

Catherine Mahon

First Woman President of the INTO

Prepared and Written by
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An INTO Publication

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Ard Rúnaí
An Seanadóir Joe O'Toole

INTO 1998

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FOREWORD

Catherine Mahon was elected as the first woman president of the INTO in 1912 and again in 1913. She was the only president to have served a second term since the rules governing elections were formed in the early 1900s. This INTO publication describes Catherine Mahon's involvement within the INTO during the years 1906-1920. Of the many women during the period who were committed activists Catherine was the most outstanding. Not only did she fight for equality issues such as equal pay and representation for women on the INTO Central Executive Committee, but she set the INTO on a course of expansion with her recruitment drive, and led the INTO to affirm its position as an independent, representative body. Her remarkable and courageous leadership during these years contributed enormously to the development and strength of the INTO. To this day we remain in her debt. The influence of the INTO today is a legacy of the commitment of visionaries such as Catherine Mahon. She represents a model in terms of participation finding time to involve herself in local politics as well as professional matters.

The INTO wishes to acknowledge the help, cooperation and assistance of all those who contributed, in various ways, to compiling this book. The INTO would like to thank the following, in particular.

Síle Chuinneagáin, M.Ed. for the detailed research and adaptation of her thesis 'Women Teachers and I.N.T.O. Policy 1905-1916' for this publication. Síle teaches at St. Paul's JNS, Ayrfield, Dublin 13.

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Paddy Barry, Catherine Mahon's nephew who generously shared his memories of his aunt. Margaret Hogan who contributed material. Anthony Dargan, principal Carrig NS North Tipperary who also contributed photographs and material on Catherine Mahon.

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Thomas Ryan, Past-President RHA who was commissioned by the INTO to paint a portrait of Catherine Mahon which now hangs in the Catherine Mahon Room, Vere Foster House, 35 Parnell Square, and a photo of which was reproduced for the cover of this publication.

The INTO policy team who were responsible for overseeing the final production of the publication included Deirbhile Nic Craith, Veronica Cleary, Ruth Warren, Elaine Daly and Ursula Doyle.

Fraternally,

Senator Joe O'Toole
General Secretary
March 1998

INTRODUCTION

Women teachers, individually and collectively, have been instrumental in shaping the policy and direction of the INTO. Their contributions to the development of the Organisation have, as yet, received little attention. Where there has been historical investigation it has emphasised the INTO's work for women rather than the benefits to the INTO of women's membership. In *One Hundred Years of Progress; The Story of the INTO 1868 - 1968* T. J. O'Connell observed a marked "awakening of a new and more healthy spirit" among the rank and file of the INTO during the first twenty years of the century. O'Connell did not, however, acknowledge the role of women teachers in this development. He fleetingly mentioned Catherine Mahon's "brilliant" leadership in 1913 but he did not assess her achievements although he described, in some detail, Mahon's disagreement with INTO policy in 1920.

Catherine Mahon, an idealist, was a principled, courageous fighter who was ready to take issue wherever she saw injustice, often at considerable cost to herself. She was a spirited public speaker, an effective, energetic lobbyist who won the respect and admiration of her contemporaries. She was a keen nationalist and a lifelong supporter of the Irish language. Her passionate concern for a wide range of issues, as well as her sense of humour, are evident in the letters and speeches she wrote from her base in the small village of Carrig, North Tipperary. She is affectionately remembered by her nephew as a kind, gentle woman who was a support to his family when his father, a teacher, had to retire early due to illness and the family had to move from the teacher's residence. Mahon's own teaching career, if we include her time as a monitor, spanned fifty years.

It is clear that Mahon was active in a multitude of organisations but this study is mainly confined to her INTO career. It does not explore the links between changes in Irish society and developments within the INTO. A good deal of relevant quotation from *The Irish School Weekly* has been incorporated to help provide a basis from which the analysis can be seen to proceed.

Mahon campaigned strenuously for the involvement and participation of women at all levels within the INTO. Her campaign continues to have a resonance today especially at the higher levels of the Organisation where, apart from the Equality Committee, women are very much under repre-

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sented on the national committees. Identifying the dedicated service Mahon gave in promoting the interests of teachers may serve to inspire a new generation of teachers to commit themselves to the work of the INTO.



Catherine Mahon.

Courtesy of Anthony Dargan.

CHAPTER 1

Early Years

WINIFRED O'MEARA was nineteen when her first child Catherine was born on 15 May 1869 in Laccah, North Tipperary. Winifred had married James Mahon, eighteen years her senior, in July the previous year.¹ She at one time worked as a shopkeeper and James, according to Catherine's birth certificate, was a labourer.² He had lived through the famine which had a severe impact in that part of Tipperary. Both parents, in later years, worked in the Church of Ireland Rectory in Loughkeen, Winifred as cook and James as coachman.³ Catherine was followed by Patrick born 1871, Mary born 1873, Margaret born 1876, Michael born 1879, Elizabeth born 1881 and Jane born 1884.⁴ It cannot have been easy to rear a family of seven children mainly on the wages of an agricultural labourer but Winifred, to whom Catherine was very close throughout her life, was a good manager.

The Mahon's nevertheless, endured several tragedies. In the family entry for the 1911 census it was noted that of the seven children born alive only four were now living.⁵ Patrick, a teacher in Kinnity N.S., died of pneumonia which, it was believed, was the result of a heavy wetting he had received when attending the funeral of a pupil.⁶ Elizabeth, who for five years worked as a monitor with Catherine in Carrig N.S., seems to have died in 1900.⁷ Jane died, aged sixteen years, in 1901.⁸

For many years the family lived in a cottage in the townland of Ballykinash, North Tipperary, but for most of Catherine's career she lived, with her mother, in two adjoining houses in the "little hamlet" of Carrig.⁹ Situated in the heart of farming country, not far from the border of North Tipperary and Offaly, Carrig's dominant feature is the Roman Catholic Church of the Annunciation. Opposite the church stands Carrig National School and the terrace of small houses where Catherine lived. Her house is said to have been a comfortable one and had a room lined with books. She was not, however, houseproud, when her sister, on a visit, began dusting Catherine is reputed to have said "Don't disturb the spiders!"¹⁰ Catherine never married, she apparently had a suitor but showed no interest in him.¹¹ Indeed, when filling the family entry for the 1911 census, which she wrote

in Irish, Catherine stating her marital status wryly noted, "Aonta (fos)", i.e. still single.

