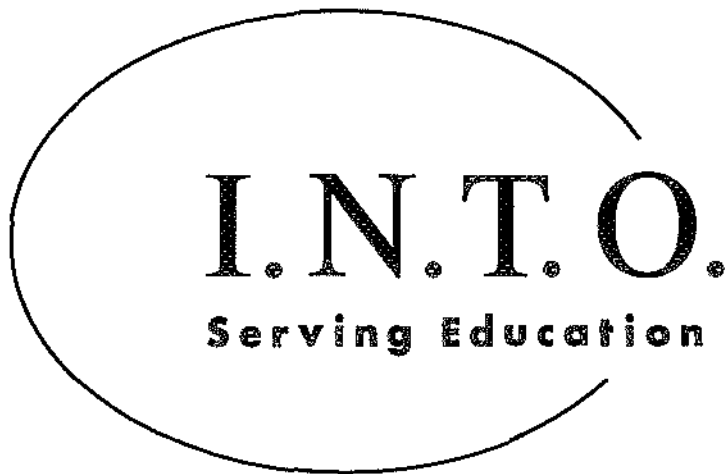


An INTO Publication

THE INTO AND THE 1946 TEACHERS' STRIKE

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INTO 1996

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Foreword

The strength and influence which the INTO enjoys has been built by generations of teachers who over the past 128 years regularly stood against injustice, rallied in support of victimised colleagues and sacrificed as required to improve the professional status of teachers.

Today's INTO is an inheritance from our former colleagues rather than any tribute to those of us privileged to be the current leadership.

We owe a debt of gratitude to those past generations and none more so than the Primary teachers of 1946.

This publication is a tribute to them.

The INTO wishes to acknowledge the help, co-operation and assistance of the following in compiling this book.

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Senator Joe O'Toole
General Secretary
April 1996

DUBLIN TRADES COUNCIL

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF PARENTS ASSOC.

DEMONSTRATION OF PARENTS

ON

TUES., 10th SEPTEMBER

**TO DEMAND RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS
AND JUSTICE FOR TEACHERS**

PARENTS ASSEMBLE AT 7.30 P.M. PARNELL SQ., NORTH

PROCESSION PROCEEDS AT 7.45 P.M. TO

MASS MEETING

AT

PARNELL MONUMENT

PARENTS ASSOCIATION WILL PROVIDE SPEAKERS

ALL PARENTS INVITED

PROLOGUE

When teachers went on strike in Dublin in March 1946, it was not unnatural that there would have been a fair amount of surprise. The national teacher had been closely identified with the heart of Irish society for the previous one hundred and fifteen years. The position of deference and respect which teachers enjoyed within the community made them unlikely members of the vanguard of militant trade unionism. All this changed in 1946 and for over seven months teachers organised by the INTO threw down the gauntlet to the Government over its treatment of teachers. That Government under Mr. De Valera had been continuously in office for over fourteen years, and, fresh from its triumph over maintaining Ireland's neutrality in the War, looked likely to remain there.

Why then did teachers alone out of all the professional groups who had suffered impoverishment during the War decide to resort to militant action at a time of financial stringency in the nation's economy? I propose to examine the development of events and assess their impact on Irish society and also the short-term and long-term implications for those most closely involved.

The 1946 teachers' strike was the first outright use of the strike weapon by a professional group in Ireland, an example which has since been followed by other professional classes. The strike itself certainly reduced enthusiasm for the sacrifices necessary on the part of teachers for the language revival. It did, however, mark the emergence of the INTO as a force of increasing power in the field of education in the 1950's and since.

The strike came about as a result of widespread dissatisfaction among teachers with the direction of educational policy and with their treatment at the hands of the educational administration. The relationship between the INTO and Fianna Fáil had progressively deteriorated from that party's assumption of power in 1932. The origins of that strained relationship are to be found in Mr. De Valera's renegeing on a promise made in Rathmines followed rapidly by the Economies cut in 1933 and the imposed salary settlement of 1934.

Mr. Derrig, Minister for Education, never succeeded in accommodating his party's educational policy with the necessity of having a satisfied teaching body to implement it. This failure was caused by his Department's insistence on what the INTO regarded as outmoded teaching methods, coupled with Mr. Derrig's own failure to convince his Cabinet colleagues, particularly the Minister for Finance of the extent of teacher discontent.

The Government decision to resist teacher demands in 1946 proved costly. It underestimated the extent of teacher alienation from educational bureaucracy as well as their discontent with conditions. The method of presentation of a salary offer in 1945, failing as it did to tackle any of the root causes of teacher

unease, demonstrated the very lack of sympathy, which teachers claimed existed for their particular circumstances, especially the problem of language revival. Teachers could see that the rhetoric of Government revivalists was not being matched by financial commitment.

From a political point of view the decision was also a miscalculation on the part of the Government. Deciding to have a head-on confrontation with a union which had direct access to virtually every home in the country did not make good political sense for Fianna Fáil as a party. This consideration was not lost on the Catholic Church, however. The role of the Hierarchy and in particular of the Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr. John Charles McQuaid indicated a recognition that whatever the outcome of the dispute might be, the INTO was a force to be reckoned with.

For the INTO the strike was an effort to defend their professionalism. Teachers' professional morale had been almost systematically eroded and there did not appear to be any hope of amelioration in their circumstances. The strike did much to restore this flagging morale. The unity and solidarity of the organisation survived the crisis intact, and the politicization process which it engendered among members made the INTO a powerful obstacle to Fianna Fáil's desire to retain office in 1948.

Today the teacher's strike of 1946 has established a firm niche in the folklore of national teachers. It invariably crops up as a subject of conversation when groups of teachers get together. While many of those who took part in the events are now dead, there are many still alive who clearly remember their individual involvement.

CHAPTER I

THE ROOTS OF DISCONTENT

Relations between national teachers and educational authorities in Ireland had never been good. From its inception in 1868, the INTO had been involved in a continuous campaign to improve the status and salaries of teachers. The relationship between teachers and the National Board of Commissioners of National Education had been particularly strained under the regime of Dr. William J.M. Starkie as Resident Commissioner between 1900-20, when something 'like a reign of terror existed among teachers'.¹ The instruments of this terror were the Board's inspectors. The report of a Committee of Inquiry issued on 31 January 1914 made little difference to the situation and there was 'little or no improvement in the relations between the Board and the teachers during the remaining period of its existence'.² Nonetheless another vice-regal Committee known as the Killanin Committee laid the basis for a much improved salary agreement signed on 29 November 1920. The agreement generated much optimism among the INTO that at last their profession had been elevated above 'the indigence limit'.³ They looked forward to the arrival of native Government in 1922 when they hoped that education would at last become a priority concern.

From the beginning of home Government, many factors contrived to belie this optimism. Educational policy was a low priority from the outset, and such as there was, was an 'incidental offshoot of language concerns'.⁴ With his appointment as Minister for Education on 6 December 1922, Eoin MacNeill found himself in charge of a bureaucracy virtually the same as had existed under the old regime.⁵ Despite reports that the new Minister might set up an advisory council on education⁶, the nature of the emergence of the new State was not one which was likely to encourage the establishment of critical agencies in any sphere of Government without direct control and influence from the Government body. Accordingly, there was no real structural change in any area of education while there remained a deeply rooted tendency on the part of the Civil Service to perpetuate old ways. The absence of an independent advisory council in education meant that there was 'no effective forum for either teachers or concerned citizens to air their misgivings about Government policy or to seek redress for injustices inflicted by State bureaucracy'.⁷

The Language Problem

As early as the first Dáil in 1919, language had become a cause of 'unexceptionable nationalist authenticity'.⁸ A Minister for Language was appointed but no Minister for Education. By 1920 the Gaelic League were attempting to force teachers to implement a language revival programme drawn up by themselves, without consultation with teachers. Mainly as a result of 'things being made

very unpleasant for teachers⁹ the INTO inaugurated a conference which became known as the National Programme Conference to draw up detailed syllabuses for use in schools. The conference report advocated the idea that work in infant classes be conducted entirely through the medium of the Irish language.¹⁰ Teacher unease with this new idea was expressed in the Report's appendix especially with regard to the role of the inspectorate in supervising this new policy.

In 1926 mainly as a result of INTO pressure a second Programme Conference was called. This time, however, representatives to the Conference were appointed by Government. Despite INTO misgivings it was decided that the language revival programme in national schools was to be implemented using the methods of the National Programme Conference. In two pages of reservations attached to the Report the INTO stated that 'while our difficulties entailed by the effort to restore Irish as a vernacular are recognised and adverted to, we regret that the Conference did not see its way to accept the recommendations made by the teachers organisation in this regard'.¹¹

The Report was accepted in the Dáil on 7 May 1926 by the Minister for Education, Professor John Marcus O'Sullivan as the official programme for national schools. He attempted to assuage teacher fears concerning the role of the inspectorate by setting up a Committee of Inquiry. The Report¹² was issued in April 1927, and signed by the INTO. Despite calls for more harmonious relations between teachers and inspectors there was little effective change. The Committee's terms of reference had precluded it from considering the contentious rating system by which inspectors could categorise teachers into grades, 'Highly Efficient' (Very Good), 'Efficient' (Good), and 'Fair'. Reduction from a 'Highly Efficient' rating to 'Efficient' meant removal from the supernormal scale of salary, while a reduction from 'Efficient' to 'Fair' would mean a loss of ordinary increment. Apart altogether from effects on salary and prospects of promotion, the rating system also 'affected teachers' prestige and personal self esteem.¹³ The statistical constancy of the numbers allocated to each grade became a source of suspicion and 'wonder if not admiration'¹⁴ to teachers!

The language policy caused more tension when in 1929 the Department of Education issued a circular which linked efficiency ratings with proficiency in Irish and with its use as a teaching medium.¹⁵ Following demands at their Annual Congress in 1931 the INTO submitted a memorandum to the Minister in September 1931 dealing mainly with the inspection system and calling for a general stock-taking with special regard to the question of Irish. Despite an interview with the Minister on 9 November at which a 'considered reply' to the various points raised by the delegation was promised¹⁶, nothing further happened. Three months later a new Government was in office.

When Fianna Fail came to office 'the drive to revive the language through the schools was intensified'¹⁷ under a new Minister for Education, Mr. Thomas Derrig who was appointed on 9 March 1932. At the 1932 INTO Congress a motion was adopted calling for 'an immediate inquiry into the inspection system'¹⁸. The situation remained unresolved, however, and several years later James Dillon alleged in the Dáil that teachers not showing what was considered proper enthusiasm for the language, would be 'pursued vindictively by the inspectorate'¹⁹ in implementing the Minister's education policy.

The setting up of Preparatory Colleges in 1926 was another element in educational policy which caused tension. The purpose of these colleges was to cater for student teachers with proficiency in Irish. The method of selection for entry to the colleges was criticised by the INTO as were the effects of the increased teacher supply on employment. When a letter was issued from the Department announcing that women teachers would on marriage 'cease to be eligible for recognition in any capacity in a national school'²⁰ the move was strongly opposed at the 1932 INTO Congress. Despite this opposition, the regulation known as the marriage ban became operative from 1 October 1933. In another letter issued in 1938 the Department of Education called for the statutory retirement age of sixty for women teachers to be rigidly enforced as a custom had grown up of their 'continuing until they were sixty five'.²¹ Both these enactments which caused 'severe hardship among women teachers'²² were criticised by the INTO and were seen as efforts to deal with an unemployment problem which they regarded as having been created by the Department itself.

The failure of the Department to set up a Committee to inquire into the inspection system and the unease with regard to the Irish Revival expressed at the 1931 Congress, resulted in teachers feeling more and more frustrated with the methods they were being asked to use. The appointment of Mr. Derrig as Minister for Education did not offer much hope for a radical reappraisal of this particular problem. He regarded Dr. Corcoran on whose ideas the methods used were mainly based as 'one of the greatest educationalists of our time'.²³ He shared Dr. Corcoran's view that the language could be restored by the method used even without parental approval. He made it clear in the Dáil that he regarded opposition to the method being used as part of the misleading propaganda 'which had been going on for many years past against the national policy in regard to Irish'.²⁴

At the opening of Feis Ceileann in Dun Laoghaire in 6 March 1934 Mr. Derrig publicly criticised national teachers for their 'poor results'²⁵ in teaching the language. His attitude brought sharp criticism from teachers but despite this he pressed ahead with the implementation of a revised programme in 1934 in which he laid even greater emphasis on the place of Irish in the curriculum. At the 1936 INTO Congress the extra pressure resulted in a call for the Central Executive Committee (C.E.C.) of the organisation to select a special committee

to make a full examination of the whole question of Irish 'as a teaching medium other than the home language of the child in primary schools'.²⁶

The Committee issued its Report on 28 March 1941. The Report stated: 'The first obvious fact that emerges is that the majority of infant teachers are opposed to using Irish as the sole medium of instruction where English is the home language'.²⁷ It also adverted to the 'detrimental effects'²⁸ the methods were having on children, 'parental opposition'²⁹ and to actual damage to the language itself. Departmental reaction to the Report's publication was ominously muted. In a formal letter acknowledging receipt of a copy of the Report it was intimated that the INTO were aware of the views of the Department and Minister on the matter, and it was not deemed necessary to add anything 'by way of formal observations'³⁰ on the matter.

