

1 The Social Setting

‘Is this a Civilized Country?’

Ireland endured a prolonged period of unrest from 1912 that involved a rising in 1916, a war of independence with Britain in 1919 and culminated in civil war between 1922 and 1923. Amid this chaos the Irish Free State was born in 1922 and began the task of asserting its legitimacy and reinstating law and order and rudimentary services of civil society and government.¹ The new Irish state was remarkably stable under the leadership of Cumann na nGaedheal until 1932 and then under Fianna Fáil until 1948.² Much hope and fear was vested in the birth of the state, however, the Professor of Philosophy at Maynooth College, Rev Peter Coffey, wasted his mental energy when he fretted that an independent Ireland would be guided by ‘the voice of Irish Labour’, which would result in the confiscation of the property of the bourgeoisie without due compensation: no such social reform occurred, quite the contrary.³ The new Irish state, cheered on by the main churches, fortified the protection of private property for those who could afford it.⁴ The interests of this class were protected (and furthered) while tight books were balanced, unforgiving ideology was cemented in legislation and limited welfare provision was pruned and depleted to survive the economic reality of political independence.

Mrs Paula C., X Talbot Place, Dublin, n.d. c. 1937. DDA, AB 7 CC, Box 7.

¹ The Irish Free State, established in 1922, equated to the same geographical area as the Republic of Ireland. The Free State existed until 1937, when the state became known as Éire and the Republic in 1949.

² Cumann na nGaedheal was founded in March 1923 and was made up of all those serving in the Provisional Government. Sinn Féin (the main political opposition, later to split resulting in the formation of Fianna Fáil in 1926) did not serve in either the Dáil or the Provisional Government after the Treaty vote of January 1922. Fianna Fáil, led by Eamon de Valera, entered the Dáil for the first time after the general election of 1927.

³ Rev Peter Coffey, *The Social Question in Ireland* (Dublin: CTSI, 1919).

⁴ R. Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland, 1923–1948* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

‘Apathy of citizens who lack confidence in existing regime’ 21

‘Apathy of citizens who lack confidence in the existing regime’

The highest price for the years of conflict and unrest was paid by the poorest in Irish society. The largest Catholic charity, the Society of the Saint Vincent de Paul’s [hereafter Vincent de Paul] monthly bulletins recorded the deteriorating situation for certain vulnerable groups. In July 1918, its president noted that the increase in unemployment and prices throughout the country had brought many ‘widowed charwomen’ and large families ‘below the poverty line’.⁵ The early years of political independence only brought worse tidings. The closure of factories and companies that had catered for the demands of the British army had a significant impact on local areas.⁶ In March 1922, for example, there was unrest in Wexford following the closure of Messrs Doyles’ works and the Wexford Engineering Company and a massive reduction in staff at Messrs Pierces’ works from 600 to 100.⁷ The withdrawal of the British army from Buttevant Barracks in north county Cork had resulted in the need for emergency relief schemes to deal with the distress caused by the consequent unemployment.

On 6 March 1922, Rev John Godfrey c.c. wrote from Letterfrack in Galway to the Provisional Government: ‘On behalf of the people of this parish of Ballinakill situate (sic) in Western Connemara on the shores of the Atlantic I wish to put before you a few painful facts so that you might put them before your Government.’⁸ He spoke for a community that lived on dried fish and needed potato seed to plant their meagre bog land, but were told by those that administered poor relief ‘there has been no grant so what can we do’. He lamented that many of the men in the area had had no work for the previous eighteen months and decried the paltry small-scale relief works as ‘a poor joke’.⁹ Godfrey also recorded a decline in the services available to help this community since independence. The Congested Districts Board had helped the fishing community to maintain their nets,¹⁰ but it was no longer functioning and ‘we think your Government which has acquired all the privileges of that old Board

⁵ *Bulletin of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul*, 83 (July 1918), p. 207.

⁶ ‘Distress and unemployment in Saorstát generally’, Department of an Taoiseach, S4278A, NAI. [hereafter S4278A].

⁷ S4278A.