It is likely that Catherine began her education at Carrig N.S., as this would have been her local parish school. Later, as a teenager she attended Birr Convent of Mercy N.S., some three miles distant from Carrig. Birr Convent N.S. was a girls' school founded by the Sisters of Mercy in June 1841 and taken into connection with the Board of National Education in December that year.¹² The Board supervised the state supported national school system which had been established ten years previously, largely for the education of the poor. When Catherine was a pupil the nuns were also running, along with the national school, an industrial school and a fee paying primary school for the children of the better off families in the locality.¹³ Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, geography, grammar and needlework formed the curriculum under the National Board but as the Mercy sisters valued preparation for the sacraments above all else, religious instruction would have been of paramount importance within the school.¹⁴ The nuns also would have instilled habits of "neatness and industry, mutual forbearance and self-control" in their pupils.¹⁵ Their influence on Catherine probably induced in her the devout faith in Catholic teaching and the zeal to remedy social injustices which were a feature of her adult life.

Catherine was an able pupil and in October 1884, when she was fifteen years of age, she was appointed a monitor at Birr Convent N.S.¹⁶ Monitorships were scholarships open to the pupils of the schools in which they were educated and were highly valued prizes. Candidates for monitorships had to be "free from any physical defect" and as a rule be between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. They were appointed monitors, after a competitive examination, by the district inspector who was obliged to consult with the manager of the school as to their character and suitability and to ensure that the teacher had no objection to their appointment. Once appointed monitors undertook a form of apprenticeship teacher training for five years. Apprenticeships at an early age were indigenous to working class culture and the monitorial system encouraged large numbers of working class children to become teachers.¹⁷ It was a system which assisted Catherine's entry into teaching. Her parents could not have afforded to allow her, the eldest of seven children, to defer her earnings, nor could they have afforded to send her to training college.

Birr Convent N.S. was a relatively large school with an average atten-

dance ranging between 200 and 300 pupils, and during Catherine's apprenticeship, employed at least five monitors annually.¹⁸ Convents like it were the major training centres for Catholic women national teachers up until 1883 as the Catholic hierarchy banned priests from employing teachers trained in the Board's model schools or training college. When the principle of state support for denominational training was accepted in 1883 Our Lady of Mercy College, Baggot Street, Dublin was recognised as a training college.¹⁹ Until then only 34 per cent of teachers, 27 per cent of Catholic teachers and 52 per cent of Protestant teachers, had been trained in training colleges.²⁰

The work of a monitor was quite demanding and would have required dedication and a steadfast ambition to become a teacher. During her five years as a monitor, Catherine would have taught for up to three hours each day receiving instruction from her teacher along with the other pupils of the school for the remainder of the day. Her teacher would also have given her additional instruction in the monitorial course either before or after ordinary school hours or on Saturdays.²¹ Catherine must have maintained a good standard of work as each year she successfully passed her annual examination by the inspector and her salary rose accordingly. In her first year as monitor she earned £5; this increased to £6 in her second year, £8 in her third year, £10 in her fourth year and £16 in her fifth year.²² Her monitor's salary would have been an important addition to the family income and must have been a factor in enabling her parents to allow her to continue to study until she was twenty one years of age. In 1890 Catherine sat the final examination for monitors, known as the Teachers' Examination, and having been placed in the third class, second division of national teachers was qualified to teach in national schools.

In becoming a teacher Catherine was joining an increasing band of women at the end of the nineteenth century. Apart from teaching, her occupational choices would have been few and compared with the drudgery of domestic service, the long hours and poor pay of needlework, the physical demands of shop-work, or the stark option of emigration, teaching would have had many advantages. It was not manual labour, it offered the potential of intrinsic job satisfaction, it had a certain social status and it was deemed an appropriate occupation for women. This was the period when the "feminisation" of teaching occurred in many countries, a development which was due to the increase in publicly funded schooling, the departure

of men from teaching and the traditional acceptance of teaching as suitable work for women.

The ideal of woman promoted from the eighteenth century onwards was that of a nurturing, caring, subservient creature whose ideal place was in the private sphere of the home; however, teaching, although in the public sphere of work, was defined as an extension of woman's nurturing role in the home. Teaching would not diminish feminine qualities but would help women to prepare for their future roles as wives and mothers. Some educational reformers, such as the American Henry Bernard, argued that by nature and God's design women were the ideal teachers of little children. Bernard declared that:

*Heaven has plainly appointed females as the natural instructors of young children, and endowed them with those qualities of mind and disposition which preeminently fit them for such a task.*²³

In Ireland this philosophy underpinned the introduction of rule 127(b) by the Commissioners of National Education in 1905 which was based on the recommendations of Mr. F.H. Dale who, in his report on national schools, stated:

*If there is any point of agreement among all interested in education it is that a man both by temperament and training is unfitted to teach infants, and the charge of them should be entrusted to women....nor can it be reasonably expected that a man should possess the patience or sympathy with very young children which are natural to even an unskilled woman teacher...*²⁴

Theories such as these assisted the feminisation of teaching.

The expansion in the number of publicly funded elementary schools also led to an increase in the numbers of women teachers. For instance, during a period of rapid expansion in elementary education in England the number of women teachers rose from the equivalent of 99 female teachers for every 100 male teachers in 1870 to 306 female teachers for every 100 male teacher in 1910.²⁵ A contributory factor in the increased hiring of women was that they could be employed at lower rates of pay than men. Similar trends occurred in countries such as America, Canada and Sweden. For example, in 1861 in Toronto 45 per cent of all teachers were women but by the end of the 1880s women made up nearly 80 per cent of the teaching force. The hir-

ing of women teachers on comparatively lower salaries was perceived as one way of minimizing costs in the context of a tripling of the pupils registered in the Toronto public schools.²⁶ In Ireland the increase in women teachers was a more gradual development; their numbers grew from 43 per cent in 1870 to 50 per cent in 1900. Until 1905 there was no indication that the Commissioners of National Education wished to increase the number of women in their service. Indeed, they seemed more concerned with the difficulties of attracting suitable male candidates to teaching.