Reacting to calls in the Senate to institute a governmental enquiry into the matter of Irish in the light of the reports findings, Mr. Derrig rejected many of the claims of the Report as inaccurate and misleading and he questioned whether the exercise could be accepted 'as an honest and careful inquiry into the matter'.³¹ In the Dáil Mr. Derrig's rejection of the teachers' work was even more emphatic:

Ní dócha go dtuigeann an dream seo a labhrann inár gcoinnibh an fhírinne seo - fhirinne a caithfear a thuigsint más mian linn an fhadhb do réiteach go macánta - nach féidir linn an Ghaedhilg do shlánú gan sár-iarracht do dhéanamh i gcoinnibh Béarla agus uaireanta i gcoinnibh an nadúr dhaonna fein, i dtreo go mhairfeadh an teanga.³²

(These people who criticise us ought to recognise this fact if we are to attain a satisfactory solution to the problem (of Irish revival) and that is that the Irish language cannot be saved without making a supreme effort against English and sometimes even against human nature itself in order that the language might survive). He exhorted teachers to apply themselves to the revival in the spirit of the Gaelic League so that 'great results'³³ might be achieved. Despite a plea from Professor J.M. O'Sullivan under whose Ministry the method of revival had been initiated Mr. Derrig rejected a call for a Government investigation. He maintained that he was satisfied with the progress of language restoration and reiterated his contention that the Report was further evidence of a continuous campaign of propaganda against 'teaching through Irish'.³⁴ The INTO executive having considered the Minister's statements on the matter felt that the best reply to his opinions was 'to be found in the Report itself'.³⁵

Teacher dissatisfaction with Mr. Derrig's reaction to their survey was compounded by his decision to introduce a compulsory primary certificate examination whereby 'all pupils in sixth or higher standards in national schools would be presented for examination annually'.³⁶ An optional examination

which had existed since 1929 based on a recommendation of the McKenna Committee had proved sufficiently irritating to teachers, because of the level of official involvement, to demand its abolition at the 1935 INTO Congress. A referendum among teachers indicated that the examination had proved impracticable in operation and 'positively harmful to educational progress'.³⁷ The compulsory examination was viewed as yet another official whip to be used against teachers. It was condemned outright at the 1943 INTO Congress and calls were made for the C.E.C. of the organisation to issue a directive to members 'to refuse voluntary cooperation in the implementation of the regulation'.³⁸

Mr. Derrig defended his introduction of the compulsory scheme on the grounds of teacher refusal to agree to an 'adequate voluntary scheme'.³⁹ He had introduced the scheme in response to public demand. In the Senate he rejected INTO questioning the legality of the measure as being a threat but that ultimately he was the rule-making authority 'as far as the Department of Education was concerned'.⁴⁰ Referring to a forthcoming General Election he pointed out that the Irish people might provide a Minister for Education 'who will regard the teachers' organisation as a judge and jury in this and other matters'.⁴¹ The INTO did not accept that Mr. Derrig's action was a response to public demand in the wake of his response to their Report on Irish teaching methods:

We believe that the alleged public demand for a primary certificate has little or no existence, but even if it did exist we could scarcely bring ourselves to believe that it would carry much weight with a minister who has never shown any tendency to bow before the storm.⁴²

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- 1 T.J. O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress, A History of the INTO*, (INTO, Dublin 1968), p.405.
- 2 Ibid. p.409.
- 3 *Irish School Weekly* (I.S.W.) Vol. LXIX No. 16, 27 Nov., 1920 p.357.
- 4 Donald H. Akenson, *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland 1922-60* (Montreal and London 1975), p.25.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *Times Education Supplement* 10 Nov., 1923.
- 7 Akenson, *Education in Independent Ireland*, p.34.
- 8 Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-79* (Glasgow, 1981), p.47.
- 9 O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress*, p.343.
- 10 The idea of teaching infants through the medium of Irish was mainly advocated by Dr. T. Corcoran S.J., D.Litt. Professor of Education in U.C.D. His views were based on his personal observation of immigrant children learning English in New York. He was supported by the Gaelic League. (See -

- O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress*, p.347; also Brown, *Social & Cultural History*, p.51.
- 11 O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress*, p.361.
 - 12 McKenna Committee Enquiry, chaired by Rev. Lambert McKenna S.J. who had also chaired the Second Programme Conference.
 - 13 O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress*, p.416.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 D.H. Akenson, *Education in Independent Ireland*, p.58.
 - 16 O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress*, p.362.
 - 17 Dr. Donal MacCartney, "Education & Language, 1938-51" K.B. Nowlan and T.D. Williams (eds.), *Ireland in the War Years and After, 1939 -51* (Dublin 1969) pp.80-93, p.81.
 - 18 *I.S.W.*, Vol. XXXVI No. 16, 21 Apr., 1934, P.397.
 - 19 *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 90, 12 May, 1943, p.174.
 - 20 Letter from Secretary of Department of Education to Dr. T.J. O'Connell quoted in *100 Years of Progress*, 2 Dec., 1932, p.280.
 - 21 Letter quoted in *I.S.W.* Vol. XL, No. 18, 30 Apr., 1938, p.425.
 - 22 *I.S.W.*, Vol. XL, No. 18, 30 April 1938, p.425.
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 - 24 *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 59, 10 Dec., 1935, p.2197.
 - 25 *Irish Press*, 7, Mar., 1934.
 - 26 *I.S.W.* Vol. XXXVIII, No. 17, 25 Apr., 1936, p.400.
 - 27 *Report of Committee of Inquiry into the Use of Irish as a teaching medium to Children whose Home Language is English*, Dublin, INTO, 1941, p.12.
 - 28 Ibid. p.24.
 - 29 Ibid. p.60.
 - 30 O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress*, p. 371.
 - 31 *Senate Debates*, Vol., 26, 22 July 1942, p.1874.
 - 32 *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 89, 5 May 1943, p.2378.
 - 33 *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 90, 13 May 1943, p.232.
 - 34 Ibid. p.258.
 - 35 *I.S.W.* Vol. XLIV, No. 35/36, 29 Aug., 1942, p.507.
 - 36 Letter from Secretary of Department of Education to Dr. O'Connell dated 2 Dec., 1942 *I.S.W.* Vol. XLV, No. 5/6, p.35.
 - 37 T.J. McElligott, *Education in Ireland* (Dublin 1966), pp.28/29.
 - 38 *I.S.W.*, Vol. XLV, No. 19/20, 8 May 1943, p.145.
 - 39 *Dáil Debates*, Vol., 90, 13 May 1943, p.195.
 - 40 *Senate Debates*, Vol. 27, 27 May 1943, p.2197.
 - 41 Ibid.
 - 42 *I.S.W.*, Vol., XLV, No. 23/24, 5 June 1943, p.189.

CHAPTER II

THE SALARY QUESTION

While alienation among teachers due to conflict over policy had a debilitating effect on their professional morale, the period following the institution of native Government also saw a reduction in their living standards. The optimism engendered by the 1920 salary settlement was short lived. In fact, in accepting a fixed permanent scale arrangement, teachers found themselves in an anomalous situation compared with Civil Servants who prior to the onset of native Government had accepted arbitration machinery - with a bonus system which might rise or fall according to fluctuations in the cost-of-living index. In the Dáil on 2 November 1923 this anomaly first raised its head. When speaking on retrenchment proposals, the new minister for Finance, Mr. Blyth, called for reductions in the salaries of national teachers and old age pension payments. He proposed a reduction of 10% on the grounds that the 1920 salary settlement was three to three and a half times the salaries obtaining before 1914: 'Even admitting that these were abnormally low we cannot justify continuing to pay salaries so many times the pre-War salaries'.¹ Despite opposition from Labour TD's - of whom the General Secretary of the INTO, Dr. T.J. O'Connell was one - the cuts went ahead. Dr. O'Connell later asserted that the Government's reason for the cuts was to furnish evidence of willingness to cut public expenditure to banks so as to secure a national loan - 'an assertion which was never challenged'.² A cut in the Civil Service 'bonus' meant that only teachers' basic salary suffered a reduction.

Although tested in the courts³, the legality of the Government's right to cut salaries was upheld despite reservations about the method by which the cut was actually made. This resulted in teachers' salaries in all official documents and the rules of the Department being referred to as the 1920 figure 'less 10%'. This served as a constant reminder to teachers until April 1934 of what they regarded as an unwarranted breach of faith on the part of the Government. It also resulted in an annual call at the INTO Congress for a restoration of the 1920 scales until the increasing cost of living made restoration inadequate. This happened at the 1940 Congress when it was decided to press for a basic increase and a bonus system along the lines of the Civil Service. Despite threats of further salary reductions, no further cuts were made under the Cosgrave Government. Some fees were, however, withdrawn for extra-curricular work. Fees for training pupil teachers and monitors were abolished in 1926 and those for elementary evening schools in 1928. Even though these specialist activities applied only to a small minority of teachers, they eventually came to join the litany of offences which teachers regarded as already unduly excessive.

There were, however, indications towards the end of the Cosgrave administration that teachers were not yet free from the threat of further cuts. A problem arose regarding their pension fund. Actuarial investigation revealed a deficien-

cy of over £4 million on 31 December 1926 'which pending remedial action, was growing at compound interest'.⁴ The Government refused to entertain further financial assistance to the fund beyond its existing commitments. A suggestion that teachers make good the deficiency by increasing their contribution from 4% to 12% was not acceptable to the INTO. Budgetary problems at the end of 1931 resulted in Mr. Blyth suggesting that he might remedy a shortfall of £900,000 by increasing income and petrol tax and by further public service salary cuts 'including national teachers'.⁵ In a letter on 5 December 1931 he proposed to the INTO a 6% cut, added to the 4% pension contribution in return for Government taking responsibility for the pensions of all teachers. The offer was sufficiently attractive to the C.E.C. of the INTO for them to recommend acceptance and at a special delegate Conference held in Dublin on 19 December 1931 the proposal was accepted 'by 212 votes to 121'.⁶ Before the cuts could be implemented a General Election took place in early 1932.

Fianna Fáil in Charge

The 1932 election was remarkable in many ways but from a teacher point of view interest in changing the Government was of particular concern. Many Fianna Fáil candidates during the campaign accused the INTO executive of betraying their pension fund to the Government. This view was endorsed by many INTO members and in the union election results announced at its Congress in 1932 'virtually the whole executive who had negotiated the Blyth agreement were heavily defeated'.⁷ Fianna Fáil's concern about low salaries was expressed by Mr. De Valera when in a speech in Rathmines Town Hall he promised Civil Servants that no cuts in salaries of £300 or £400 would be made if his party were returned to power. Shortly afterwards he stated that the same principle would apply to national teachers.⁸ The 1932 Congress of INTO also repudiated the agreement made with Mr. Blyth at the special Conference of 19 December 1931.

The new Government with Labour Party support (to which INTO were affiliated) were faced with serious economic problems from the outset. When a deputation from the new INTO Executive met Mr. MacEntee (the new Minister for Finance) and Mr. Derrig (the new Minister for Education) on 20 May 1932 to discuss the pension problem they were asked to accept the arrangement made with the previous Government. A further meeting on 4 June 1932 did not improve the situation and succeeded only in reducing the proposed cut from 6% to 4%. The offer was rejected in a special INTO referendum on 9 July 1931 by 13 to 1 and during the winter of 1932 and spring 1933 intensive campaigning was carried on against the proposal.⁹

Another shock, however, awaited the INTO. A snap General Election early in 1933 enabled Mr. De Valera to divest himself of Labour Party support and in March 1933 an Economies Bill proposing temporary cuts in the remuneration of Civil Servants, Gardai, Army and National Teachers, was introduced in the

Dáil. Because of his Rathmines promise and the political climate of the time, Department of Finance officials were able to modify the implications of the proposed cuts for Civil Servants.¹⁰ Civil Servants suffered cuts on a sliding scale from 1% on a salary of £320 up to 10% on a salary of £1,650¹¹ while teachers' cuts ranged from 1% on salaries as low as £90 per annum to 8% on £450. Thus, while a teacher's salary of £300 per annum was cut by 6% a Civil Servant with similar salary suffered no reduction. Teachers were further exasperated when an unsigned memorandum was issued by the Department of Finance to the Press and was widely publicised, purporting to show that teachers were in fact leniently treated by the Bill. The memorandum further stated that the pension issue was to be settled although the Bill made no reference to pensions. The deep resentment felt by teachers at the cut, and the anger at the memorandum, resulted in a one-day protest strike being called for 26 April, at the 1933 INTO Congress.¹²

Mr. De Valera refused to meet a deputation from the 1933 Congress to discuss the Economies Bill 'unless they had full powers to settle the pensions question'.¹³ He added that the Economies Bill was not negotiable. The one-day strike accordingly went ahead on 26 April. Public protest meetings were held in many centres throughout the country while reports in the Press stated that abstention from school was 'practically universal',¹⁴ all over the country.

The Government was in no mood to see its policies challenged by public protest. In the Dáil Mr. MacEntee Minister for Finance castigated teachers for their action. He accused them of being unreasonable. He pointed out that they had accepted a 10% cut from the previous Government in settlement of the pensions question, yet refused an improved offer from Fianna Fail of a 9% cut. They had also rejected an overture from Mr. De Valera to settle the question once and for all. Instead of meeting Mr. De Valera:

they preferred to pass resolutions protesting because their salaries were cut...they were not going to be good Irishmen any longer...in fact they would not do their duty to the State which employed them. They decided to go out on a one-day strike, and parade the streets of the city with banners flying. The people who were prepared to accept a 10% cut from the last Government would not even come to discuss the question with us...

Does anyone think we could defend a concession to the National Teachers' Organisation after the way it has ruled itself out of court during the past few weeks.¹⁵

Mr. MacEntee's irritation with INTO was apparent when he stated that there would be no further discussion or negotiation with the organisation on salaries or pensions except 'with accredited representatives in a position to close a deal over the council table'.¹⁶

On 24 February proposals for settlement of the pension and salary problem

were received by the INTO. The scheme outlined was practically the same as that rejected in July 1932. INTO representatives were invited to a meeting the following day, 25 February, not to discuss the merits of the proposals but 'lest any point of importance had been overlooked in the formulation of the new proposed salary scales'.¹⁷ From 1 April 1934, the day after the Economies cut ceased the new scale involving a 9% cut was to operate. In future responsibility for all teacher pensions was to be accepted by Government.

While Government regarded the 1934 settlement as being a concession to teachers, the INTO saw it as a further cut and yet another serious setback to their professional status. The 1936 Congress demanded a restoration of the cuts but despite a public campaign organised by the INTO canvassing bishops, school managers, TD's and public representatives, there was no improvement in the situation.

Calls for restoration of the cuts were rejected by Mr. Derrig as 'simply incomprehensible'¹⁸ and he reiterated the Government's contention that the 1934 scales were not cuts but an essential element in the settlement of the pensions problem.

The teachers regarded the case as being far from settled. In a pamphlet they pointed to 'broken pledges, comparisons with Northern Ireland, and the language burden',¹⁹ as the reasons for urgent reconsideration of their case. In the Dáil Estimate debates in 1938 Jerry Hurley argued strongly for restoration of the cuts emphasising the growing discontent among teachers. He stressed that 62% of the total amount that had to be found in the 1933 Economies Bill 'was taken from national teachers' salaries'.²⁰ He pointed out that they were the only public servants singled out for a cut in 1934. Despite all this, primary education, remained the only education received by 90% of the nation's children.

Mr. MacEntee, Minister for Finance was not to be dissuaded. He rejected proposals to restore the cuts in Cabinet but not alone on financial grounds. He urged resistance to teacher demands because of possible side effects. He rejected the principle of comparing salaries with Northern Ireland because if admitted would lead to 'demands from gardai and civil servants'²¹. He rejected the argument that the language burden should be a consideration on the grounds that 'if the Government were to allow the teachers the Irish language as a lever to force up remuneration, where would the process stop?'²² He adverted to the security of the teaching profession as a reason for resisting claims, pointing out that this security had been added to by the pension settlement of 1934 and the panel arrangement of 1935. Mr. Derrig argued for at least an equivalent salary to teachers in Northern Ireland²³. He felt that the teachers' strongest argument was that they were the 'worst paid teachers in the British Isles'.²⁴

On 12 April 1938 just prior to the 1938 INTO Congress, Mr. Derrig announced that the Government had decided to grant an all-round increase of 5% on

teachers' salaries to date from 1 April 1938. The decision was welcomed by teachers as a step in the right direction towards restoration of the cuts. However, Mr. Derrig emphasised at a meeting with the INTO on 21 May that the 5% was not a restoration of cuts but an increase on the 1934 scales which was warranted by changed circumstances and might be 'withdrawn should circumstances so change'.²⁵

The Impact of War

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, further problems arose for teachers. Cabinet shuffling resulted in the education portfolio being handled by Mr. MacEntee for a short while, followed by Mr. De Valera until finally on 17 June 1940 Mr. Derrig resumed control. At its Congress at Easter 1940 the INTO decided to press for a bonus to meet the rapidly rising cost of living rather than seek restoration of the 1920 scales. Although Mr. De Valera met teachers on 13 October and 24 November, 1939 to discuss general educational issues, he refused to meet them to discuss the subject of cost-of-living compensation. Following the 1940 Congress decision, the C.E.C. of the INTO decided at a meeting on 11 April to press for a bonus at the rate of 15/- a week for all teachers.²⁶

Mr. Derrig refused to meet a deputation from the INTO to discuss the new approach. Referring to Mr. De Valera's refusal it was stated, 'The Minister is of the opinion that there has been no change in the position which would justify his holding out any hope that the decision already conveyed to you can be reconsidered'.²⁷ A further request for a meeting was refused in another letter on 7 January, 1941.²⁸ The basis for refusing was the operation of Emergency Order Number 83 known as the Standstill Order which gave Government power to freeze wages and salaries during the Emergency. As the order had not prevented Civil Servants and Gardai getting bonus increases in 1942, teachers began to feel especially discriminated against. In Cabinet, Mr. Derrig himself expressed the urgency of their case. In a memorandum to the Taoiseach on August 1942, he pointed out that refusal to increase remuneration to national teachers 'would have grave results and might impair seriously work being done in schools'.²⁹ In a letter to the Minister, T.J. O'Connell, General Secretary of the INTO wrote that in view of the increases awarded to gardai and civil servants 'the argument against the teachers' case is no longer tenable'.³⁰ In the same letter the comparison with salary scales in Northern Ireland was made and the history of the cuts was outlined. At its Congress in Killiney at Easter 1942, the INTO demanded the withdrawal of Emergency Order No. 83.

