 3) The increased physical strain on weakly persons employed on turf and tillage schemes.
- 4) The stress produced by living in such abnormal times.
- 5) The non-co-operation of patients.

¹¹¹ *Irish Ambulance Gazette*, xiii (1943), p. 8.

¹¹² Lang, *Coming to terms with world health*, p. 391.

¹¹³ Linda Bryder, *Below the magic mountain, a social history of tuberculosis in twentieth-century Britain* (New York, 1988), p. 116.

- 6) The return to Ireland of persons infected with tuberculosis that were formerly resident or employed in Great Britain.
- 7) The discharge from the Irish Army of tuberculin cases.
- 8) Increased rural to urban migration.¹¹⁴

Having illustrated these points, MacEntee stated:

No doubt each and all of these may have contributed in some degree to bring it about. And yet when any one of the suggested causes is closely considered in the light of the facts, it is difficult to accept it as being the really significant factor in bringing about the sudden increase in morbidity and mortality which was experienced last year.¹¹⁵

In MacEntee's opinion the problem was not 'capable of facile explanation', he instead ascribed it to 'some new [unknown] factor evoked or stimulated by the conditions of the Emergency.'¹¹⁶

The relative significance of the various reasons listed by the CMOH is impossible to determine, but like Minister MacEntee suggested, there is little doubt that together they contributed in some way to the increased prevalence of TB. The majority of the points however, cannot be considered independently of malnutrition. The association between poverty, overcrowding, and malnutrition is well established. The potency of TB has much to do with the immune status of the carrier; one's immune system can be compromised by malnutrition. Again it is possible that 'poverty imposes psychological stress on the body that reduces immune capacity' thus increasing the risk of infection.¹¹⁷ As regards 'weakly' persons becoming infected as a result of overexertion on the bogs or in agriculture, it is indeed possible that this could compromise one's immune system. In this case the social background of the worker is important: had they come from among the under or unemployed poorer classes, they may have been poorly nourished to start with. The non-cooperation of patients is an interesting point. The tendency of the tuberculosis sufferer and their family to conceal

¹¹⁴ DD, Mr MacEntee, 28 Oct. 1943, Vol. 91, No. 10, Cols 1365-6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Col. 1366.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Col. 1369.

¹¹⁷ Nelson & Williams, *Infectious disease and epidemiology*, p. 679.

their disease to avoid the ‘stigma of TB’ was well documented.¹¹⁸ This trend was particularly common among wage-earning family members of the poorer classes. Tubercular breadwinners were particularly adverse to the prospect of being bedridden and were even more anxious to avoid the sanatorium. The loss of a breadwinner’s income had the potential to plunge a family into poverty inducing dependence on state welfare. The most a man with a wife and five dependent children could hope to obtain through welfare was thirty shillings weekly (see Chapter III); on such a wage hunger was inevitable. The sanatorium patient was well fed, but there was no special provision for his or her family which must have weighed heavily on one’s conscience. Economic difficulties were an obstacle to treatment.¹¹⁹ Central to this was the prospect of poverty and thus hunger. As can be seen from Table 5.3, the TB mortality rate for 1940 for men insured under the National Unemployment Insurance scheme (see Chapter III) was much lower than that experienced by the general male population. In brief, men in proper employment were far less likely to die from TB than their uninsured, unemployed counterparts. These figures underline the influence of socio-economic factors upon the death rate.

Table 5.3 A comparison of the TB mortality rate for insured men with that of the general male population, 1940

Age	TB deaths	Number of insured men	Rate per 100,000		Percentage decrease on general rate
			Insured men	General Male population	
16-19	12	39,320	33	121	65%
20-24	59	64,358	92	196	53%
25-34	105	112,659	93	214	61%
35-44	79	78,377	101	179	43%
45-54	48	60,716	79	184	57%
55-64	34	44,542	77	133	42%
65+	13	13,589	96	73	30%

Source: Theobald Wolfe Tone Dillon, ‘Statistics of tuberculosis’ in *Irish Journal of Medical Science* (July, 1942), p. 228

¹¹⁸ *Irish Press*, 30 Oct. 1933.

¹¹⁹ Dillon, ‘Tuberculosis: A social problem’, p. 173.

Seán MacEntee acknowledged that a number of factors combined to bring about an increase in the prevalence of TB in Ireland, but at the same time he argued against any factor associated with poverty. Whether or not MacEntee was in denial is not clear, but such an admission would have reflected badly upon the government. In one breath he pointed out that the problem was beyond simple explanation, but in the next he offered up inward migration as the reason. This theory credited the increase to the influx of infected people from Britain and the continent to Ireland during the early part of the Emergency. This hypothesis enabled MacEntee to claim that:

Any increase thus arising, however, cannot be ascribed to existing living conditions here, for in such cases the disease originated abroad and was brought back here.¹²⁰

This however neglects the fact that both inward and outward migration to Dublin from both rural areas and Britain had been a feature of Irish society since long before the Famine.

Nutritional studies, 1943-44

1944 was an important year for the development of nutrition and dietetics in Ireland. Central to this was Charles Clancy Gore's 1944 paper, 'Nutritional standards of some working-class families in Dublin, 1943'. Read to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland on 28 January 1944, it caused quite a stir. The report itself was a survey of the nutritional state of 100 families (accounting for 684 people, 348 children and 336 adults) selected from one of Dublin's new estates. Using the British Medical Association's 1933 dietary recommendations as the standard, Gore calculated that it would cost 14s. weekly to adequately feed an adult man at the prevailing Dublin prices.¹²¹ What Gore actually discovered was far in deficit of this standard. Just one percent of the adults and two percent of the children examined were consuming a

¹²⁰ DD, Mr MacEntee, 28 Oct. 1943, Vol. 91, No. 10, Col. 1367.

¹²¹ Charles Clancy Gore, 'Nutritional standards of some working class families in Dublin, 1943' in *Stat. Soc. Ire. Jn.*, xxvi, no. 2 (1943-44), p. 243.

satisfactory amount of food per the 14s. standard.¹²² At the lowest end of the scale, 109 persons were consuming on average between just two and four shillings' worth of food per head per week.¹²³ Milk consumption was found to be totally inadequate while the amount spent on bread as opposed to more nourishing but less filling foodstuffs increased with family size. For twenty-five families with nine or more members, their expenditure on bread accounted for at least fifty percent of their total food expenses.¹²⁴ TD James Dillon perfectly summed up the position of the working class man (or agricultural labourer) with a large family and an insufficient income, explaining:

He gets, perhaps, at the present time 36s. a week. Now, when the first baby is born to that man's household, it is welcome. He is able to make both ends meet. When the second baby arrives, he views its arrival with some modest concern. The third baby is unquestionably a burden, and the fourth and fifth are disasters.¹²⁵

On 'Nutritional standards of some working-class families in Dublin, 1943', Clancy Gore concluded:

The standard of living of these families is obviously low. This may be due entirely to prevailing war conditions causing the very marked increase in the cost of living. In peace time it is probable that the smaller families would have adequate incomes. At the moment it is possible, only for these smaller families, to maintain with difficulty a reasonable standard of living. It is, however, absolutely impossible for the larger families to provide adequately for themselves, at present.¹²⁶

The study, the first substantial nutritional survey conducted in the country thus painted a damning picture of the nutritional state of Dublin's working class and clearly demonstrated the impact that the Emergency was having upon large families in particular.

¹²² Ibid., p. 253.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 250.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 252.

¹²⁵ DD, Mr Dillon, 13 May 1942, Vol. 86, No. 6, Col. 1979.

¹²⁶ Gore, 'Nutritional standards of some working class families in Dublin', p. 253.

One major point on which Clancy Gore's study was criticised was the fact that it was based upon families where the main breadwinner was in employment.¹²⁷ Had it included families dependent upon state and voluntary welfare schemes for their maintenance, an even grimmer picture of living conditions in Dublin would have been depicted. In this sense, the study understated the malnutrition of Dublin's poor. This was noted by Patrick McGilligan, Fine Gael TD for Dublin North-West.¹²⁸ Alfred Byrne, independent TD for Dublin North-East, and former lord mayor of Dublin (1930-1939), remarking on the study and the nature of poverty in Dublin more generally stated:

Malnutrition in the poorer parts in the City of Dublin, so far as children are concerned, is responsible for very many deaths of infants, and these could be saved if something extra were done by the Government for their parents. Malnutrition is providing prospective patients for the sanatoria in and around the city. I can go back some 50 or 60 years, and I can truthfully say that I see more barefooted children, and more children badly clad and ill-fed in the city to-day than I ever saw before. I have seen women in the poorer parts of Dublin barely covered. I have been brought to homes and I have entered rooms where there were no beds and where there was no bed clothing. I have seen children sleeping on sacks in the corner of a room. All these things can be seen within 100 yards of the principal street in this city... On the corporation housing estates we have people living on very moderate allowances. They have to pay high bus fares in order to get to their homes on the outskirts of the city. These people have received very meagre increases in pay to meet the higher cost of living. The result is that the children are suffering and the women are paying the price. I have seen women in various parts of Dublin depriving themselves of food that they should keep for themselves, so that their children might be fed.¹²⁹

Byrne added:

I say that the time has arrived for the Government to determine the minimum standard at which a human being can live: that that minimum standard should be fixed by the Government and that it should be guaranteed from somewhere.¹³⁰

A Department of Local Government and Public Health memorandum on Gore's paper dated 14 April 1944, reasoned that the disparity between the price of food items

¹²⁷ *The Economist*, 26 Feb. 1944.

¹²⁸ DD, Mr McGilligan, 14 Mar. 1944, Vol. 92, No. 14, Cols 2231-2.

¹²⁹ DD, Mr Alfred Byrne, 14 Mar. 1944, Vol. 92, No. 14, Col. 2241.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Col. 2244.

on the cost-of-living index and industrial wages were relevant to the study's conclusions.¹³¹ An article on Gore's paper which appeared in the *Irish Independent* on 13 July 1944, stoked further interest with the Department of the Taoiseach querying the Department of Local Government and Public Health 'as to the desirability or practicability of carrying out such an inquiry under government auspices.'¹³² Dr James Deeny, appointed chief medical advisor to the Department of Local Government and Public Health in September 1944, noted in his memoir that Gore's findings 'created a distinct unease about the nutrition situation' and also, how a death in Allihies, West Cork, believed to be from starvation, provoked an outcry.¹³³ Nutrition had become politicised.

The appointment in 1944 of Dr James Deeny at the age of thirty-seven to the position of chief medical advisor to the Department of Local Government and Public Health was among other things, a significant development for the advancement of nutritional science and its social application in Ireland. Born in 1906 to a Catholic family in Lurgan, County Armagh; Deeny was educated in Clongowes Wood College County Kildare and studied medicine at Queen's University Belfast (QUB). Thereafter he assisted in his father's practice, continued his postgraduate studies in QUB, and in 1931, opened his own practice adjacent to his father's.¹³⁴ It was in Lurgan that Deeny witnessed firsthand the poverty of the town's linen factory workers, exacerbated by the depression of the 1930s. Poor health as a result of hunger was a major problem which prompted Deeny to clinically assess Lurgan's linen factory worker's nutritional

¹³¹ Memo on queries raised in connection with a paper on: 'nutritional standards of some working-class families, in Dublin 1942', 14 Apr. 1944 (NAI, HLTH/B160/10, p. 3).

¹³² Department of the Taoiseach memorandum to the Department of Local Government and Public Health, 22 June 1944 (NAI, HLTH/B160/10).

¹³³ Deeny, *To cure and to care*, p. 102.

¹³⁴ *Ulster Herald*, 23 Sept. 1944.

status.¹³⁵ In 1938, Deeny's 'The assessment of nutrition', was published in the *Ulster Medical Journal* in which he concluded that 'it is imperative that more thought should be given to the problem.'¹³⁶ In 1939, the results of Deeny's clinical study of 202 male linen weavers were published in the *British Medical Journal*.¹³⁷ This was followed up by the results of a survey of 205 female linen weavers, 'Poverty as a cause of ill health', published in 1940 in the *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*.¹³⁸ On the paper, which Deeny read to the society on 31 May 1940, Dr Robert J. Rowlette commented that it 'would form the basis of a great deal of knowledge that they hoped to obtain in the future.'¹³⁹ Between 1939 and 1944, Dr James Deeny wrote extensively on the subject of nutrition with a particular focus on vitamin deficiencies.¹⁴⁰ He received international attention for his 1943 article on 'Familial idiopathic methaemoglobinaemia' or the 'blue men of Lurgan'; two brothers with a rare blood disease which Deeny treated with sodium bicarbonate and vitamin D. During WWII, Deeny gave lectures on good nutrition, disseminated in Northern Ireland via radiobroadcast while the Ministry of Health also consulted him on nutrition in Northern Ireland. Deeny's work attracted attention south of the border also and was awarded research grants from Ireland's Medical Research Council.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Margaret Crawford, 'James Deeny and the Irish national nutritional survey, 1946-48' in Brenda Collins, Phillip Ollerenshaw and Trevor Parkhill (eds), *Industry, trade and people in Ireland, 1650-1950, essays in honour of W. H. Crawford* (Belfast, 2005), pp 253-4.

¹³⁶ James Deeny, 'The assessment of nutrition' in *Ulster Medical Journal*, vii, no. 3 (1938), p. 213.

¹³⁷ James Deeny, 'Clinical and social survey of male linen weavers' in *British Medical Journal*, i, no. 4 (1939), pp 267-70.

¹³⁸ James Deeny, 'Poverty as a cause of ill health' in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, xvi, no. 3 (1940), pp 75-89.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰ See: James Deeny, 'Polycythaemia and vitamin C' in *British Medical Journal*, ii (1940), pp 864-6; 'Pellagra in general practice in Northern Ireland' in *BMJ*, i (1942), pp 157-8; 'Riboflavin deficiency: with a case report' in *British Medical Journal*, ii (1942), p. 607; 'Familial idiopathic methaemoglobinaemia: treatment with ascorbic acid' in *BMJ*, i (1943), pp 721-3; 'Ascorbic acid and complement - a study of their relationships' in *IJMS*, xviii (1943), pp 82-90; 'Excretion of ascorbic acid' in *IJMS*, xix (1944), pp 17-24; 'Infant mortality in the city of Belfast' in *Stat. Soc. Ire. Jn.*, xvii, no. 2 (1943-44), pp 221-40.

¹⁴¹ Lawrence William White and Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Deeny, James Andrew' in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Dublin, 2009).

James Deeny's appointment is indicative of the brave direction in which the Department of Local Government and Public Health was heading. As evidenced by Dr Francis Constantine Ward, parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Local Government and Public Health, these qualifications figured prominently in the department's selection of Deeny to the position of chief medical advisor. Discussing Deeny's appointment in the Dáil on 20 September 1944, Dr F. C. Ward commented:

He has made a special study of nutrition and social medicine and has carried out research work on vitamins for the Medical Research Council of Ireland. He has also carried out a survey into infant mortality, an investigation into the incidence of tuberculosis, and a survey into social conditions in the linen industry in Northern Ireland, and he is the author of many publications on medical subjects.¹⁴²

Figure 5.8 Dr James Deeny in the 1940s

When the government decided in late 1944 to conduct a national nutritional survey in conjunction with the Irish Medical Research Council and to establish 'dietary standards appropriate to this country', it is unsurprising that Deeny was given the lead on the project.¹⁴³



Tuberculosis campaign, 1943-46

As planning for the National Nutritional Survey got underway, the political, medical, and public attention paid to issues of malnutrition and tuberculosis continued. After 1942, the TB mortality rate improved steadily, bar a spike in 1947 (see Chapter VI). Dr E. J. T. McWeeny attributed this trend to the effect of remittances and government welfare schemes which permitted

¹⁴² DD, Dr Ward 20 Sept. 1944, Vol. 94, No. 10, Col. 1664.