The departure of men from teaching also helped to open up teaching to women. Teaching was becoming a less attractive proposition for men as more lucrative opportunities became available to them. For instance, in rural America teaching a short term in country schools appealed to men as one of the few non-manual jobs available which provided a cash income. For a young man wishing to establish himself as a minister, politician, shopkeeper or lawyer teaching was a means of gaining visibility in the community. A farmer could also combine teaching in the winter with caring for his homestead the rest of the year. But once standards of teacher qualifications rose and the school year lengthened, men began to leave teaching. For them returns from teaching were not sufficient to warrant time spent on training. The rural teacher's salary was, on its own, barely sufficient to support one person, much less a family, although it was seen as adequate for a woman living at home or inexpensively as a boarder in a farm family. In Ireland, in 1880, one of the Board's inspectors observed that "much more attractive and lucrative pursuits are open to young men...who naturally chose the easier life and the occupation which will pay best.", whereas teaching, he noted, "was the very best occupation open to a young woman."²⁷

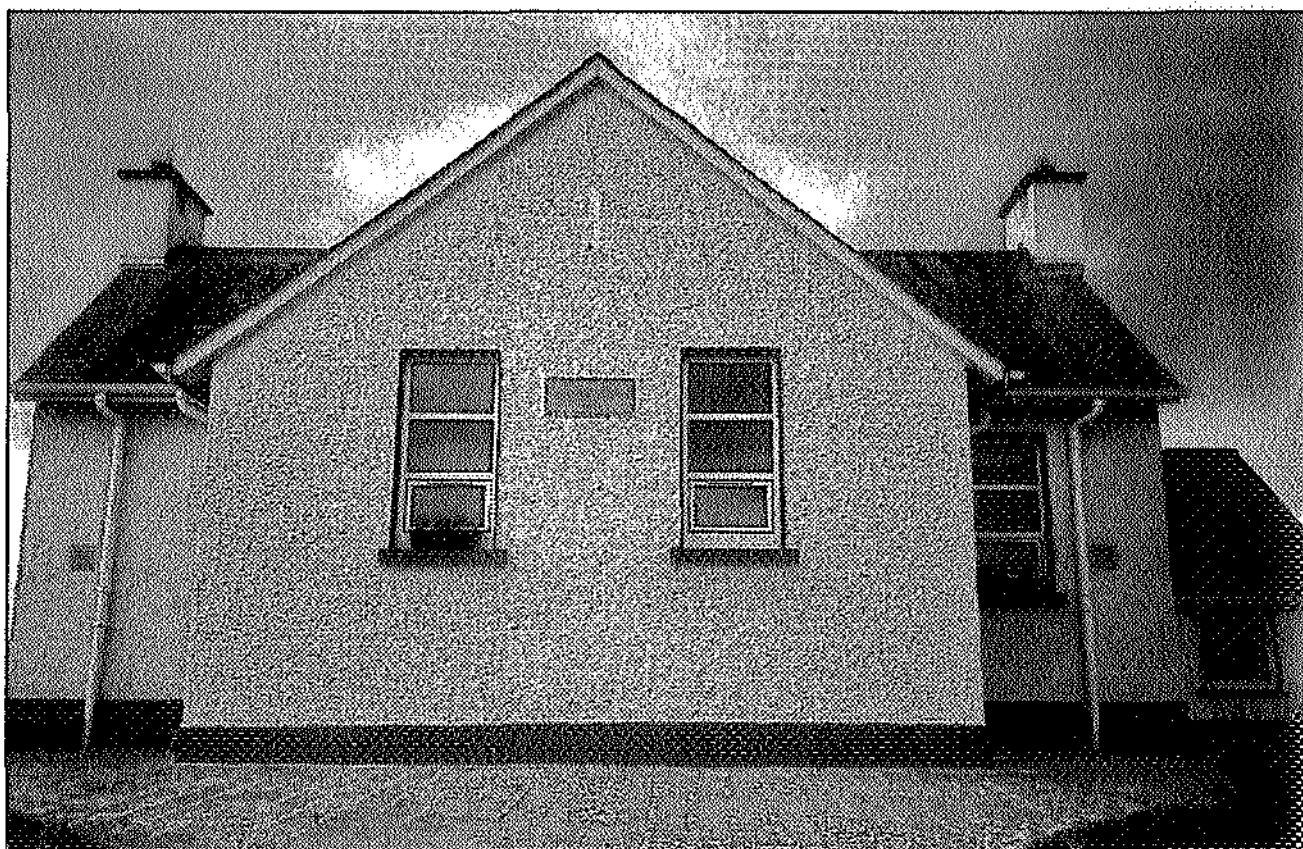
The expansion of elementary education, the departure of men from teaching and the view that women were innately suited to the teaching of young children all helped to swell the numbers of women teachers. However, women had their own motives for becoming teachers and these often were not those attributed to them by the educational reformers. For instance, Swedish women viewed teaching as:

*a sought-after profession which gave scope for dignity in the work which carried responsibility for the future generation's upbringing and education. It was an independent occupation, and it brought with it influence in the local community and participation in public life.*²⁸

Mahon's subsequent career would indicate that she shared this view of teaching.²⁹ It was for her an important, responsible occupation, she valued the economic independence it allowed her and she welcomed the opportunity it provided to participate in community and public life.

Mahon's first task on qualifying was to secure a position. On the recommendation of the nuns in Birr she went to work as a lay teacher in two schools run by the Sisters of Mercy. During the school year 1890-1891 she taught, initially, at Tulla Convent N.S. County Clare and then at Nenagh Convent N.S. County Tipperary.³⁰ These schools were in the same diocese as Birr Convent N.S. and like Birr were under the charge of Mrs. M. A. Beckett, superior of the Mercy order in the diocese. As a lay teacher, Mahon was paid by the nuns rather than the Commissioners.

In September 1891 Mahon obtained her first post under the Board of National Education when she was appointed principal of Glenculloo N.S., County Tipperary.³¹ This was a small rural school with an average attendance of under thirty children. She did not remain in Glenculloo for long. By April 1892 she had resigned to take up the post of principal of Carrig N.S. in her native area of North Tipperary. The vacancy in Carrig arose as a result of quite tragic circumstances. There was an outbreak of typhus in the



Carrig National School today.

Courtesy of Anthony Dargan.

Carrig area during the autumn\winter of 1891 and two children had died. It was believed they had contracted the fever in Carrig N.S. and as a result the school was boycotted.³² By the Spring of 1892 only the principal's children were attending. He resigned at the end of March and was replaced by Mahon on 25 April 1892.³³ Mahon, who was known locally, gained the confidence of the community and the school's average attendance immediately rose and was maintained at a consistently high average for many years.³⁴



Catherine Mahon and some of the local community of Carrig, including pupils of Carrig N.S., Birr, 1903.
 Courtesy of Anthony Dargan.

