

# **The role of women in 1916**



**MARY MULDOWNEY**

**CONGRESS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE  
2016**

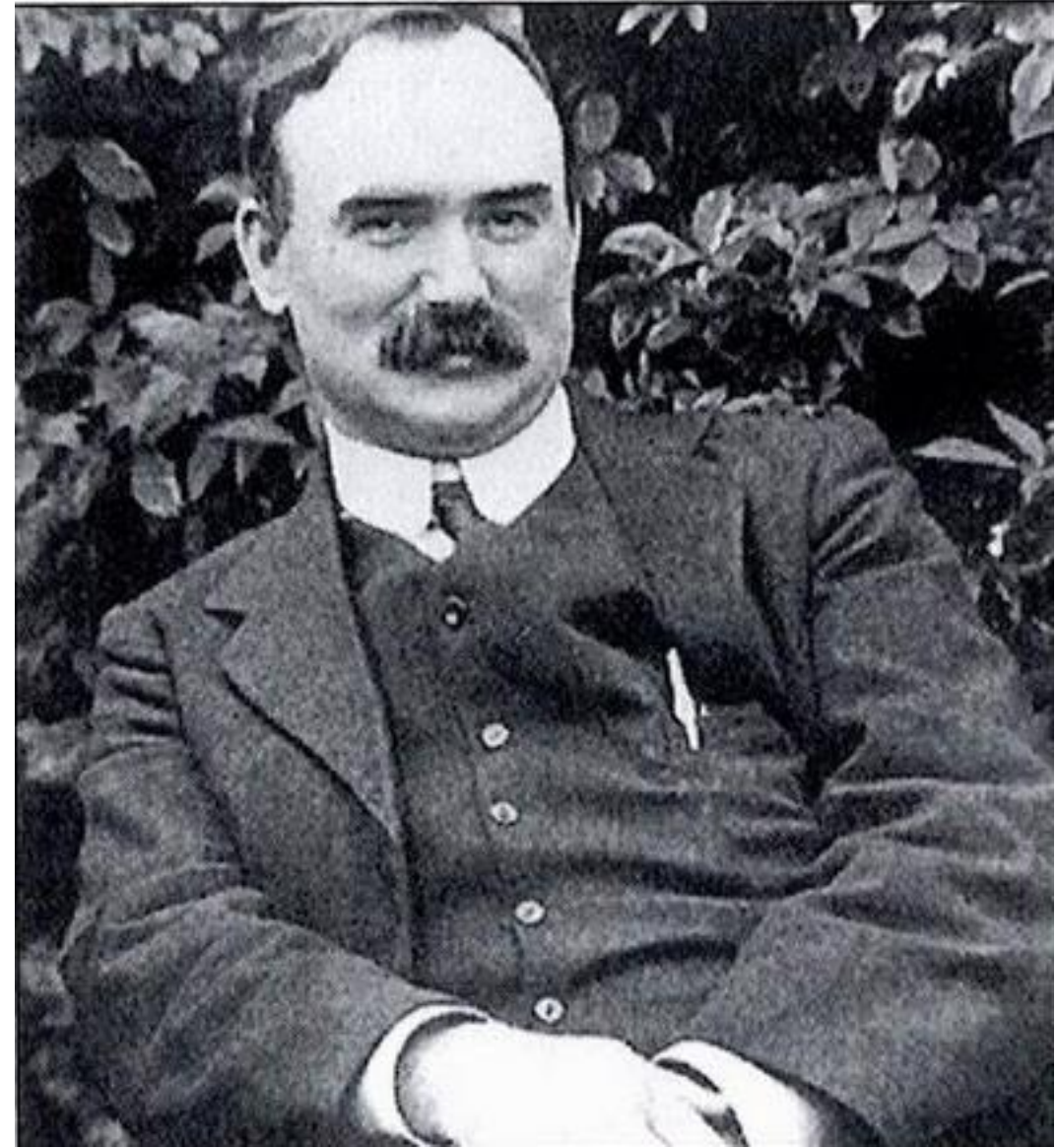
The singer sings a rebel song and everyone sings along.  
Just one thing I'll never understand:  
Every damn rebel seems to be a man.  
For he sings of the Bold Fenian Men and  
the Boys of the Old Brigade.  
What about the women who stood there too  
When history was made....?  
Ireland, Mother Ireland, with your freedom loving sons,  
did your daughters run and hide at the sound of guns?  
Or did they have some part in the fight  
and why does everybody try to keep them out of sight?  
For they sing of the Men of the West and the Boys of Wexford too.  
Were there no women living round those parts?  
Tell me, what did they do...?

Brian Moore, *Invisible Women*



[There are] none so fitted to break the chains as they who wear them, none so well equipped to decide what is a fetter. In its arch towards freedom, the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of those women who, feeling on their souls and bodies the fetters of the ages, have arisen to strike them off, and cheer all the louder if in its hatred of thralldom and passion for freedom the women's army forges ahead of the militant army of labour.