On 19 December 1942, a bonus increase of 7/- a week for men and 5/- a week for women was announced, to become operative from 1 January 1943, and applicable to teachers with salaries below £378-17s.-Op. The size of the award was decried by the INTO as inadequate and they stressed that an increase in the basic scale was 'absolutely essential'.³¹ However, with the General Election

in 1943 returning Fianna Fáil to office, no radical departure in policy seemed likely. Writing in the *Irish School Weekly*, T.J. O'Connell pointed to growing unrest among teachers: 'It is evident from reports to hand that teachers all through the country are stirring themselves with a view to demanding from the Government fair treatment in the matter of remuneration. Goodness knows they've been patient long enough'.³²

A public campaign on salaries was inaugurated with a public protest meeting organised by the Dublin City Branch of the INTO on 2 October 1943 to demand 'an immediate increase in the remuneration of teachers commensurate with the great increase in the cost of living'.³³ The Lord Mayor, Alderman P. Doyle, pledged the support of the Dublin citizenry. During the winter of 1943, the INTO held public meetings throughout the country at which they made the case for their demand. The cuts, the language burden, comparisons with Northern Ireland and the increasing cost of living were cited in support.³⁴ An additional bonus award of an extra 3/- a week operative from January 1944 failed to satisfy them: 'To us it seems a stupid, pointless kind of bonus for it has no relation at all to the increased cost of living on which it is avowedly based'.³⁵

Many of the problem areas in education began to be thrown together in teachers' minds as frustration mounted. A motion of no-confidence in the INTO Executive, although defeated by 'a large majority'³⁶ at the Dublin branch meeting on 22 February 1944, was symptomatic of increasing discontent. The Congress of 1944 echoed the mood of despondency and as might be expected an appeal from Mr. Derrig for cooperation with the compulsory primary certificate examination received short shrift. There was also much criticism of the inspection system, the position of women teachers, preparatory colleges and the methods of teaching Irish. Commenting on the Congress atmosphere the editor of the *Irish School Weekly* wrote:

The pity is that the tradition of bad school buildings, underpaid teachers and rigid bureaucratic control is as strong as ever it was and the public have come to regard education, not as something productive and basic, but as a big debt in the National Accounts.³⁷

The despondency was added to when Fianna Fáil took advantage of a split in the Labour Party to call a sudden General Election in May 1944 and were returned with a strong overall majority. In the Estimates debate in June 1944 Mr. Derrig revealed no radical alteration of policy for the post-War situation. The demands made by the C.E.C. of the INTO when they met him at a meeting on 30 June, to bring up again the issues raised at the 1944 Congress, were greeted in a similarly non-committal manner. In a letter to the INTO on 10 August 1944 he stated:

The question concerning the remuneration and the superannuation of teachers, and the granting of bonus to serving and pensioned teachers cannot, especially in the conditions of the existing emergency, be consid-

ered apart from the policy of Government towards the various classes of persons who are remunerated out of the monies provided by the Oireachtas nor from the Government's general financial and economic policy affecting incomes and wages.³⁸

The C.E.C., at a meeting on 10 August, expressed grave dissatisfaction with the Minister's reply and conveyed their views to the Press. Further dissatisfaction was aroused when Mr. De Valera mooted the idea, at a meeting in Ennis of Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, of getting children to act as 'spies'³⁹ on teachers to ensure they gave good example in speaking Irish. Whatever about the seriousness of his remark, the timing and regard for teacher sensibilities was decidedly inept. The remark was widely condemned by teachers and added grist to their determination to demand better conditions. At a meeting on 21 October 1944, the Dublin City branch, along with condemning Mr. De Valera's attempts to turn the children of Ireland into 'spies and informers'⁴⁰ called for more militant action regarding salaries. They indicated that: 'The state of affairs was rapidly becoming intolerable, that arguments, resolutions and public meetings were futile and stronger action would have to be taken'.⁴¹

The teachers' cause did, however, get an unexpected boost. At their general meeting in Maynooth on 10 October the Catholic hierarchy recommended teachers' claims 'to the sympathetic consideration of the Government Departments concerned'.⁴² Despite this call and Mr. Derrig's own arguments for some leeway⁴³ at a Cabinet meeting on 19 December 1944, the demands were rejected by Mr. Aiken, the Minister for Finance. In a memorandum on 18 December, Mr. Aiken dealing with Mr. Derrig's calls, again rejected the admissibility of the comparison with Northern Ireland as a consideration. He pointed out that teachers had no contractual right to a bonus increase and that to give in on the demand for a basic pay increase would give rise to corresponding demands from other public service sectors and 'infringe the whole spirit of the National Wages Standstill Policy'.⁴⁴ He added that it would also create the impression that 'the Standstill policy had been completely abandoned so far as public servants were concerned'.⁴⁵ The teachers' claim was rejected by the Cabinet with a vague promise that 'the remuneration of teachers as well as of other classes of public servants would be open to reconsideration after the Emergency'.⁴⁶

In November 1944, 26,000 civil and local authority servants received increases in their ordinary cost-of-living bonus ranging from 7/9 to 23/- per week with an additional emergency bonus of 1/- per week. The teachers were awarded the 1/- a week but nothing more. The award was described as contemptuous and insulting by teachers. At a meeting of the Dublin teachers the C.E.C. were urged to draw up a proposed scale of salaries to be forwarded to the Government and discussed by teachers throughout the country. The new demands were drawn up and submitted to the Department.⁴⁷ In a letter acknowledging receipt of their proposals, Mr. Derrig promised to give them 'careful consideration'.⁴⁸ At a meeting with teachers on 24 March, however, he

could offer nothing except that he would bring their representations before the Government. He was, however, fully aware of the seriousness of the situation. In a letter to the Taoiseach, he pointed to the urgent need for some relief. He referred to the Hierarchy's intervention and to 'fears of a serious degree of discontent among teachers'.⁴⁹

His fears were not unfounded. At the 1945 INTO Congress in Galway the level of discontent was soon apparent. In his Presidential address, Tom Frisby accused the Government of showing disregard amounting almost to contempt for the Hierarchy and of insulting teachers and education as well:

I should like to warn those responsible for it, in all the seriousness that appertains to this moment, that they might drive the teachers too hard. Even our patience has its limits. If peaceful agitation gets us nowhere, other methods must be adopted - methods that will be bad for education, for the children and the nation. If we are forced into revolutionary action, the repercussions may reach far beyond the educational service.⁵⁰

During the course of his speech he also sharply criticised many aspects of educational policy and especially the inspection system, examinations and the position of women. The Irish Press in an editorial described Mr. Frisby's speech as deplorable and as being an 'ultimatum to the Government'.⁵¹ However, a motion of confidence was passed unanimously by Congress on Mr. Frisby's stand. A group of teachers mainly from the Dublin branch succeeded in getting a 'Propaganda Committee' inaugurated to pursue the salary demand, although not entirely with the blessing of the C.E.C. Dr. O'Connell felt that their brief might reasonably have been the responsibility of the Executive:

These people sat for some hours and produced a set of recommendations, which were readily accepted by Congress as something entirely original in the way of planning. Even mild criticism of the practicability of some of the suggestions would hardly be listened to and the Committee was accorded a vote of thanks for its work.⁵²

Congress also decided to disaffiliate the INTO from the Labour Party because the link was proving to be a source of 'embarrassment and liability'.⁵³

In a response to a telegram from Congress Mr. De Valera met a deputation from the C.E.C. on 18 April but no further advances were achieved. He defended another increase to gardai and civil servants granted in January 1945 as righting a wrong caused by a promise made to them before the enactment of the Standstill Order.⁵⁴ However, an even larger increase to higher Civil Servants granted two days later seemed to belie his own maxim calling for 'equality of sacrifice'.⁵⁵

This time teacher reaction was more spectacular. A protest was staged by teachers in the Public Gallery at the opening of the Dáil Debates on 27 April

1945. Leaflets were distributed referring to 'disgraceful salaries', 'debts', 'demoralisation' and to teachers being 'in the hands of money-lenders'.⁵⁶ Gardaí cleared the gallery and the debate resumed. General Mulcahy stated that despite poor salaries teachers were asked to cope with 'huge classes, an iniquitous exam system, restoration of the language and inadequate text books'.⁵⁷ In his defence, Mr. Derrig, reiterated the argument of the Department of Finance, that a rise for teachers would be 'tantamount to abandoning the policy implemented in the Standstill Order'.⁵⁸ He also rejected calls for educational planning as was happening in Britain or that arguments about 'what was going on elsewhere necessarily relates to us'.⁵⁹

The Central Propaganda Committee founded at Congress did get C.E.C. blessing at their meeting on 28 April 1945 'to pursue all work in connection with the salary campaign'.⁶⁰ On 12 May they ordered a countrywide series of special meetings in pursuance of the salary claim. Widespread publicity surrounding the meetings resulted in support from many different sections of the community. The Central propaganda Committee circulated a pamphlet entitled *Teachers at Bargain Prices*,¹⁰³ containing quotes from newspaper articles in the country supporting their case. In another pamphlet *The Case for Increase in Remuneration for National Teachers*⁶² teachers called for 'the implementation of the scale of salaries and pensions submitted by their Organisation to the Minister for Education in December 1944 and pending this an immediate and substantial bonus'.⁶³ Support for teachers' claims was voiced at the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church on 8 June,⁶⁴ by Church of Ireland bishops⁶⁵ and by the Catholic Clerical Managers Association.⁶⁶

In July 1944 Mr. Derrig in answer to a Dáil question stated that a new salary scale was under consideration to be put into effect when the emergency ended and that he was hoping to have conversations with teachers 'in a couple of months time'.⁶⁷ The INTO, in a letter to the Minister noting the statement, stressed that no revision of existing scales would be acceptable 'unless arrived at after discussion and negotiation',⁶⁸ and that they saw no reason to postpone their introduction until after the emergency. A request for an immediate Conference was rejected in a letter of reply from the Department which stated that the INTO would have an opportunity to express their views on the proposals 'before such scales were finally approved and promulgated'.⁶⁹

The delay in consulting INTO representatives was condemned at a C.E.C. meeting on 22 September. On 6 October Dublin teachers at a meeting held in the Mansion House voted in a secret ballot by 999 to 47 to come out on strike if and when called on to do so by the Executive. Mrs. K. Clarke, President of the INTO who presided at the meeting wrote of the intensity of feeling among the Dublin teachers:

You could see the faces of Jackie Brosnahan and his 'men' lighting up with joy as the human stream poured in to tell them Dublin was ready. It

was good to be there. It made you feel that life was worthwhile after all. I wonder will the INTO ever fully appreciate what these young men and some of the older ones have done in the past few months.⁷⁰

Mr. Derrig was clearly aware of the widespread support for the teachers' claim and pointed to difficulties 'breaking the goodwill between the Minister and the teachers'.⁷¹ The long-awaited meeting to discuss the new scales finally took place on 16 November 1945. At the meeting, the INTO Executive were presented 'with an elaborately detailed, cut and dried scheme, in which all the principles and suggested reforms embodied in the Galway Conference scales were ignored'.⁷²

The proposals were declared 'wholly unacceptable'⁷³ by teacher delegates. Despite further meetings the Government position remained virtually unchanged. The teacher argument that the new offer would leave them worse off than in 1938 brought the response that they were not the only section likely to be in that position. Compensation for the increased cost of living was not going to be a consideration in Government plans. A compromise proposal from the INTO along the lines of the recently accepted Black Committee in Northern Ireland was also rejected by the Minister.

In a letter to Mr. Derrig dated 10 December the INTO threatened strike action on 17 January 1946 if he was not prepared to go further. The threat was withdrawn the following day on the advice of His Grace, Dr. Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin who was attempting to find a compromise. Despite a letter of withdrawal Mr. Derrig did not move any closer to meeting teacher demands. At their meeting on 19 January 1946, as their action in rejecting Mr. Derrig's offer had been 'unanimously approved by the branches'⁷⁴ the C.E.C. called a special delegate conference to meet in Dublin on 9 February 1946 to review the whole position in the light of Government intransigence.