Mahon was ambitious and as soon as she was established in Carrig N.S. she started to work her way up the salary scales. Under the National Board there were three salary classes, each class being subdivided in two. The rates of pay for the classes were as follows:

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
First class - first division	£58 a year	£70 a year
First class - second division	£43	£53
Second class - first and second division	£34.10	£44
Third class - first and second division	£27.10	£35 ³⁵

In addition, teachers earned results fees for pupils who passed the annual examination by the inspector.

Teachers had to remain at least one year in a salary division before they could be promoted to a higher one. Promotion depended on the efficiency of their school and was obtained through the district inspector who certified that in respect of cleanliness, discipline, proficiency and progress the school



Catherine Mahon and pupils of Carrig N.S., Birr, 1905. Courtesy of Anthony Dargan.

had been maintained in a satisfactory state during the previous year. Mahon organised her school on efficient lines and she made rapid progress up the salary scales. She started in Carrig N.S. in the second division of third class and was promoted to the first division of third class at the end of her first year.³⁶ Promotion from class to class depended not only on good reports from the inspectors but on success in an examination which required a great deal of private study. By the end of 1894 Mahon was preparing to proceed into the next salary class. She succeeded both in her examination and in the special inspection of her school and in 1895 was promoted to the second division of second class.³⁷ The following year she was promoted to the first

division of second class.³⁸ She could make no further progress up the salary scale because of the Commissioners' rule prohibiting teachers appointed after 1 August 1887 qualifying as first class teachers unless they had been trained in a training college. The Commissioners, however, granted teachers a year's leave of absence to enable them to attend a training college and to improve their qualifications. Mahon availed of this opportunity in 1898. She attended Our Lady of Mercy Training College, Baggot Street, Dublin, for the academic year 1898-1899 and a substitute teacher was employed to take her place at Carrig N.S. On leaving the training college Mahon was qualified as a first class teacher. However, changes introduced to the salary scales in 1900 meant she could only obtain a grade two salary. As she had entered the training college on the understanding that her higher qualification would entitle her to a commensurately higher salary this injustice must have rankled with her.

By the turn of the century Mahon, who had progressed as far as she could in her career, was ready for further challenges. She was living in an Ireland alive with movements for social, political and cultural change. The Home Rule movement, the suffrage campaign, Sinn Fein, Labour, the Gaelic League and the co-operative movement were all working to bring about change in Ireland. Mahon was influenced by these movements. She was a member of several suffrage societies, an ardent home ruler and an enthusiastic supporter of the Gaelic League.³⁹ However, it was her involvement with the INTO which was to give her some of her most demanding and rewarding challenges.

¹ Parish Register, Riverstown, Birr, Co. Offaly, 1868.

² Winifred was literate, James was able to read but not write. See, *Co. Tipperary Census* 1901 and *Co. Tipperary Census* 1911, National Archives, Dublin.

³ Margaret Hogan of Birr gave me this reference.

⁴ The Tipperary North Family History Foundation assisted in finding these dates.

⁵ See, *Co. Tipperary Census* 1911, National Archives.

⁶ Paddy Barry, nephew of Catherine Mahon, remembers his mother and aunts recounting how Patrick had died.

⁷ In the civil death records a Winifred Mahon, Carrig, schoolteacher, is recorded as having died on 21 July 1900. This, in fact, appears to be Elizabeth. The register for Carrig N.S. includes a rather sharp note from the inspector on 19 April 1900 calling for "medical testimony" as to "unfitness of Lizzie Mahon" monitor, to

- attend the Easter exam. Apart from another warning note from the inspector on 7 May 1900, there is no further mention of Elizabeth in the register. See, ED 2 143, Folio 31 and 32, National Archives.
- ⁸ Both sisters appear to have died from T.B.
- ⁹ This description is taken from notes Catherine Mahon wrote on Carrig.
- ¹⁰ As told to Margaret Hogan of Birr.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² ED 2 24, Folio 57 and 162, National Archives.
- ¹³ See, *Irish Catholic Directory* 1882 (Dublin), p. 179. The industrial school was established in 1873 and continued until the end of 1889. See, ED 2 143 and ED 4 916, National Archives.
- ¹⁴ Book-keeping was optional for girls and boys. Agriculture was obligatory for boys of 4th class and higher except in schools in large towns; it was optional for girls.
- ¹⁵ *A Guide for the Religious Called Sisters of Mercy*, (London 1866).
- ¹⁶ In the salary register for Birr Convent there are two dates given for Mahon's appointment 1.10. 84 and 1.7.85. The rules for National Schools stated that monitors could only be appointed on 1 July so the nuns must have made a special case for Mahon's appointment in October. Mahon was fortunate in this because generally monitors had to be under sixteen years of age when appointed and Mahon could have been found ineligible on this ground by July 1885.
- ¹⁷ This was certainly the case in England where up until the 1890s the majority of elementary teachers were from working class backgrounds. See, J. Purvis, *Hard Lessons* (Oxford: Polity, 1989) and F. Widdowson, *Going up into the Next Class: Women and Elementary Teacher Training 1840-1914* (London: Hutchinson, 1983). No Irish research has been undertaken in this area.
- ¹⁸ See, Birr Convent N.S., roll number 3220, in ED 4 912; ED 4 913; ED 4 914; ED 4 916, National Archives. The average attendance of pupils in Birr Convent N.S. declined from 317.5 on 31.12.1884 to 208.5 on 31.12.1890.
- ¹⁹ See, J. Coolahan, *Two Centenary Lectures* (Dublin : Carysfort College, 1981).
- ²⁰ D. H. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 356.
- ²¹ Until 1900 teachers were paid a gratuity for instructing monitors.
- ²² 16 Female and male monitors earned the same amount for their first three years; for their fourth and fifth years female monitors earned £10 and £16 respectively whereas male monitors earned £12 in their fourth year and £18 in their fifth year.
- ²³ J. Preston "Female Aspiration and Male Ideology: School-Teaching in 19th Century New England" in Angerman, Binna, Keunen, Poels, Zirkzee Eds. *Current Issues in Women's History* (London: Routledge Press, 1989).
- ²⁴ *Report of Mr. F. H. Dale, His Majesty's Inspector of Schools, Board of Education, on*