James Connolly, *Forward*, 23 August 1913





Kathleen Lynn (1874 – 1955)



Louie Bennett (1870-1956)



Delia Larkin (1878 – 1949)



Constance Markievicz (1868-1927)



Hannah Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946)



Helena Moloney (1884-1967)





Ulster Volunteer Force, 1914



Irish Volunteers training, 1914



Cumann na mBan, 1916



Irish Citizen  
Army, 1916

# Inghinidhe na hEireann

## IRISH GIRLS

Ireland has need of the loving service of all her children. Irishwomen do not sufficiently realise the power they have to help or hinder the cause of Ireland's freedom.

If they did we should not see the sad sight of Irish girls walking through the streets with men wearing the uniform of Ireland's oppressor.

...

Women's influence is strong. Let us see, fellow-countrywomen, that we use it to the fullest for the Glory of God, and for the honour and Freedom of Ireland.

Inghinidhe na hEireann are very anxious to get the co-operation of any girl who reads this handbill and feels she should like to help in working for Ireland's freedom and trying to save innocent country girls from the great danger which their thoughtless association with soldiers exposes them to. The Secretaries are always to be seen on Thursday evenings between 8 and 10 'clock at 12 North Great George's Street, Dublin.



FOR THE GLORY OF IRELAND



WILL YOU GO OR MUST I?

WILL YOU ANSWER THE CALL?

**NOW  
IS THE TIME,**



**AND THE PLACE IS THE  
NEAREST RECRUITING OFFICE**

*Have You any  
women-folk worth  
defending?*



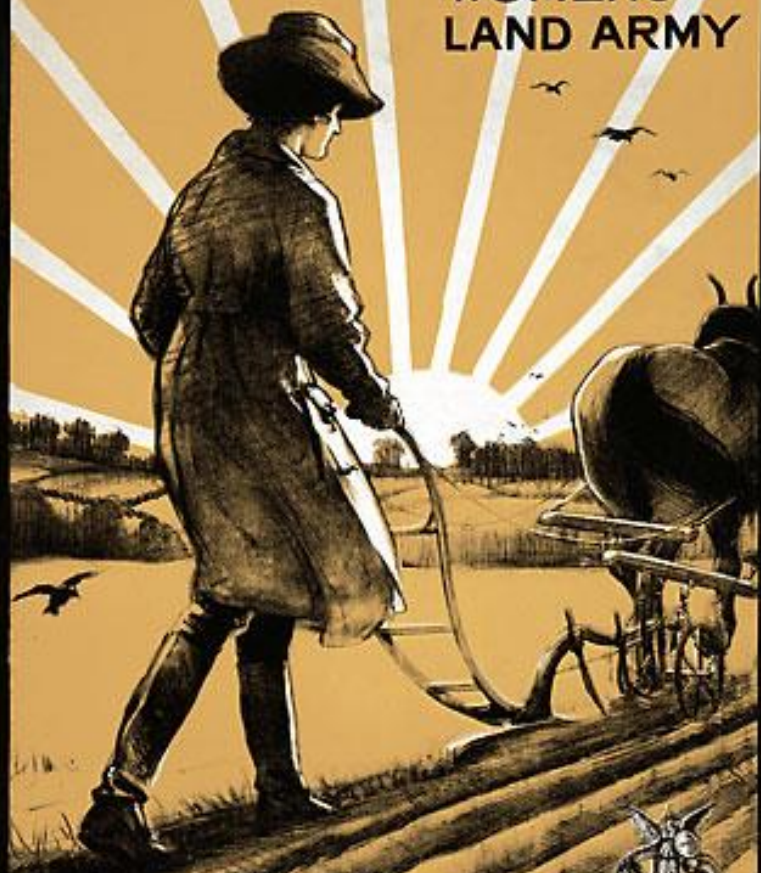
*Remember  
the Women of  
Belgium*

**JOIN TO-DAY**



# NATIONAL SERVICE

## WOMEN'S LAND ARMY



GOD SPEED THE PLOUGH  
AND THE WOMAN WHO DRIVES IT

APPLY FOR ENROLMENT FORMS AT YOUR NEAREST POST OFFICE OR  
EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE

# THESE WOMEN ARE DOING THEIR BIT



# LEARN TO MAKE MUNITIONS

# QUEEN MARY'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS.



WE'RE LOOKING  
TO **YOU**  
TO JOIN OUR  
CIRCLE!

# ENROL TO-DAY

FULL PARTICULARS AND FORMS OF  
APPLICATION FROM THE NEAREST  
EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE.

ASK AT POST OFFICE FOR ADDRESS.



# Munitions of War Act, 1915.

[5 & 6 GEO. 5. CH. 54.]

## ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS.

A.D. 1915.