The Conference held in the Mansion House urged the C.E.C. to make further representations to the Minister and 'to submit the eventual final offer to all the members in the State who would decide by referendum whether the offer should be accepted or rejected'.⁷⁵ An amendment calling for a strike on 26 February was defeated but it was agreed that should the Government offer be rejected, then the Dublin teachers would be called out, 'within a period of 10 days after the result of the referendum became known'.⁷⁶

The further representations brought no advance and the final offer was duly put to INTO members. The result reached Head Office of the INTO on 9 March 1946:

Of the 9121 ballot papers issued to the Saorstat members 8522 valid votes i.e. 94% were returned; 3773 voted for acceptance, 4749 favoured rejection - majority 976. The Executive directed the Dublin teachers to come out on strike in accordance with the decision of the special conference. His Grace, Most Reverend Dr. McQuaid was the first to be informed of the result of the referendum.⁷⁷

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CHAPTER III

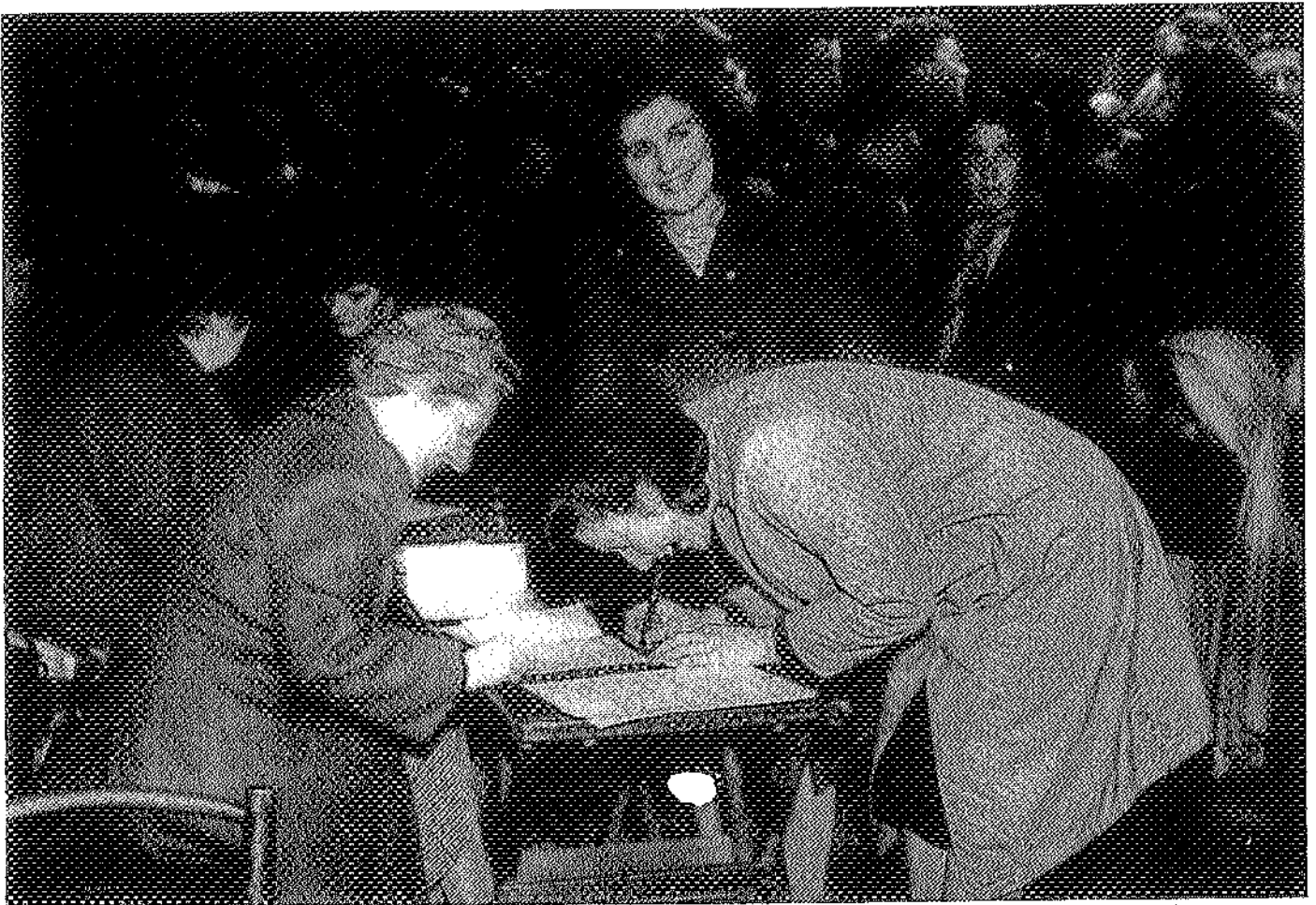
THE DIE IS CAST

Opening Moves

In a letter to Mr. Derrig shortly after the result of the referendum had been announced, the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid wrote:

There seems to be an inevitability about this matter which will cause it to work itself out to the bitter end. And when the end will have been reached it will be only a question of starting where one might have started before.¹

There could be no doubting that by the time the decision was taken there existed grave dissatisfaction among teachers with many matters in the educational field. The vote on the Government offer provided many with an opportunity of voicing this discontent. In fact the numbers voting in favour of acceptance - 44.3% of the total valid poll-would indicate that there was a strong element of protest in the votes of those who favoured rejection of the offer.



*Signing On on the first day of the strike on the Teachers' Club,
Mary Lawlor (Moriarty)*

The INTO firmly laid the blame for the situation in the Government's court. In a Press statement on 12 March they cited Government refusal to establish a representative committee to examine the salary situation, as the immediate cause of the strike. The Government offer had been rejected because of the all-round inadequacy of the scale as offered. The statement continued by saying the offer had teachers divided 'into forty different categories, each carrying, different rates of pay and each again subdivided into further categories according as they were deemed to be "efficient" or "highly efficient"'.² It was pointed out that the INTO would have been prepared to accept a settlement along the lines of the recent offer in Northern Ireland.

The following day Mr. Derrig strongly defended the Government position in another Press statement. The Government could not admit to the principle that they were bound by the methods and machinery of elsewhere 'in dealing with this or any other question'.³ The refusal of a representative committee had not prevented the INTO from entering direct negotiations. The Government offer representing a £1.25 million increase over the 1938 scale was a Government decision based on what they judged could be afforded. He felt confident they would be supported by every reasonable member of the community 'who studied the situation'.⁴

On 14 March Mr. Derrig intervened in the "Vote on Account" debate to give a more thorough explanation of Government determination. He said that teachers could not be treated differently from others affected by the Standstill Order. He pointed out that full compensation for the cost-of-living increase due to the War was not feasible in the circumstances. With regard to the proposed strike action he stated: 'I believe that the action is thoroughly misguided, thoroughly foolish and futile'.⁵ He questioned whether his offer had in fact been rejected by teachers as a whole as only 4,749 out of 10,750 in receipt of salary had voted against it. The action was determined by a body of 'agitators or malcontents in the teaching body who were bent on stirring up mischief'. He had tried to banish these from his mind when making the offer. He hoped that wiser councils would prevail and that the strike would be called off.

On the same day a letter from the Department of Education to the INTO expressed the Minister's surprise at the proposed action in the light of earlier negotiations. The letter pointed out that their action was being regarded 'as a challenge to the Government'⁷ and as being highly prejudicial to the interests of pupils, parents and indeed teachers themselves. In the event of the strike going ahead the Government offer would be automatically withdrawn and the salary of striking teachers would cease 'with a consequent break in pensionable service'.⁸

On 15 March a circular was issued by the Department of Education to managers and teachers in Dublin schools. It expressed regret at the proposed action and repeated that it was being regarded 'as a challenge to the authority of the

Government'.⁹ It called for the fullest cooperation from managers in facilitating teachers wishing to continue working who were assured 'against loss of remuneration and position by reason of reduced attendance due to the strike'.¹⁰

The INTO replying to the discrepancies in Mr. Derrig's figures pointed out that they included non-INTO members such as those in schools run by religious bodies. They rejected his argument that their withdrawal of the threatened strike action on 11 December, 1945 precluded their present course. At a meeting of Dublin teachers in the Mansion House on 16 March the directive to begin the strike on 20 March was given. In a Press statement issued following the meeting 'deep resentment' was expressed at 'the threatening and bullying tone' of the circular issued to managers and teachers. They felt sure that the Minister's appeal to clerical managers and religious teaching communities 'to act as strike breakers' would 'fall on deaf ears'.¹¹

No further effort was made to prevent the strike. In an editorial on the eve of the strike the Irish Times called on Mr. Derrig to withdraw his 'ill-advised circular' and re-open negotiations in order to prevent 'calamitous consequences'.¹² In a letter to the same paper Rev. E.C. Hodges, Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick asserted that rejection of the offer certainly represented the views of teachers in small Church of Ireland schools 'who had been suffering wrongs since the foundation of the State'.¹³

The Strike Begins

The strike began on 20 March 1946. On that morning a letter from Dr. McQuaid to the General Secretary of the INTO was published in the Press. The letter assured him that the clergy would not be used as an instrument for breaking the strike. The letter stated:

Your organisation must have no doubt that the clerical managers of the city and the religious superiors have full sympathy with the ideal of a salary in keeping with the dignity and responsibility of your profession as teachers.¹⁴

The letter pointed out that while managers were bound in obedience to the orders of the civil authority to keep the schools open, it assured them that no teacher would be penalised for striking.

The effect of the letter was to punch a gaping hole in Government strategy as well as providing an invaluable morale booster for teachers. It allowed teachers to 'don the cloak of clerical approval'.¹⁵ From a Government viewpoint Dr. McQuaid's intervention was the last thing they wanted and opened up a rift between McQuaid and De Valera which 'was never fully mended'.¹⁶

The Department of Education published a series of advertisements in the daily

papers which outlined the salaries attainable by the various categories of teachers under the new offer. The INTO accused the Minister of attempting 'to mislead the public at its own expense'¹⁷ while Mr. Derrig defended expenditure on the advertisements 'as being in the public interest'¹⁸ and on the grounds that people could make up their own minds on whether or not the offer was reasonable.

On the day after the strike began Mr. Derrig repeated that full compensation for the increased cost of living, as teachers were seeking was just not feasible. He accused teachers of being unreasonable and again expressed surprise at their action: 'I think having regard to the comparative security of teachers in their employment, and the very reasonable leisure periods they enjoy as compared with others, they cannot grumble'.¹⁹ He criticised teachers for challenging the authority of the State when they should be giving good example. It was a threat to the Government organised as a result 'of the activities of a small but active minority among the teaching body'²⁰ who had agitated amongst the women teachers and suggested to them that they were not being treated justly. He felt the strike was not comparable to ordinary trade union action in that it challenged the Government and was really directed against parents and children. The Minister for Finance Mr. Aiken said that as the Government could offer no more, to reopen negotiations would be pointless:

"Actually from the point of view of the national financial purse, the longer the strike goes on, the better it is for the finances of the country since we will not have to pay the salaries of teachers".²¹

In a Press statement issued on 23 March the INTO rejected Mr. Derrig's contention that the Government offer represented an increase of £1.25 million. They stated that this figure included £.5 million of Emergency bonuses which would be withdrawn eventually. They denied that they were seeking compensation for the cost-of-living increase but were seeking in fact a decent scale of salaries 'free from many of the objectionable features outlined in the recent offer'.²² They asserted that Government fears of a knock-on effect now made the teacher struggle the struggle of all who earned a wage or salary.

The Department of Education replied in another Press statement that teachers were 'arrogating to themselves the right to determine the remuneration to be paid to them'.²³ It further asserted that the people of Dublin should ask why only their children should suffer and 'have their mental and moral development retarded'. The INTO replied the following day that they had sought a representative committee to determine their salary but this had been refused by Government. The statement continued:

With regard to the Department's newfound concern for the welfare of their children, (Dublin parents), they will no doubt remember that when the INTO drew public attention some years ago to the mental strain and worry they (the children) were exposed to because of the Department's

insistence on outdated teaching methods, its representations were spurned and scoffed at.²⁴

On the ground the response from Dublin teachers to the call of the INTO Executive for strike action was virtually unanimous with 1227 out of 1230 INTO members signing the roll on the first day, in order to be eligible for strike pay. It had been arranged that strikers would receive 9/10 of their normal salary from a fund made up from country teachers surrendering 1/10 of their salaries. Picketing began on 27 March with women teachers showing remarkable enthusiasm for picket duty. Special branch meetings were arranged for 30 March to be addressed by strike committee members. At these meetings it was pointed out that religious instruction for First Communion and Confirmation would be carried on during the strike.

Nonetheless there was no sign of settlement or compromise. In an editorial, *The Irish Times* accused both sides of 'bombarding each other with advertisements and statements'²⁵ which were of negligible interest to the man or woman in the street. It proposed that Dr. McQuaid be called on to act as arbitrator, as about 40,000 children were directly affected by the impasse. Teachers began to analyse the fundamental issues which they felt were behind the dispute. An editorial in *The Irish School Weekly* called for reform of the whole educational system: 'The accountants have had their way for far too long and bureaucracy has provided us with plenty of evidence for long overdue impeachment'.²⁶ In a series of special notices prior to their Annual Congress progress, the INTO criticised discrimination towards pensioned teachers and 'the rating system'. The system was described as 'degrading' and although invented by the British, had never been applied in Great Britain. The notice pointed out that the recent offer aimed to perpetuate the device in an aggravated form. It stated: 'Teachers' objections to the rating system is no less strong than their objections to the inadequacy and inequality of the Minister's financial proposals'.²⁷

The Government position remained unchanged, despite calls for movement. A motion at a Fianna Fáil Convention in Tullamore on 7 April calling on the Government 'to renew its offer as a basis for negotiation'²⁸ was withdrawn following an appeal by Gerard Boland T.D. who stated that the Government could not negotiate while the strike was on. In the Dáil on 9 April Mr. Derrig rejected calls for arbitration as he felt the dispute 'did not lend itself to arbitration'.²⁹ He further rejected the idea of an arbitrator because the Government would be handing over its 'authority and discretion' to someone outside. He rejected allegations that he himself had helped bring about the dispute with his allegedly provocative handling. He stated that he had only been trying 'to bring home to teachers the serious nature of the action upon which they were embarking'.³⁰ He expressed concern at 'the grave results that would accrue to the community as a whole if the strike should succeed or should it be made to appear that it had succeeded'.³¹ He accused teachers of striking, not because of

injustice but because they wanted to force the Government 'to do something that it thinks and has good reason for believing it is not entitled to do.'³²

In a letter to the press the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr. Barton voiced concern at the crisis the strike was causing for small minority Church schools. He outlined the difficulties experienced even in normal times, of maintaining sufficient numbers to keep schools open and to difficulties in keeping teachers in those schools. The situation now was leading many of these to accept 'more attractive posts in Northern Ireland or England'.³³

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- 13 Letter to *Irish Times*, 19 March, 1946.
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CHAPTER IV

THE 78TH ANNUAL CONGRESS AND BEYOND



Executive Group

Front row: Mr. T.J. O'Connell (General Secretary); Mrs. K.M. Clarke (outgoing President); Mr. D. Kelleher (incoming President); Miss N. Higgins; Mr. Sean McGlinchey.

Back row: Mr. Hugh O'Connor; Mr. P. Carney; Mr. Sean Sweeney; Mr. T. Foley; Mr. I.H. McEnaney.

On the morning of the opening of the 78th INTO Congress a series of letters were published which revealed that the Government had in fact rejected an offer by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. McQuaid to act as mediator. In reply to Dr. McQuaid's call for some movement in a letter to Dr. O'Connell on 5 April, the INTO replied that:

They were prepared to instruct teachers to return to work without prejudice to their case, on condition that their case be reopened and that Your Grace be accepted to act as mediator between the Government and themselves.¹

Dr. McQuaid expressed his willingness to act as mediator and the full correspondence was sent to Mr. Derrig on 8 April.