- Primary Education in Ireland*, H.C. 1904 (Cd. 1981) XX.
- ²⁵ B. H. Bergen, "Only a Schoolmaster: Gender, Class, and the Effort to Professionalize Elementary Teaching in England, 1870 - 1910", *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (Spring, 1982). From 1870 to 1910 the number of elementary teachers in England increased from 13,729 to 161,804.
- ²⁶ See, M. Danylewycz and A. Prentice, "Teachers, Gender and Bureaucratizing Systems in Nineteenth Century Montreal and Toronto", *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 24 (Spring, 1984).
- ²⁷ *Forty-seventh Report of the Commissioners of National Education for the year 1880* H.C. 1881 (C.2925) XXXIV, p. 207.
- ²⁸ C. Florin, "Social closure as a Professional Strategy Male and Female Teachers from Co-operation to conflict in Sweden, 1860-1906", *History of Education*, Vol. 20, (1, 1991), p. 18.
- ²⁹ As a young teacher she signed herself Kate Mahon, but when she began to take a more public role this changed to C.M. Mahon. She was referred to by her contemporaries as Miss Mahon and henceforth she will be referred to, mostly, as Mahon.
- ³⁰ See, Mahon's evidence in *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland) 1913*, (Cd. 7235), H.C. 1914, XXVIII, p. 876. Mahon is not listed in the salary registers for Tulla Convent N.S. or Nenagh Convent N.S. for the year 1890-1891. This is because as a lay teacher in a convent school she was paid by the nuns.
- ³¹ ED 4 917, roll number 11083, National Archives.
- ³² ED 2 143, National Archives.
- ³³ ED 4 917, roll number 2325, National Archives. The average attendance had declined to 6.2 for the quarter ending 31.3.1892.
- ³⁴ Carrig N.S. at the time Mahon was appointed principal was a one roomed school situated in the grounds of the Catholic church.
- ³⁵ See, *Fifty-eight Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, for the year 1891*, H.C. 1892 (C6788), XXX, Appendix B.
- ³⁶ ED 4 918, National Archives.
- ³⁷ ED 4 919, National Archives.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Mahon subscribed to the Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association in 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1912. When the Irish Women's Franchise League, an avowedly more militant group, was formed in 1908 Mahon became a member of this group as well. She also joined the Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association when it was established in 1915. This non-militant organisation sought to organise Catholic women to fight for suffrage. See, "Women Teachers and the Vote" Address given by Catherine Mahon at the ICWSA, Box No. 396 -

Early Years

11 (4) - 396.1 (494), Fawcett Library, London; Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association, Report of the Executive Committee 1876 - 1918, National Library; C. Murphy, *The Women's Suffrage Movement and Irish Society* (New York, Harvester Press, 1989); R.C. Owens, *Smashing Times: A History of the Irish Women's suffrage Movement 1889 - 1922* (Dublin : Attic Press, 1984).

CHAPTER II

"a preponderance of women teachers"

The INTO and the introduction of rule 127(b) in 1905

THE IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION, in which Catherine Mahon was to become a leading figure, was established in 1868. Its expressed objects were (a) the promotion of education in Ireland; (b) the social and intellectual elevation of teachers and (c) the cultivation of a fraternal spirit and professional intercourse with kindred organisations in other countries. It was founded as a non-sectarian, non-political organisation and its constituent parts in the early 1900s were local associations (branches), usually based in the important towns; county associations, embracing all the local associations of the county, and eight Districts into which all the counties were grouped for the purpose of electing the Central Executive Committee (CEC). The CEC consisted of eight District Representatives, two Assistants' Representatives and four higher officers, these were, President, Vice-President, Central Secretary and Treasurer. The journal *The Irish School Weekly (ISW)* which described itself as "A practical journal for practical teachers and a record of the work of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation" was seen as the INTO's official organ. Minutes of CEC meetings, Congress reports, local association meeting reports and INTO financial statements were published in the journal and the editorials and leading articles were written by prominent members of the INTO.¹ The INTO did not become a registered trade union until 1918.

From its foundation the INTO protected women teachers' interests especially where these coincided with men teachers'. But where there was a conflict of interests, women teachers' concerns were often relegated to second place.² The INTO's reaction to the introduction of rule 127(b) in 1905 illustrates this point. The rule was introduced by the Commissioners of National Education as part of their Rules and Regulations for national schools. It stated that:

*Boys under eight years of age are ineligible for enrolment in a boys' school where there is not an assistant mistress, unless there is no suitable school under a mistress available in the locality.*³

The INTO objected to the potential loss of salary, promotion and incremental rights of men teachers but it made little effort to safeguard the status and promotion prospects of women teachers. In addition, leading articles in the *Irish School Weekly* portrayed women teachers in a negative light. The INTO's reaction to rule 127(b) is worth examining as it helps us to appreciate the progress and change in attitudes towards women which subsequently occurred, developments in which Mahon played a significant role.

Rule 127(b) once it came to public attention was severely criticised. On 25 February 1905 a public meeting organised by the Gaelic League condemned the "starvation policy of the Government and its sub-office in Marlborough St. regarding primary education"⁴. Dr. Douglas Hyde, President of the Gaelic League; the Lord Mayor of Dublin; John Redmond, Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party; the President of the INTO; Fr. Finlay and Patrick Pearse were among those who addressed the meeting. Dr. Hyde was scathingly critical of the Board of National Education. The "dodgery, trickery, and the chicanery of that anti-Irish, miserable, vacillating and contemptible Board" must be met with strong action, he declared⁵. The rule that would force infant boys to "be instructed by low-paid, poor females" was also condemned by him. Hyde attributed the rule to the National Board's desire to hire cheap labour.⁶

Initially, teachers also believed the rule was an economy measure aimed at reducing educational expenditure. This view was promoted in the *Irish School Weekly*. The first editorial on the subject of rule 127(b) claimed that the instigator was the Chief Secretary, George Wyndham. Wyndham, it was suggested, was attempting to reduce educational expenditure in order to have more money available for his land purchase schemes. By appointing women teachers at lower salaries the government would make a significant saving. The majority of men assistants were earning salaries ranging from £56 to £86 a year. With the enforcement of rule 127(b) they could be replaced by women teachers at salaries of £44 a year. The government, it was also claimed, would benefit financially by the reduction in salaries of men teachers through the removal of infant boys from their schools. The average attendance of pupils at school was important to teachers as it determined their salary grades. In schools where attendances ranged from 30 to 40 pupils, more than half of which were in the charge of men, the removal of infant boys could reduce the man teacher from second to third grade. There was a difference of £30 between the maximum salary of grade two and

grade three.⁷

The Central Executive Committee of the INTO at its meeting on 25 February, 1905 resolved:

That we strongly protest against the new rule of the Commissioners of National Education by which boys under eight years of age are ineligible for enrolment in a Boys' School, unless there is an Assistant Mistress on the staff, as by such a rule grave injury will be inflicted on all Boys' Schools.⁸