⁸ Rev Godfrey, c.c., Letterfrack in Galway to the Secretary of the Provisional Government, City Hall, Dublin, 6 March 1922, S4278A.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Congested Districts Board was established in 1891 with the intention of improving agriculture and industry in areas of acute poverty, for example, along the west coast from Donegal to Cork. Eventually, the board operated in as much as one-third of the

22 The Social Setting: 'Is this a Civilized Country?'

should also take on some of its obligations & give to those poor fishermen a substantial help.' He was not just sketching a wretched situation; he was challenging a 'native' government to live up to the high expectations of many and not to 'treat these people as the alien Government which has gone, has done'.¹¹

These accounts of the detrimental social impact of the revolutionary period and the realities of growing unemployment also reveal increased social tensions throughout the country as farmers, employers and the government pushed to reduce wages. In July 1923 the wages of Dublin dockers were cut by two shillings and the building workers, coalmen, carters, tradesmen, transport and manufacturing workers soon suffered the same fate.¹² On 27 October 1923, the fishermen and labourers of Tramore, County Waterford sent a petition: 'TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH FREE STATE seeking relief as a result of the distress caused by a lock-out initiated by the chief employer in the area.' They claimed the employer had tried to reduce wages although the cost of living in the district had greatly increased since the 'initiation of the Free State'.¹³ Mr C. Ambrose, who wrote on behalf of the fishermen and boatmen as an honest broker, confirmed that there was a vicious dispute between agricultural labourers and the Farmers' Union: 'houses and haggards have been burnt where work was attempted – and as a retaliation. . .labourers' cottages have also been destroyed.' He believed the agricultural 'labourers [were] induced by the Transport Union to resist a reduction of wages', but he also pointed out that 'the farmers had organised things in such a way that v. few of the labourers will ever be taken back.' Tapping into pervasive social fears, Ambrose warned the Department of Fisheries that 'there will be, and are, many idle men, who are open to dangerous and evil courses that instigators around here are not slow to suggest'.¹⁴ He urged the government to introduce relief work that would improve the harbour facilities for the fishermen and provide much needed employment and 'stop many from adopting the evil course

country. It was very popular with local people because of the amount of money it invested in local economies. The CDB wound up in 1923 following Irish independence. During its lifetime it invested considerable sums of money into the rural Irish economy. See, C. Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board, 1891–1923* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 73.

¹¹ Rev Godfrey to Secretary of the Provisional Government.

¹² Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland*, p. 53.

¹³ Petition from the Fishermen, Boatmen and Inhabitants of Tramore for a Grant in connection with the relief of unemployment to THE GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH FREE STATE, 23 October 1923, S4278A.

¹⁴ Mr C. Ambrose, Crobally, Tramore, [County Waterford] to the Minister for Fisheries, 27 October 1923, S4278A.

‘Apathy of citizens who lack confidence in existing regime’ 23

that outside influences are suggesting’.¹⁵ Official discussions on the worsening situation generally accepted that unemployment and its bed-fellow poverty were on the increase, however, this was accompanied by an unwillingness to change policy and provide a ‘dole’. This latter consideration was usually bolstered by oblique references to trouble-makers who were stoking the flames of discontent. Ambrose was raising a spectre of social unrest that was guaranteed to send a shiver down the official spine of government.

In November and December 1923, Charles Gordon Campbell,¹⁶ secretary to the Department of Industry and Commerce, described the unemployment situation as ‘rapidly becoming critical’.¹⁷ He revealed that of the 39,000 workers in receipt of unemployment benefit, three-quarters would exhaust their entitlement by February 1924. The government was faced with a situation where 31,250 people would have neither work nor benefit. Nor did Campbell consider this figure an accurate reflection of the situation as it only included industrial workers. If demobilised men and agricultural workers were included, he calculated that 80,000 workers in the country would be without work or benefit ‘and little or no prospect of any private employment’.¹⁸ This he characterised in terms of its impact on national security rather than in terms of human distress – it was a ‘serious, if not dangerous problem’. He was firmly against an extension of benefits and proffered relief works in the form of road and house building as the only option, but ‘the main difficulty in each case is to ensure that the cost of the work to be carried out shall be reasonable and this primarily involves a considerable reduction in wages’.¹⁹ He acknowledged that the ‘cost of living has just risen ten points’ and was ‘higher than at any time since independent figures were published for the Free State’.²⁰ However, the only suggestion with regard to the anomalous situation of pushing for lower wages while acknowledging the increasing cost of living was to recommend a bill to require

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Gordon Campbell was the secretary to the Department of Industry and Commerce between 1922 and 1932. P. Dempsey, ‘Charles Gordon Campbell’ in J. McGuire and J. Quinn *et al.*, *The Dictionary of Irish Biography, Volume 2*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 281–282.