¹⁴³ Department of Local Government and Public Health memorandum to the Department of the Taoiseach, 9 Dec. 1944 (NAI, HLTH/B/106/10).

better living conditions and the purchase of more food.¹⁴⁴ Irrespective of the general improvement, the TB mortality rate remained high, not returning to its pre-war level until 1948 (see Figure 5.2). The establishment of the Anti-Tuberculosis Section of the Irish Red Cross in 1943 lent energy to the anti-tuberculosis campaign and through intensive propaganda it launched the issue into the public consciousness. The section attributed as many as 64 out of every 100 deaths for those aged between 15 and 25 in 1944 to TB while it estimated that there were approximately 44,000 cases of advanced tuberculosis in the country.¹⁴⁵ While the tubercle bacillus is the direct cause of infection, the IRC readily acknowledged that malnutrition and other social factors were principle contributory factors and this was repeatedly stressed in the organisation's publications.¹⁴⁶

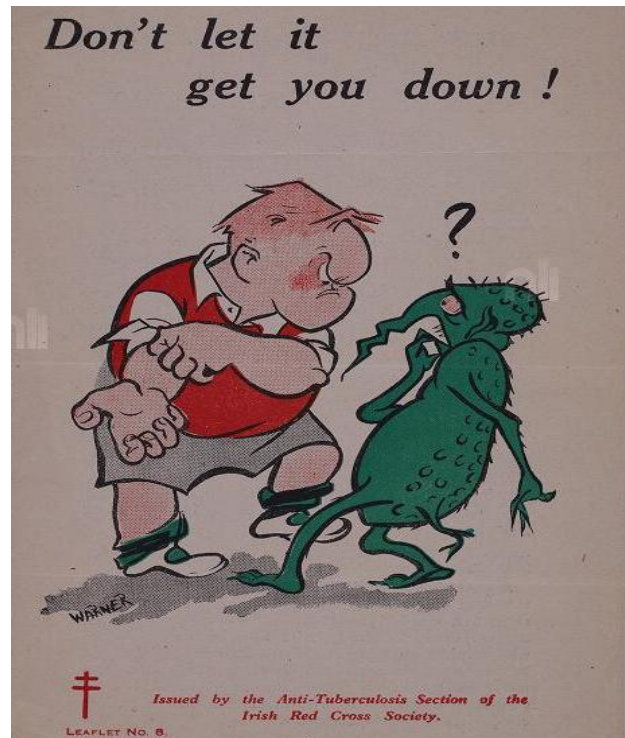
¹⁴⁴ *DLGPH, Report, 1943-44*, p. 205.

¹⁴⁵ 'The Anti-Tuberculosis Section', iv, no. 3 (1944), p. 75; *The Anti-Tuberculosis Section*, iv, no. 7 (1944), p. 204.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204; 'The Anti-Tuberculosis Section', iv, no. 6 (1944), p. 175; Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Don't let it get you down!* (Dublin, 1945). The January 1945 issue of the *Irish Red Cross Monthly Bulletin* dealt primarily with food, nutrition and health, see: 'The Anti-Tuberculosis Section' in *Irish Red Cross Monthly Bulletin*, v, no. 1 (1945).

Figure 5.9 The cover page of an Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section information pamphlet, 1945

With the aid of members of the medical profession such as Dr Dorothy Price, the Anti-Tuberculosis Section produced several publications intended to educate the public in the various aspects of the disease such as its epidemiology, prevention, and rehabilitation.¹⁴⁷ The IRC's Tuberculosis Exhibition, opened by the Taoiseach on 28 May 1945 was originally scheduled for two weeks



Source: Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Don't let it get you down!* (Dublin, 1945)

but proved so popular it was kept on for a third week.¹⁴⁸ The exhibition included demonstrations, cooking classes, and lectures delivered by TB experts such as Dorothy Price and officials from the Department of Local Government and Public Health. Professor Theo Dillon gave a lecture on 'food, nutrition and health', chaired by Professor Robert Fearon, in which he described the modern Irish diet as 'dear, dirty and deadly'.¹⁴⁹ The exhibition was well documented in the press, its format was informative, it was geared towards the layman, and it emphasised the social aspect of the disease (see Figure 5.9).

¹⁴⁷ Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Tuberculosis, a series of lectures for the layman* (Dublin, 1945), Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Tuberculosis and how to prevent it* (Dublin, 1945), Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Don't let it get you down!* (Dublin, 1945); Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Tuberculosis, a long-term plan for prevention* (Dublin, 1945); Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Sanatoria* (Dublin, 1945); Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Aftercare and rehabilitation* (Dublin, 1945); Irish Red Cross, Anti-Tuberculosis Section, *Tuberculosis in animals* (Dublin, 1945).

¹⁴⁸ Mac Lellan, 'That 'preventable and curable disease', pp 132-3.

¹⁴⁹ 'The Anti-Tuberculosis Section', v, no. 7 (1945), p. 205.

Figure 5.10 An Irish Red Cross leaflet for the Mansion House Tuberculosis Exhibition, 1945

TUBERCULOSIS EXHIBITION
Mansion House, Dublin.

The Exhibition will be opened by the TAOISEACH at 4 p.m.
On **MONDAY, 28th MAY, 1945.**
GENERAL MULCAHY, T.D., MR. WM. NORTON, T.D.,
MR. JUSTICE CONOR MAGUIRE, Chairman of the Society,
will also speak.
THE LORD MAYOR of Dublin will preside.

LECTURE PROGRAMME :

TUESDAY, May 29th, at 8 p.m.
"What Tuberculosis means to the man in the street."
Speakers:—**DR. T. W. T. DILLON, DR. JOHN MOWBRAY.**
Chairman—**Miss LOUIE BENNETT.**



MONDAY, June 4th, at 8 p.m.
"Social Aspects of Tuberculosis."
Speakers—**DR. M. NAUGHTEN, M.O.H., Clonmel.**
DR. C. R. McARDLE, Dublin Corporation.
Chairman—**MR. D. J. O'DONOVAN, Commissioner for Co. Dublin.**

TUESDAY, June 5th, at 8 p.m.
"Food, Nutrition and Health."
Speakers—**DR. T. W. T. DILLON, MISS EITHNE O'MALLEY.**
Chairman—**PROF. FEARON, T.C.D.**

WEDNESDAY, June 6th, at 8 p.m.
"Mass Radiography."
Lecture and Demonstration by **DR. R. A. REYNOLDS.**
Chairman—**DR. M. CROWE, Dublin Corporation.**

THURSDAY, June 7th, at 8 p.m.
"Childhood Tuberculosis."
Speakers—**DR. DOROTHY PRICE, MR. HARTNETT, Dept. of Agriculture.**
Chairman—**DR. G. T. O'BRIEN.**

FRIDAY, June 8th, at 8 p.m.
"Tuberculosis can be Wiped Out."
Speakers—**DR. HASLEY WILLIAMS, Secretary General, National Association**
for the Prevention of Tuberculosis.
DR. T. McWEENEY, Dept. of Local Government and Public Health.
Chairman—**THE HON. CONOR A. MAGUIRE.**

 **ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS SECTION** 
IRISH RED CROSS SOCIETY.

K. T. WHITE, LTD., PRINTERS, DUBLIN.

Source: Flyer for the tuberculosis exhibition, Mansion House, 28 May 1945 (TCD, MS 7537/58)

Anne Mac Lellan suggests that the IRC's work led to a change in the national attitude; when one considers how the discussion of TB widened post 1943 and the increasing coverage it received in the media, this appears to be true.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Mac Lellan, 'That 'preventable and curable disease', p. 134.

If the link between malnutrition and TB was being increasingly made, the drive for increased sanatorium accommodation remained as strong as ever. In 1944, Dublin Corporation announced it would build a modern facility with 320 beds at Ballyowen, County Dublin.¹⁵¹ That same year the Department of Local Government and Public Health declared that a 1,000 bed sanatorium was to be built at Santry Court, North County Dublin. This project however, was later abandoned due to the unforeseen development of air traffic at Dublin Airport which necessitated the provision of more runways.¹⁵² The Tuberculosis (Establishment of Sanatoria) Act, 1945, passed on 6 March 1945 to ‘make further and better provision for the establishment of sanatoria for the treatment of persons suffering from tuberculosis’ is further evidence of the government’s commitment to the sanatorium solution.¹⁵³ The government’s 1946 White Paper *Tuberculosis* acknowledged the ideal for Ireland of the two beds per death ratio, a formula suggested by the American National Tuberculosis Association.¹⁵⁴ Published in January 1946, the White Paper promised 2,000 new beds, new sanatoria, new equipment and an all-round effort to improve methods of prevention and treatment.¹⁵⁵ The Post-Sanatorium League, an organisation with a particular concern for aftercare and rehabilitation of the TB patient, was established by a group of ex-TB sufferers on 26 July 1944.¹⁵⁶ The creation of the Post-Sanatorium League is further evidence of the preeminent position of the sanatoria in the fight against TB.

National Nutrition Survey, 1946-48

Deeny entrusted the organisation of the National Nutrition Survey to Dr Desmond Hourihane while the eminent statistician Robert Geary of the Central

¹⁵¹ *Irish Press*, 11 Feb. 1944.

¹⁵² DD, Dr Ryan, 12 June 1947, Vol. 106, No. 14, Col. 1662; Deeny, *To cure and to care*, pp 158-9.

¹⁵³ Tuberculosis (Establishment of Sanatoria) Act, 1945 (1945 no. 4/1945) (6 Mar. 1945).

¹⁵⁴ Mac Lellan, ‘That ‘preventable and curable disease’, p. 129.

¹⁵⁵ *Irish Times*, 31 Jan. 1946.

¹⁵⁶ John Horgan, *Noel Browne, passionate outsider* (Dublin, 2000), pp 36-7.

Statistics Office was charged with establishing the methodological approach and system of data analysis.¹⁵⁷ The aims of the study as identified by Hourihane were to:

- 1) Ascertain the amount of the various foods consumed by the population.
- 2) To translate these amounts into calories.
- 3) To illustrate the primary food habits of the population.¹⁵⁸

The ultimate objective was to use this data to draw up dietary standards applicable to the Irish people that were comparable to international dietary standards such as those established by the Health Committee of the League of Nations in 1936. To obtain the data, a scheme of research was drawn up by the Department of Local Government and Public Health in consultation with the Irish Medical Research Council and it was thus decided that the survey would be divided into two parts including a dietary and a clinical study.¹⁵⁹ The Medical Research Council – introduced to avoid any criticism of bias – formed an advisory committee which included Dr J. M. O'Connor (Chairman) and Dr W. J. E. Jessop (Secretary), while Professor William Fearon was also a member.¹⁶⁰ The inclusion of the Medical Research Council was significant as it secured the assistance of two British Ministry of Health Officials, Dr E. R. Bransby and Dr H. E. Magee.¹⁶¹ The dietary survey which took about two and a half years was conducted by a team of ten women. These investigators were all married women and students of domestic economy or of the social sciences and were paid £200 annually in addition to expenses.¹⁶² Before they commenced their work they received three months' training in England carrying out and observing similar work under the supervision of Dr Bransby.

¹⁵⁷ C. S. Breathnach and J. B. Moynihan, 'An Irish statistician's analysis of the national tuberculosis problem – Robert Geary (1896-1983)' in *IJMS*, clxxii (2004), pp 149-53.

¹⁵⁸ Desmond Hourihane, 'Objective, scope and general plan of the Irish National Nutrition Survey' in *British Journal of Nutrition*, iv, no. 2-3 (1950), p. 270.

¹⁵⁹ Estimates 1949-50, nutrition survey, n.d. (suspected 1948), (NAI, HLTH/B106/2, p. 1).

¹⁶⁰ Deeny, *To cure and to care*, p. 102.

¹⁶¹ J. M. O'Connor, 'The Irish National Nutrition Survey' in *BJN*, iv, no. 2-3 (1950), p. 269.

¹⁶² *Irish Times*, 9 Oct. 1946, 3 Oct. 1946.

Similarly, the doctor employed for the clinical examinations received preliminary training in England which was made possible by Dr Magee.¹⁶³

It was decided that the survey should extend to 2,500-3,000 families – roughly about one in every 250 private families or 1,000 persons in the country; in the end, a total of 2,693 families constituting 14,641 people were examined.¹⁶⁴ These families were divided fairly evenly between rural and urban areas and were classified into groups deemed important in relation to their proportion to the total population (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 The seven different types of family examined in the Irish National Nutrition Survey, 1946-48

Type of family	No. of families in the sample	Total no. of persons in survey	Survey dates
Resident in Dublin City	500	2,423	April - August 1946
Resident in the Congested districts	200	934	September - October 1946 and March - April 1947
Large towns (population over 10,000)	329	2,083	October 1946 - May 1947
Small towns (population under 10,000)	516	3,442	May 1947 - September 1948
Farming families	948	4,686	October 1946 - September 1948
Farm workers' families	177	951	October 1946 - September 1948
Exceptional rural families	23	122	October 1946 - September 1948

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, parts I-VI*; Robert C. Geary, 'Statistical plans and methods of the Irish National Nutrition Survey' in *British Journal of Nutrition*, 4(2-3), (1950), p. 275

In Dublin, families were randomly selected from four wards using the 1943 register of population. The areas sampled were Mountjoy, Rotunda, Drumcondra all on the North side and Drumcondra in the west. The families were then classified according to three grades, slum, artisan, and middle-class. In the town areas it was decided not to adhere too rigidly to the method of random sampling and the study was biased towards families that were poorer and larger than the norm. Farming families were selected from the Agricultural Statistics List. A number of district electoral divisions (DED) were chosen

¹⁶³ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part I, methods of dietary survey and results from Dublin investigation* (Dublin, 1948), p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; Estimates 1949-50, nutrition survey, n.d. (suspected 1948), (NAI, HLTH/B106/2, p. 1).

in each county roughly proportional to the county's farming population and ten families were then selected from each DED. Families of farm labourers were selected proportionate to the number of married male agricultural labourers; this was done alongside the study of the general farming family sample. The DED was again used as the unit of division in the congested districts, though it was the practice to err towards the poorer areas.¹⁶⁵ In the congested districts, the families were visited twice in order to take account of possible seasonal differences in available food supplies.¹⁶⁶ The final grouping, only created once the survey got underway, included professionals, tradesmen and families of 'independent means'.¹⁶⁷

For the dietary survey conducted from April 1946 to August 1948, the investigators visited each of the pre-determined families intermittently over a period of one week. On the initial visit the investigator weighed and took note of all the food in the house. A form (referred to as a logbook) was given to the housewife upon which she was to note the price of all the food purchased and the quantity of food consumed during the period under study. Exactly one week after the first visit was made, the investigator returned to weigh and measure all the food remaining in the house. The housewives were given 2s. 6d. upon completion of the logbook.¹⁶⁸ This data enabled the researchers to determine the types and quantities of each individual food consumed as well as its cost. Allowances were made for waste along with meals eaten away from the home. Other data such as the age, gender, occupation of the family members, family income, and number of rooms in the dwelling were also recorded. It was acknowledged that the carrying out of the survey might disturb the housewife's normal domestic

¹⁶⁵ Robert C. Geary, 'Statistical plans and methods of the Irish National Nutrition Survey' in *BJN*, iv, no. 2-3 (1950), pp 275-6.

¹⁶⁶ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part II, dietary survey of the congested districts* (Dublin, 1949), p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part VI, exceptional rural families and summarised results of all the dietary surveys with appendices* (Dublin, 1950), p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ Hourihane, 'Objective, scope and general plan of the Irish National Nutrition Survey', p. 270.

routine and so the importance of following normal practices was impressed upon them.¹⁶⁹ According to Dr Hourihane, the investigators, especially during the early stages of the study, encountered reluctance on the part of the informants to provide information as to the foods purchased. The respondents apparently felt that the information might be used in some way to their disadvantage as regards rationing or income tax.¹⁷⁰ This suggests that the investigators were viewed in a similar way to the glimmer man, or the government inspector – just another extension of the overbearing and invasive Emergency bureaucracy. When bread rationing was introduced on 18 January 1947, a date almost directly in the middle of the two visits to the congested districts, the housewives there felt that it had been introduced on account of the information they provided during the first visit.¹⁷¹ In other cases purchases of foodstuffs such as tea were concealed due to their illicit nature while other informants entered unlikely foodstuffs into the logbooks, ones that wouldn't normally have been expected.¹⁷² The latter pattern, especially common in the congested districts was most likely an attempt – out of embarrassment – to hide poverty.