### PART I.

#### Section.

1. Settlement of labour differences.
2. Prohibition of lock-outs and strikes in certain cases.
3. Differences to which Part I. applies.

### PART II.

4. Controlled establishments.
5. Supplementary provisions as to the limitation of the profits of a controlled establishment.
6. Voluntary undertaking to work for Minister of Munitions.
7. Prohibition of the employment of persons who have left work in munition factories.
8. Rules as to badges.
9. Application of Part II. to docks used by Admiralty.

### PART III.

10. Amendment of the Defence of the Realm (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1915.
11. Power to require information from employers.
12. Punishment for false statements, &c.
13. Payment of members of arbitration and munitions tribunals, &c.
14. Penalties.
15. Munitions tribunals.
16. Power for companies to carry on munitions work.
17. Rules to be laid before Parliament.
18. Application of Documentary Evidence Acts to Ministry of Munitions.
19. Interpretation.
20. Short title and duration.

#### SCHEDULES.

[Price 2d.]

A





## A black and white photograph of a group of women in early 20th-century attire standing on a cobblestone street. They are holding large Union Jack flags. In the background, a building with the words "ROYAL BANK" is visible. A man in a military uniform stands on the right side of the group.

# **NEW SCALE OF SEPARATION ALLOWANCES**

## **For SOLDIERS' WIVES AND CHILDREN**

**FROM MARCH** Old Separation Allowances paid by the Government to the wives and children of soldiers have been increased so that the total weekly payment to the family, if the soldier makes the usual allowance from his pay, is as follows:

Wife	=	per week	£28	=	15/-
Wife and 1 Child	=	per week	£79	=	20/-
Wife and 2 Children	=	per week	£11	=	23/-6
Wife and 3 Children	=	per week	£13	=	25/-6

and in all cases an addition of £1 for each additional child.

**Each Motherless Child = 5/-**

From February 1st, 1918, Separation Allowance is payable for all children up to the age of 15 years.

## **ALLOWANCES FOR OTHER DEPENDENTS**

If an unmarried soldier has supported a dependent or dependents he is claimable provided such widow or widower (or support) her/his Government and help during the war by making a grant of Separation Allowance provided he will contribute part of his pay.

The maximum rate of allowance is a dependent wife, or a child, or the next of kin, or a son, or a daughter, who the soldier supported more than one dependent the maximum amount will be £1 a week, and for two dependents the maximum will be £2 a week, or above of the following amounts:

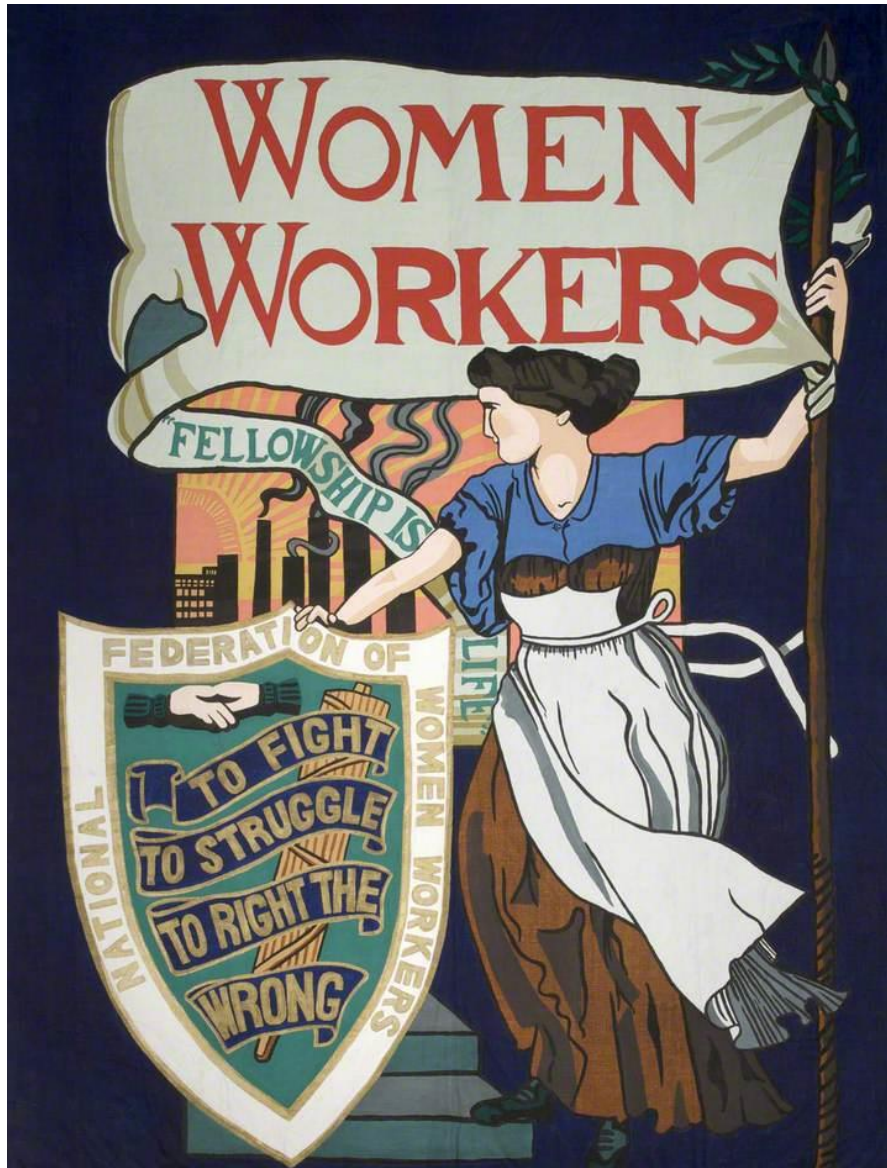
If a soldier supported his mother only,	the weekly maximum allowance will be	£19
" " " " his father and mother	" " "	£27
" " " " his mother and 2 brothers or sisters	" " "	£27