¹⁷ ‘Memo on the Unemployment position’ resulting from a discussion with the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture to be placed on the Agenda of the Exe Council for consideration, signed Gordon Campbell, 10 December 1923, S4278A.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ ‘A memo prepared by Mr Gordon Campbell on the matter of unemployment during the coming winter’, circulated by the secretary of the Minister of Industry and Commerce, 19 November 1923, S4278A.

²⁰ This admission appeared in the final draft of the very bleak and frank memo on unemployment for the winter of 1923/4, S4278A.

24 The Social Setting: 'Is this a Civilized Country?'

'retailers of the more important commodities of life to display their prices in their windows'.²¹

Nonetheless, Campbell had the malcontents in his sights: 'Disruptive elements profit by the situation in every way. When they are not given direct support, they gain by the apathy of citizens who lack confidence in the existing regime.'²² All this despite the fact that he himself admitted that 'even if the road and housing schemes absorbed their max number of workers it would only be 20,000 combined.'²³ When ministers spoke of 'departure from normal policy' it was to consider stabilising building wages for twenty-four months.²⁴ Ultimately, they were forced to extend benefit in December 1923, to deal with the immediate need in the state. Nothing was certain – the state could still have failed, as Campbell recorded '[B]usiness is languishing; bank deposits are diminishing. The National trade balance is adverse. Taxation is high; public expenditure is necessarily heavy.'²⁵ Civil unrest coupled with widespread apathy with the new regime was a frightening prospect for these new ministers.

Una Newell's study of 1920s Galway documents horrendous poverty along the western seaboard with famine-like conditions in parts of Connemara. These were exacerbated by particularly wet winters in 1923 and 1924, which reduced harvest and turf yields leading the medical health officer for the Clifden district to declare 'I have no hesitation in stating that at no time in my experience has poverty and unemployment been greater.'²⁶ By 1925 the government was called upon to deny reports in the American media of a famine in Connemara, this it had to do delicately not wishing to deter American donations.²⁷ It acknowledged that Cork, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Donegal, Leitrim and Cavan were affected by a severe fuel shortage, but the government emphasised its relief measures. The *New York Evening World* was told that arrangements were 'nearly completed providing a daily meal for

²¹ 'Memo on the Unemployment position', 10 December 1923.

²² Final draft of Campbell memo 'Unemployment', December 1923, S4278A. ²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Memo of the Minister for Local Government concerning Roads and Housing, 26 November 1923, S4278A.

²⁵ Final draft of Campbell memo 'Unemployment', December 1923, S4278A.

²⁶ Ú. Newell, *The West Must Wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State, 1922–32* (Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 75; For contemporary accounts, see, for example, 'Numerous Black Spots – Chronic Poverty – Evils and Remedies for Them', *Irish Independent*, 2 February 1924; Pádraig Ua Dúbhthaigh, 'Immediate needs of the Gaeltacht – How the might be supplied', *Irish Independent*, 7 October 1924.

²⁷ Prof. Timothy A. Smiddy, Ireland's envoy to the United States, cabled the government on 30 January 1925: 'Papers here carry statement of famine in Connemara, Kerry and Fermanagh. Thousands imperilled. Crisis worse since 1847. Cable me promptly statement.' He was referring to *New York Evening World* and *Gaelic American*, S4278A.

‘Apathy of citizens who lack confidence in existing regime’ 25

18,000 children in Counties Galway, Donegal, and Kerry’.²⁸ Only four years later Peadar O’Donnell’s book *Adrigoole*²⁹ dramatised the deaths in 1927 of a mother and two of her five children from fever and starvation in Adrigole in the Beara peninsula in Cork.³⁰ While not a famine, it was indicative of the private misery of thousands of impoverished families in the new state who lived on the verge of starvation and destitution. As Finola Kennedy noted: ‘Absolute poverty persisted for decades after Independence’ and semi-starvation remained commonly observed reality in Dublin city and elsewhere until at least the mid 1940s.³¹