In a similar fashion to the dietary survey, the clinical survey comprised an examination of pre-determined groups selected from the same areas as the dietary survey with a bias towards the poorer sections of the community. As Robert Geary suggested, 'there was little point in securing proportionate representation'.¹⁷³ While the clinical survey was conducted analogous to the dietary survey, it was not possible to investigate such a broadly representative sample; sections of the population considered nutritionally vulnerable were therefore targeted. In total, 14,835 school children, 570

¹⁶⁹ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part I, methods of dietary survey and results from Dublin investigation* (Dublin, 1948), pp 4-7.

¹⁷⁰ Hourihane, 'Objective, scope and general plan of the Irish National Nutrition Survey', p. 272.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

¹⁷² Hourihane, 'Objective, scope and general plan of the Irish National Nutrition Survey', p. 273.

¹⁷³ Geary, 'Statistical plans and methods', p. 275.

adolescents, and 320 nursing and expecting mothers were examined.¹⁷⁴ The children brought a form home to their parents on which information such as the age and gender of the child as well as the occupation of the father was to be recorded. The occupations were then used to divide the sample into broad social groups such as unskilled labourers and white-collar workers. Unlike the primary school children, it proved difficult to secure adolescents and mothers willing to be examined and almost all of those who did volunteer came from Dublin. The clinical survey itself was divided into two parts, a nutritional assessment by the investigator, and a measurement of heights and weights. The method adopted for the nutritional assessment was that employed in Britain during WWII. It consisted of the recording of certain clinical signs thought to be indicative of defective nutrition together with a record of the examiner's judgement. The state of nutrition of the participants was then described as either being 'good', 'fair', or 'poor'. While it was noted that the subjective nature of the study could lead to errors, it was felt that the employment of the single investigator would diminish this error.¹⁷⁵

A significant criticism that can be made of the National Nutrition Survey, when considering its findings, relates to the study's geographical scope. As the rural study was conducted concurrently to the towns' study, it was not feasible to examine rural families resident more than five miles away from the towns in which the investigators were lodging. It is reasonable to presume that the conditions in these areas would have been materially different to the less remote rural areas on account of their less ready access to the centres of population. Margaret Crawford makes the point that the proliferation of grocery shops throughout Ireland, providing as they did access to imported foodstuffs, helped to homogenise consumption habits.¹⁷⁶ However, as illustrated in chapter II, some of Ireland's remotest areas, especially in the west of the

¹⁷⁴ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part VII, clinical survey* (Dublin, 1952), p. 7.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 8-10.

¹⁷⁶ Crawford, 'James Deeny and the Irish National Nutritional Survey', p. 263.

country, were served by commercial travellers as opposed to the more commonplace grocery shops. These traders, hit particularly badly by petrol rationing were forced to curtail their operations with the result that some of the worst shortages reported throughout the Emergency were in the areas they normally served. Again, some of Ireland's blackest TB spots were in rural areas, especially in the west of the country.¹⁷⁷ All of this indicates that within these areas there was the potential for consumption habits, levels of nutrition, and general living standards to diverge from the trends presented by the National Nutrition Survey.

James Deeny, writing in 1950 in the *British Journal of Nutrition* on the significance of Ireland's National Nutrition Survey, summarised:

Roughly half the population, the 600,000 farm families, of Ireland have enough or more than enough to eat... The survey also shows for the other half of the Irish population, that the majority of dwellers in the towns or in Dublin are adequately satisfied and consume a reasonable diet.¹⁷⁸

Therefore, the National Nutrition Survey painted a very favourable picture of the national health as a whole. However, there were also some negatives. Among Dublin's poorest slum households, the 'bread and spread culture' was particularly prevalent.¹⁷⁹ More worrying however was the deficient calcium consumption (according to the League of Nations Health Organisation's standards) that was evident among Dublin's poorest and largest families (see Table 5.5).

¹⁷⁷ Horgan, *Noel Browne*, p. 36.

¹⁷⁸ James Deeny, 'Practical significance of the Irish National Nutrition Survey' in *BJN*, iv, no. 2-3 (1950), p. 293.

¹⁷⁹ Crawford, 'James Deeny and the Irish National Nutritional Survey', p. 269.

Table 5.5 Actual milk consumption in Dublin for families of different sizes and social classes presented in terms of a percentage of actual requirements, 1946

Type of family	Number of families in sub-section	Total number of persons surveyed	Number of persons in family			
			1 or 2	3 or 4	5, 6 or 7	8, 9, 10 or 11
Slum	188	754	116%	73%	53%	53%
Artisan	210	1,191	189%	110%	70%	43%
Middle Class	102	478	179%	142%	101%	76%
All types	500	2,243	151%	98%	70%	49%

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from: Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part I, methods of dietary survey and results from Dublin investigation* (Dublin, 1946); Department of Health, survey of human nutrition, 17 July 1948 (NAI, HLTH/B106/9)

This was easily the survey's worst finding and the fact that the Department of Health omitted this particular data is an indication of how damning it was.¹⁸⁰ Seventy-five percent of all schoolchildren examined in the clinical survey were found to be in 'good' nutritional health, twenty-two point five percent were 'fair' and just two point five percent were found to be in a 'poor' nutritional state.¹⁸¹ The nutritional state of the subjects was determined by the medical officer in terms of the existence of certain clinical signs which were judged to be indicative of defective nutrition. These signs included gingivitis, subnormal muscle development, subnormal muscle tone, subnormal hand grip, diminished subcutaneous fat, goitre and evidence of rickets.¹⁸² Those in a 'fair' nutritional state presented mild forms of these signs, whereas those in a 'poor' nutritional state demonstrated more acute symptoms. Evidence of rickets for both boys and girls was encountered in approximately seventeen percent of all cases examined in the Dublin sample.¹⁸³ Generally, the National Nutrition Survey highlighted the largely favourable nature of Ireland's dietary habits and the positive nutritional state that the majority of the population enjoyed. What the National Nutrition Survey achieved was a defined picture of Ireland's food situation which compared favourably with other

¹⁸⁰ Department of Health, survey of human nutrition, 17 July 1948 (NAI, HLTH/B106/9).

¹⁸¹ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part VII, clinical survey* (Dublin, 1952), p. 23.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸³ Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part VII, clinical survey* (Dublin, 1952), p. 18.

European countries as well as an illustration of the dietary deficiencies of Ireland's vulnerable groups. At the same time it should be noted that these results applied to the nutritional state of the population during the post-war years and so should not be taken to be fully reflective of standards during the war years. The lack of correlation between the National Nutrition Survey and the findings of Clancy Gore's study conducted several years earlier in 1943 underlines this point.

Rickets

The prevalence of rickets, a deficiency disease which occurs in growing infants and children, increased in Ireland during the Emergency. Primarily associated with vitamin D deficiency, a lack of dietary calcium is also important.¹⁸⁴ In 1942 'some Dublin paediatricians' became aware of the increase of the number of cases diagnosed radiologically in Dublin's children's hospitals.¹⁸⁵

Table 5.6 Incidence of rickets diagnosed radiologically in Dublin's children's hospitals, 1939-42

Hospital	Cases X-rayed		Rickets per 1,000 children	
	1939-40	1941-42	1939-40	1941-42
National Children's	1,403	2,081	10	20
St Ultan's	291	354	10	31
Temple Street	637	596	9	28

Source: E. T. J. McWeeny, Memo on nutrition, 20 Oct. 1943 (HLTH/B106/10, p. 4)

In 1942 a further investigation was made in conjunction with a rickets survey undertaken in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland by the British Paediatric Association. 365 children, selected at random from the outpatient departments of Dublin's children's hospitals and welfare centres, were examined. The incidence in the group was extremely high – 230 per 1,000 in all children under four years of age and

¹⁸⁴ Rickets is primarily related to the abnormal metabolism of vitamin D and secondarily to calcium and phosphate metabolism. Dietary vitamin D deficiency and the activation of vitamin D precursors by sunlight and the kidneys are of the many causes, by far the most important. See: Ted Steinbock, '121. Rickets and Osteomalacia', in *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease*, pp 280-2.

¹⁸⁵ E. T. J. McWeeny, Memo on nutrition, 20 Oct. 1943 (HLTH/B106/10, p. 4).

450, per 1,000 in children between one and a half and two years of age. Dublin's figures were four times higher than those of any English city investigated.¹⁸⁶ Further rickets investigations of children aged between three months and four years, randomly selected from the out-patient sections of the three children's hospitals, were conducted during the spring months of 1943 to 1948. Sessions that were especially likely to be attended by children suffering from the disease were avoided.¹⁸⁷ The incidence of rickets among the sample decreased from 179 per 1,000 in 1943 to 29 per 1,000 in 1948.¹⁸⁸

As early as 1941, Dr Fearon, drawing on the work of the Dr Edward Mellanby of the British Ministry of Health, noted that flour of a high extraction rate had the potential to inhibit calcium absorption due to its high phytic acid content.¹⁸⁹ This material was not the sole purvey of the medical community but was also discussed in *The Standard*, a newspaper which reflected the attitudes of the Catholic Church.¹⁹⁰ Between September 1940 and February 1942 the extraction rate of flour had been increased from its pre-war level of seventy percent to one-hundred percent. At the same time more concentrated types of vitamin D became more expensive.¹⁹¹ However the majority of the mothers of the children diagnosed with rickets were 'emphatic that the child concerned had received the same diet as his elder brothers and sisters who had shown no sign of the disease.'¹⁹² This suggests the increased incidence was related to the extraction rate of flour as opposed to a reduced dietary intake of vitamin D. Prior to the war, the British Ministry of Health recognised the problem that the loaf of a high extraction rate posed, and as early as June 1939 had ordered the fortification of bread

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁸⁷ W. J. E. Jessop, 'Results of the rickets surveys in Dublin' in *BJN*, iv, no. 2-3 (1950), p. 290.

¹⁸⁸ W. B. Macintosh and M. G. Dunnigan, 'The role of cereals in the aetiology of nutritional rickets: the lesson of the Irish nutrition survey, 1943-48' in *BJN*, xlv, no. 1 (1981), p. 19.

¹⁸⁹ William Fearon, 'Our daily bread' in *IJMS*, xvi (1941), p. 56; For more on this process see: Ted Steinbock, '121. Rickets and Osteomalacia', in *The Cambridge historical dictionary of disease*, pp 280-2.

¹⁹⁰ *The Standard*, 16 May 1941.

¹⁹¹ *Torch*, 27 Nov. 1943.

¹⁹² Jessop, 'Results of the rickets surveys in Dublin', p. 290.

with calcium as a preventative measure.¹⁹³ In mid 1944, following consultation with British experts, the Department of Local Government and Public Health recommended the fortification of Irish flour with calcium carbonate to the sum of seven ounces per sack.¹⁹⁴ While the extraction rate of flour was reduced to eighty-five percent in December 1943, official fortification of flour did not begin until June 1946.¹⁹⁵

Figure 5.11 The merits of the 'new bread', June 1946



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, June 1946

In Ireland's limited pre-war plans, nutritional considerations played no part. As an agricultural country whose produce was considered vital to Britain, it was assumed that the war would actually revitalise the Irish economy negating the need for a rationing framework. Instead the economy suffered and as the war dragged on and prices rose, it became necessary to institute rationing. Nutritional considerations however, were of little consequence in the development of these controls. The amount

¹⁹³ Fearon, 'Our daily bread', p. 53.

¹⁹⁴ Department of Local Government and Public Health memorandum to the Taoiseach, 3 May 1944 (NAI, DTA/S12064 A).

¹⁹⁵ Stationery Office, *National Nutritional Survey, part I, methods of dietary survey and results from Dublin investigation* (Dublin, 1948), p. 11.

of rationed food one could receive depended on the total available supply of the particular foodstuff. In Britain, welfare rations were made available for expectant and nursing mothers, children, and the necessitous classes. The communal feeding infrastructure was greatly expanded. Industrial canteens gave more fats, meat, and sugar per meal than in the public 'British Restaurants' and a rural pie scheme was initiated for agricultural workers.¹⁹⁶ In Ireland, it was argued that the availability of adequate supplies of the 'protective foodstuffs' (foods considered rich in vitamins and calcium) annulled the need for a similarly comprehensive system. In reality, rising prices put these foodstuffs beyond the reach of the poorest sections of the population and the shortage of fuel made their preparation difficult. In Britain, nutritionists rose to prominence during the Second World War. Parallels can be seen in Ireland, especially in the appointment of the socially and nutritionally conscious Dr James Deeny to the position of chief medical advisor to the Department of Local Government and Public Health in 1944. The fortification of Irish flour in light of the high incidence of rickets also mirrored developments in the UK. Although introduced seven years later in 1946, this was a reactionary as opposed to a preventative measure.

The impact of the Emergency upon public health and the initiation of the National Nutrition Survey are two interrelated issues. Shortages and rising prices definitely had an impact on health with both infant deaths and deaths from tuberculosis increasing. While the censors may have prevented overtly negative public debate on the issue of health (and other sensitive issues) in order to 'keep temperatures down', in this case, the statistics do not lie.¹⁹⁷ In light of the declining health among the poorest sections of the Irish population, socially and nutritionally conscious doctors such as

¹⁹⁶ His Majesty's Stationery Office, *How Britain was fed in war time, food control 1939-45* (London, 1946), pp 42-5.

¹⁹⁷ Donal Ó Drisceoil, 'Keeping temperatures down: domestic politics in Emergency Ireland' in Dermot Keogh and Mervyn O'Driscoll (eds), *Ireland in World War Two, neutrality and survival* (Dublin, 2004), pp 173-86.

Deeny and Robert Fearon extolled the virtues of proper nutrition. As the Emergency progressed increasing attention was paid to the subject, and this had much to do with the fight against tuberculosis which became highly politicised during the period. Crucially, there was a growing recognition of the links between malnutrition and illness. As TB became news, nutrition became news. Information on nutrition was no longer the preserve of the medical journals and the problem was addressed officially, in the Department of Local Government and Public Health's 1942 pamphlet, *A simple guide to wholesome diet*. The findings of Charles Clancy Gore's 1944 paper, 'Nutritional standards of some working-class families in Dublin, 1943' caused consternation. Where the problem lay was in the fact that no one really knew how good or bad the national situation was. Thus following the example set in the UK and elsewhere, and drawing on the expertise of Ministry of Health officials, Ireland's National Nutrition Survey was put into motion.

Chapter VI

The Long Emergency

As far as our work is concerned, it will be a very long time before the Emergency is over.

Irish Housewives' Committee, annual report, June 1946, p. 7

The 8 May 1945 marked VE Day or Victory in Europe Day for the Allies, while the surrender of Japan on 2 September 1945 officially brought the Second World War to an end. In Ireland, exactly one year later on 2 September 1946 the Emergency Powers Act was revoked. This, suggests Bryce Evans, marked the end of the period of emergency in Ireland.¹ The end of the war was looked forward to with high hopes and the desire for a return to normality was strong. In spite of the Second World War's conclusion, Ireland continued to face supply difficulties and as a result many of the controls introduced under the Emergency Powers Act remained in force well after the act itself was repealed. This chapter will therefore extend the analysis of rationing in Ireland to the immediate post-war years of 1945-48 or the 'Long Emergency'. It will attempt to place Ireland's supply difficulties within the international context and will test the hypothesis that the Emergency, although concluded diplomatically and militarily, actually continued in a popular sense.