On 13 April, Mr. Derrig in a reply repeated that the Government could make no further offers beyond that already made:

That being the position, no good purpose would be served by further discussion such as implied by any suggestion of mediation. It would be wrong to invite His Grace to mediate on an issue which, so far as they are concerned has already been decided.²

The publication of the full correspondence in the press further steeled the resolve of the Congress delegates to continue. A motion deploring the Government's attitude was passed unanimously and 'full moral and financial support'³ guaranteed to the strike. In her Presidential address to Congress Mrs. K.M. Clarke stated:

The smouldering resentment of years against stereotyped ideas and bureaucratic administration, the series of harsh enactments against women teachers, and an inspection system which contributes little or nothing to the value of education - all have helped to fan the flame, and have found their fitting climax in the present upheaval.⁴

She called on the Government to adopt 'a sane and reasonable method'⁵ on the language question and to set up a Council of Education. She concluded that the strike would be worthwhile if only it shook the Government out of 'its complacency regarding education' and 'if we can have a Department of Education that is a real Department and not just part of a political machine'.⁶

The tone and attitude prompted the Irish Press in an editorial to wonder why in fact teachers were on strike. Was it dissatisfaction, or an attempt to control the public purse or an effort to change the educational policy of the State?⁷ In a letter of reply Dr. O'Connell stated that the strike was a result of dissatisfaction, that they did not want to control the public purse and that they did want to change the educational policy of the State, though 'not in the sense suggested by your editorial but to prevent teaching from becoming the Cinderella of education'.⁸

The Government's rejection of Dr. McQuaid's offer to act as mediator and the publicity surrounding the Congress resulted in the INTO receiving widespread support and calls for settlement from many different organisations and bodies. On 6 May, Dublin Corporation unanimously adopted a motion calling on the Minister to meet an all-Party delegation with a view to bringing the dispute to a close.⁹

Mr. Derrig refused to meet the deputation. On 8 May the Dublin Trades Council invited the INTO to lead a march in the Connolly Commemoration Ceremony on 12 May. In accepting the invitation Mr. Sean Brosnahan, Chairman of the Dublin City branch of the INTO pledged that teachers would 'never suffer the humiliation of giving up the strike'.¹⁰ On 16 May the Irish Conference of Professional and Service Associations representing about 30,000 members, called on the Government to reconsider Dr. McQuaid's request for mediation.

The parents of children affected by the strike began to organise themselves as the dispute showed no signs of ending. On 22 May an overflow meeting was held in the Mansion House under the auspices of the Dublin Trades Union Council in order to coordinate the activities of the various parent groups. A motion was adopted blaming the Government for prolonging the dispute. It was also decided to form parent committees in every parish for the purpose of bringing the strike to an end and having negotiations reopened'.¹¹ The Parents' group held another meeting outside the Dublin Trades Council hall in Gardiner Street on 30 May at which they passed a motion demanding the postponement of the Primary Certificate Examination¹² and calling on the Minister to receive a deputation.

Education Estimates Debate: Government Holds Firm. 22-24 May 1946- 47

Introducing the Education Estimates Debate 1946-47, Mr. Derrig referred in a general way to the strike. He expressed concern at the deprivation being suffered by 40,000 children as a result of the action by national teachers but stated that the Government was not going to change its mind: 'Dá ngéilleadh an Rialtas d'éileamh ba mhó na éileamh a mheasfadh sé bheith cothrom agus réasúnta ní bheadh sé ag comhlíonadh a dhualgas don pobal a rinne Rialtas de'.¹³ (If Government yielded to a demand greater than that which it considered fair and reasonable, it would not be fulfilling its duty to the public which elected it.)¹⁴ Dealing with calls for reform, he warned against rushing into sudden changes of policy and of regarding education as a panacea.

Opposition deputies showed more unease. Deputy Mulcahy called for the Estimates to be referred back as a vote of no confidence in the Minister and in the way he was handling his Department at a very critical time in the country's history. He said the country was in 'an utterly chaotic state in educational matters'.¹⁵ Dr. O'Higgins felt that the strike was merely symptomatic of 'the worn turning'¹⁶ and that it was more than just an economic issue. Deputy P. Coogan cited the Minister's refusal to listen to advice as resulting 'in his fumbling from one blunder to another in the matter of education'.¹⁷ Deputy P. McGilligan stated: 'I do not know of any strike which has commanded the approval of so many prominent individuals as this strike has'.¹⁸

In defence of the Government, Deputy E. Kissane, Parliamentary Secretary to the Taoiseach, saw the issue as being whether a section of the people could make demands on Government and back these demands up with strike action. If the Government were to surrender in this case they would have to do so in every case he argued and 'that would be the beginning of the end of democratic Government'.¹⁹ Mr. Derrig's defence was not conciliatory. The primary certificate examination was to go ahead on 5 June. He felt reassured because deputies had not criticised the offer which Government had made to teachers.

The decision to resist teachers had been taken in the public interest. During negotiations he had offered a special rent allowance to Dublin teachers²⁰ but this had been rejected because the INTO had refused to make them a special case. The Government was aware of the anomalous position of teachers with regard to the cost-of-living bonus system but they could not make a special case for them apart from the Emergency Powers Act. They did, however, examine the teachers' case for increased remuneration before all other claims. Now the opposition he alleged had turned the strike into 'a political issue'.²¹

From a Government point of view defeat on the issue would result 'in hundreds of demands from different sections'.²² If the Government did not exercise control in national housekeeping, how would it do so in more serious areas?:

There are influences and individuals abroad, very anxious to fish in muddy waters and to create as much agitation and turmoil as they can to advance whatever particular ideas they may hold although they do not necessarily hold the same ideas very long.²³

He pointed out that the Government was aware of these dangers and that there was a greater question at stake than a question of money: 'National teachers had allowed themselves to be used as a spearhead, to be jockeyed into an agitation of this kind, the full dimensions of which they can only guess at'.²⁴

Having discussed the implications of the agitation being carried on, Mr. Derrig went on to state that teachers were also showing 'a lamentable lack of appreciation' for what the State had done for them: 'The State has taken him in and given him the position he holds'.²⁵ Regarding the principle of equal salaries for women teachers, he felt that the time was inopportune for its introduction. He defended the 'rating system' as being an incentive and that so far as he could establish there were no artificial barriers to gaining a 'Highly Efficient' rating. He also defended the inspectorate and the primary examination. Finally he rejected calls for a Council of Education not because he was opposed to it but because he doubted if 'there was any real demand for it'.²⁶

Mr. Derrig's references to darker forces at work were echoed by Mr. Erskine Childers at a meeting in Balinalee, Co. Longford. He charged that there was a three-fold attack on Government authority, 'from left-wing forces, an attack from those who believed the Government should hand over its authority when negotiating with teachers and an attack based on the supposition that the regime was Fascist and corrupt'.²⁷ In a letter to the press, Mr. Sean MacEntee accused opposition in the Dáil of mere rhetoric and putting up a 'sham fight'²⁸ which they could not convert into votes. Nevertheless the indications were that Fianna Fáil were beginning to feel pressure.

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CHAPTER V

BOTH SIDES DIG IN

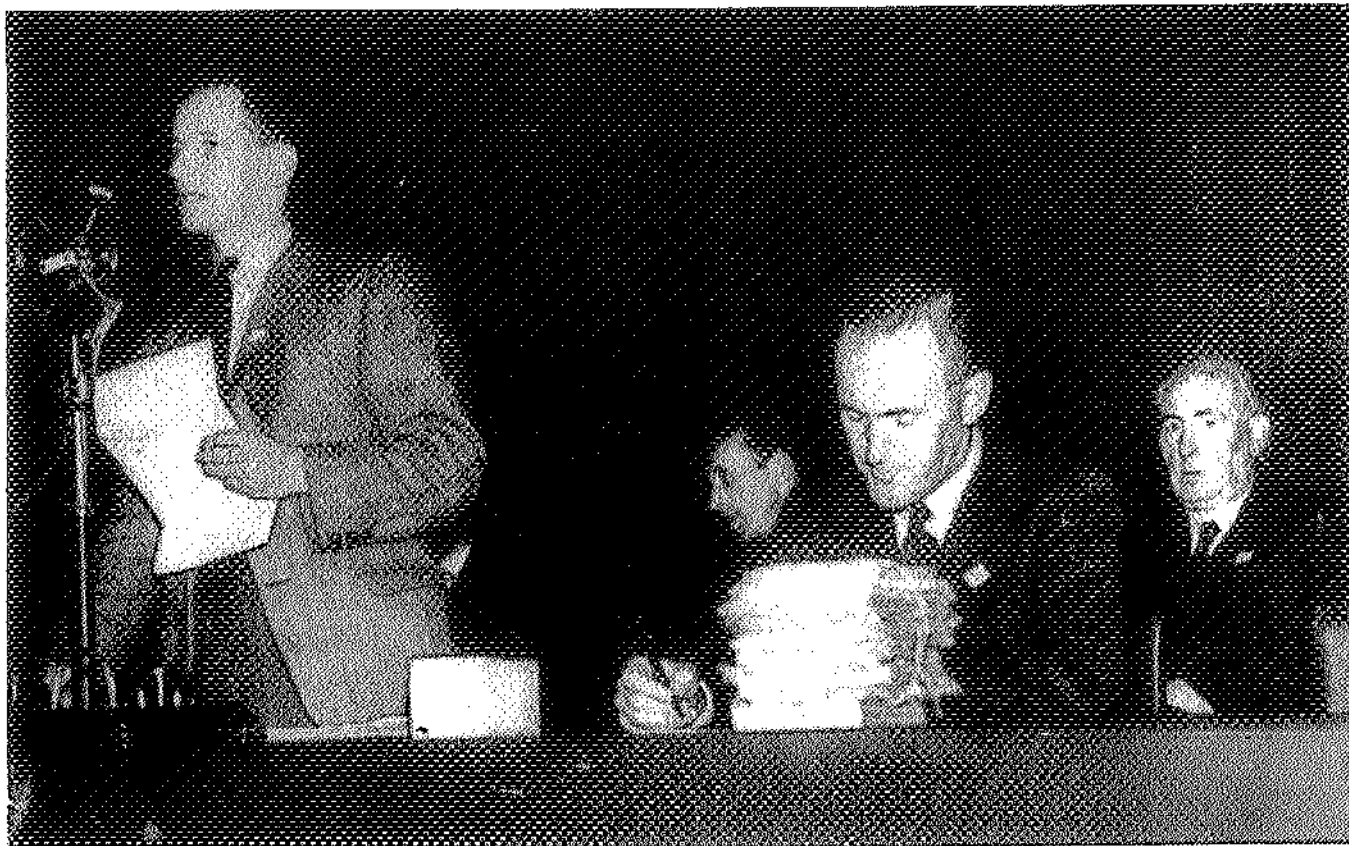
The length of the strike enabled a more coherent resistance to Government to emerge and this caused more embarrassment. This opposition was causing difficulties for Fianna Fáil who were drafting legislation to set up a Labour Court to mediate in disputes involving private employers. Mr. Derrig's defence of the Government's position drew sharp reaction from the media and the INTO. In an editorial the Irish Times accused the Department of Education of 'ineptitude' and 'inefficiency' and warned of the dangers of forcing teachers back to work unconditionally.¹ The Irish Independent in its editorial column said that while other departments of State had at least some solid achievements to their credit, the Department of Education was unique 'in its series of unrelieved recurring errors'.² The Irish School Weekly viewed Mr. Derrig's defence of 'public interest' with suspicion. Was Mr. Derrig defending the public interest it asked when introducing Preparatory Colleges, closing Training Colleges and 'persisting in its policy of banning the home language in infant classes'.³

At the public meetings organised between 25 May and 15 June the determination to continue had not been altered by Mr. Derrig's statements. In Tipperary, D.J. Kelleher, President of the INTO stated: 'if the Government continued their no-surrender policy the teachers would continue the same policy'.⁴ Dissatisfaction with the rating system, the treatment of women teachers and the inspectorate was emphasised at these meetings. In an advertisement entitled 'Government's Generous Offer' the INTO stated that under the offer purchasing power of teachers would actually be lower than in 1938.⁵

Mr. Carney of the Executive of the INTO interpreted references to subversive forces by Government speakers as a Government attempt to find 'a new bogeyman with which to frighten the electorate'.⁶ At a very large meeting held in Dublin on 25 June Sean Brosnahan also denied the charges of subversion stating that their one object 'was the removal of teachers' salary from the realm of controversy'.⁷ At the same meeting Mr. Sean O' Grady a past President of the INTO challenged the Government to a public debate on the rating system and stated that they were not going to remain the yes-men of 'outmoded and unorthodox educational machinery'.⁸

All the major Churches at meetings held throughout June called for re-opening of negotiations.⁹ On 18 June the Irish Co-ference of Professional and Service Associations pledged full support to the teachers and regretted the 'deplorable example'¹⁰ being set by the Government to all other employers in its refusal to accept the Archbishop's mediation. The concern of parents was made manifest at meetings held throughout the city. Protestant parents were particularly worried and expressed their anxiety in the press where it was stated that the strike

was having a 'far more disastrous effect on Protestant schools than on those under Roman Catholic management'.¹¹ On 28 June a Central Council of Parent Associations was formed to coordinate the activities of the different parent groups. The INTO appointed a correspondence secretary to liaise with the various associations.



Sean Brosnahan addressing strike rally in Mansion House, 1946. Also in the photograph, Colm Clandillon, Dave Kelleher and T.J. O'Connell.

With regard to the activities of parent groups, Deputy Alf Byrne asked Mr. Derrig in the Dáil for his reaction to their resolutions and those of other bodies.

Mr. Derrig replied that he had no proposals for settlement other than to urge teachers to return as the strike was 'solely a result of their actions'.¹² During the Appropriation debate in the Senate Senator Duffy referred to parents' attitudes and implored both sides to 'put the points at issue to arbitration'.¹³ Senator P.J. O' Reilly urged an all-Party Senate Committee to mediate. Both suggestions were rejected by Mr. Frank Aiken, Minister for Finance. He thought the Government offer generous and his only misgiving was that if a comparable increase were applied generally 'the nation could not afford it'.¹⁴ He questioned the rules and procedure of the INTO which enabled them to strike with the approval of 'less than a majority of their members'.¹⁵ He pointed out that it was not the Government that paid the teachers ultimately but parents themselves through taxation. He finally appealed to other civil servants and professional classes not to use their organisations to promote their own interest 'without

regard to the interests of the rest of the community'.¹⁶

As under normal circumstances schools in operation prepare to close for most of July and August. On 6 July the C.E.C. of the INTO held a review meeting at which plans were made for 'an intensification of the strike activities after the holidays'.¹⁷ Support for teachers was expressed at the rival trade union conferences. The Irish Transport and General Workers Union at their meeting in Galway pledged support on 5 July, while the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on 11 July declared that the 'Government must accept full responsibility for the strike and take immediate steps to settle it satisfactorily'.¹⁸

The parent groups continued their campaign through the holidays. On 11 July a deputation from the Central Council of Parent Associations visited the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and sought to enlist the support of all Protestant bishops to bring about a settlement. The following day Dr. McQuaid received a similar delegation. At a special meeting on 12 July attended by representatives from twenty parent associations in the city, it was stated that a mass petition 'was making good progress'.¹⁹

From a Government point of view the dispute created additional pressure when on 6 July a new political party, Clann Na Poblachta was launched in Dublin. In their manifesto the new party pointed to the enormous wealth accumulated by a small section during the War 'while unemployment and low wages, coupled with the increased cost of living are the lot of the workers'.²⁰ The irritation caused was hardly disguised in a letter from Mr. De Valera replying to a request to receive a deputation of Fianna Fáil teachers to discuss the dispute:

The Government cannot give way to strike action. I feel personally that teachers entered this course without due consideration. My advice to them is that they should return to their duties and save themselves and the children further hardship. There is no other way of ending the situation and the sooner that is realized by everyone, the better.²¹

In the Dáil, Mr. Dillon suggested that the dispute provided an ideal opportunity for the Government to test their Labour Court idea. He proposed that they set up an ad hoc Labour Court to examine the issues. Mr. Derrig distinguished between the attitude Government ought to have towards public servants and its responsibility to act as mediator in ordinary industrial disputes. 'Is it the public servants who are going to determine the question by coercing the Government or is it the Government is going to determine it having given it full consideration?'²² Regarding the possibility of the schools reopening after the holidays he stated that 'he had no information as to the teachers' intentions'²³ but hoped that it would not be necessary 'to consider alternative arrangements for the education of the children'.²⁴

On 12 August Dublin Corporation adopted a motion urging the Government to set up a Commission representative of managers, parents, teachers and the Department 'to enquire into the causes of the present teacher dispute and make recommendations'.²⁵ In a press statement the INTO declared their willingness to submit their claim to the proposed committee and if the Minister was willing to do likewise, 'they would direct teachers to return to schools'.²⁶ It pointed out that failure of schools to re-open after the holidays would now be the responsibility of Government. In a letter of reply to the Corporation's proposals read out at their meeting on 2 September, Mr. Derrig stated that as the causes of the dispute were well known to the public 'there would be no point, therefore, in setting up a Commission'.²⁷ The ensuing debate resulted in a motion being passed blaming the Minister for Education for the continuance of the strike and called on him 'to resign'.²⁸

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CHAPTER VI

THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

With no breakthrough in the situation during the holidays the INTO after their meeting on 7 September issued a press statement which declared: 'The minister has left teachers no option but to take all possible measures to prosecute the campaign with all the measures at its disposal'.¹ On 10 September a mass demonstration organised by the parent associations took place in the centre of Dublin (see poster page vi).