In 1931 the Vincent de Paul characterised the previous ten years as a period during which ‘the condition of those who are normally near the border-line of want had gradually become worse; unemployment insurance, which was intended to tide families over short spells of idleness, had in many cases lapsed altogether, and whole families were faced with practical starvation.’³² Phil O’Keeffe, who grew up in the Liberties in Dublin, described the unemployment of the 1930s as a sudden event that caught her family off guard: ‘Then without warning my father became unemployed due to economic recession. Unemployment was biting into every home, with sometimes fathers and sons in the same household losing their jobs.’³³ Her family had held its own until the recession, when it joined the ranks of the struggling poor. It is significant that O’Keeffe did not portray her family as part of the ‘real poor’, while the poor ‘were part of everyday life. . . we edged away from their cold, raw figures as they stood beside us in the shops’.³⁴ While Seán O’Connor, who also grew up in inner city Dublin during the late 1930s and early 1940s, noted that his grandmother, who was a shopkeeper, did not

²⁸ The first report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health since independence (which covered the period 1922 to 1925) recorded the complete loss of the turf harvest of 1924 in these areas resulting in ‘[T]he conditions which prevailed towards the close of 1924 and the early months of 1925 were unparalleled for many years.’ These areas were aided under the Fuel and School Meals Schemes. *Department of Local Government and Public Health: First Report, 1922–25* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1927), pp. 144–145.

²⁹ Peadar O’Donnell, *Adrigoole* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929); A file prepared on this Sullivan tragedy for the Executive Council in April 1926 gives interesting insight into official anxiety to absolve the government of any blame. In this file everyone from the Sullivan family themselves to their neighbours are blamed. W. J. Gilligan, ‘Statement on conditions in Adrigole’ in UCDA: Fitzgerald Papers, P80/1081 DLG.

³⁰ For an eyewitness account see ‘P. J. Doyle to the Editor’, *Irish Examiner*, 1 April 1927.

³¹ F. Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche: Family Change in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2001), p. 58.

³² ‘Supplement of Irish Conference, April 1931’, *Bulletin of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul*, 96 (April 1931), p. 2.

³³ Phil O’Keeffe, *Down Cobbled Streets* (Dingle: Brandon Publishers, 1995), p. 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

26 The Social Setting: 'Is this a Civilized Country?'

distinguish between the 'poor' and the working class: 'To her, the poor were the widowed, the unemployed and the sick, and the working classes were families where the man had employment but was always at risk of losing his job anyway. In that way the two categories were almost interchangeable. The shopkeepers and the property owners were all well able to take care of themselves.'³⁵

There was, however, considerable anecdotal evidence that those who could normally 'manage' were slipping into the unforgiving pit of poverty: the phrase 'people who had seen better days' began to emerge repeatedly in the charitable literature of the period as a growing new category of poverty. As Mrs Karen M., a widow from Cork wrote to Archbishop Byrne in the mid 1930s: 'I saw better days, its hard cruel world for some. better times may come soon please God.'³⁶ Of course, this form of poverty was not in fact new, but it was on the increase and served as a potent motif of the failing confidence in the possibilities of independence to improve the long-term (or even immediate) economic needs of the people of Ireland. By 1928, the Sick and Indigent Room-keepers' Society was reporting that 'the position was worse now than it was before the war. There was a wave of false economy in Dublin at present and people who were entitled to have assistance were not getting it.'³⁷ Throughout the country there were routine reports of starvation, for example, people existing in a state of 'protracted starvation' in Kerry,³⁸ or 'semi-starvation' in Leitrim³⁹ or generally living in a state of poverty incompatible with human dignity.⁴⁰ Not infrequently, this narrative was part of a story of failure since independence with one writer lamenting, for example, in 1938 that: 'Under the English regime everyone recognized that one of the greatest stigmas on its government was the wretched state of poverty . . . and the passion to right this evil played no small part in inspiring the struggle which drove the English out. With fifteen years of native rule we still await the righting of this wrong.'⁴¹ The ebb and flow of the begging letters to Archbishop Byrne certainly support the general lament among charities that poverty was increasing and the profile of those seeking charity was diversifying. In 1922, the first year of the

³⁵ Seán O'Connor, *Growing up so High: A Liberties Boyhood* (Dublin: Hachette Books Ireland, 2013), p. 92.