**FURTHER PARTICULARS CAN BE OBTAINED AT ANY POST OFFICE OR RECRUITING OFFICE**

# **ENLIST TO-DAY**

**AND YOUR DEPENDENTS WILL BE WELL PROVIDED FOR**





The great majority of the workers were girls. The wage for women workers was 15 shillings a week when many employers in Dublin were paying only 6 shillings a week. In the factory in Dublin there was a canteen which served wholesome food which many of the working girls were not accustomed to. The ladies' committee presiding over the canteen was chaired by the Marchioness of Waterford.

*Weekly Irish Times* 11 March 1916



1. The first and last principle of the Irish Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland.
2. That the Irish Citizen Army shall stand for absolute unity of Irish nationhood, and shall support the rights and liberties of the democracies of all nations.
3. That one of its objectives shall be to sink all difference of birth, property and creed under the name of the common Irish people.
4. That the Irish Citizens Army shall be open to all who accept the principle of equal rights and opportunities for the Irish people.
5. Before being enrolled, every applicant must be, if eligible, a member of his/her trade union, such a trade union to be recognised by the Irish Trades Union Congress.

Principal Object – ‘to arm and train all Irishmen capable of bearing arms to enforce and defend its first principle’.





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DEFENCE FORCES IRELAND



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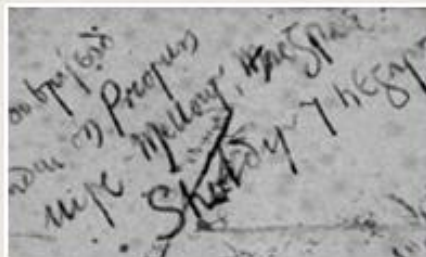


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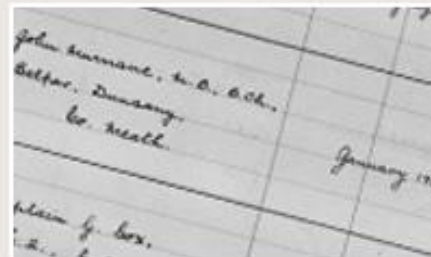
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The only thing left that was not smashed beyond repair was the workers' spirit, and lucky they were to have a man of Connolly's stature to lead them.

The ideal of National as well as Social freedom, which he held up to them, gave them a spiritual uplift from the material disaster and defeat they had just suffered [in the 1913 Lockout]. Eventually they all fought in the Rebellion, and, as far as I know, not one of them is a penny the better for her part in either fight. They served their country without desire or hope of gain or reward. In such a manner is the real aristocracy of a country born.

Helena Moloney, Witness Statement 391, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1950



Helena Moloney in the 1940s



A Citizen Army can only be formed from a class-conscious community of workers, and the Irish workers still slumbered on in the dark shade of unawakened thought. ...

Sean O'Casey, *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*.

The old lingering tradition of the social inferiority of what were called the unskilled workers prompted the socially superior tradesmen to shy at an organisation which was entirely officered by men whom they thought to be socially inferior to themselves.