The march was described vividly in a letter to the press by Louie Bennett, Secretary of the Irish Women Workers' Union who felt that the spirit of the march signalled the emergence of a new factor in Irish political life:

The strike has become a far more serious and far-reaching problem than a salary one. It concerns the whole of society. It has become the spear-head of a struggle between Government and people. It has become a moral issue.²

Dublin teachers met in the Mansion House on 6 September where they reaffirmed their commitment to continue. They expressed their appreciation for the loyalty and cooperation of their country colleagues. Arrangements were made to hold another series of public meetings throughout the country between 23 September and 6 October. As the weather was particularly bad that autumn they decided to postpone resumption of picket duty so that strikers might be free to volunteer their services to help save the harvest. It was decided that the public meetings would culminate in a mass rally of parents and teachers in Dublin on Saturday 5 October.

The parent groups continued to cause problems for Fianna Fáil deputies who were forced to refuse invitations to address groups because of the Government stand. Mr. Sean Lemass in a letter to the Aughtim Street Parents' Association alleged that the decision to strike had been instigated by the teachers' leaders for the purpose of embarrassing the Government: 'The persons concerned are I believe much less concerned with the welfare of teachers as a class than with undermining the authority and influence of the Government'.³ He alleged that the parent groups 'were organised by the political opponents of the Government for party purposes'.⁴ The allegations were hotly denied by the Central Parents' Association at a meeting on 4 October. Mr. Rory Roberts in a letter on behalf of the Irish Trade Union Congress declared 'that while his organisation was in sympathy with the aims of the Association' they 'had never⁵ sought to control or exercise supervision over it' nor to finance it in any way.

The Fianna Fail Ard Fheis: 8 October 1946

The meeting of the Central Parents' Association on 4 October arranged that parents would picket the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis arranged for 8 October. Eight parents from each of the twenty five affiliated branches were rostered to undertake picket duty for 'the purpose of having the schools reopened'.⁶ It was decided to send a telegram to the Conference for the same purpose. The Government was also faced with a motion tabled by Dublin Townships Comhairle Ceantair calling for settlement by arbitration or negotiation. Thirteen other Fianna Fáil branches had submitted motions on the same subject. The Labour Party at its annual congress in Wexford called for 'a public inquiry into the whole system of Primary Education in the country'.⁷



Striking Teachers demonstration at the All Ireland Final Kerry V Roscommon, September 1946 in Croke Park.

The weekend prior to the Ard Fheis saw a build up of INTO activity. The mass demonstration of parents and teachers held on 5 October in Dublin was told by Sean Brosnahan of the INTO that if anyone thought that the strike would end

due to the collapse of teachers, they 'were making a big mistake'.⁸ The special meetings of the INTO held around the country revealed that there was no evidence 'that country teachers, as the rumour-mongers would have it, were getting tired'.⁹ The following day on Sunday 6 October about seventy teachers dressed in black coats and carrying banners rushed on to the pitch at half time, watched by the Taoiseach and the President during the Kerry/Roscommon All-Ireland Final at Croke Park.¹⁰ They were removed following scuffles with gardai and stewards. It was later revealed that the demonstration had been carried out without INTO approval.

On the morning of the opening of the Ard Fheis a notice appeared in the *Irish Times* headed 'Fianna Fail Ard Fheis: Information for delegates: An important sidelight on Partition'.¹¹ It outlined the comparative salaries in Northern Ireland and the Twenty Six Counties and then posed the question 'Can Northern teachers be expected to be enthusiastic anti-Partitionists?'¹² The motion calling for settlement through arbitration and negotiation was proposed by Mr. Edward McManus who stated that the purpose of the motion was not to embarrass the Government but to seek some solution. The motion was strongly opposed. Mr. John Kelly, delegate, argued that 'a vote for the motion would be a vote of no confidence in the Government,¹³ and he described the strike 'as a crime against the nation'.¹⁴ Mr. Derrig said that the Government could not submit to coercion and 'had to be masters in their own house'.¹⁵ Mr. De Valera admonished the Ard Fheis for not approaching the question in a realistic manner. Emergency controls could not be abandoned at the behest of an outside body he said. They had to be mindful of possible knock-on effects as well as inflation. How could they re-open negotiations he wondered, implying as it did an improved offer and capitulation?: 'Thus everyone who wanted to force the Government's hand would have a fine headline set by the teachers'.¹⁶ He appealed to teachers to return to work assuring them of a sympathetic hearing should they do so. The only alternative that he could see was a lock-out which he felt would be a deplorable step. He pointed out that the issue was to be debated in the Dáil: 'If parliament wishes to disagree with the Government, then parliament is supreme. But we will not surrender on this issue. If parliament is not satisfied...let there be another Government'.¹⁷

Hardly surprisingly Mr. De Valera's intervention sealed the issue. However, Dr. O'Connell writing in the *Irish School Weekly* stated that until his intervention 'there was a strong probability that despite what Mr. Derrig had said, perhaps even partly because of what he had said the motion would have been carried'.¹⁸ He based this statement on information from delegates who attended the debate. In his Presidential address to the Ard Fheis Mr. De Valera underlined the importance of the Government warning of the dangers in the times ahead of 'sections of the people acting in their own interests without regard to the ultimate welfare of the whole community'.¹⁹ He expressed the hope that 'the community would not use the strike weapon as a means of disruption'.²⁰

Mr. De Valera's speech while calming the Ard Fheis delegates, was strongly criticised by teachers at their October branch meetings. After a special meeting of the INTO Executive on 15 October a statement was issued declaring that the strike would continue. The Dublin City Branch of the INTO held a meeting on 19 October which was addressed by Mr. D.J. Kelleher, President of the INTO. He assured those on strike of the steadfast support of the country teachers. A resolution adopted unanimously, pledged that they would continue the strike until they had 'obtained justice for the teachers of the Twenty Six Counties.'²¹ The meeting further assured the C.E.C. of its full confidence 'in whatever action they might take'.²²

An effort to bring the sides together was attempted by Mr. Sean Moylan, Minister for Lands. Following discussions with the INTO Executive he wrote to Mr. De Valera stating that teachers would go back if the 'Highly Efficient' rating were abolished, a standard salary for principals introduced and equal pay introduced for women. He indicated that he thought a promise on abolishing the rating system might be sufficient 'to get them back'.²³ He finally returned to teachers to say that 'The Taoiseach would listen to nothing less than unconditional surrender by the teachers'.²⁴

Dáil Debate: 23 October 1946

The Government decided to allow special time on the opening day of the new Dáil session for discussion on a motion tabled by General Mulcahy and Mr. P. McGilligan:

That the Dáil is of the opinion that the long-continued closing of schools in the city of Dublin is a grave source of moral danger and educational loss to the children, and this creates distracting problems for parents, and therefore calls on the Government to set up at once a conciliation committee consisting of representatives of the Government, the managers, the teachers and the Dublin School Attendance Committee, to consider and make recommendations with a view to terminating the present dispute and bringing about the immediate reopening of schools.²⁵

In '100 Years of Progress' Dr. T.J. O'Connell writes that had the INTO been consulted they would have advised against tabling the motion. He reasoned that a Dáil decision would effectively rule out further attempts to attain mediation.²⁶ Nonetheless in a lobbying campaign through letters to the press, the INTO outlined its grievances. One letter stated that the strike was a result of the 'indifference amounting to contempt'²⁷ with which the claims of national teachers had been treated since the foundation of the State. Another letter criticised the 'obnoxious rating system',²⁸ unknown in other countries but which the Government sought to extend here. The position of teachers in small schools was also highlighted.

The result of the debate itself was never in doubt with all seventy two Fianna Fáil deputies mustered for the occasion, of whom only one other apart from the Minister and Taoiseach spoke. Introducing the motion General Mulcahy said that there was more behind the strike than 'mere dissatisfaction with pay'.²⁹ The strike was a result of dissatisfaction felt throughout the country with the whole educational system. He cited class sizes, the Irish language, lack of confidence among teachers with the inspectorate, disregard by the Department for the opinions of teachers and the 'general condition of poverty of some classes of teachers'³⁰ as contributing factors. He described the rating system as insulting to teachers' professional pride and accused the Department of being unheeding in relation to the problems of women teachers. Deputy Norton argued that as primary education was the only education received by '90% of the school-going children of the country'³¹ there was little to be gained by humiliating teachers.

Mr. Derrig in his reply went over ground that he had covered previously such as the weakening of Government authority and the threat from darker forces outside the country. He reiterated his contention that Government had to be master in its own house or public affairs could be reduced to a state of chaos and confusion once any organised body which felt itself numerically, financially or politically strong enough decided to impose its will on the community.³² On matters other than salary he stated that he had always been prepared to meet teachers to discuss these matters. He reminded the Dáil that the inspection system had been 'exhaustively inquired into'³³ in 1926 in a report signed by the INTO. On the rating system he pointed out that it had come into being with 'the concurrence and support of the INTO'.³⁴ He finally appealed to teachers to return, assuring them that there would be no question of victors or vanquished but 'more of a desire to understand, perhaps more than we have done in the past, one another's point of view and to get to know one another's difficulties'.³⁵

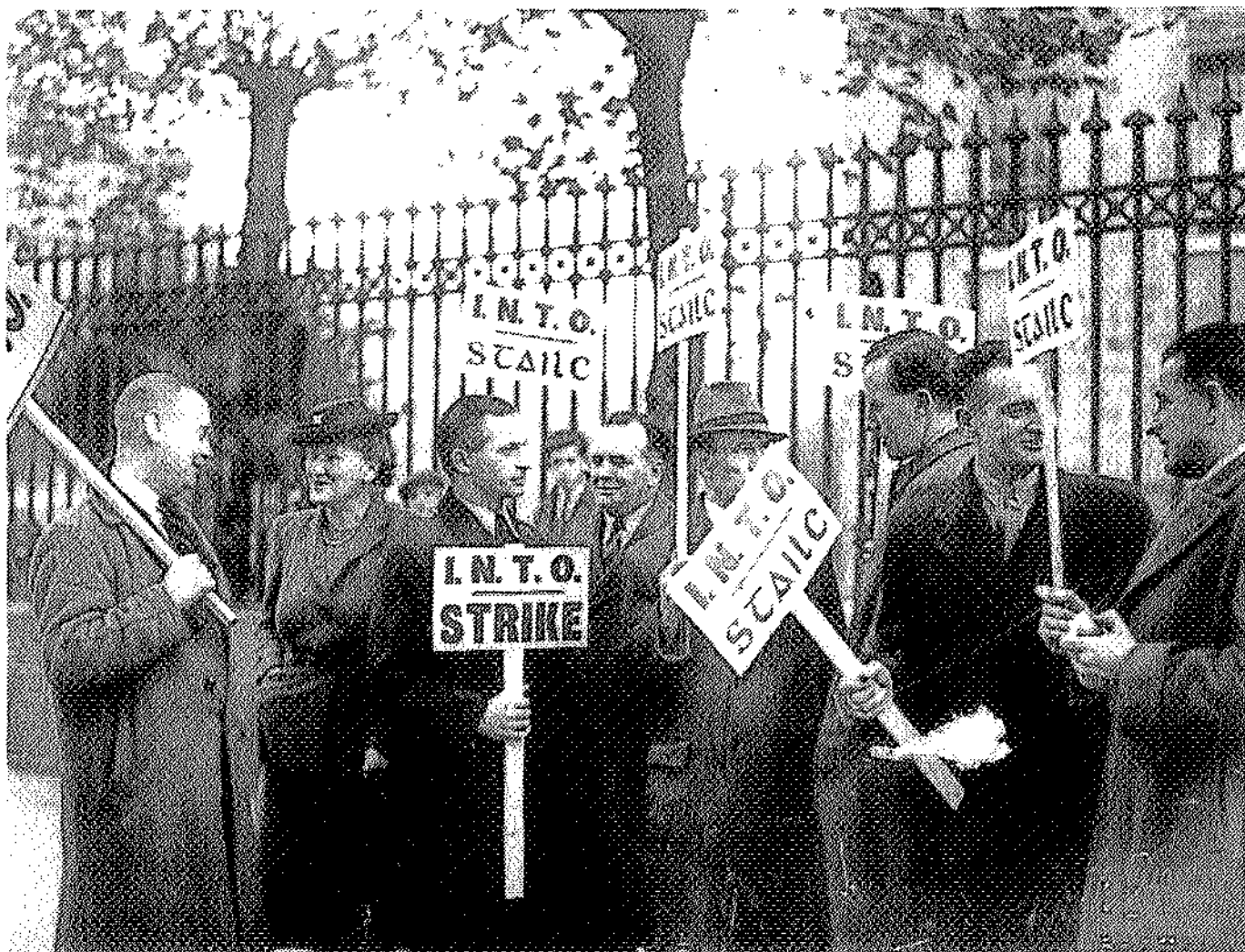
Mr. De Valera felt that Government throughout the dispute had been in the position of "dogs tied stones loose". They had refrained from putting their side of the case in order to prevent matters from becoming worse. The offer to teachers had been as generous as possible in the circumstances. The Government could not submit to the idea of a conciliation committee because it would involve them surrendering responsibility to an outside body and also because it would be 'an encouragement to strikes'.³⁶

Dr. T.F. O'Higgins criticised the Government for putting the entire blame for the situation on the side of those on strike. Pearse would have thought little of them for seeking victory over teachers who were merely seeking 'to discuss with an Irish Government the conditions within their schools and the conditions applying to themselves'.³⁷

The result of the vote was that all Fianna Fáil TD's voted against the motion. All other parties in the House as well as Independents voted for the motion.

O'Connell in his *100 Years of Progress* emphasises the finality of the outcome: 'The Dáil had spoken; mediation, conciliation or arbitration was finally out'.³⁸

The Strike Draws To A Close



The Last Picket - Marlboro Street, 2.p.m. - 4p.m. October 30th, 1946.
Jack Dufficy, Brid Bergin, Jackie Brosnahan, Sean Brehony, Kevin Costelloe, Rory O'Driscoll, Mick Doherty, Matt Griffin.