³⁶ Mrs Karen M., Convent Road, Doneraile, Co Cork, c. 1933. DDA, AB 7 CC, Box 4.

³⁷ 'Poverty in Dublin', *Irish Independent*, 2 May 1928.

³⁸ 'Poverty in Kerry – Protracted Starvation', *Irish Independent*, 13 November 1928.

³⁹ 'A Black Picture – Poverty in Leitrim', *Irish Independent*, 18 December 1929.

⁴⁰ 'Unholy Poverty', *Irish Press*, 16 December 1931.

⁴¹ 'Poverty in Connemara', *Connacht Tribune*, 28 May 1938.

collection, a mere 46 letters were sent (or have survived); by the mid 1920s the annual number had risen to 160 letters and throughout the 1930s the figure never fell below 300.⁴² In 1939, the final year of the collection, when the archbishop was dying and the world teetered on the precipice of war, 376 letters were saved, reflecting the deterioration in the barometers of wellbeing such as life expectancy, infant mortality and unemployment figures.⁴³

'Our own poor'

Ironically, in view of the policy decisions taken in the first decade of independence, Irish officialdom engaged in a rhetorical appropriation of the country's poor: they became the symbol of an Irish determination to see the shadow of the coloniser banished. This is unsurprising in many ways, as Virginia Crossman has argued that from 1860s the poor relief system became a site of contestation. The Catholic Church used criticisms of the system to assert its claim over 'its poor', by arguing that the system did not cater for the needs of poor Catholics, often framing those objections in moral terms.⁴⁴ With the coming of Irish independence it was not the poor who had inherited the earth, but the Catholic middle class, which had been 'in waiting' for decades. In June 1923, the President of the Executive, William T. Cosgrave,⁴⁵ declared the treatment of the country's poor a benchmark of civilisation: 'It has been well and truly said that kindly care for the poor is the best sign of true civilization, and, again, that the condition of a nation's poor indicated the character of the national mind.' He proclaimed that 'With the coming of Freedom the people . . . were quick to realise that at last it was in their power to end for ever the contemptuous treatment of the poor resulting from the workhouse system, and they set about inaugurating a new system with energy and zeal'. He hoped that through the 'Free State the new Schemes established for the better relief of the poor and the better care of the sick,

⁴² 1934 was the only exception when the archbishop received 230 letters.

⁴³ M. E. Daly, 'Death and disease in independent Ireland, c. 1920–1970: A research agenda' in C. Cox and M. Luddy (eds.), *Cultures of Care in Irish Medical History, 1750–1970* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 229–250.

⁴⁴ V. Crossman, "'Attending to the wants of poverty": Paul Cullen, the relief of poverty and the development of social welfare in Ireland' in D. Keogh and A. McDonnell (eds.), *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), pp. 146–165; V. Crossman, *Poverty and The Poor Law in Ireland, 1850–1914* (Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 168–197, p. 229.

⁴⁵ President of the Executive was the title for the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland from 1922 until 1932. See, M. Laffan, *Judging W. T. Cosgrave: The Foundation of the Irish State* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2014).

28 The Social Setting: 'Is this a Civilized Country?'

will be administered prudently and humanely, and that these schemes will win for themselves the confidence of the people'.⁴⁶ The people whose confidence must be won were doubtless not the poor, but the ratepayers. In these pronouncements the integrity of Irish independence was expressed in simplistic terms that defined the old system of relief (that of the coloniser) as 'alien', 'unsympathetic' and 'wasteful'. In juxtaposition, the native system of relief would be 'humane', 'prudent' and 'discerning' to prevent 'fraud' and 'demoralizing' welfare.⁴⁷

The first few reports emanating from the Department of Local Government and Public Health represent a self-conscious exercise in establishing the credentials and benefits of the new regime mingled with anxiety about the cost of its new ideology of compassion.⁴⁸ The old regime was characterised as indiscriminate by dumping all the poor in the workhouse and adding isolation and stigma to the burden of the 'respectable poor'. The first departmental report, which covered the 1922 to 1925 period, opened its section on 'poor relief' with the following explanation:

The Workhouse was the sole refuge of vagrants, and of the physical wreckage of the population, and being largely availed of by these classes came to be regarded with abhorrence by the respectable poor, amongst whom relief in a Workhouse carried with it an enduring stigma.⁴⁹