Teachers also lobbied their MPs who raised questions in the House of Commons regarding the rule's application. For instance, Mr McHugh MP, tabled a question for the Chief Secretary on 13 March 1905, asking how many men teachers the new rule was likely to throw out of employment and how many would be placed on reduced salaries. He also queried the Commissioners as to whether, in the event of the amalgamation of small schools, the principal teachers of such schools when reduced in rank would be allowed the salaries and pension rights previously held by them. The Commissioners, in reply, stated that as the new rule had not yet come into operation it was quite "impossible to anticipate with any degree of accuracy the various ways it will affect the emoluments of teachers, or whether it will effect them to any serious extent".⁹ The Commissioners, however, stressed that the rule was not part of an economy drive. The rule was being implemented because the Commissioners had found:

...that boys under eight years of age have received little or no instruction in schools where there were no mistresses, and especially in schools with only one master. The tender ages of these pupils necessitates instruction of a special character, and the Commissioners are convinced that women are more fitted to impart this instruction than men.¹⁰

The Commissioners based this view on the report made by F.H. Dale, an English inspector, who had been appointed in 1902 to carry out an inquiry into the Irish national school system. There was a suggestion in the ISW that an examination of inspector's reports pre-1900, when children were individually examined, would probably show that the master taught the infants as well as he taught any other class in the school. It was also reported that many men teachers had stated they were never more happy than when teaching infant boys.¹¹ But apart from these assertions no reference was made to the underlying premise of rule 127(b).

The INTO did not question the assumption that women were instinctively suited to the teaching of infants, however, the ISW leader writers did imply that an increase in women teachers would be detrimental to Irish education. The editorial of 18 March quoted the educationalist Fabian Ware who had praised the quality of the German elementary education system as "being the best organised of educational systems".¹² Ware compared the proportion of women teachers to men teachers in Germany and England and stated:

*It is clear the large proportion of women and the smallness of the number of trained teachers in England as compared with Prussia, does not make for greater efficiency. The Prussians believe in men teachers.*¹³

To emphasize this point the editorial also quoted Sadler another educationalist. Sadler noted that, "Not only are 87% of the teachers in Prussian schools men, but women are never in sole charge of a school."¹⁴

The ISW editorial observed that 52.3 per cent of the certificated teachers in Ireland were women and 47.7 per cent of certificated teachers were men. Ireland, thus had fewer women teachers than England but with the introduction of rule 127(b), and the possible increase in women teachers, the Commissioners would, the editorial suggested, "reduce the education of our people to a lower level than that which obtains in England".¹⁵ The editorial also referred to the Moseley Commission, a British Commission which had examined the American educational system, and observed that the Commissioners had viewed "with alarm the growing preponderance of women teachers" in America.¹⁶

These views were reiterated in leading articles in the following week's issue of the ISW. But, first the existing cohort of women teachers was praised and placed above reproach in the ISW where it was stated:

*In any references we have made to this obnoxious "rule" of the Commissioners, we have always kept before our minds that the women teachers of Ireland can hold their own with those of any country in the world. The ability, devotion to duty, and success which characterize the women of Ireland when engaged in teaching are not surpassed.*¹⁷

Further extracts from the Moseley Commission, which gave a very negative image of women teachers, were then quoted. For example, Professor Armstrong of the Moseley Commission was quoted as saying:

*Most of us who are conversant with school work were struck by the distinctly low average of attainment in the American high schools. To what is this attributable? In large measure to the prevalence of mixed schools and the preponderance of women teachers. They should rather be men mostly. Insight and originality are wanted, and it is important that men rather than women should exercise the predominant influence.*¹⁸

H. R. Rathbone, of the Liverpool Education Committee, another member of the Mosely Commission was also quoted. He claimed that he "did not meet a single American educator who regards with satisfaction the great and growing preponderance of women teachers."¹⁹ The ISW's use of quotes was an indication of women's low ranking within the INTO.

The Catholic hierarchy was vehemently opposed to rule 127(b). This was in line with the church's opposition to reform of the education system which had come to a head in 1903 when the Chief Secretary had attempted to introduce the principle of local rate aid to help fund education. The Catholic church saw local authority involvement and funding as a threat to its management of schools and denounced Wyndham's proposals.²⁰ During 1905 the Catholic hierarchy focussed on rule 127(b) in its opposition to government education policy. Dr. Foley, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, the Catholic hierarchy's representative on the Board of National Education, opposed the rule at Board meetings and secured a number of modifications. The Commissioners, under pressure from Dr. Foley, agreed that special consideration would be given in cases where a two teacher boys' school would lose a male assistant under the rule.²¹ The Commissioners also agreed that boys of seven years, deemed capable of entering second standard, could be enrolled in the boys' school.²²

The ISW editors viewed these as "important modifications" which would serve to prevent the average in some boys' schools from falling, consequently lowering the salary of the principal.²³ The editors also stated that the best remedy for a one teacher boys' school was to amalgamate with the neighbouring girls' school. Taking as an example a girls' and boys' school in close proximity to each other with an average attendance each of 40 pupils the editors outlined the advantages of amalgamation:

The principal of the Girls' School would become Assistant in the amalgamated school. Under what conditions? She would not lose one farthing by

doing so. If she is already Second Grade or higher she would retain the exact salary she had as Principal, and her pension rights in addition.²⁴

The woman teacher would benefit because, suggested the editors, she "would have considerably less work to do, and that work would be done much more efficiently than before." Amalgamation would be especially beneficial to women teachers in the third grade argued the editors:

If the lady teacher should happen to be only in Third Grade at the time of amalgamation she will have a much better chance than before of receiving her increments regularly owing to increased facilities for efficiency, and if she should show marked efficiency she would be promoted to Second Grade with corresponding salary.²⁵

The Commissioners had stated that in cases of amalgamation the man teacher would be assured of the high status position of principal.²⁶ The editors spelled out the advantages to him:

As Principal of the Boys' School he could never rise higher than the maximum salary of Second Grade, namely £107; as Principal of the amalgamated school he would be eligible for rising to the maximum salary of the highest Grade, namely, £175.²⁷

Without amalgamation the teachers in these schools, it was claimed, might not even achieve second grade because of the difficulty of teaching six or seven standards efficiently on their own. The editors hoped that managers would arrive at some compromise with the Commissioners because amalgamation seemed to be the only way to preserve the existing rights of teachers. The amalgamation of small schools was a long term goal of the Commissioners and rule 127(b) fitted in with this policy, but the Catholic church was opposed to amalgamation because it believed mixed schools were morally unsound.²⁸ The Catholic hierarchy, at its meeting in June 1905, advised all managers of national schools to unite and refuse to implement rule 127(b).