The INTO accused the Government of making misleading and groundless statements during the debate. In a letter to the *Irish Times*, Dr. O'Connell pointed out that the rating system had been continuously opposed by the INTO since its inception in 1900 and that the modified system embodied in the 1920 salary agreement as a result of negotiation and compromise was nevertheless regarded by teachers 'as the main blot on the 1920 Settlement'.³⁹ With regard to inspection, the 1926 McKenna Committee was precluded from discussing rating. He added that in 1931 the INTO had submitted a memorandum to the Department pointing to its failure to implement the recommendations embodied in the McKenna Report. He called for 'a public withdrawal of the allegations.'⁴⁰

In a letter to the Irish Times following a debate at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland on the strike, Rev. W.C. Simpson welcomed the discussion as marking a step forward in the attention given by the Church of Ireland to questions of importance affecting the social welfare of the country. He pointed to an historical rather than economic cause for the Government's resistance:

We can all understand that the present Government with its own military background and its long and patient struggle to suppress violent elements of disruption in the country should continue to base its policy on a system of compulsion in matters of education - but this habit of mind must surely give way in the course of time to an intelligent plan suited to an intelligent Christian social order.⁴¹

On Monday 28 October the gardai intervened to prevent teachers from broadcasting replies to Government arguments from a room on Dublin's O'Connell Street. However, the situation was transformed dramatically when on the morning of 30 October the press carried news that the strike was over. A statement had been issued by Dr. T.J. O'Connell, General Secretary of the INTO following a meeting of the Executive on Tuesday night 29 October 1946. The statement said that the meeting had considered a letter from the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. McQuaid which had asked them to consider the advisability of returning to work 'in consideration of the welfare of the children who are under my pastoral care, more especially in view of their spiritual and moral interests which as time passes, are being seriously endangered'.⁴² Dr. McQuaid's letter pointed out that the invitation was issued on his sole initiative so that 'it might not be construed as being in any sense prejudicial to the natural right of Government, and the teachers, or to the just and equitable claims of the teachers'.⁴³ The statement continued:

In deference to the wish expressed by the Archbishop of Dublin, as the spiritual authority for the education of the children, the Central Committee, the better to consult for the welfare of the children, unanimously decided to accept the invitation of His Grace and to direct the teachers to return to work without prejudice to their natural rights or to their just and equitable claims. Accordingly, the teachers now on strike are hereby directed to report for duty at their schools on Thursday morning, 31 October. A meeting of the Dublin City branch will be held in the Metropolitan Hall, Abbey Street, tomorrow (Wednesday) the 30th inst., at 4 p.m. A statement will be issued later from the Executive.⁴⁴

In its editorial the Irish Times while acknowledging that the decision was a 'strange denouement'⁴⁵ of the seven-month old conflict, had no doubts about what it meant: 'In effect, the teachers have surrendered'.⁴⁶

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- 5 Letter to *Irish Times*, 5 Oct., 1946.
- 6 *Irish Times*, 5 October, 1946.
- 7 *Irish Times*, 10 Sept., 1946.
- 8 *Irish Press*, 7 Oct., 1946.
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- 10 Film recording in possession of Sean Brosnahan.
- 11 Notice *Irish Times*, 8 Oct., 1946.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 *Irish Press*, 9 Oct., 1946.
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- 22 Ibid.
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- 35 Ibid., p.257.
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CHAPTER VII

THE AFTERMATH

The first intimation many of the strikers had that the strike had ended was gleaned from newspaper reports as they assembled for picket duty on the morning of Wednesday 30 October. The strike committee had, however, been informed of the Executive's decision at a meeting on Tuesday night. The meeting was described afterwards as 'very tense'¹ with many members criticising the decision angrily. The termination of the dispute was welcomed by leading churchmen, educationalists, politicians and parents. In many cases the welcome was coupled with the opinion that the Government ought to respond in a generous way to the gesture and with warnings that unless this was done 'bitterness and antagonism would seriously interfere with education'.²

The Executive's unanimous decision to accept Dr. McQuaid's invitation was explained to Dublin teachers at a meeting held in the Metropolitan Hall, Lower Abbey Street on Wednesday night 30 October. The reasoning was that it was futile to continue following the Dáil decision of 23 October.³ Reaction from the floor was one of outrage at the action. Mr. Sean Brehony accused the Executive of 'cutting the ground from under their feet'.⁴ Mr. C. Sheehan argued that 'there were no circumstances to warrant such action'.⁵ Despite the general feeling of having been sold out, many of those who disagreed with the decision appealed for the need to preserve the unity of the organisation. The result was that resolutions were passed to the effect that while the Dublin teachers did not agree with the C.E.C. decision, they would abide by it.⁶

Dissatisfaction with the decision found expression in the announcement of the candidacy of Sean Brosnahan, Chairman of the Dublin City Branch for the position of President of the INTO. The election soon became a contest between those who agreed with the Executive decision as represented by Mr. J. O'Kelly and Mr. T.J. Nunan both C.E.C. members, and those who disagreed represented by Mr. Brosnahan. Mr. O'Kelly appealed to voters that he had 'acted in the best interests of the organisation'⁷ in acceding to Dr. McQuaid's invitation. Mr. Nunan appealed to the old reliable virtue of common sense and warned of 'the decisions of young men in a hurry'.⁸ The dissatisfaction of "the young men in a hurry" was underlined at a public meeting held in the Mansion House on the first anniversary of the strike, 19 March 1947. The following motion was passed unanimously:

That this public meeting assembled on the first anniversary of the teachers' strike deplores the fact that the grievances which produced the strike have not yet been remedied, and it further deplores the failure of the Government to respond to the widespread demands voiced by responsible public representatives for an independent public inquiry into the

present system of primary education.⁹

Sean Brosnahan was elected President of the INTO during the following month and this coupled with the announcement of the retirement of Dr. T.J. O'Connell after thirty one years as General Secretary went some way towards mitigating the heartburning and frustration. Further, teachers anger was turned outwards towards a perceived "external enemy" - the Fianna Fáil Party.

Despite calls for a generous response to the teachers' action the attitude of the Minister, Mr. Derrig, remained rigid and uncompromising. A meeting between education officials and the INTO on 22 November 1946 achieved little. A claim that the strike period might be recognised for pension purposes was rejected.¹⁰ By Christmas the new rates of pay promised from 31 October still had not been implemented. The complicated nature of the new scales carried over into the new year leading Dr. O'Connell at one stage to declare to members that 'it would be quite impossible for us to attempt to say from the data at present available whether a teacher has been paid all that is due to him or where exactly he should be placed on the scale'.¹¹

Further difficulties such as the rising cost of living and a proposed "emergency stabilisation" of wages led the INTO in November 1947 to ask for an immediate review of their salaries. The Minister pointed to the impending General Election and said that discussion of the INTO request would have to await its outcome.¹²

More anger was generated among teachers with an announcement that a special payment was to be made to those teachers who had made their services available for work in the schools during the strike period. Mr. Derrig stated that the number who would receive the payment (£20 in the case of a Principal and £10 in the case of an Assistant) was 416 'of whom 364 were in capitation convent and monastery schools'.¹³ He also admitted that no application had been made for the payment which left a very bitter taste among the members of the INTO:

No action on the part of the Government either on the course of the early negotiations which led up to the strike, or during the course of the strike itself was so deeply resented by the teachers as this recognition and reward for this minuscule section who refused to stand in with their fellows in their fight for benefits and conditions which if obtained, would have come to them equally with those prepared to sacrifice pay and pension rights in order to secure them.¹⁴

Soon after the announcement of the special payment to non-strikers the Department of Education issued a circular to managers and principal teachers in Dublin City schools outlining a proposed scheme of night classes to make

good the educational loss suffered by those children who had left during the strike. The INTO in a press statement following a meeting on 21 January 1947 protested against the manner of its introduction, without prior consultation with the union. They also questioned the Minister's motives in introducing the scheme, strongly suspecting that it might be 'a publicity gimmick by the Minister or his Department who had not yet got over their pique because the teachers had the courage to challenge'¹⁵ them.

As a result of the Dáil debate on 23 October it was proposed that the four teacher TD's, members of Fianna Fáil, 'be expelled from the INTO'¹⁶ and the C.E.C. urged members to refrain from active support of the party until such time as harmonious relations between the Department and the INTO were restored. It was inevitable that the newly formed political party, Clann na Poblachta would find eager recruits among disaffected teachers. Mr. Con Lehane a founder member of the party, addressed the first anniversary meeting of the strike on 19 March where he pledged the party's support for the teachers' demand for justice and fair play. He stated that:

The working class would not forget that for the first time in history an Irish Government had put a premium on scabbing...This scandalous and indefensible gesture would be remembered in Dublin long after the present Ministers were relegated to whatever Limbo is reserved for discredited politicians.¹⁷

The pervading educational atmosphere was hardly an ideal launching pad for a comprehensive INTO booklet entitled *A Plan for Education*. The publication was the work of a special committee appointed in September 1943 to set out in a general way 'the educational ideals of the organisation'.¹⁸ As might be expected the reaction to a Report which suggested that the general tendency of Government policy was towards making 'Irish almost a dead language',¹⁹ was not overly receptive. The suggestion that the Department of Education, so eager for the language, was in fact 'contributing to its demise'²⁰ through insistence on written examinations, was equally unacceptable.

Mr. Derrig rejected calls for educational reforms in Ireland along the lines of those which were currently taking place in post-War Europe. His argument was: 'Bhíomar saor ó aon ní do chuirfheadh bac ar ár scéimeanna oideachais'²¹ (We were free from any interruptions in our educational development' (during the War).) He felt that criticism of the education system was a result of misrepresentation and ignorance. He questioned the basic understanding of teachers of the educational system and its workings: 'It is extraordinary how people, even those who set out plans for education, do not seem to understand the fundamental position which exists in this country regarding education'.²² He opposed a call for a Council of Education to investigate dissatisfaction with the system, because he had not seen 'evidence of such dissatisfaction'²³ In the

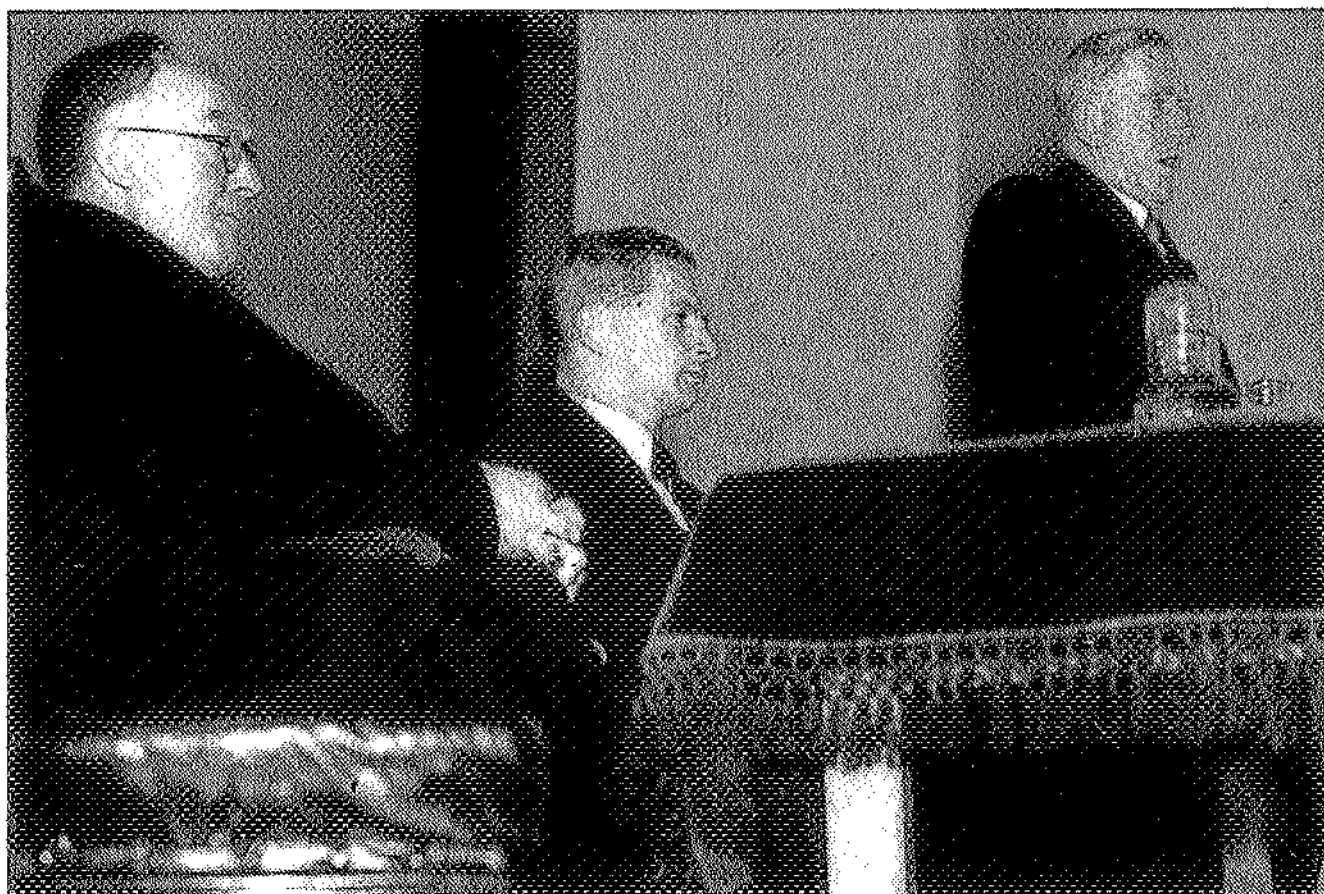
Senate Mr. Derrig again suggested points raised in *A Plan for Education* were not worthy of consideration.²³

The Minister's lack of enthusiasm for sweeping reforms found support in the *Annual Report of the Department of Education 1946- 47*. It expressed satisfaction with education progress which had been made throughout the year 'ach amháin gur chuir an stailc isteach go mór ar chuid de scoileanna Bhaile Átha Cliath'²⁴ (except that the strike interfered greatly with some Dublin schools. With regard to the Irish language it reported:

Ní hionadh go bhfuil an fheabhas seo atá ag teacht ar an gcaint ag dul chun maitheasa sa cheapadóireachta scríofa, ná go bhfuil daltaí go bhfuil an Gaeilge go blasta iontu do scríobhadh go saoráideach.²⁵

(Not surprisingly, the improvement which is being effected in oral work is improving written composition and that pupils with a good command of Irish are able to write with ease).