Post-war Europe

The post-war world was a torn and hungry place. The conclusion of hostilities did not bring about a sudden end to the suffering and starvation faced by many and in fact in some places, privation actually increased. In addition to the massive loss of human life in Europe – an estimated thirty-five to forty million people died in Europe as a direct result of the Second World War – huge material and infrastructural destruction

¹ Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War, farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester, 2014), p. 177.

crippled the post-war continent.² Throughout Europe, hundreds of cities had been entirely or partially devastated. In Germany around one in five living spaces in the country had been destroyed, Berlin lost up to fifty percent of its habitable premises and throughout the country an estimated eighteen to twenty million people were rendered homeless.³ The mounds of rubble that remained were devoid of essential services, there was no water, gas, electricity or sanitation. One American columnist writing in the *New York Times* suggested that Europe's population had been reduced to living in:

Medieval fashion surrounded by the broken-down machinery of the twentieth century.⁴

Roads, bridges, railways, telegraph and telephone communications had been destroyed, damaged, and had fallen into disrepair. The bombed-out cities served by hamstrung networks were then inundated by millions of refugees and POWs seeking either their old homes or new ones. Europe's rural infrastructure was also shattered. Farmhouses had been burned down, farmland flooded and neglected. Farms had been plundered, crops destroyed, livestock slaughtered, machinery requisitioned and throughout the continent labour had been lost to the war effort. Food production in Europe for 1945 was reduced to thirty-six percent of its pre-war level.⁵ This had serious dietary consequences. In Germany, at the start of the war, average food consumption equated to 2,507 calories per head, but this figure had diminished to just 1,124 calories in 1945; this translated to two thin slices of bread spread thinly with margarine, a spoonful of porridge, and two small potatoes.⁶ Throughout Europe many millions were consuming less than half the amount of food they would have eaten prior to the war. The standard diet was woefully short of fats and protein and diseases associated with malnutrition

² Keith Lowe, *Savage continent: Europe in the aftermath of World War II* (New York, 2012), p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴ *New York Times*, 3 Sept. 1944: quoted from Lowe, *Savage continent*, p. 8.

⁵ Lizzie Collingham, *The taste of war, World War Two and the battle for food* (London, 2011), p. 469.

⁶ Lowe, *Savage continent*, pp 36-9.

increased while transport difficulties hampered the distribution of food relief supplies and building materials.

The extent to which the average Irish person was capable of appreciating the gravity of the situation in Europe is hard to tell. Following the lifting of censorship, reports of the massive loss of life, the material destruction, the atrocities, and the shortages were disseminated through Ireland's press. The sheer scale of the calamity, however, would have been hard to comprehend. Others who remembered the anti-German propaganda of the First World War may have found the information coming out of Europe hard to trust, or felt that it was exaggerated.⁷ At the same time, the Irish people had grown weary of the war and its impact upon Ireland. By the conclusion of the war in Europe on 8 May 1945, the Irish population had been subjected to government controls of one sort or another for almost six years. A statement made by Minister for Supplies, Seán Lemass, published in the *Irish Press* in February 1944 and entitled 'A dangerous attitude', alludes to the complacency which even then appeared to be setting in amongst the public. According to the article, Lemass noted:

The idea that a period of peace and plenty is just around the corner, has taken a firm grip in many minds. The inevitable result is to cause a slackening of effort in every sphere of activity... Suppose the war in Europe does end this year; what then?... we will not have enough bread next year unless we have sufficient wheat ourselves, or enough sugar unless we grow sufficient beet, or enough butter unless we produce the milk. Europe will be desperately short of food and the countries which are unable to feed themselves will have first claim on whatever supplies can be bought from overseas.⁸

Following the end of the war, the importance of maintaining economic controls was stressed by the government. The post-war world was full of uncertainties, Lemass knew

⁷ Clair Wills, *That neutral island, a history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 397.

⁸ *Irish Press*, 2 Feb. 1944.

this, but he also looked to the past, referencing the massive inflation experienced in the wake of the First World War.⁹

In the Department of Supplies' estimates for 1945-46, Lemass cited export restrictions in countries upon which Ireland was dependent for supplies, the lack of shipping and the prosecution of the war in the east as reasons for Ireland's continued supplies difficulties. There had been no appreciable improvement in the supplies situation in the previous twelve months; the Irish government continued to make every effort possible to secure additional supplies; representations were made by Irish diplomats in the countries concerned; John Leydon, Secretary of the Department of Supplies even visited Britain, the USA and Canada with a view to increasing trade while Irish Shipping Ltd also continued to seek additional tonnage.¹⁰ The Irish Housewives' Association (IHA), established in May 1942 to campaign for fair prices and equitable distribution (among other things) also recognised the problems Ireland faced. The organisation's 1945 annual report noted that although the war was over, conditions would not be normal for a long time adding:

We do not feel that our work is over, or our usefulness ended.¹¹

The IHA felt the need to persist with its campaign for fair prices and equitable distribution. As illustrated in Table 6.1, created using data from the IHA's magazine, the *Irish Housewife*, the price of everyday items had increased dramatically in Ireland during the Emergency.

⁹ DD, Mr Lemass, 25 June 1945, Vol. 97, No. 15, Cols 1562-3.

¹⁰ Department of Supplies, estimates for the Department of the Taoiseach, July 1945 (NAI, TAOIS/S11987).

¹¹ Irish Housewives' Committee, third annual report, June 1945 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 6).

Table 6.1 Price comparison of everyday items sold in Ireland at their 1939 and 1946 prices

	1939 prices			1946 prices			Range			Percentage increase
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Corned beef			7		1	2			7	100
Liver			10		1	10	1			120
Mutton (breast)			9		1	4			7	55
Rashers (streaky)		1	9		3		1	3		71
Pork sausages		1	3		2	2	1	1		73
Herrings (doz.)		1			3		2			200
Rabbits (each)			6		2		1	6		300
Eggs (doz.)		1	11		3		1	1		56
Butter		1	6		2	4			10	55
Cheese		1	4		1	9			5	31
Margarine			8		1	8	1			150
Lard			7		1	2			7	100
Dripping			6		1				6	100
Sugar			3			5			2	66
Tea		2			3	8	1	8		83
Flour (stone)		2	6		4		1	6		60
Oatmeal (stone)		3	4		7		3	8		110
Salt (stone)		1			2		1			100
Potatoes (stone)		1			2		1			100
Apples (each)			3			6			3	100
Shoes (men's)	1	5		2	2			17		68
Shoes (women's)	1	2	6	1	15		13	6		55
Shoes (children's)		15		1	1		6			40
Male suit	5	5		12	12		7	7		140
Female costume	3	10		7	19		4	9		127
Coal (one ton)	1	18		5	8		3	10		184
Turf (two tons)	2	5		5	8		3	3		140
Soap			6			11			5	83
Saucepans		3	9		10		6	3		166
Cup and saucer			6		1	9	1	3		250
Kitchen dresser	1	19	6	7			4		6	250
Bed sheets		14		2	2		1	8		200

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from 'going up' in *The Irish Housewife* (1946), p. 52

The average increase for the thirty-two items contained in Table 6.1 is almost 110 percent. In the IHA's annual report for 1946 it was noted that:

As far as our work is concerned, it will be a very long time before the Emergency is over.¹²

¹² Irish Housewives' Committee, fourth annual report, June 1946 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 7).

For the average Irish person however, the reduction of the flour extraction rate to a more palatable eighty percent in November 1945, its lowest level since late 1940, was indicative of improving times.¹³ Supplies of wheat, agricultural inputs and spare parts also became more available. While just thirty tractors and 106 tractor ploughs were imported in 1941, the figures for 1945 increased to 600 and 300 respectively.¹⁴ The turf drive was also relaxed; the Department of Industry and Commerce reduced County Council Scheme's target for 1946 from 400,000 to 350,000 tons.¹⁵ In June 1946 the tea ration was increased from a half ounce to one and a half ounces per head per week.¹⁶ As Mary Daly points out, 'this was something of a false dawn.'¹⁷ In the following years various factors would conspire to knock the wind out of the sails of Irish people's post-war optimism.

World food shortage

Ireland's supplies situation may have improved slightly during the immediate post-war months, but by early 1946 it was becoming clear that the world was facing a massive food crisis. The depressed state of global agriculture meant that the world was short of milk, meat and fats; this however came as no great surprise. What was not anticipated was the deficit in the global cereals supply. A two-sided problem, the expected global yield had been overestimated and actual requirements had been underestimated. At a meeting of the United Nations on 13 February 1946, a resolution urging food economy was passed. Speaking at the meeting, Britain's foreign secretary,

¹³ *Irish Times*, 27 Nov. 1945.

¹⁴ Historical survey of work dealing with rationing, miscellaneous supplies and control of exports, 1938-1945, parts IX and X (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/4, pp 443-5); *Irish Times*, 27 Sept. 1945.

¹⁵ Mary E. Daly, *The buffer state, historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997), p. 269.

¹⁶ *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin* (1946), p. 75.

¹⁷ Mary E. Daly, *The first department, a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002), p. 263.

Ernest Bevin, stressed that the position was ‘really alarming’ and went so far as to say that:

The war is still on, and we must beat the enemy, famine.¹⁸

But it was not until the meeting of the Combined Food Board Cereals Committee in London on 3 April 1946 that the true gravity of the situation became clear.¹⁹ The crux of the problem lay in the abnormally high requirements that were requested by countries which normally produced a surplus or had been largely self-sufficient. Droughts in Southern Europe and North Africa in 1945, followed by more droughts in the Americas, Australia, Asia and parts of Southern Africa in 1946 lowered yields.²⁰ In India the catastrophic crop conditions resulted in a rice deficit of almost 2,000,000 tons.²¹ Altogether this created an unprecedented demand for imports of cereals. During the years 1935-39 the global trade in wheat and flour had averaged at 15,000,000 tons.²² For the six months of January to June 1946, stated requirements were in the region of 20,000,000 to 21,000,000 tons. This was against a supply of wheat and wheat substitutes of approximately 13,000,000 tons, a deficit of about 7,000,000 to 8,000,000 tons.²³ The estimated availability therefore represented about sixty percent of the stated requirements and so the committee recommended that both exporting and importing countries institute grain economising measures. In the end a total of 28,000,000 tons of grain were imported into deficit areas during 1946-47.²⁴

¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 14 Feb. 1946.

¹⁹ The Combined Food Board was a United Nations organisation which dealt with the allocation of commodities in short supply.

²⁰ *Statement of the Combined Food Board Cereals Committee*, 3 April 1946, p. 1, available at Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur L'Europe, Publications (http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_of_the_combined_food_board_cereals_committee_london_3_april_1946-en-1627b02c-01a2-457c-89c4-3567352578cf.html) (12 July 2014).

²¹ *Irish Times*, 14 Feb. 1946.

²² *Statement of the Combined Food Board Cereals Committee*, 3 April 1946, p. 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁴ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, *The state of food and agriculture: 1947* (Geneva, 1947), iii.

In Ireland, proactive measures were taken by the government to help alleviate the distress in Europe. One such action was the establishment of the European Relief Scheme in 1945.²⁵ £3,000,000 was voted for the relief of distress in Europe to purchase food aid such as sugar, butter and condensed milk which was distributed through the International Red Cross.²⁶ When the *Irish Cedar* of the Irish Shipping Ltd was returned to her Italian owners she was laden with a cargo of 2,000 tons' worth of relief goods. The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva described this as being 'a most beautiful example of charity.'²⁷ Particular appreciation was reportedly shown for Irish sugar as sugar was one of the first commodities to disappear on the continent following the outbreak of the war.²⁸ The *Irish Press* described how in a home for old people in Berlin the 'inmates' ate their 40g daily ration of sugar with a spoon, it being 'undoubtedly the most nourishing item on their meagre menus.'²⁹

Figure 6.1 'Irland Spende' or 'Irish Gift' being unloaded in Berlin, 1946



Source: *Irish Press*, 10 July 1946

²⁵ Daly, *The first department*, p. 263.

²⁶ *The Standard*, 30 Nov. 1945.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, 30 Jan. 1946.

²⁸ Lowe, *Savage continent*, p. 34.

²⁹ *Irish Press*, 30 July 1946.

Some promises proved harder to keep. In 1945, France, Belgium, Holland and Italy were each allocated 2,000,000 lbs. of canned meat but delivery proved impossible due to lack of tin cans and shipping.³⁰ Organisations such as the St John's Ambulance Brigade and the Catholic Social Service Conference also contributed to the European relief effort. In January 1946 the St John's Ambulance Brigade donated its mobile canteen to the International Red Cross; during the war years the canteen had been used to administer cheap food in areas such as Crumlin and Cabra.³¹ In the minutes of the Sodality of Our Lady, St Joseph's, High Park, it was noted that the sodalists planned to respond to an appeal 'for the gift of old clothes for the suffering people of Hungary.' The clothes would first be sent to the CSSC's central clothing guild, City Quay, for onward distribution.³²

From early 1946, as the repercussions of the poor harvests began to be felt around the world, there was a shift in Ireland's food policy as the controls around flour and bread were tightened once more. These developments were in line with ones instituted elsewhere and were a direct response to the United Nation's recommendations. For example, in January 1946 the US government, one of the principle exporters of wheat, raised the extraction rate for flour to eighty percent.³³ On 10 February 1946, de Valera announced that the extraction rate of flour would be increased to eighty-five percent; Ireland would have 'the same loaf as Britain.'³⁴ De Valera explained:

Conditions have turned out to be definitively worse than anticipated. A series of natural calamities have been superimposed on the calamities due to the war... War-ravaged Europe, disorganised without farm equipment or fertiliser or proper transport, is quite unable to provide for its own needs.

³⁰ Minutes of the inter-departmental committee on relief supplies for Europe, 11 Jan. 1946 (NAI, DFA 419/4 part 1).

³¹ *Irish Press*, 17 Jan. 1946.

³² Minutes, Sodality of Our Lady, St Joseph's School, 9 June 1946 (OLC, SJ/7/1 No. 2, p. 2).

³³ Collingham, *The taste of war*, p. 479.

³⁴ *Sunday Independent*, 10 Feb. 1946.

De Valera urged ‘the greatest effort’ yet made to be put into the production of wheat for the coming year for:

The more food we produce, the safer will be our own position and the more we shall have for those who are in need.³⁵

Three days later the UN passed its resolution urging food economy. The Irish government’s response to the recommendations of the Combined Food Board Cereals Committee was also swift. On 4 April 1946, the day following the conference, then Tánaiste and Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, who had been in attendance, announced that the extraction rate would be raised to ninety percent.³⁶

Reports detailing the suffering in Europe were widely disseminated in the Irish press.

An article published in the *Connacht Sentinel* on 16 April 1946 suggested that:

Famine stalks Europe just as terribly as it stalked this country one hundred years ago.

Adding:

Our ninety percent wheaten loaf, when it comes, will be a small sacrifice to make to assist starving millions.³⁷

In Ireland the memory of the Great Famine was regularly evoked, as was the idea that continued rationing was about more than just national food security. The Irish Housewives Association also launched a campaign against waste, particularly of bread and urged the use of flour substitutes such as oatmeal and potato. It was the IHA which suggested that the government reintroduce the ban on the serving of wheaten meals in catering establishments which they did on 21 May 1946. Boland’s Ltd published advertisements encouraging bread economy and recommended recipes for the use of stale bread.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Irish Press*, 4 Apr. 1946.

³⁷ *Connacht Sentinel*, 16 Apr. 1946.

³⁸ Irish Housewives’ Committee, fourth annual report, June 1946, pp 6-7.

During the war the Irish government supplemented the domestic wheat supply with imported wheat sourced mainly from North America. Grain Importers (Éire) was in fact able to purchase grain in quantities to the extent of Irish Shipping Ltd's shipping capacity. At this point, transport rather than supply was the problem. Following the cessation of hostilities in Europe, the shipping position immediately improved. The net tonnage of vessels with cargoes that entered and cleared from Irish ports in 1946 amounted to 2,956,000 tons as compared with 1,396,000 tons in 1944.³⁹ Wheat was one of the commodities which began to flow more freely into Ireland with the result that extraction rate for flour was lowered to eighty percent. As Lemass admitted himself, it was expected that there would be no further difficulties.⁴⁰ With the realisation of the grain shortage however, supply now became the issue. From August to December 1945, 103,305 tons of wheat was imported into Ireland, in comparison just 66,797 tons were secured during the whole of 1946.⁴¹ From July 1946 the Irish government made representations to the International Emergency Food Council to increase Ireland's wheat allocation.⁴² However, the exporting countries drew comparison with Ireland's overall availability of food with that of other countries and also noted the lack of bread rationing; that same month bread rationing was introduced in the UK.⁴³ This situation was problematic for Ireland as flour consumption increased considerably during the Emergency. Average pre-war weekly consumption stood at 52,000 280lbs sacks, which had increased to 65,000 280lbs sacks by the summer of 1944; a level which was maintained thereafter.⁴⁴ Flour assumed an increasingly important position in the Irish

³⁹ *ITJSB* (1948), p. 191.