Although the ISW editors conceded that many "lady Principals too would probably resent becoming Assistants by amalgamating schools" they nevertheless continued to advocate the benefits of amalgamation.²⁹ Their

arguments, however, did not convince women teachers who valued their positions as principals and who resented the possibility of being demoted. In the letters page of the following week's issue of the ISW, "Mistress" wrote:

*You say many lady principals would probably resent being made assistants. Most assuredly they would, especially if, as in a case I could cite, the girls' school has been always superior to the boys', the attendance larger, the examinations and reports better, the teacher more highly classed and in receipt of a higher salary. How would such a mistress feel to be "amalgamated" with the inferior school?*³⁰

Another woman principal declared that; "I, for one, would prefer reduction of my salary by half, rather than submit to such a degradation."³¹

Concern about the demotion of a woman principal was also raised by the Catholic clerical manager of the Kilmeedy National Schools, Co. Limerick. He was angry at the prospect of having to amalgamate the schools of his parish and the effect it would have on the principal of the girls' school. He raised the issue with his parliamentary representative who questioned the Chief Secretary on the matter. The manager was dissatisfied with the Chief Secretary's reply and forwarded a copy of a letter he had sent to the Commissioners to the ISW. The Commissioners had refused to make a grant for the building of new schools unless the infant boys were sent to the girls' school and unless the manager undertook to amalgamate the schools if the attendance fell below fifty in either the girls' or boys' schools. The manager was opposed to these conditions "My people and myself", he wrote, "have the very strongest objection, on moral and educational grounds, and we shall persist in refusing to submit to it."³² The manager went on to describe the girls' school and its principal:

*The Female School is, I venture to say, one of the best of its kind in Ireland. Last year it gained the Carlisle and Blake premium for excellence...The Head Mistress of this school is a person of remarkable ability. She is 27 years of age, and is for the past six years Principal of the school. She is most assiduous in the discharge of her duties and the splendid condition of her school is the result... Her reward is to be degradation and humiliation. She is to see her school blotted out, and herself to be reduced to the position of assistant in the new mongrel Institution which you propose to substitute for it! I ask you is that fair?*³³

There was little indication that the INTO was concerned with this aspect. "Seumas", who wrote a weekly by-line column, was the only one who referred to it in the *ISW*. He warned women not to silently acquiesce to degradation and suggested that they should first ascertain whether their pension rights would be safeguarded, whether former capitation payments would continue, whether they would receive promotions and monetary advantages to which they were entitled under existing circumstances, and whether they would be dismissed if the average in the school fell under 50.³⁴

Some of these issues were clarified by the Commissioners. For instance, on the question of the capitation rights of women and men teachers in amalgamated schools the Commissioners ordered:

*That in cases of amalgamation of boys' and girls' schools the master be paid residual capitation grant for the boys, and the mistress for the girls, so long as the mistress remains in the school.*³⁵

Once the privileged assistant, that is the woman teacher who had been principal of the girls' school prior to amalgamation, retired all the capitation rights would go to the male principal. Yet, the financial considerations were only one aspect of the question. As "Seumas" pointed out, "far above these important material considerations is that of the status of the lady principal teacher." He depicted a scenario whereby:

*Mr. A.B., newly trained, age 20, third grade, has been appointed principal teacher in the ____ Amalgamated N.S. Mrs. Y.Z., formerly first of first grade, 25 years service, has been graciously retained as assistant.*³⁶

The INTO's efforts to protect the interests of men teachers during the 127(b) controversy in 1905 was an indication of the status of women within the INTO. Men teachers had legitimate grievances against rule 127(b). Their average attendances could be reduced with a possible decrease in their salaries and promotion prospects. Yet, women also had grievances but these were not addressed in the same way. The INTO did not protest against the amalgamation of small schools which the Commissioners advocated as a means of reducing the negative impact of the rule. Men were guaranteed the principalships of amalgamated schools. The question of having principalships awarded on merit rather than on the teachers' sex was not raised, even

though women principals objected to their possible reduction in status. Not only were women's interests ignored but the image of women teachers portrayed in the *ISW* implied that an increase in the numbers of women teachers would be damaging to the Irish education system. A few women teachers wrote individually to the *ISW* pointing out how they would suffer from the effects of the rule. But there was no combined force of women within the Organisation, there were no women on the Executive, there never had been and issues purely of interest to women teachers were largely ignored. If the INTO continued on this basis it would fail to attract new women members. It was expected that rule 127(b) would lead to an increase in the numbers of women teachers and failure to recruit them could jeopardise the INTO's future as a representative Organisation. The INTO, therefore, had to begin to address issues of concern to women teachers.³⁷

¹ See, T.J. O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress; the Story of the INTO 1868-1968* (Dublin: INTO, 1968), pp. 454, 455.

² It has been argued that the imposition of the marriage bar and the requirement that women teachers retire at sixty years of age were not fought with the same vigour given, for example, to the fight for salary increases. See, E. O'Leary, "The INTO and the Marriage Bar for Women National Teachers 1933 - 1958, *Saothar*, Vol. 12, (1987)), pp. 47 - 51.

³ *Rules and Regulations Commissioners of National Education 1905*, (Dublin: CNEI), p35. The regulations and duties of teachers can also be found in Appendix A of the annual reports of the Commissioners of National Education.

⁴ *ISW*, 4 March 1905, p.114.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.99.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁸ *ISW*, 4 March 1905, p.107.

⁹ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education 1905*, 28 March 1905, p.117 in National Library of Ireland.

¹⁰ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education 1905*, 14 March, 1905, p.85.

¹¹ *ISW*, 1 April 1905, pp. 210, 211.

¹² *ISW*, 18 March 1905, p.164.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.165.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.164.

¹⁵ *ISW*, 18 March 1905, p.165.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *ISW*, 25 March 1905, p.195.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.196.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Brian E. Titley, *Church, State and the Control of Schooling in Ireland 1900-1944* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press), p.32.

²¹ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education 1905*, p.89.

²² Ibid.

²³ ISW, 25 March 1905, pp.192,193.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ For instance, the principal teacher of Aughrim Boys' School, Mr. Mac Sweeney, had been informed that under the operation of rule 127(b) his salary might, if the average attendance in his school fell below 20, be reduced from £130 to £56. Mr. O'Donnell MP sought clarification on this point. The Commissioners stated that they had written to the manager of Aughrim Boys' and Girls' National Schools suggesting that the best course to adopt would be to amalgamate the Boy's and Girls' schools "...making the master the Principal of the combined school. If this were done the salary of the master would not be reduced, but, on the contrary, would be increased, and he would become eligible for promotion to the highest grade of teachers as the average attendance at the combined school would be 70. The salary of the mistress would remain as at present, under special Treasury sanction." See, *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education 1905*, p.154.