The post-strike period saw no amelioration in the relationship between national teachers and Government. An INTO advertisement regarding their deteriorating conditions, which referred to a statement made by Mr. Aiken early in the



Bundoran Congress 1948. Speaker: Minister for Education, Richard Mulcahy T.D., Sean Brosnahan, and Bishop O'Callaghan.

strike concerning revenues accruing to the Exchequer as a result of strike action, was condemned in the Irish Press as an example of 'unscrupulous political propaganda'.²⁶ The Irish School Weekly, agreed that while the advertisement might be construed as political propaganda, it argued that the only alternative to that kind of propaganda was the 'silence of Totalitarianism'.²⁷

It was perhaps to be expected that teacher resentment towards Fianna Fáil would find an outlet in the 1948 General Election. A feature of the emergence of Clann na Poblachta was 'the number of teachers associated with it'.²⁸ The victory which the Government had achieved over the teachers in 1946 was to prove rather costly in the 1948 election. De Valera's biographers, Lord Longford and T.P. O'Neill assessed it as 'a strike which went a long way towards undermining the goodwill which De Valera had won by his success in maintaining neutrality'.²⁹

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EPILOGUE

The INTO Executive decision to call off the strike following Dr. McQuaid's appeal caused a lot of soul searching among the rank and file of the INTO. A release valve for frustration was provided for in the letters pages of the INTO journal the Irish School Weekly, and also at meetings held at the local branches. Those who opposed the decision would have sided with the views expressed by a Mr. C.J. Lehane who in a letter to the editor wrote:

"The glorious struggle for improved conditions of working, and for decent remuneration has come to an inglorious ending with unconditional surrender by the C.E.C. (definitely not by the general body of teachers). No amount of cant about "moral victory" can hide the stark naked reality of failure to attain even the least of the much talked of "fundamental principles".¹

As far as the Executive were concerned however, the writing was on the wall with regard to the possibility of any concessions from Government. Replying to Mr. Lehane the General Secretary wrote that "his outspoken criticism would curry more conviction to the ordinary member if having "told off" the C.E.C. he had proceeded to outline the alternative course which they should have adopted following a refusal to accept the Archbishop's invitation".²

However despite the strong feelings expressed there was a sizeable body of opinion among teachers who warned against aggravating the situation. In a letter to the journal Mr. Frank O'Duffy from Monaghan cautioned that invective directed against the C.E.C. should not be done at the expense of the unity and integrity of the INTO as a whole. He recommended reflection on Kipling "as both a lesson and inspiration":

"As a creeper that girdles the tree trunk
The law runneth forward and back,
For the strength of the pack is the wolf
And the strength of the wolf is the pack".³

The decision however had been taken and only time would tell how valid it had been. Even though Fianna Fáil had been returned to office in the five previous General Elections people were starting to question the old republican rhetoric. Mr. De Valera still maintained the status of revolutionary hero throughout Ireland but economic conditions remained harsh. The action of teachers against economic conditions brought the first challenge by any group of professionals against Government economic policy. This was something which had stung Fianna Fáil and Mr. De Valera deeply. Despite efforts by the government to attribute political motivation to the teachers this was now widely accepted as not being the case. Rural teachers had supported their city col-

leagues throughout the campaign despite personal hardship in many cases. In their eyes the struggle transcended mere political issues. It wasn't a struggle about control of the purse strings or party allegiance but about responsibility of Government to people. What was the point in having Independence if those in power were as unresponsive to the difficulties of the people as an alien regime. The INTO had had plenty of experience in dealing with the former as well as the latter.

Life in Dublin was not easy in 1946 and no group was more aware of the deprivation which existed than teachers who were dealing with the economic realities on a daily basis. The Executive decision to call off the strike for the sake of the children was taken because of genuine concern. Members of C.E.C. would not have disagreed with an editorial in the Connacht Tribune which stated that "The strike was conducted with a dignity and decorum worthy of the best traditions of this noble profession and their magnanimous gesture in returning to work at the appeal of the archbishop of Dublin must compel the most cynical to believe that first and last the children's welfare is the prime concern of teachers"⁴. They also realised that they were committing electoral suicide and risking castigation among their own members but they genuinely believed that the Government had no intention of budging on their demands and to continue with the campaign would be both futile and damaging to children of parents who had supported them staunchly. Too many bridges had now been burned. As well as causing severe embarrassment for Fianna Fáil the strike became a rallying flag for many dissatisfied groups. Most of these now realised like teachers, that hope for ameliorating their situations lay not in convincing Fianna Fáil of the merits of their claims but in combining together to remove the party from office. Clann na Poblachta was to become the focus to achieve this aim and teachers, now fully politicised were making no bones about their political motivation and threw themselves into the task with relish.

In the book "De Valera - Long Fellow Long Shadow" Tim Pat Coogan wrote that the towering presence of De Valera in Irish politics gave him a status in the country which seemed to suggest that he could act in a virtual dictatorial manner in relation to any aspect of Irish life. Teachers challenged this status and in refusing to negotiate with them in a serious manner he incurred their displeasure. With churches supporting their position they presented formidable opposition. Dr. T.J. O'Connell laid responsibility for the strike and the ensuing bitterness solely with Mr. De Valera. He wrote that the efforts at settlement failed because of the intransigence of a Taoiseach "who despite appeals from the public the press and from Parliament itself could not be moved from a position he had taken from the very beginning. One word from Mr. De Valera could have prevented the strike. One word would have sent the teachers back after it had begun. It was to be unconditional surrender as far as he was concerned and none of his ministerial colleagues was free to say otherwise"⁵.

Although the INTO continued to make demands on the Fianna Fáil government they had very little expectation of success. By the end of 1947 the attention of all sections of the public focused on the forthcoming General Election. Tim Pat Coogan wrote that "the strike was like an electoral runaway rolled out in front of a new party waiting to take off."⁶ This new party was Clann na Poblachta founded by Sean McBride. The party gathered its strength and vigour from disaffected republicans within the ranks of Fianna Fáil and with a social policy which included a commitment to eradicate T.B. which each year claimed many lives and had a social stigma far greater than Aids today. Tim Pat Coogan also states that "Either then or now it would be difficult to imagine two other groups in Ireland which could match the commitment and energy of the combination of the republicans and the teachers. Disillusioned with Fianna Fáil a significant proportion of the membership of the teachers' trade union. The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) swung over to the new Party. The teachers Club in Dublin's Parnell Square virtually became Clann na Poblachta's headquarters, from which a nationwide campaign was directed."



INTO Strike - Working Committee

Front row: Miss B. Bergin, M.A., Ingean Ni Scinnideora, Miss McBride, Miss McGrath, Mrs. Breen, Mrs. P. Byrne, Mr. Sean O'Grady, Mr. M. O'Doherty, Mr. E. Regan.
L.to R., Back row: Mr. W. Mullarkey, Mr. B. Wright, Mr. Sean Brehony, Mr. Sean Kennedy, Mr. P. O'Reilly, Mr. Dan Rinn, Mr. Kevin Costelloe, Mr. L. O Dubhgaill, Mr. Tom Roycroft, Mr. C. Clandillon, B.A.

The aim of unseating Fianna Fáil was not to be easy. The main issue as far as they were concerned was maintaining power while that of the opposition parties was removing them at all costs. The strategy adopted by the party to

ensure electoral success lay in a rather hastily constructed economic policy devised by Sean Lemass coupled with an electoral Amendment Bill presided over "unblushingly"⁸ by Mr. De Valera. The number of deputies in the house had been fixed in 1935 at 138 but in the new Bill, despite the fact that the population had fallen, this number was increased to 147. The number of three seater constituencies was also increased from 15 to 22 which favoured Fianna Fáil over the smaller parties. While achieving some success in curbing the gains of the new party (the constituency revision meant that the Clann won 10 seats instead of 19 had it secured representation proportional to its vote). Fianna Fáil fell from office following the results of the election. Although Richard Mulcahy was the official leader of Fine Gael he was unacceptable to the Clann as Taoiseach and so John A. Costello became Taoiseach of the new inter-party government while General Mulcahy became the new Minister for Education.

Whatever about the jockeying for position among the newly elected government the INTO were delighted with the outcome. Prior to the election the Executive had prepared a questionnaire for all the party leaders on the matter of salaries and conditions.

"Favourable replies were received from Messers Mulcahy (F.G.) Norton (Lab.) McBride (Clann na Poblachta). No reply was received from Mr. De Valera (Fianna Fáil) or from Clann na Talmhan".⁹

The first meeting with the new minister took place on 5 March 1948. The remit of the meeting was wide-ranging including the whole question of salaries, pensions, arbitration, a council of Education and the effect of the strike on the Dublin teachers incremental and pensionable service. The INTO called for the establishment of a representative committee similar to the recently established Black Commission in Northern Ireland to consider and recommend suitable salary scales and conditions of service. Following this meeting the Executive reported that "the atmosphere was cordial and sympathetic and there seemed to be a genuine desire on the part of the minister to secure the goodwill and cooperation of teachers".¹⁰

The optimistic tone continued through to the 1948 annual INTO Congress at Bundoran. In his address to Congress General Mulcahy announced that the Arbitration scheme for the public service, proposed by Fianna Fáil in 1947, but from which the teachers had been excluded would now be accepted by the government. This decision he stated "would leave teachers, along with the Council of Education he proposed to have set up, free to concentrate on the higher aims of Education".¹¹ He further pledged to investigate and improve the whole area of pensions. At a private session at Congress two letters were read out agreeing that credit would be granted for incremental and pensionable service lost by Dublin teachers because of their absence on strike from 20 March to 21 October 1946. Legislation was to be introduced by way of amendment to the

superannuation scheme. This announcement made a great impression with the delegates at the Congress in marked contrast to reaction to the announcement of the special bonus which was to be paid to the non-strikers by the previous minister "It seemed to indicate a new spirit and a good omen for the co-operation for which the minister had pleaded during his Congress address".¹² There were also some minor adjustments on pay, allowances and staffing conditions announced but teachers emphasised that the existing 1945 scales on which the tinkering was based, were totally inadequate. They demanded that completely new scales be introduced incorporating the principal of a common basic scale for all teachers - primary, secondary and vocational. They demanded that there be no discrimination on grounds of sex, and called for the abolition of the rating system. Teachers should be paid salaries appropriate to their qualifications and service irrespective of the attendance at their schools or the date of entry into service.

In the Education debate in the Dáil in May 1948 the minister stated that he hoped to have the salaries committee and the arbitration scheme set in place before the end of the year. Early in 1949 the representative committee on salaries consisting of 18 members under the chairmanship of Judge P.J. Roe S.C. was finally set up. Its terms of reference were "to consider salaries and other grants including provision on retirement to be paid to Teachers in National schools, and to report thereon".¹³

The INTO members appointed to the committee were the four offices, President, Vice-President, ex President and General Secretary, viz. Messers L. Forde, J. Mansfield, Sean Brosnahan and D.J. Kelleher and also Maighréad Ní Scinnídeora and Dónal Scanail.

The Roe Report finally issued on 8 May 1949 but the INTO Executive felt that because of the fact that the report contained majority and minority recommendations their case was not fully appreciated. They wanted the immediate implementation of the majority proposals in full. The Government were more inclined to the minority proposals. Hard negotiations had still to come. However certain basic principals were embodied in the report which marked a significant advance for teachers. Common incremental salary scales were introduced for women and single men with a higher scale for married men. Women principals and vice principals were to get the same rates of allowances as single men in the same positions. Additional bonuses were to be paid for honours University degrees. Civil Service superannuation terms were recommended with the introduction of the lump-sum gratuity payment on retirement. There was a recommendation that women teachers might receive an enhanced pension rather than the gratuity - a proposal endorsed by the teacher members on the Committee but following opposition from women teachers this proposal was dropped and "the government agreed that in this respect women and men should be treated alike".¹⁴

The main issues of contention which now existed between the Executive and the Government were concerned with the actual scale figures proposed, the date on which they were to become operative and in the case of the lump sum payable on retirement, the inclusion of those who had retired prior to 1 January 1950, the date from which the new agreement was to operate. The greatest advance however created by the new atmosphere was the proposal to set up a Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for teachers. This promise was finally brought to fruition on 24 February 1951 when the terms for the operation of the scheme were agreed and signed by the General Mulcahy.

The INTO has continued to battle for improvements in the conditions of remuneration and service of teachers since 1946. It may be noted however that the improvements secured from General Mulcahy as Minister for Education contributed in no small way to the regrets, often expressed by older teachers, that political circumstances had prevented him from becoming Taoiseach in his own right.

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- 1 Extract from letter published "I.S.W." Vol. 48 No. 51/52. Dec. 1946 (p610).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Editorial quoted *I.S.W.* Vol. 48 p610. Dec. 1946.
- 5 History of the INTO "100 Years of Progress" Dr. T.J. O'Connell, (pp239/240).
- 6 De Valera "Long Fellow Long Shadow" Ch. 30 p.636.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 *100 Years of Progress* p.240.
- 10 Ibid p.241.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid. p.242.
- 13 Ibid. p.243.
- 14 Ibid. p.246.

Note on abbreviations used in Appendix I

E.B.	=	Emergency Bonus.
E.	=	Efficient.
H.E.	=	Highly Efficient.
Min.	=	Minimum.
Max.	=	Maximum.
J.A.M.S.	=	Junior Assistant Mistresses.
N.I.	=	Northern Ireland.

This document is a photocopy of an official memorandum sent to the Secretary of the Taoiseach from the Secretary of the Department of Education 23/5/1946, S.P.O. S10236C.

Appendix I
New Scales for National Teachers

	Existing scale (1938) without E.B.	Original proposals of Minister for Educ. to Gov. (24/9/45)	First official proposal to INTO (16/11/45)	Second official proposal to INTO (8/12/45)	Scales submitted by INTO (12/44) pension stoppage.	New scales for N.I. less 5%
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Single men						
E - min.	147	200	200	220	300	264
E - max.	318	400	380	380	600	522.5
H.E - max.	+357	460	416	416	600	522.5
Married men						
E - min.	147	200	200	220	300	264
E - max.	318	545	485	485	650	522.5
H.E - max.	+357	614	525	525	650	522.5
Women						
E - min.	134	200	180	200	300	237.5
E - max.	258	400	324	340	600	427.5
H.E - max.	+283	460	356	376	600	427.5
J.A.M.S.						
E - min.	98	130	140	150	200	See
E - max.	133	214	186	196	400	Note (1)
H.E - max.	133	238	186	212	400	Below
Cost (including appropriate provision for Capn. Schools) not less Above 1938 scales. £1,700,000						
	-1,512,000		1,000,000	1,150,000	?	
				see note (2) below		than

+ There are in the existing scales higher maxima for H.E. Principals of bigger schools but the figures given apply to H.E. Principals of schools with less than 50 pupils, and H.E. Assistants.

Note (1): N.I. has special arrangements for J.A.M.S. depending on length of service; those of long service will receive the scale for trained women teachers; those with shorter service, unless they go to training, will receive only £160-£240.

Note (2): The figure of £1,150,000 on column (4) above includes provision of about £50,000 by way of rent allowance or addition to salary for teachers in Dublin, Cork, etc., e.g., married men in Dublin - £40, others in Dublin - say £15; married men in Cork, etc. - £20, others - £10.

The figures of cost given above are those in excess of the existing scales, omitting E.B. altogether; if extra cost above current expenditure (existing scales - E.B.) is desired, the amounts given should be reduced by £320,000 - the present cost of E.B., by £453,000, the cost of E.B. as from 1st January, 1946.

* **Memorandum for information of Taoiseach sent to Secretary of Taoiseach from Secretary of Department of Education 23/5/1946.**

Abbreviations

I.S.W.	=	Irish School Weekly
S.P.O.	=	State Paper Office
C.E.C.	=	Central Executive Committee.

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