⁴⁰ DD, Mr Lemass, 29 Jan. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 5, Col. 590.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Cols 505-6.

⁴² In 1946 the International Emergency Food Council took over the functions of the Combined Food Board.

⁴³ DD, Mr Lemass, 29 Jan. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 5, Col. 597; *Donegal News*, 6 July 1946.

⁴⁴ Memorandum for Government, Flour and Bread Prices, n.d. (NAI, INDC/EMR/3/440, p. 1); DD, Mr Lemass, 29 Jan. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 5, Col. 591.

diet during the Emergency, especially for the urban poor who found cooking difficult due to the nature of the fuel supply. Government subsidy also meant that it was cheaper than alternative foodstuffs. The reduced imports of wheat aside, there was cause for optimism going into the harvest of 1946. Some 642,595 acres of wheat were sown that year, just 20,000 less than in 1945.⁴⁵ As the war was over and with imports expected to improve this was considered a satisfactory effort. Unfortunately though, Ireland was about to enter a period of acute difficulty.

Battle for the harvest

During the late summer of 1946 Ireland experienced atrocious weather conditions. Early August was a deluge with the latter half of the month marked by almost incessant rains.⁴⁶ It was described as the ‘worst August in living memory’ by one ‘old and experienced’ West Limerick landowner.⁴⁷ Throughout the country rivers burst their banks, bridges were downed and there was considerable flooding. Fields were waterlogged, crops were flattened, and animals were drowned. Turf was past saving. At Dromore, Bailieborough, Co. Cavan, farmers used a boat to get from one part of their lands to another.⁴⁸ It was reported that forty percent of the crops on the Mount Street Club’s 225 acre farm in Clondalkin had been destroyed.⁴⁹ The material in the press readily conveys the sense of fear and foreboding that swept over the country in early September. An article in the *Irish Independent* declared:

⁴⁵ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 188.

⁴⁶ Kevin C. Kearns, *Ireland’s arctic siege, the Big Freeze of 1947* (Dublin, 2011), p. 24.

⁴⁷ *Kerryman*, 7 Sept. 1946.

⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 10 Sept. 1946.

⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 5 Sept. 1946. The Mount Street Club was a non wage-earning co-operative established in 1934 for unemployed men to make productive use of their time in the club’s premises which included workshops in the city and a farm in Clondakin. Workers received remuneration on a ticket system for hours worked. The tickets could then be exchanged for a wide variety of goods and services. See: Gerard Fee, ‘The effects of World War II on Dublin’s low-income families 1939-1945’ (PhD thesis in history, University College, Dublin, 1996), p. 27.

Nothing in this country is now of greater urgency... than to save what remains of the harvest... If calamity is not prevented it will bring suffering into every home.⁵⁰

Another article in the *Irish Independent* worried:

It is very much to be feared that such privation as this country has not known since Black '47 may overwhelm our people in the next eight or nine months.⁵¹

Now it appeared as though Ireland like many other parts of the world was also facing famine. While the incessant rains had broken by early September, the harvest was seriously delayed. On 4 September the Irish Farmers Federation thus requested that labour be made available to save the harvest. The following day the Minister for Agriculture, James Ryan, appealed for volunteers to do just that. He suggested the establishment of 'clearing centres' throughout the country by 'responsible citizens' for the registration of volunteers, as a point of contact for the farmers, and for the overall organisation of the effort.⁵² Dublin was thus organised into four bureaux for recruitment purposes. The central bureau was established at 11 Parnell Square; the Rathfarnham and Dun Laoghaire bureaux for the south of the county, and the Swords bureau for the north of the county.⁵³ Owners of private motorcars were also requested to offer them for harvest work.⁵⁴

Throughout September and early October 1946, thousands of volunteers, both men and women hailing from all walks of life responded to the government's call to save the harvest. Civil servants were released where practical on full pay for volunteer work and appeals were made to private business owners to do the same.

⁵⁰ *Irish Independent*, 6 Sept. 1946.

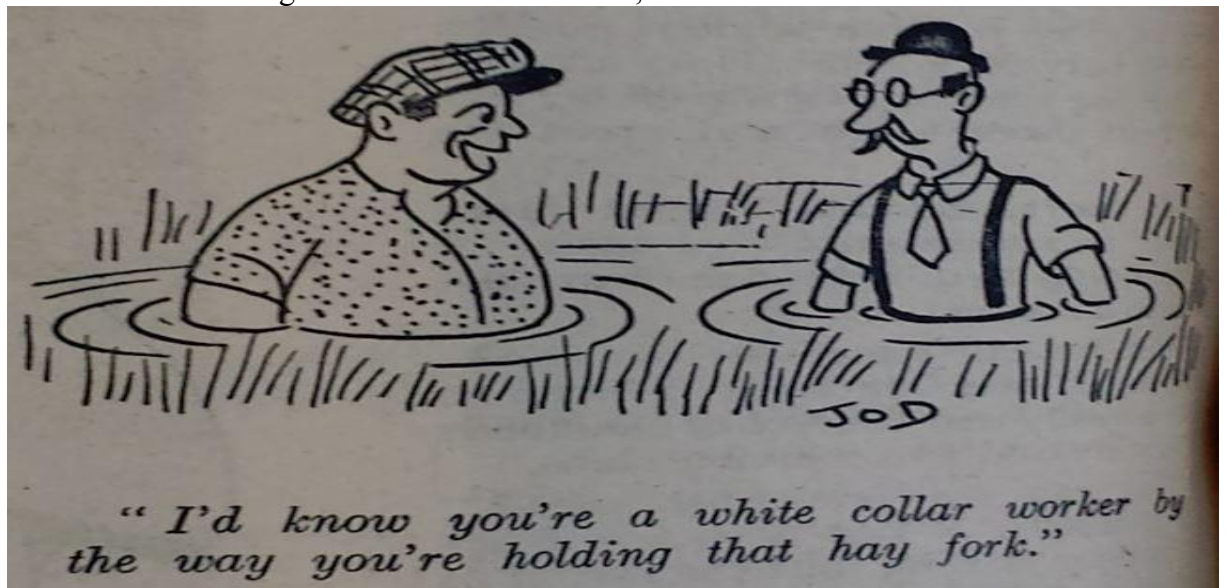
⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9 Sept. 1946.

⁵² *Irish Times*, 5 Sept. 1946.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13 Sept. 1946.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 Sept. 1946.

Figure 6.2 A depiction of a farmer and a white collar worker standing waist deep in water during the 'battle for the harvest', Oct. 1946



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Oct. 1946

The local authorities' county engineering labour resources normally used for work on the roads, bogs and cottage repair were also released for harvest work.⁵⁵ Volunteers with farming experience were assigned skilled jobs, but every pair of hands was a welcome addition to Ireland's 'harvest army' as it was described as in the press.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Harold O'Sullivan, *A history of local government in the county of Louth, from earliest times to the present time* (Dublin, 2000), p. 177.

⁵⁶ *Irish Independent*, 18 Sept. 1946.

Figure 6.3 An Irish Red Cross volunteer leaving the Central Bureau, 11 Parnell Square, with sandwiches for the harvesters, September 1946



Source: *Irish Independent*, 18 Sept. 1946

This really was a massive voluntary effort. Private car owners who ferried the volunteers to the farms were supplied with petrol. The Irish Red Cross established a canteen at their HQ on Molesworth Street, Dublin, to provide food for the harvesters. It was often the case that the farmers could not afford to feed the volunteers and nor could the workers, many of whom were unemployed, afford to bring with them a suitable lunch.⁵⁷ A month later the IRC estimated that it distributed approximately 100,000 rations.⁵⁸ GAA matches were put on hold until the work was completed and in Galway children of farming families were advised to stay at home and help with the harvest⁵⁹ While there were rumours of farmers neglecting to help their neighbours, businesses refusing to let their workers go, and able-bodied unemployed persons snubbing the

⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 1946.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 Oct. 1946.

⁵⁹ *Connacht Sentinel*, 10 Sept. 1946.

appeal, for the most part it seems the ‘battle for the harvest’ was taken up with enthusiasm.⁶⁰

By early October most of the harvest was saved. Disaster had been averted and reports on the national voluntary effort were largely praiseworthy. Nevertheless there was a sharp drop in yields. The 1946 wheat yield of 462,700 tons was twenty percent lower than the previous year’s although the total acreage sown was approximately the same. Of this sum just 337,000 tons was officially milled, 78,500 tons was retained for seed which left 50,000 tons unaccounted for. The *Irish Trade Journal* suggested that this sum was lost at harvest or went to waste in the course of collection, threshing and delivery, but it’s also likely that a proportion of the 50,000 tons made its way onto the black market.⁶¹ 150,000 would need to be imported to make up the deficit. The rains also reduced the quality of the wheat through pre-harvest sprouting (PHS). PHS occurs during periods of prolonged rainfall and high humidity after the grain has ripened and before it can be harvested leading to a partial breakdown of starch into sugar which results in a flour of poor quality. This in turn affects loaf quality.⁶² Loaves produced from this flour were soggy which resulted in wastage. Normally, this problem could have been offset by mixing the native wheat with Canadian or US ‘strong wheat’ varieties, but these grains weren’t available in sufficient quantities.⁶³ The Canadian yield had been lower than expected and despite the fact that the US recorded a bumper harvest, internal transport difficulties as well as a maritime strike prevented the shipment of US wheat to Ireland.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Tuam Herald*, 28 Sept. 1946; *Connacht Sentinel*, 10 Sept. 1946.

⁶¹ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 188.

⁶² W. E. Thomason, ‘Understanding pre-harvest sprouting of wheat’, 11 May 2009, available at: Virginia Tech, VT News, Virginia Cooperative Extension, http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/424/424-060/424-060_pdf.pdf (22 June 2014).

⁶³ DD, Mr Lemass, 29 Jan. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 5, Col. 602.

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 27 Aug. 1946; *Connacht Sentinel*, 10 Dec. 1946; *Irish Times*, 30 Jan. 1947.

Bread Rationing

In the context of both the global and national cereals deficit, the government introduced the rationing of flour and bread on 18 January 1947 knowing that this measure was necessary to secure allocations of wheat from the International Emergency Food Council.⁶⁵ The domestic ration was fixed at six pounds of bread, or four and a half pounds of flour per head per week. Farmers were permitted to retain one barrel of wheat per annum per head of household. Provision was also made to grant supplementary allowances at a rate of half the domestic ration for certain classes of employee that were engaged in heavy manual work and who owing to the conditions of their employment were unable to return home for a mid-day meal.⁶⁶ Agricultural workers who resided at least two miles from their place of employment, who were not supplied with meals by their employer and who were unable to return home for a mid day meal could also purchase the additional allowance. The production and sale of flour and bread was already strictly controlled with bakers, wholesalers, retailers all needing licences to engage in the trade, 33,000 retailers were licensed to sell bread. With the introduction of bread rationing, regulation was extended to the consumer as it became mandatory for them to register with a single merchant and to submit coupons in return for their bread ration. Permits were granted to catering establishments, charitable organisations and schools to receive allocations of bread at a rate of four ounces per meal served.⁶⁷ In light of the introduction of bread and flour rationing in 1947, the relaxation of the controls around wheat in 1945 proved premature. Lemass had stated that it was the:

⁶⁵ Flour and Bread (Rationing) Order, 1946 (1946 no. 288/1946); Daly, *The first department*, p. 264.

⁶⁶ The types of workers eligible for the supplementary allowance included: drainage workers, Bord na Móna workers, builders, cement workers, continuous process shift workers, dockyard workers employed on ship repairs, fertiliser workers, fishermen, foundry workers, gangers and foremen when actively employed, haulage of sea sand for manurial purposes, miners and surface workers who handled coal, night shift workers, postmen, railway engine crews, road workers, tannery workers, foresters, turf workers employed by county councils or industrial concerns, and quarry workers. See: History of flour and bread rationing, 1952 (NAI, INDC/EMR/7/24, pp 7-8).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 1-7.

Government's anxiety... to err on the side of removing controls too soon rather than leaving them in force until it is quite certain that they are no longer required.⁶⁸

In the case of wheat, a vital constituent of the Irish diet, this turned out to be foolhardy. James Hughes, Fine Gael TD for Carlow-Kildare noted that the unpredictability of the Irish weather should have been taken into account suggesting Lemass overlooked this because he was a 'city man'.⁶⁹

One of the immediate criticisms of the scheme was that no special allowance was made for flour confectionary goods. The Confectioners' Association made representation to the government and forecasted that the approximate 800 manufacturers concerned would be hard hit as consumers would necessarily purchase essential supplies of bread over luxuries. Shortly afterwards a special page was allocated from the ration book which permitted the purchase of a half pound of flour confectionary per week.⁷⁰ Of a more serious nature was the debate which ensued around eligibility for the supplementary bread allowance. In Britain, farmers were permitted extra allowances of tea, sugar, and margarine for field workers during harvest, threshing, hay-making and sheep-shearing times.⁷¹ In Ireland the farmers considered it a particular slight that they, who were expected to provide the country with food and fuel, were not all permitted additional rations. While the supplemental scheme covered turf workers employed by Bord na Móna, the county councils and industrial interests; no allowance was made for the individual or family who maybe travelled several miles to the bog to provide for their fuel needs in the coming year. Lemass reasoned that any extension of the supplementary allowances scheme would necessitate either a reduction in the domestic

⁶⁸ Department of Supplies, July 1945, p. 2.

⁶⁹ DD, Mr Hughes, 29 Jan. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 5, Col. 611.

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 6 Jan. 1947; History of flour and bread rationing, 1952, p. 10.

⁷¹ Jules Backman, *Rationing and price control in Great Britain* (Washington, 1943), p. 32.

ration or a reduction in the lasting period of the stocks.⁷² Right from the inception of bread rationing until its abolition in November 1948, repeated requests were made for the widening of the scheme to classes of consumer as varied as fishermen to school children. Provision was eventually made to increase the domestic ration for September for consumers resident outside the county boroughs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford and the borough of Dun Laoghaire in order to facilitate the harvest.⁷³

Some initial difficulties were experienced with the bread rationing scheme due to panic buying and a glut of last minute applicants. These problems aside the scheme ran smoothly with the general consensus being that the domestic ration was a generous one. At the same time its introduction was a cause for alarm, at no point during the war was this measure taken. As was stated in one letter to the *Irish Times*:

Bread rationing after two years of 'peace' made us sit up.⁷⁴

For many it was a shocking development. Bread had become an increasingly important stomach-filler, an affordable staple in an otherwise restricted diet. Experience had shown that the introduction of bread rationing in the UK was highly unpopular and it was even described as:

The most unpopular action that her Labour government ever undertook.⁷⁵

That the measure was subsequently taken in Ireland is illustrative of the seriousness of the situation the country was facing. The country was short an estimated 150,000 tons of wheat and there were no guarantees that shipments would be forthcoming. Bread rationing was just as unpopular as it was shocking. This is evidenced by the attention it received in the Dáil. Bread rationing was very much an issue of political significance, it was a symbolic sore.

⁷² DD, Mr Lemass, 13 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 7, Col. 958.

⁷³ Flour and Bread (Rationing) Order, 1946 (Supplemental Provisions) (Harvest Period) Order 1947 (1947 no. 294/1947).

⁷⁴ *Irish Times*, 10 Feb. 1947.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 Jan. 1947.