O'Casey, *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*

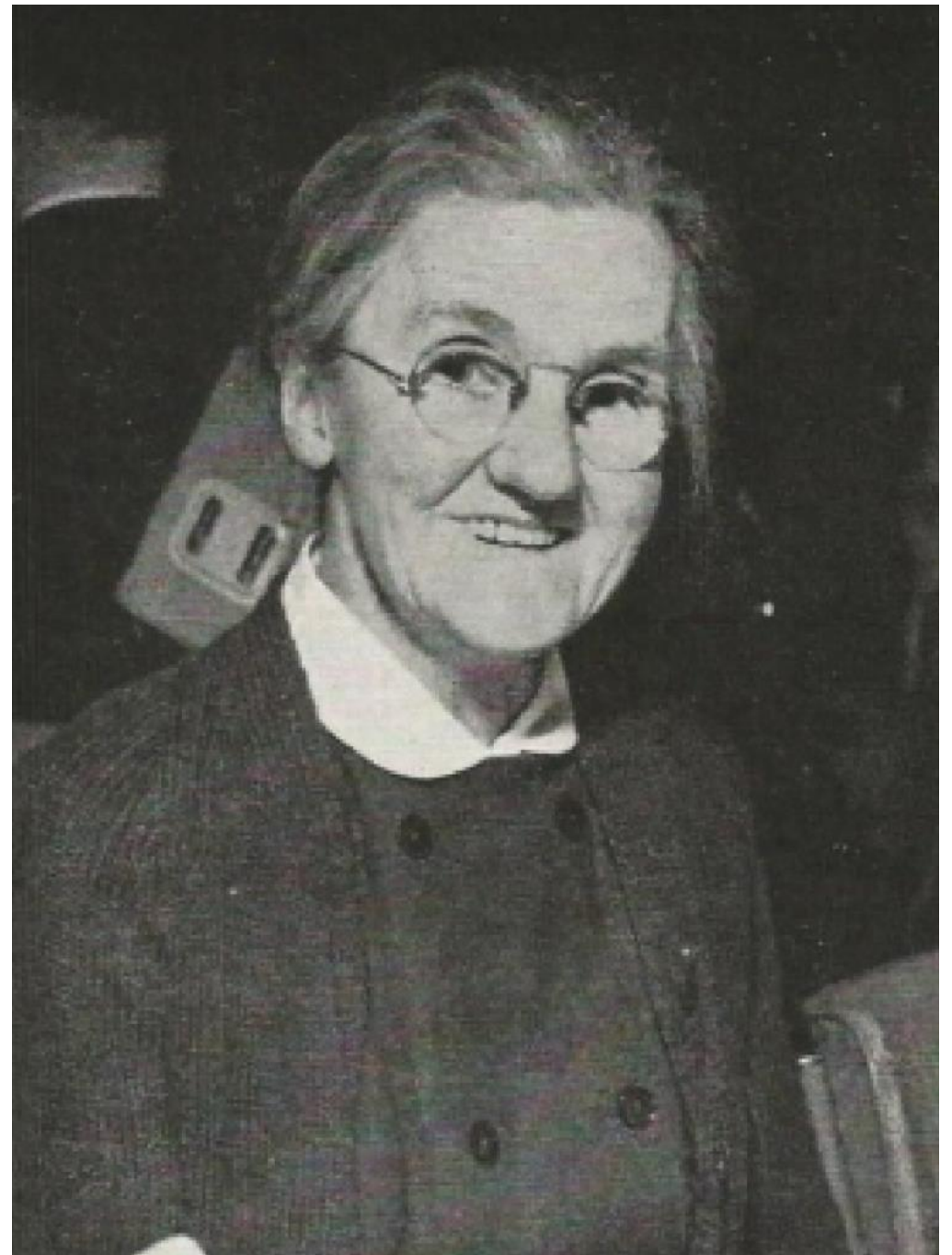




Winnie Carney (1887-1943) was a suffragist and trade unionist who was born in Bangor, County Down. She was the first secretary of the Irish Textile Workers' Union in Belfast. During the 1916 Rising she was stationed in the GPO with James Connolly. After her involvement in the independence struggle and in socialist politics, she worked for the ITGWU until ill health caused her early retirement.

Rosanna (Rosie) Hackett (1892-1976) was born in Dublin. She was working in Jacobs Biscuit Factory when she joined the ITGWU after its foundation in 1909. She was one of the first members of the Irish Women Workers Union.

After her involvement in the independence struggle in the ICA Rosie worked for the IWWU for 40 years and received a medal in 1970 for 60 years devotion to the trade union movement. In May 2014 the latest bridge over the River Liffey in Dublin was named after her.







Louie Bennett (1870-1956) was born into a wealthy, middle class family in Dublin. She was a suffragist and committed pacifist, who vocally opposed the First World War. In 1913, she volunteered to help the starving families of strikers affected by the Dublin Lockout. When Helena Moloney was arrested after the 1916 Rising, she asked Bennett to take over from her as secretary of the Irish Women Workers' Union. She kept this position until 1955.

In 1932, she was elected the first woman president of the ITUC.

Cissy Cahalan (1876-1948,) was born in Cork or Tipperary. She was one of the earliest members of the Irish Drapers' Assistants Association, which is now MANDATE. She was President of her union in 1912, and was elected to the Irish Trade Union Congress Executive, 1922-23. She was also a member of the Irish Women's Franchise League and was a lifelong friend of Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington.