However, the new regime introduced legislation in 1923 to remove restrictions on 'the respectable poor' who sought relief outside the workhouse and for this a new vocabulary was created: workhouses became much more benign sounding 'county homes' and 'outdoor relief' became 'home assistance'.⁵⁰ The report stressed the benefits of these changes was

⁴⁶ Cited in *Report of the Commission on the Relief of the Sick and Destitute Poor, including the Insane Poor* (Dublin, 1927), p. 18; Also cited in Joseph E. Canavan, S.J., 'The Poor Law Report', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 16 (December 1927), p. 631.

⁴⁷ See the Department of Local Government and Public Health's description of the duties of the Superintendent Assistance Officers, who would adjudicate on home assistance cases, as someone 'experienced to give advice in doubtful or difficult cases, and while sympathetic in all cases of poverty and affliction, he must be capable of discerning easily the presence of fraud or deception, and where relief, if granted, would be unnecessary or demoralizing'; *Department of Local Government and Public Health: First Report, 1927–28* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1929), p. 87.

⁴⁸ D. Seán Lucey, "'These schemes will win for themselves the confidence of the people': Irish independence, Poor Law Reform and hospital provision', *Medical History*, 58 (January 2014), 44–64.

⁴⁹ *Department of Local Government and Public Health: First Report, 1922–25* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1927), p. 52.

⁵⁰ The Poor Law remained in operation in Dublin until 1929 with old outdoor relief and the workhouse. However, throughout the country, Cousins points out that significant reform of these county schemes was instituted by way of ministerial regulation in 1923; it

the facilitation of better discrimination: 'Respectable poor persons ... are not compelled as a condition of obtaining relief to separate themselves from friends and relatives and to associate with the objectionable types who frequented the workhouses.'⁵¹ The implicit idea was that there was always a residue of people – 'the wreckage of the population' – but Irish authorities would endeavour not to confuse 'people in humble circumstances' with these 'wretches'.⁵²

The poor were objectified into abstract categories of the 'worthy and unworthy', the 'deserving and undeserving',⁵³ 'the respectable and the incorrigibly idle', the 'shamefaced and the toucher'. These dichotomies of discrimination were not new, this 'vocabulary of poverty'⁵⁴ had a long international history,⁵⁵ but the new Irish state made the rigorous policing of these divisions a distinguishing characteristic of its more discriminating system. It argued that the old regime had offended the sensibilities of the 'genuine' Irish poor by failing to treat them differently to the 'unworthy', and worse, it had operated a system that 'demoralized' the poor. In 1924, during a debate about the cost of the old age pension, the Minister for Local Government, Séan Burke revealed how deep this view of 'false' charity ran:

the most serious defect of the Irish character is this tendency to dependence of one kind or another, and it is a very serious thing in the State at the present time. The number of people who lead a parasitic existence, more or less, is increasing in proportion to the number of people who are striving to make an honest living, and it is, therefore, not an easy thing to encourage thrift and providence. The country was brought to the verge of disaster by the famine in the 'forties of the last

defined eligibility for relief 'as any poor person who is unable by his own industry or other lawful means to provide for himself or his dependents the necessaries of life'. Local boards had considerable discretion and could, for example, insist that able-bodied recipients work for assistance. M. Cousins, *The Birth of Social Welfare in Ireland, 1922–1952* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), pp. 33–35.

- ⁵¹ *Department of Local Government and Public Health: First Report, 1922–25* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1927), p. 64.
- ⁵² Garraty has noted that the term 'residuum' emerged internationally in the 1890s to describe the long-term unemployed. J. A. Garraty, *Unemployment in History: Economic and Public Theory* (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 128.
- ⁵³ Woolf noted that this categorisation emerged in the 15th century and 'was to condition all future attitudes to the poor'. S. Woolf, *The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 18.
- ⁵⁴ O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750–1789* (Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 117.
- ⁵⁵ Peel argues that the old vocabulary of poverty, which was pervasive in Australia until the 1920s, took a considerable battering as a result of the large-scale poverty caused by the Great Depression. This new reality required different terminology to encapsulate its overwhelming pervasive quality. M. Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain* (The University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 76.