The Big Freeze

The introduction of bread rationing in January 1947 was a bitter pill to swallow; however, Ireland was to face still further adversity. From late January until mid March 1947, the British Isles was gripped by a spell of unprecedented weather. Popularly referred to as the 'Big Freeze', it represented the British Isle's most severe and protracted spell of bad weather of the twentieth century. In Ireland the really cold weather began on 24 January 1947 with temperatures falling to minus six. Dublin had its first snow on 28 January and two days later a low of minus thirteen was recorded. On 2 February 1947, Ireland experienced the first of several blizzards that would sweep the country over the course of the next two months as arctic conditions set in.⁷⁶ From around the country, reports told of impassable roads, frozen rivers and icy blizzards. Fierce gales whipped the country and heavy seas pounded the coast. On 1 February 1947 the *Irish Plane* of the Irish Shipping Ltd was driven onto the coast at Ballycotton County Cork.⁷⁷ The snow and low temperatures wreaked havoc with essential services and communications. It left transport, electricity, water, and telephone services disorganised with repair work hampered by transport difficulties. Throughout the country deliveries of vital supplies were held up. Flights were cancelled and schools closed. Inhabitants of snowbound villages reportedly walked ten and twelve miles to the nearest towns in an attempt to secure supplies of rationed goods.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Kearns, *Ireland's arctic siege*, pp 3-5.

⁷⁷ *Irish Press*, 20 Feb. 1947.

⁷⁸ Garda Commissioner, Position in west of Ireland arising out of recent snow storms – enquiry by An Taoiseach, 4 Mar. 1947 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/749).

Figure 6.4 A car near Hollywood, County Wicklow during the ‘Big Freeze’ of 1947



Source: *Irish Independent*, 6 Feb. 1947

The reporting of this exceptional climatic event depicts an almost otherworldly landscape which severely tested the limits of the population.

Cattle struggling through chest-deep snowdrifts to get a small tuft of grass in the hedges, one chimney with smoke coming from it, children peering out through the windows of fireless cottages, and an almost deserted appearance over the countryside.⁷⁹

This was the general impression made on one *Irish Press* reporter following a twenty mile tour of the foothills to the Dublin Mountains made on 20 February 1947. After the blizzard of the 25 February 1947 which totally cut off the west of the country, the *Irish Times* reported:

Blacked-out towns and villages, 1,000 more phones cut off in Dublin alone, main roads impassable, passenger bus services suspended, homes without milk – some without food and fuel – mountain turf bogs six feet under snow.⁸⁰

In inland areas snow measuring seven feet deep was recorded. At least one fifty-foot drift was reported near Glencree, County Wicklow, while the Hamlet of Moneystown at Roundwood was said to be ‘lost in the snow.’⁸¹ So desperate was the situation in Wicklow that farmers brought their milk to lorries at Avoca on homemade sledges, and

⁷⁹ *Irish Press*, 21 Feb. 1947.

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 27 Feb. 1947.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1947.

plans were formulated (though never put into place) to airdrop supplies to the highland villages which had been snowbound for more than a week.⁸² Many farmers suffered heavy losses of livestock which perished due to exposure and lack of fodder. There were losses of human life also, such as the brothers Alex (69) and Patrick McAndrew (76), farmers, who were found several hundred yards away from their home near Evrick, Belmullet, County Mayo, with a bucket of turf close by.⁸³ Then on the weekend of 15 to 17 March, torrential rains lashed the country. These combined with warmer temperatures to trigger a ‘colossal “quick thaw” of the country’s massive snow-pack’.⁸⁴ Vast volumes of water were released and farmland became inundated. Kilkenny City was reported to have had the worst floods in living memory.⁸⁵ Unfortunately for Ireland, the harshest weather experienced during the twentieth century coincided with a period of acute fuel scarcity as supplies of both coal and turf ran short. This combination of events caused widespread suffering during the winter of 1947.

The fuel famine

1946 was a bad year for turf in a number of ways. In mid June, just as the first cutting was to be removed from the bog, the turf hauliers, represented by the Irish Lorry Owners Association, and subcontracted by Fuel Importers Éire to transport turf from the turf area to the non-turf area, went on strike. As the strike didn’t end until 31 July 1946, the crop was left lying on the bogs exposed to the elements where it deteriorated.⁸⁶ This turf was reported to be in such poor condition upon arrival in Dublin that it was beyond satisfactory stacking. It was left in the dumps unclamped and uncovered at the mercy of the heavy rains of August and the following months. By January 1947 this turf was in a sodden condition and owing to the delay in the removal of the first cutting much of the

⁸² *Ibid.*, 7 Mar. 1947; Eirskine H. Childers to Eamon de Valera, 5 Mar. 1947 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/749).

⁸³ *Irish Times*, 7 Mar. 1947.

⁸⁴ Kearns, *Ireland’s arctic siege*, p. 14.

⁸⁵ *Munster Express*, 21 Mar. 1947.

⁸⁶ *Irish Independent*, 1 Aug. 1946.

second crop never made it off the bog.⁸⁷ As depicted in Figure 6.5, the turf the inhabitants of the turf-area were expected to burn was ‘honestly wet this time.’

Figure 6.5 A bellman sells ‘honestly wet’ turf as represented in *Dublin Opinion*, 1947

The battle for harvest also took a heavy toll on that years turf drive. In the scramble to prevent famine, turf was neglected. Throughout the country, rural labourers and county council workers were diverted from the bogs to the fields. While Seán MacEntee was of the opinion that the aversion of disaster had much to do with the



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Mar. 1947

measures taken by the local authorities, the redeployment of labour helped to precipitate fuel scarcity.⁸⁸ Throughout the country turf was left on the bogs for too long and by 1947, supplies of ‘useable turf’ within the turf area were at an all time low.⁸⁹ Turf also became more affordable in the non-turf area in 1946, its price being reduced from sixty-four to fifty-four shillings per ton, but Richard Mulcahy made the reasonable argument that this resulted in increased demand. Mulcahy explained that reduction in price enabled the poorer sections of the community to purchase more turf. Similarly, the reduced price meant that cutting turf for private production as was practiced in the Dublin Mountains was less remunerative.⁹⁰ Lemass estimated that during the second half of 1946 consumption in the turf area increased by approximately fifty percent on

⁸⁷ DD, Mr Costello, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Cols 1526-7.

⁸⁸ Seán MacEntee, Speech to the county engineers, 9 Apr. 1947 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/764).

⁸⁹ *Irish Times*, 14 Jan. 1947.

⁹⁰ DD, Mr Mulcahy, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Cols 1505-6.

1945 levels.⁹¹ The cumulative effect of the strike, the poor weather, and the reduced price was that demand increased while both the supply and quality of the turf available decreased.

Throughout late 1946 and into January 1947 there were murmurs of an impending fuel crisis, but the government didn't act. Indeed, the potential for calamity extended beyond Ireland's insufficient turf supplies. There were some worrying developments in Britain regarding its coal industry which should have raised eyebrows in Ireland. As early as July 1946, the British Minister of Fuel and Power, Emmanuel Shinwell, announced that there might be some curtailment of industry that coming winter owing to the shortage of coal.⁹² Shinwell estimated that the stock position at the beginning of the winter would be about 11,000,000 tons, or 5,000,000 tons short of the normal reserve of 16,000,000 tons.⁹³ The comparatively low rates of total production and general poor efficiency in British mining were massive problems for the Labour government. The industry suffered acute labour problems. The work was underpaid, it was dangerous, the hours were long and the working conditions were poor. All of this made mining unpopular. Strikes were a regular occurrence and absenteeism was rife. The rate of absenteeism at 'the coalface' for 1946 was estimated at 19.32%.⁹⁴ Years of mismanagement and neglect meant that average output per man in British mines was lower than that attained in North American or European mines. The uncertainty over ownership reduced private investment during the preceding years which further hampered production. Britain's mines were nationalised on New Year's Day 1947.⁹⁵ The lack of transport also hampered production, this was public knowledge. The war had taken a heavy toll on Britain's locomotives and rolling stock; approximately one-

⁹¹ DD, Mr Lemass, 22 Jan. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 1, Col. 16.

⁹² Hansard, Coal situation, HC Deb, 24 July 1946, Vol. 426, pp 67-8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp 60-61.

⁹⁴ C. L. Mowat, 'The anatomy of British nationalization' in *The Anthiic Review*, ix, no. 3 (1949), p. 273.

⁹⁵ David, Kynaston, *Austerity in Britain, 1945-51* (London, 2007), p. 185.

fifth and one-seventh were respectively out of action in December 1946.⁹⁶ At the same time increasing demands were being placed on the coal supply. In 1946, the consumption of coal for gas and electricity production was twenty-four percent and seventy-six percent higher than in 1938.⁹⁷ With Britain demobilising both militarily and industrially, demand for power was increasing as new industries were established and as old industries recreated themselves; Labour's policy regarding full employment also increased demand.⁹⁸ Indeed Britain's consumption of coal was insatiable, increasing from 179,000,000 tons in 1945 to 185,000,000 million tons in 1946; total output stood at just 190,000,000 tons.⁹⁹ By late 1946 industries throughout Britain, including the vital ones, were reportedly beginning to 'see the floor' of their reserves.¹⁰⁰ In the later months of 1946 British coal output increased slightly, but the margins were fine. Throughout the country politicians, industrialists, and those connected to the coal industry expressed their anxiety; regarding the coal position, it was as if the country was standing on thin ice, this much was clear.

When the British Isles became gripped by the bad weather in latter part of January 1947, the worst fears of those who had looked anxiously at Britain's coal position was realised. With much of Britain snowbound, the road and rail transport infrastructure became dislocated while the strong winds interrupted the coastal shipping. Coal distribution was thus brought to a standstill and 'a state of creeping paralysis' was induced within British industry.¹⁰¹ Throughout the county industries were forced to go on slow time or cease operations altogether as a direct result of the coal shortage. London was said to only have two weeks supply of domestic coal. The *Irish Times*

⁹⁶ Hansard, Coal shortage (railway wagons), HC Deb, 20 Dec. 1946, pp 2429-35.

⁹⁷ Hansard, Coal Situation, 24 July 1946, p. 69.

⁹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 17 Jan. 1947.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*; Mowat, 'The anatomy of British nationalization', p. 273.

¹⁰⁰ *Irish Independent*, 3 Oct. 1946.

¹⁰¹ *Irish Times*, 6 Feb. 1947.

reported on 4 February 1947 that unemployment in North-West Britain had jumped from 8,000 to 36,850 in the previous ten days as industries shut down operations.¹⁰²

Two days later the *Irish Times* solemnly noted:

Now, at a time when some improvement might have been expected, things have become even worse than they were at the height of the war.¹⁰³

With coal supplies failing to reach power stations in London, the midlands and the north-west, Shinwell announced that the electricity supply to industries and domestic users in these areas would be rationed. Householders would have to make do without electricity for five hours daily.¹⁰⁴ Within a week, this provision was extended throughout the country.¹⁰⁵ With an estimated 2,000,000 people idle as a result of the cuts, and a population of 22,000,000 residing in the affected areas, British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee admitted that the position facing Britain was ‘one of the utmost gravity.’¹⁰⁶ It was in this context that the British government decided on 6 February 1947 to ban the export of coal from Liverpool and other north-western ports. This meant a ban on exports of coal to Ireland. Although it was stressed that this would only be a temporary measure, it had serious immediate consequences. Once again, Ireland’s dependence on a favourable trading position with Britain for the inward flow of vital supplies was cruelly illustrated.

At the time of the British government’s announcement of an export ban on coal, Dublin was said to have about three weeks supply while some important industries only had one, a situation which P. J. McEvoy, President of the Federation of Irish Manufactures described as being the ‘the last straw’.¹⁰⁷ During the previous weeks Irish industries and intensive coal burners like the Electricity Supply Board, the gas

¹⁰² Ibid., 4 Feb. 1947.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 6 Feb. 1947.

¹⁰⁴ Kynaston, *Austerity in Britain*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁵ Alex J. Robertson, *The bleak midwinter, 1947* (Manchester, 1987), p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ *Irish Independent*, 11 Feb. 1947.

¹⁰⁷ *Irish Times*, 7 Feb. 1947.

companies and Córas Iompair Éireann maintained operations on a reduced quota of coal. Still, Britain's ban on coal exports came as a massive blow to these industries, their employees and those who depended on their services. Cuts soon followed. In Limerick the gas supply was cut to eight and a half hours daily while Dublin Gas Company limited the 'on' hours to just five hours per day.¹⁰⁸ On 14 February 1947, the need for economy in electricity usage was announced. Outside shop lighting was banned and the users of electric fires were advised to use them sparingly or risk disconnection.¹⁰⁹ The last of CIE's main-line passenger trains travelled on the 22 February 1947.¹¹⁰

In a broadcast on 24 February 1947 Lemass urged economy in the use of gas, electricity, and fuel and was reported by the *Irish Independent* to say that 'the crisis was more severe than anything the country had experienced previously.'¹¹¹ In the midst of the freezing cold and accompanying fuel famine, people reportedly striped wood from their homes to make fires while coal was being sold at £8 per ton on the black-market.¹¹² Fuel supplies in the capital were at an all time low. The suffering extending beyond Dublin too, the poor in the west of Ireland were said to be having a particularly bad experience while fuel shortages were reported in urban areas throughout the country.¹¹³ In rural areas people reportedly used communal fires for cooking and went to bed early to keep warm.¹¹⁴ Where fuel was available in the turf area it was often dear as was the case in Tuam:

Tuam is, if anything, better off than the rest of the country. Fuel is dear – too dear for the poor – but there is a plentiful supply.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 11 Feb. 1947; Kearns, *Ireland's arctic siege*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 22.

¹¹⁰ *Irish Press*, 22 Feb. 1947.

¹¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 25 Feb. 1947.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1947, 8 Feb. 1947.

¹¹³ Garda Commissioner, Position in west of Ireland, 4 Mar. 1947, p. 1; Department of Local Government and Public Health, Snow bound roads, position, 6 Mar. 1947 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/749, pp 1-2).

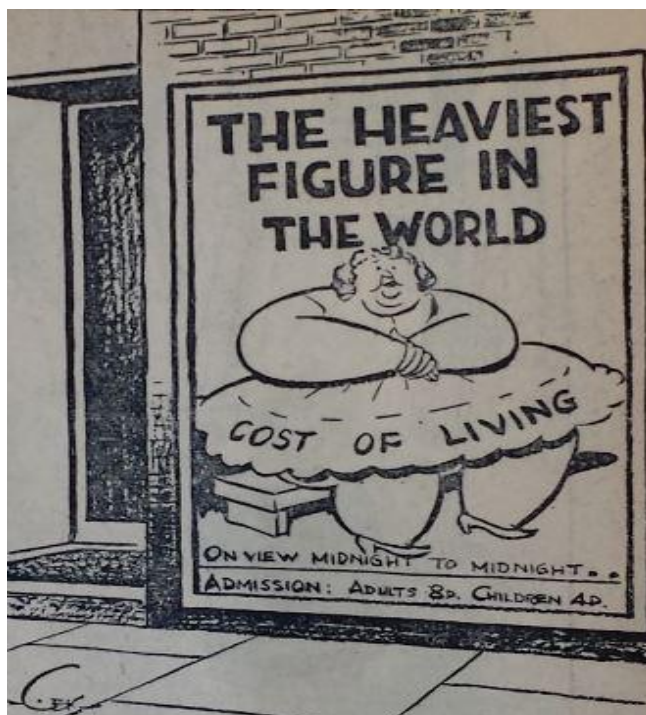
¹¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 19 Feb. 1947.

¹¹⁵ *Tuam Herald*, 1 Mar. 1947

The inconsistencies in the demarcation of the turf and non-turf areas proved a real problem. In Cobh which was part of the scheduled turf area, turf was sold for £5 a ton while in Cork City, which was part of the non-turf area in spite of the fact that it was fifteen miles closer to the bog, turf was sold at the fixed price of fifty-four shillings.¹¹⁶ The price of everyday essentials increased during the wake of the ‘big freeze’ Between August 1946 and August 1947 the price of food as represented on the cost-of-living index increased by fifteen percent. According to the Irish Housewives Association, from January and June 1947 a pound of sugar became 1*d.* more expensive; the price of a pound of butter increased by 4*d.*, and fresh vegetables became two to three times as costly. The IHA admitted that since Christmas their efforts had been mainly concerned with prices.¹¹⁷

Figure 6.6 A caricature of the cost-of-living as ‘the heaviest figure in the world’, *Dublin Opinion*, 1947

Throughout the fuel crisis criticism was levelled at the government for its handling of the affair. On 27 February 1947, Richard Mulcahy put forward a motion in the Dáil condemning the government’s failure to make better provision of fuel for industry and the essential services.¹¹⁸



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Feb. 1947

Continued austerity proved a handy stick with which to beat the government, but the opposition’s attacks are also indicative

¹¹⁶ DD, Mr Corry, 12 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 6, Col. 806.