# POBLACHT NA H EIREANN. THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

**IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:** In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLANKE.

SEAN Mac DIARMADA.

THOMAS MacDONAGH.

P. H. PEARSE.

EAMONN Ceannt.

JAMES CONNOLLY.

JOSEPH PLUNKETT.







Apparently, as Jinny and the other girls told me, the troops poured up the stairs and came in to where the girls were. It would never occur to them, of course, that they were women soldiers. ... The British officers thought these girls had been taken prisoner by the rebels. They asked them: "Did they do anything to you? Were they kind to you? how many are up here?" Jinny Shanahan quick enough - answered: "No, they did not do anything to us. There are hundreds upstairs - big guns and everything". She invented such a story that they thought there was a garrison up on the roof, with the result that they did delay, and took precautions.



I think that is important, because that may have delayed them, by some hours, from getting to the men on the roof. It was very natural for the British officer to take her story, and to think there were hundreds of men along the roofs of the City Hall and Dame Street, as she told them. I would not blame him for being taken in, when she said: "There are hundreds of them with big guns". I thought that was something for which Napoleon would have decorated her.

Helena Moloney, Witness Statement WS391, 19 May 1950



She (Mary Hyland) didn't go to jail because Michael Mallin, on the morning of the surrender, he trusted her and he sent her to visit his wife, to tell his wife they were about to surrender. But my aunt Mary had a bandolier with bullets on her and forgot to take it off. A soldier stopped her and asked her where she got it and quickly she said she'd taken it from a dead body and her sister was pregnant and needed the money and she was about to sell it. And he said 'where does your sister live?' Now she knew the road Mrs. Mallin lived on but she didn't know the number so she was in a bit of a quandary. He said 'I'll walk with you' but when she got there Mrs. Mallin was looking out the window and came out and embraced her and he went on about his business.

Esther Hyland, Mary Hyland Kelly's great-niece  
Interview with Mary Muldowney, 2015



Mary  
Hyland-Kelly,  
c. 1966

The bomb that exploded in the tram smashed Noble's window, and the crowd started to take out the sweets. They then started to break the other windows and general looting started. George came out of the GPO and asked for civilians to volunteer to help to stop the looting. Some did volunteer and George handed them white sticks.

It was no use. The separation allowance women began to gather in the street. They crowded round the Post Office, and abused the Volunteers inside, throwing the glass from the broken windows at them. They knelt down in the street to curse them. I remember one woman kneeling with her scapular in her hand, screaming curses at them. George came out again, and waved a big knife at them, which produced some effect.

Geraldine Dillon, sister of Joseph Plunkett, Cumann na mBan GPO 1916.  
Witness Statement 358,



... we draw attention to the case of many of the women prisoners. Practically all of these women were engaged in the work of nursing and succour – some of them only taking their places on the second, third, or fourth day, when it was obvious that the need of assistance for the wounded was urgent. These women have been arrested, and no one knows where they are. Their friends are anxious to know whether they are alive or dead, and no information can be obtained from the military or police.

... we hear that several of the Trade Union leaders of Dublin have been arrested. No one knows the charges against them. Though active participators in Trade Union and Labour fights, they have not been adherents of the Sin Fein movement. We fear that in the general condemnation many men and women, who are innocent of any connection with the revolt will be unjustly punished should they be hastily tried by Court Martial.

Letter to Arthur Henderson, M.P., Secretary to the British Labour Party from Thomas Johnson, Chairman and D.R. Campbell, Treasurer, National Executive Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1916.

Richmond Barracks





Herbert Asquith

Thomas Johnson



We regret to learn that while the Government are agreeable to compensate for losses occasioned by damage to furniture and houses (as well as other property) they are unable to undertake to pay compensation for loss of life or injury to the persons of innocent citizens arising from the same cause.

It being a well-established practice in modern society that loss of property is of more concern to governments than loss of life, the decision causes no surprise, but it is none the less lamentable at this particular moment in the history of our country.

Letter from D.R. Campbell and Thomas Johnson to Herbert Asquith, Prime Minister, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1916.



Letter from the Rt. Hon. Sir J.G. Maxwell, Commander in Chief, Ireland, to the Secretary, War Office, 10 May 1916.

Sir,

On the conclusion of the fighting which took place in the Dublin area, I found that about seventy women had either surrendered with the rebels or had been arrested by the police.

The majority of these belonged to the Sinn Féin ambulance society, an association which did not entirely confine itself to Red Cross work; it was in fact the women's brigade of the Irish Volunteers and was highly seditious in its activities. ...

... the reports which I had received disclosed the fact that the allegation that they were merely Red Cross workers could not be sustained. They were also persons who were known to the police before the rising, and who, had they been male prisoners, I would have at least recommended for internment.

In view of their sex, however, I considered that it would be desirable that they should be granted their liberty, but, at the same time, I could not consent to allow them to be at large in this country while the present unsettled states of affairs continues.