¹¹⁷ Irish Housewives Committee, fifth annual report, June 1947 (NAI, Tweedy Papers 98/17/5/1/1, p. 5).

¹¹⁸ DD, Mr Mulcahy, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Col. 1503.

of the severity of the crisis and underline its political significance. Deputy Joseph Blowick of the Farmers Party who would later be leader of Clann na Talmahan during the first interparty government questioned Lemass' experience of turf as Lemass was a Dubliner. Blowick stated:

The minister is a city man and may not understand the handling of turf, but there are many deputies who can tell him about it... the stuff I see at present in the hotel where I stay and in other places is not turf, and any farmer down the country will tell you that he leaves better stuff on the bog than the stuff the Dublin people are asked to burn.¹¹⁹

While Blowick didn't stretch to lay blame with the government for the bad weather, Fine Gael's spokesman for external affairs and future Taoiseach, John A. Costello, didn't hold back:

We have as many jokes now in this country about wet turf as there used to be about Ford cars...we have heard of the man who had been in a collision and said he was nearly drowned because he had run into a lorry load of turf. The country is full of such jokes about turf. But it is no joking matter to the people who have to use it in its sodden condition, and that is all due to the Minister and to Fuel Importers Limited.¹²⁰

More turf jokes are captured in Figure 6.7, a caricature of Bord na Móna's officers as from the June 1947 edition of *Dublin Opinion*.

¹¹⁹ DD, Mr Blowick, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Col. 1623.

¹²⁰ DD, Mr Costello, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Col. 1527.

Figure 6.7 The office of Bord na Móna as depicted in *Dublin Opinion*, June 1947



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, June 1947

The *Irish Independent* delivered a more balanced appraisal of the handling of the crisis pointing out that:

The government cannot be blamed for the abnormal weather, or for the collapse of the British mining industry. What the government must be held responsible for is the utter inactivity shown during the past month.¹²¹

The fuel famine of 1947 crystallised the inefficiencies of the fuel rationing system. Deputy Alfie Byrne noted how he had witnessed pregnant women queuing in the freezing cold for up to four hours just to get a sack of wet turf.¹²² At the same time Lemass readily admitted that the country was facing ‘a first class fuel crisis’ in domestic fuel and noted that congestion in the Phoenix Park’s dumps was a particular problem.¹²³ His admission that there was little to be done except hope for improved weather, caused particular disquiet. With supplies of fuel at an all time low, Dublin’s bellmen were reportedly absent from their rounds.¹²⁴ Why didn’t the government use the army to clear snowbound roads, relieve the congestion in the fuel dumps, transport turf from the turf to the non-turf area, and then distribute it within the non-turf area? The fuel rationing system also had a glaring flaw, one which the Irish Housewives Association pointed out to Lemass during the midst of the crisis. When registering with a fuel merchant, consumers weren’t required to produce documentation. As the IHA explained, it was left ‘more or less to the conscience of the people not to register with more than one merchant.’¹²⁵ While Lemass argued that this wasn’t an issue as it was illegal to register with more than one fuel merchant, the system was clearly wide open to abuse. The fact that this problem was flagged by the IHA themselves, whose mission it was to voice the ‘grievances’ of ordinary women, implies that this was a credible concern.¹²⁶

¹²¹ *Irish Independent*, 25 Feb. 1947.

¹²² DD, Mr Byrne, 12 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 6, Cols 943-4.

¹²³ DD, Mr Lemass, 12 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 6, Cols 948-51.

¹²⁴ *Connacht Sentinel*, 22 Feb. 1947.

¹²⁵ Irish Housewives’ Committee, fifth annual report, June 1947, p. 4.

¹²⁶ Irish Housewives’ Committee, first annual report, June 1943, p. 1.

In light of the fuel shortage a strong case was made for the opening of Dublin's municipal kitchens (known as the Cooked Meals Service) for communal feeding purposes (see Chapter II). Although the city's communal feeding infrastructure was formed in late 1941, the scheme wasn't put into action. James Hurson, Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health cited 'moral reasons' and government policy which aimed at interfering as little as possible with family life. But Hurson also added that the government would sanction communal supply of food 'under the compulsion of very exceptional circumstances such as a more drastic curtailment of fuel supplies'.¹²⁷ Surely the fuel scarcity and abnormally cold weather that prevailed in early 1947 constituted such 'exceptional circumstances'. Families in Dublin normally severed by bellmen were without fuel; independent deputy Alfie Byrne reported witnessing a woman in a tenement area who was normally dependant of turf cross the street to another dwelling in order to use the gas-ring there.¹²⁸ These problems were widespread but whether or not the authorities were in a position to implement the Cooked Meals Service is another matter altogether. Shortly after the Catholic Social Service Conference initiated its communal feeding scheme, Dublin Corporation supplied the CSSC with both turf and electric boilers.¹²⁹ It stands to reason that this equipment was sourced from the corporation's idle Cooked Meals Service.

In Dublin and throughout the country the weather and fuel scarcity reduced standards of domestic comfort to critically low ebb. The mortality rate in Dublin was said to have doubled with most deaths occurring among aged poor people.¹³⁰ The Irish Housewives Association certainly felt that the conditions that presented themselves in early 1947 warranted action by the authorities. They sent letters to government

¹²⁷ James Hurson, School meals, 19 Jan. 1942 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/256, p. 1).

¹²⁸ DD, Mr Byrne, 12 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 6, Col. 945.

¹²⁹ CSSC, Departmental reports, food, 1942-43 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292, p. 2).

¹³⁰ *Irish Times*, 19 Feb. 1947.

advocating the use of the municipal kitchens to feed the young and the poor and in mid February the Lord Mayor, John McCann, received an IHA deputation at the Mansion House to discuss the matter. McCann argued that there was ‘little demand for cooked meals’ and he also pointed out the existence of the voluntary schemes run by the St John’s Ambulance Brigade and the Catholic Social Services Conference which were in receipt of corporation funding.¹³¹ Dublin Corporation actually requested the CSSC to increase output at its food centres and according to the CSSC’s annual report for 1946-47, the food centres were able to cope with the increased demand without reaching full capacity.¹³² The IHA’s deputation did not agree citing investigations conducted by the association in ‘various crowded districts’ which were found to lack facilities for cooking; Crumlin was one such area where there existed demand for additional communal dining facilities.¹³³ The deputation also maintained that communal feeding should not depend on voluntary organisations, an opinion which was at odds with that of the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid.¹³⁴ Ironically, the SJA’s mobile canteen donated to the International Red Cross in January 1946 for the relief of distress in Europe would have proved useful during the ‘battle for the harvest’ and the ‘big freeze’.

Butter rationing

The ‘big freeze’ significantly impacted Irish agriculture which in turn had consequences for the food supply. Butter rationing is a case in point. Milk production fell in 1946, due to limited supplies of fodder which in turn impacted butter production; this was a product of the world grain shortage and the increased extraction rate. The domestic butter ration was thus reduced from six to four ounces from 1 February 1947;

¹³¹ Irish Housewives’ Committee, fifth annual report, June 1947, p. 4.

¹³² CSSC, Annual general report, 1946-47 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/292, p. 2).

¹³³ Irish Housewives’ Committee, fifth annual report, June 1947, p. 4; DD, Mr Childers, 13 Mar. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 15, Col. 2039.

¹³⁴ Irish Housewives’ Committee, fifth annual report, June 1947, p. 4.

a supplementary margarine ration of two ounces was also made available for domestic consumers.¹³⁵ The big freeze further limited the supply. Farmers lost large numbers of cattle (and livestock in general) during January to March 1947 with the cattle population decreasing by approximately 200,000 that year, an almost five percent reduction on its 1946 level.¹³⁶ Creamery butter production therefore fell considerably. On 8 March 1947 the domestic butter ration was fixed at two ounces per person per week while the margarine ration was increased to four ounces.¹³⁷ Prior to February 1947, the butter ration had never been permitted to fall below the six ounce mark. On 13 March 1947, Senator Patrick Baxter declared:

No decision taken by the government since war was declared has caused a greater upset in the homes of the people than its decision to reduce the butter ration.¹³⁸

Professor William Fearon, (the Trinity College Dublin based biochemist and senator for the University of Dublin) also voiced his opposition citing nutritional considerations.¹³⁹ Butter constituted an important source of dietary fat, especially for the poorer classes who were unable to afford meat. The restriction of fat intake - a key component in the human diet which adds satiety and provides flavour to food – at a time of intense cold would have increased the feeling of hunger and negatively impacted public health. The Butter ration did not again reach the six ounce level until 30 October 1948.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ *Irish Times*, 18 Jan. 1947.

¹³⁶ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 189.

¹³⁷ *Irish Press*, 22 Feb. 1947.

¹³⁸ SD, Mr Baxter, 13 Mar. 1947, Vol. 33, No. 13, Col. 1101.

¹³⁹ SD, Mr Fearon, 13 Mar. 1947, Vol. 33, No. 13, Cols 1135-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Irish Times*, 25 Oct. 1948.

Figure 6.8 *Dublin Opinion* making light of the butter shortage by showing a man cutting turf in the hope of finding a keg of bog butter

The tillage battle

Of concern following the improvement of the weather in mid to late March 1947 was the extent to which the agricultural sowing season had been delayed. On 19 March 1947, the Minister for Agriculture, Patrick Smith announced that:



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Jan. 1948, p. 371

There is, roughly, somewhat in excess of 2,000,000 acres of land to be ploughed if we are to reach the tillage achievement of last year.¹⁴¹

As illustrated earlier in the chapter, wheat supplies for the last quarter of the 1947 cereal year were uncertain with the deficit estimated at 150,000 tons. The ambiguity surrounding grain imports heightened the sense of insecurity. James Hughes, Fine Gael deputy for Carlow-Kildare stated that ‘the gravity of our current position is without parallel’ and that ‘faith, courage and determination’ would be needed to face up to it.¹⁴²

There was widespread talk of possible famine and letters from America to the *Connacht Sentinel* asked if ‘Black 47’ was going to be repeated.¹⁴³ According to Hughes approximately 75,000 acres of wheat had been sown as of 19 March 1947.¹⁴⁴ This figure amounted to just eleven and half percent of the total acreage sown for 1946 whereas in a normal year the majority of the crop would have been in by mid March.¹⁴⁵

The *Irish Press* noted:

¹⁴¹ DD, Mr Smith, 19 Mar. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 17, Col. 2397.

¹⁴² DD, Mr Hughes, 19 Mar. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 17, Col. 2408.

¹⁴³ *Connacht Sentinel*, 15 Apr. 1947.

¹⁴⁴ DD, Mr Hughes, 19 Mar. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 17, Col. 2411.

¹⁴⁵ Figure calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from: *ITJSB* (1947), p. 189.

The security of the country now lies where it has lain during all the Emergency years – in the hands of the ploughman.¹⁴⁶

Farmers were generously supplied with fuel and tractors were fitted with headlamps to aid around-the-clock ploughing. Just as there had been a ‘battle for the harvest’ in 1946, the farmers were called to arms once again in the ‘tillage campaign’. In the April 1947 edition of *Dublin Opinion*, this battle was represented by two grappling figures, one being the farmer and the other the weather, also note the headlamps displayed on the tractor (see Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9 A portrayal of a farmer wrestling the weather in *Dublin Opinion*, 1947



Source: *Dublin Opinion*, Apr. 1947

The farmers made progress fast; within a month somewhere in the region of 350,000 acres had been sown with wheat.¹⁴⁷ In total, 579,646 acres of wheat were sown, just ten

¹⁴⁶ *Irish Press*, 20 Mar. 1947.

percent less than the previous year.¹⁴⁸ 1947s wheat yield however of 313,000 tons was approximately thirty-two percent less than the previous years and forty-five percent less than that attained in 1945.¹⁴⁹ By the time of the harvest however, the anxiety had eased. Cargoes of wheat allocated by the International Emergency Food Council began to arrive in Ireland in June 1947.¹⁵⁰ While bread rationing was maintained into 1948, foreign wheat was available to make up the deficit in domestic supplies.

Table 6.2 Ireland's extent and estimated yield of wheat, 1945-47

Year	1945	1946	1947
Total area (acres)	662,498	642,595	579,646
Total Yield	573,100	462,700	313,000

Table compiled by Ciarán Bryan using data from the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin*, 1945-47

After the arrival of the thaw in mid March 1947, Britain's coal position began to improve. The warmer temperatures not only melted the snow and ice but also lessened the demand for gas and electricity which reduced the consumption of coal at the gasworks and power stations. This easing of the fuel position allowed the Ministry of Fuel to loosen the belt a little and the ministry even felt able to agree to the export of coal.¹⁵¹ On the night of 8 April 1947 it was announced that Britain would grant Ireland a weekly allocation of 11,000 tons of coal and 500 tons of coke. While the new ration was far from satisfactory – 25,000 tons of coal was received weekly during 1946 while some 50,000 tons of high quality coal used each week in Ireland prior to the war – it was enough to maintain the essential industries and utilities.¹⁵² For over two months Ireland had been starved of coal. A critical breakdown of the coal dependant industries and

¹⁴⁷ DD, Mr Smith, 22 Apr. 1947, Vol. 105, No. 8, Col. 1005.

¹⁴⁸ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 189.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28; Figures calculated by Ciarán Bryan using data from: *ITJSB* (1947), p. 189.

¹⁵⁰ *Irish Times*, 7 Jun. 1947.

¹⁵¹ Robertson, *The bleak midwinter*, p. 125.

¹⁵² *Irish Independent*, 9 Apr. 1947.

utilities was just around the corner. It was reported that for Dublin Gas Company the supplies came at almost the last minute.¹⁵³

In June 1947 imports of higher quality coal from the US began to arrive in Ireland; some 500,000 tons were reportedly received by 11 September 1947.¹⁵⁴ The improved coal supplies were a great boon to industry and allowed the government to establish a national reserve at depots in Dublin and Cork. The US's coal did not come cheap and the shipping costs added to the expense. Almost \$20,000,000 was spent on US coal in 1947.¹⁵⁵ In light of the convertibility crisis, this draw on the Sterling Area's dollar pool was not looked upon favourably by the British government.¹⁵⁶ During trade talks held in late 1947, the Irish government was encouraged to limit its dollar spending in return for trade inducements, but as a memorandum on the trade talks dated 19 September 1947 noted:

Any vague or indefinite assurances regarding supplies, etc., from the British side would not be enough. Experience shows that they have not been helpful in the past, nor have fulfilled undertakings.¹⁵⁷

Lessons had been learnt from the breakdown in trade between Britain and Ireland during the early years of the Emergency, 'gentlemen's agreements' could not be relied upon. As the Irish government became assured of its coal position for 1948, the controls around coal were relaxed. On 1 October 1947 a half ton coal was put on the domestic ration in the non-turf area.¹⁵⁸ In view of the improved supply position, the controls

¹⁵³ *Irish Times*, 9 Apr. 1947.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11 Sept. 1947.

¹⁵⁵ 'Discussion with Éire ministers', 19 Sept. 1947 in Catriona Crowe, Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh, Eunan O'Halpin (eds), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, volume VIII, 1945-1948* (Dublin, 2012), p. 467.

¹⁵⁶ Bernadette Whelan, 'Ireland and the Marshall Plan, 1947-57' in *History Ireland*, xvi, no. 3 (2008), p. 30.

¹⁵⁷ Notes of discussion with the Taoiseach and Ministers, 19 Sept. 1947 (NAI, DT S14134D).