Letter from Maxwell to the Secretary, War Office, 15 June 1916.

... The Countess Plunkett is being sent to Oxford under a deportation order made under Regulation 14. Dr Kathleen Lynn is being sent to Bath under a similar order.

The remainder, namely:-

Winifred Carney

Maura Perolz

Helena Moloney

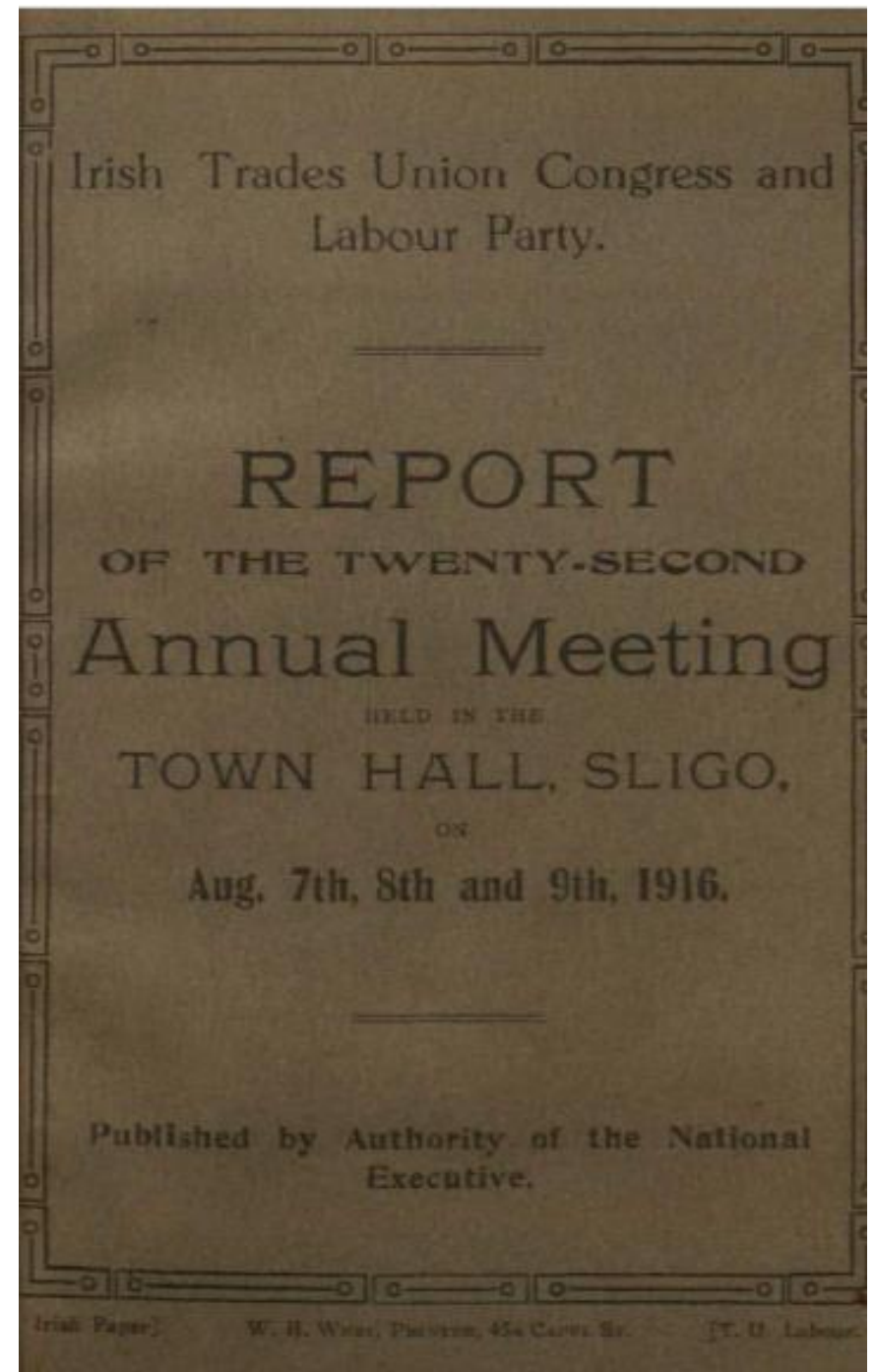
Breida Foley

and

Ellen Ryan

are to be interned at Aylesbury under Regulation 14B of the Defence of the Realm Regulations. ... It is desirable that these prisoners should be removed from Ireland with the least possible delay.

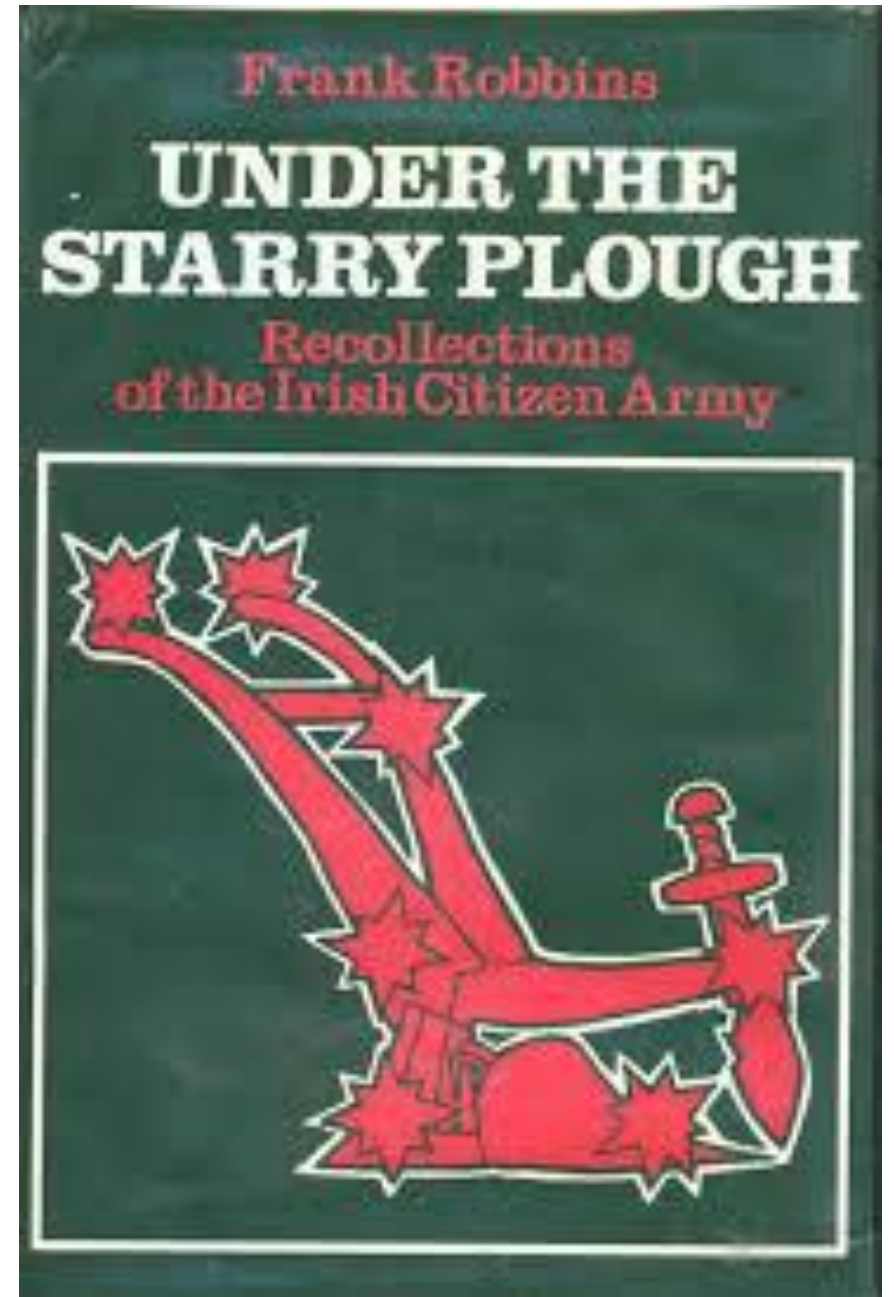
That this Irish Trades Union Congress is of the opinion that the action of the Government by arresting thousands of men and women and keeping them in prison and internment camps, without any specific charge being made against them, whereby the wives, mothers of children are deprived of their bread-winners is unnecessary, as it is bringing untold misery and privation to the homes and families of the innocent. Moreover, during this period, when the costs of food and necessaries have reached a famine price, this will cause degeneracy to the Irish populace which will eventually stagger humanity.





The close co-operation which had previously existed officially between the Irish Transport Union and the Irish Citizen Army seemed to have gone completely, and it would not be any exaggeration to say, but for these stalwarts, an openly hostile situation would have broken out. As it was, a number of incidents did occur and were encouraged by individuals outside the I.C.A. who used some of our misguided or partisan members on every occasion for their own personal interests.

Frank Robbins, Witness Statement WS 585, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1951



I found that practically all the women who had taken part in the 1916 Insurrection were not now members of the Citizen Army. This was due to the fact that new members had been recruited into the women's section who had very obnoxious pasts as far as Trade Union matters were concerned; at least two of them had actually scabbed in the 1913 strike.



This, of course, was too much for the women who had lost their jobs fighting to uphold Trade Unionism in the past to accept, not to mention the trials and tribulations endured in the performance of their national duty by taking part in the Easter Week Insurrection.

Frank Robbins, Witness Statement WS 585, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1951