¹⁵⁸ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 114.

relating to the distribution and price of coal for retail sale were completely removed from 1 January 1948.¹⁵⁹

On 13 March 1947, several days before the thaw began, and almost a month prior to resumption of British coal deliveries, Lemass declared ‘this is a crisis year.’¹⁶⁰ Indeed, the country’s economic position looked bleak and the experience of fuel scarcity during the ‘big freeze’ lent urgency to the question of fuel provision and distribution for the coming year. On 9 April 1947, a conference of county engineers attended by the Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera and the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Seán MacEntee, was held in the Customs House to discuss turf production. The position was grave; turf reserves throughout the country had been severely depleted; Britain’s coal allocation could not be taken for granted and owing to the bad weather and the necessity to concentrate on the tillage drive the turf cutting season was delayed by about two months. The need for increased production by the county councils and private producers was stressed. Fuel Importers Éire’s requirements for 1947 were set at 612,500 tons, a figure that was seventy-five percent greater than that attained in 1946.¹⁶¹ Labour problems in the turf cutting industry persisted. Morale among the county council workers was low, and many had been lured away by private producers with offers of bread and sugar rations. By May 1947 turf production was running at one-third its May 1946 rate, but in the end, the local authorities produced 420,000 tons, just 10,000 tons less the total for 1946.¹⁶²

Turf rationing

During the midst of the big freeze Richard Mulcahy accused Fianna Fáil of suffering from turf fanaticism, arguing that nothing was done in regard to coal in 1946

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp 165-6.

¹⁶⁰ DD, Mr Lemass, 13 Mar. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 15, Col. 2079.

¹⁶¹ MacEntee, Speech to the county engineers, 9 Apr. 1947, p. 3.

¹⁶² Daly, *The buffer state*, pp 269-70.

because Lemass was himself a ‘turf fanatic’.¹⁶³ The case can be made that Ireland’s coal stocks were mismanaged during 1946 when weekly deliveries averaged 5,000 tons above the ration.¹⁶⁴ Córas Iompair Éireann put on extra trains operating excursion trains right up until Christmas and supplies were also allocated to hotels and other institutions which facilitated tourists.¹⁶⁵ In spite of Fine Gael’s criticisms, without the massive expansion of turf cutting operations the country would have been in far worse state during the years of coal scarcity. The governments turf policy was for the most part a success, although the big freeze demonstrated its flaws. The mode of distribution was often identified as a factor which precipitated shortages. As discussed earlier, the fact that turf wasn’t put on the same basis as other rationed essentials, the procurement of which depended on the exchange of coupons, was indeed a critical oversight. From 1 October 1947 the fuel rationing scheme was altered making mandatory the surrender of coupons to obtain fuel (turf, coal and wood) in the non-turf area. A new fuel ration book was distributed to households for this purpose.¹⁶⁶ This development can be seen as acknowledgement of the former schemes inadequacies; it also demonstrates how lessons were learnt and is symptomatic of the grave view of the fuel position at that time.

From the end of the war into 1946, Ireland enjoyed improved levels of imports. At the same time, various controls introduced during the Emergency were relaxed; the future was looked forward too with optimism. This happy situation - as maintained by Mary Daly - proved to be ‘something of a false dawn’, a point which is underlined in this chapter.¹⁶⁷ This is best displayed in respect of grain imports which owing to the global cereals deficit were lower in 1946 than they had been in 1945. As argued by

¹⁶³ DD, Mr Mulcahy, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Col. 1516.

¹⁶⁴ Richard Mulcahy, Fuel crisis, 27 Feb. 1947 (UCDA, P7/C/103).

¹⁶⁵ DD, Mr Costello, 27 Feb. 1947, Vol. 104, No. 11, Col. 1534.

¹⁶⁶ *ITJSB* (1947), p. 114.

¹⁶⁷ Daly, *The first department*, p. 263.

Bryce Evans, Ireland during the war was at the mercy of geopolitical and economic currents; this was also demonstrated to be case during the post-war years especially in respect of wheat and coal.¹⁶⁸ The abnormal weather of 1946-47 impacted the nature of the supplies situation, but the government was not without blame. When murmurs of a potential fuel crisis were emanating from Britain, Ireland's fuel supplies were mismanaged. The reasoning behind continued rationing was multifaceted; it was understood to be about more than ensuring equitable distribution at home, it was also seen as Ireland's contribution to the relief of suffering in Europe. It had been hoped that the end of the war would bring about an end to rationing, but the reality of bread rationing (which at no point had been introduced during the war years), the austere butter ration, the fuel famine and the rising prices must have been a hard pill to swallow. The threat of the war spilling over into Ireland was gone, but the way the Emergency was experienced on a day to day basis by the average Irish person continued beyond the cessation of hostilities; in this sense it was business as usual. 1947 was a crisis year, the privation was acute which is evidenced by the infant and tuberculosis mortality rates which spiked in that year (see Figure 5.2). One can say with confidence that the hardships experience by the Irish population in early 1947 were worse than those faced at any time during the war, a sentiment which was regularly expressed by contemporaries of the period. Owing to the absence of censorship, mistakes made by the government in the post-war years were amplified and more freely discussed. The issue of continued austerity proved a handy stick with which to beat the government and was used as confirmation of the government's failings. The success of the social democratic republican party Clann na Poblachta in the 1948 general election can be viewed as a

¹⁶⁸ Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, p. 37.

popular expression of opposition to continued austerity and government control. The end of the war most certainly did not bring about an immediate return to normality.

Conclusion

By viewing the Emergency through the lens of food, rationing, and supplies, this thesis demonstrates the extent to which everyday life in Ireland during the years 1939-48 was affected by the Second World War and the socio-economic fallout from that conflict. It therefore stands in opposition to F.S.L. Lyons' contention that life in Emergency was akin to 'Plato's Cave', is distinct from the largely high-political histories which followed, and can be aligned with more complex narratives of the Emergency. Through the use of a bottom-up approach, public, medical, organisational, clerical, and governmental responses to shortages have been explored. By investigating the multifaceted relationships between various actors, and by demonstrating how privation fostered engagement, cooperation, and conflict, the complexity of the period has been illustrated.

As demonstrated in Chapter I, the nature of the supplies position and how it affected everyday life in Ireland was very much a product of the international geopolitical climate. The most striking example of this is the extent to which Ireland's supplies position began to deteriorate following the fall of France in June 1940. The impacts of this can be seen in Chapter II which explores the principal shortages and the Irish government's efforts to combat them and Chapters III and IV which demonstrate the growth of poverty in Ireland and the various responses this elicited. In relation to imported supplies, the Emergency exhibited the extent to which Ireland was at the mercy of Britain, but it also showed how Britain's difficulty was Ireland's difficulty. Decisions were taken at the highest level of the British government to wage covert economic war against Ireland in an attempt to bring it into the war. Diplomatic motives however, were not the only factors at play; the wartime geopolitical environment was a complex one. The fall of France left Britain reeling; militarily it was a disaster and it

was a severe blow to morale; it was also of significant economic consequence. Britain lost access to European markets and for various reasons discussed in Chapter I, the shipping situation became acute. These issues should be taken into account when assessing Britain's wartime trading relationship with Ireland. At the same time, the Irish government exhibited a lack of foresight and failed to read the implications of the international situation. The Munich Agreement of 1938 led some to believe that war could be avoided. Even those who expected war thought it would remain distant from Ireland and would be concluded quickly. Informed by the experience of the First World War, it was also thought that Irish agricultural produce would be vital to Britain's war effort. These misinterpretations led the government to take a complacent attitude towards the stockpiling of supplies; this was a critical failure. In *The taste of war* (London, 2011), Lizze Collingham illustrates how during the Second World War questions of food production and distribution became issues of strategic significance for the belligerents. This was also the case for neutral Ireland.

Due to shortages, the cost-of-living increased by approximately seventy percent and as wages were not permitted to increase at a comparable rate there was an appreciable decrease in the standard of living experienced throughout the country. For some, the level of comfort was reduced to a critically low ebb. A 'new poor' or what one might term an 'Emergency poor' was created among fixed low-income families and those employed in industries that were susceptible to shortages. The long-term unemployed and underemployed were plunged even deeper into poverty. Personal savings were eroded, possessions pawned, mobility reduced, and choice limited. The experience of everyday life in Ireland however was not a uniform one. Worst affected were the urban poor – concentrated in Dublin – and the rural landless labouring classes. For these sections of the community, austerity was exacerbated by inequitable

distribution of supplies and the government's failure to institute a coherent rationing system from an early stage in the Emergency. At the same time, the experience of rationing in Ireland showed that there were severe limitations to the effectiveness of rationing in an agricultural country. Britain relied heavily on imported foodstuffs thus greater control could be effected at the point of entry, the ports. Domestic agricultural produce on the other hand was harder to manage; crops produced on smallholdings by farmers resistant to government control even more so. Although often flawed, the government's rationing schemes maintained the country through the war and post-war years with the shortage and increased price of foodstuffs never so critical as to threaten the wellbeing of the majority of the population. The fuel shortage on the other hand was much more severe. Transport was curtailed throughout the country, and in urban areas home cooking and heating became particularly difficult. Fortunately Ireland possessed a domestic turf supply which was used as a substitute for coal; this took the edge of Britain's trade squeeze.

For necessitous families, the inability of rationing mechanisms to keep prices down exacerbated food, fuel and clothing poverty. This heightened the importance of welfare provided by both the government and voluntary organisations. Examination of these schemes reveals how the socio-economic impacts of the Emergency affected some of the most vulnerable members of Irish society. Voucher and food welfare schemes existed in Ireland prior to the war, but these were greatly expanded from early 1941. These new and improved welfare schemes went some way to making up for the inadequacies of the rationing system by providing the needy with supplies they desperately required. Enacted in response to Emergency conditions, these supply specific welfare schemes may be compared to Britain's 'special rations' introduced for certain classes of consumer such as expectant mothers and young children. For

proponents of Catholic Action, the provision of food as welfare meant it assumed moral significance. In contrast, non-denominational interests felt it was a concern that was too important to be left to philanthropy. While fuel was less emotive, this thesis shows how food had the potential to unite and divide opinion. It emerged as an ideological battleground within neutral Ireland and one that offers insights into the relationships between the church, state, and various interested parties. This is particularly true of the debate on communal feeding. In Britain, communal kitchens formed a key part of the state's rationing framework. In Ireland communal feeding was left to charitable endeavour. This was most cost-effective for the government, but the evidence suggests that a government operated scheme less associated with pauperism would have been more popular. At the same time, the debate on communal feeding is revealing of the contradictions in government policy. The government preached economy but would not sanction communal feeding on moral grounds but enacted a food voucher system that precluded the liberty of choice for its recipients. This is demonstrative of the government's willingness to evoke Catholic social principles as it suited.

During the Emergency, the Irish government applied rationing and price control mechanisms to various commodities in an attempt to ensure equitable distribution and prevent inflation. In spite of this, prices increased putting many goods – even rationed ones – beyond the means of those on meagre incomes. Poverty thus increased in Ireland, especially in Dublin. This necessitated a response. In the capital, the newly-established Catholic Social Service Conference, a voluntary organisation, stepped in to fill the void. Created first and foremost in response to Emergency conditions, it is clear that the desire to stem secular influences in welfare and the spread of communism were also motives. The CSSC's biggest contribution was in the areas of communal feeding and clothing provision, fields suited to the skill set of its volunteers and voluntarism in

general. This was the CSSC's biggest asset, its ability to call on volunteers from every Catholic parish and voluntary subscriptions, both financial and material. The willingness of the volunteers in organisations like the CSSC and the St John Ambulance Brigade to make sacrifices by engaging in philanthropic endeavour, or 'stepping together' for the betterment of the community offers a different narrative to that of compulsion, opposition, and the black market as outlined in Chapter II. In spite of its voluntary ethos, the CSSC was efficient and highly organised. Its establishment and rapid success is remarkable considering it was composed of approximately forty Catholic charities and organisations which were traditionally fiercely independent. The CSSC's approach was underpinned by the ideology of Catholic Action and was informed by Catholic social teachings. This was borne out in the way it delivered its aid such as through the provision of take-home meals. The CSSC was very much a Catholic response to rationing and shortages. The aid provided by the CSSC was also effective. When formulating the menus for the food centres, dieticians were consulted. This relatively novel approach ensured the meals were of the maximum nutritional benefit and as such they were a massive boost in the largely deficient diets of Dublin's poor that relied on them. Instruction in nutrition was also provided and in this respect the aid provided by the CSSC was in advance of the state. The CSSC provided a vital service in Dublin the existence of which relieved the state of the responsibility.

In comparison with other countries, Ireland's pre-war engagement with the subject of nutrition was limited, but as demonstrated in Chapter V, the Emergency changed this. Ireland's food rationing and price control schemes – unlike Britain's – demonstrated little awareness for the principles of human nutrition. The availability of 'protective foodstuffs' in Ireland were cited by the government as reasons as to why no Irish person should suffer from malnutrition, but just because these foods were available

didn't mean they were affordable. For the poorer classes, the Emergency was more apparent than the richer classes. Rising prices restricted budgets which reduced dietary intake. This increased the prevalence of the 'bread and spread' culture. In the absence of adequate 'special rations' or a more widespread and amenable communal kitchen network such as that which existed in Britain, malnutrition increased. Medical professionals, social workers and politicians all referred to its growth, the hardest evidence for which lies in the increased rates of infant and tuberculosis mortality which are both now known to be associated with malnutrition. At the time this link was not so certain, and although it was increasingly made the government was loath to acknowledge that a section of the population were malnourished. Yet nutritional concerns prompted the development of philanthropic communal kitchens and led to demand for greater state involvement in the area. The virtues of proper nutrition were also increasingly extolled. The increased prevalence of TB, a black spot on the nation's health was a significant factor in the growing awareness of the connection between poor nutrition and illness. During the Emergency TB became Ireland's most pressing health concern and as it became politicised it became news, and as a result nutrition became news. As pressure mounted on the government to tackle TB it was forced to address the issue of nutrition. The appointment in 1944 of James Deeny, the socially conscious doctor with an interest in nutrition to the position of Chief Medical Adviser to the Department of Local Government and Public Health and the carrying out of the National Nutrition Survey between 1946 and 1948 is indicative of a growing appreciation within government for the importance of human nutrition. Although borne out privation, the way in which the Emergency stimulated a new way of thinking – Ireland's nutritional discourse – was very much a positive development.

By extending the analysis of rationing from the end of the war to 1948 or to the ‘Long Emergency’, this thesis confirms the hypothesis that the Emergency, although concluded diplomatically and militarily, actually continued in a popular sense. What emerges from this thesis, especially when comparing Chapter II on wartime rationing and Chapter VI on post-war rationing, is the extent to which post-war rationing was actually more severe. The best example of this was the introduction of bread rationing in January 1947, a hardship which was a no point previously inflicted upon the Irish population. Add to this the fuel famine of early 1947 which almost brought the country to a standstill along with the austere butter ration introduced in March 1947 and the scale of the deterioration is evident. It is true that these shortages had much to do with abnormal climatic conditions experienced both nationally and internationally between 1946 and 1947; droughts caused crop failures throughout the world; Ireland experienced one of the wettest Augusts in living memory which threatened the harvest; this was followed by the ‘Big Freeze’, one of the coldest winters in living memory which delayed the sowing season and was followed by some of the worst flooding in living memory. However the consequences of these climatic conditions were exacerbated by the dislocated nature of the post-war global economy. As was the case during the war, Ireland continued to be at the mercy of global geopolitical and economic currents. This prevented Ireland from securing imports of grain and fuel to make up for domestic shortages. The way in which the Emergency was experienced on a day to day basis therefore persisted beyond the conclusion of the war and in 1947 it intensified. The first six months of the year – characterised by fuel and food poverty – was a time of crisis without parallel. This sentiment was frequently expressed by contemporaries of the period. For a time the supplies position was extremely uncertain. With no guarantee of imports in the immediate future there were murmurs of Black 47 repeating itself, but in

the latter part of the year the supplies position improved as imports of wheat and coal were resumed. Just as neutrality was not synonymous with a peacetime existence, the post-war world was not synonymous with pre-war 'normality'. Indeed, the Emergency was long. While food and petrol rationing was maintained until 1952, the position in early 1948 was considerably improved, the Emergency had passed.

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