²⁷ ISW, 25 March 1905, p.541.

²⁸ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education 1905*, 9 May 1905, p.214.

²⁹ ISW, 25 March 1905, p.194.

³⁰ ISW, 1 April 1905, p.230.

³¹ ISW, 8 April 1905, p.254.

³² ISW, 24 June 1905, p.540.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ ISW, 15 April 1905, p.259.

³⁵ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education 1905*, 9 May 1905.

³⁶ ISW, 15 April 1905, p.259.

³⁷ The INTO continued to oppose rule 127(b) for a number of years. The only further concession made by the Commissioners was that the rule would be waived where the existing grade salary of a teacher would be reduced by its application.

CHAPTER III

"Lady Principals' Representative"

The "Lady Teachers' Own Page", Equal Pay and Women's Representation on the Central Executive Committee

RULE 127(B) led to some reassessment within the INTO. The rule, it was thought, would augment the numbers of women teachers and the Organisation, if it was to expand and develop, would need their support. It was necessary, therefore, to address some issues of specific concern to women. The first indication of change within the INTO was the publication in *The Irish School Weekly* of the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" in February, 1906. The editors of the ISW invited Kathleen Roche, (perhaps a pseudonym), to write a page each week "exclusively devoted to the interests of lady teachers."¹ The editors, whom she suggested, feared she was something of a socialist, stipulated that Roche must not write anything that could be construed as "outrageously insulting" by the men teachers. Nevertheless, in the introductory "Lady Teachers' Own Page" Roche insisted she would speak plainly and was critical of her male colleagues. "We lady teachers", she declared, "owe very little to the men teachers...what have the men teachers done towards alleviating our burdens...? Have not the interests of the lady teachers been practically overlooked?"² As an active member of the INTO Kathleen Roche had never heard the special grievances of women teachers discussed. She believed the small number of women delegates sent each year to the INTO annual congress and the absence of women on the Central Executive Committee indicated the low status of women in the Organisation. Roche held men responsible for this but she also believed it was "because we lady teachers have not insisted upon having our special grievances attended to."³ She advised women teachers to join the INTO in order to have their interests placed "in the forefront of agitation", and so as to compel the Executive to admit women teachers to its ranks.

Roche's objective with the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" was, she stated, to have "a variety page dealing with every topic directly and indirectly connected with the lady teachers in our National schools."⁴ Hence she was as likely to discuss matters of fashion such as the "no glove craze", or a subject of general news such as Lady Aberdeen's return to Dublin, or a woman

teacher's success in maintaining her averages, as she was to discuss an issue of equality.⁵ Nevertheless, the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" served an important function. It noted the grievances of women teachers and it both reflected, and encouraged, concern for issues of equality. It was the main forum, especially in its early years, for discussing these issues and it enhanced the INTO's appeal to women teachers. The "Lady Teachers' Own Page" was also a source of inspiration and encouragement to Catherine Mahon. It highlighted her work for equality issues and helped her gain national prominence within the INTO. The two equality issues the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" focussed on in its first year were equal pay and the need for the participation and representation of women teachers at all levels in the INTO. Mahon played a leading role in the pursuit of these aims and the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" gave her enthusiastic support.

Equal Pay 1906

Equal pay was the issue which first brought Catherine Mahon into the public arena and which gave an inkling of her dynamic style. Her initial involvement in the INTO began when she joined an organising committee in her local branch, the Birr Teachers' Association, in 1906.⁶ Mahon had also become a member of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association that year.⁷ This was largely a middle and upper class group, predominantly Protestant and non-conformist, which sought the extension of the parliamentary franchise to all qualified women on the same terms as men.⁸ Her membership of the IWSLGA must have fuelled Mahon's commitment to equality issues.

The question of equal pay was raised by Roche in the first "Lady Teachers' Own Page" in February 1906:

Equal pay for equal work is one of my dearest wishes, and one of my pet hobbies. We teach the same number of pupils as men teachers do: we teach them as well; we teach under identically similar conditions; we gain as many "Excellents" and "Blue Ribbons"; then why not get similarly paid? Have the men teachers ever advocated this principle of justice? Never.⁹

As the INTO annual Easter Congress approached Roche focussed on the issue again. She asked how many delegates would stand up and speak and vote for the principle of equal pay.¹⁰ When an equal pay motion was put to Congress Roche believed it was due to the influence of the "Lady Teachers'

Own Page".¹¹ The resolution was as follows:

*That as women teachers have to teach every subject which is compulsory on men teachers, and have in addition to teach needlework three hours in the week, they should receive salaries at least equal to those of men teachers, and we ask the same scale of salaries for all teachers, whether men or women, for the teaching of compulsory subjects of the codes.*¹²

Catherine Mahon took on the difficult task of trying to get the motion through Congress. She argued that in voting for the resolution men would be acting in their own interests as they all knew the Commissioners wished to increase the number of women teachers and reduce the number of men for economic reasons. Mahon was, of course, referring here to rule 127(b) and she observed, "If women were paid equal salaries with men there would be no question of preferment."¹³ Mr E. Mansfield, CEC representative, agreed with her and said they would hear no more about the rule if women teachers were paid the same salaries as men.¹⁴ It is ironic that rule 127(b) provided such a good argument in favour of equal pay. The usual arguments against equal pay, that it would have a negative effect on men's salaries, or, that men needed more pay to help support their dependants, were not mentioned in the ISW report of the Congress debate.

Mahon stressed the injustice to women teachers. She pointed out that men had less to do than women because the latter taught needlework three hours a week yet, "in this case women teachers are actually paid less for doing more work." A proposed amendment by George Ramsay, CEC representative, that the question be deferred to the Executive was lost.¹⁵ Congress did not believe the issue was of sufficient importance to merit such attention but was willing to grant it a lesser degree of notice. Denis Holland (Swords) proposed that the resolution be referred to the local committees. Mahon was satisfied with this proposal and Holland's amendment was agreed to unanimously by Congress. The Chair praised Mahon's speech as the most logical one made at Congress.¹⁶

Kathleen Roche also praised Mahon's admirable speech and congratulated women teachers in having so "able a champion in the person of Miss Mahon."¹⁷ Mahon cannot have been encouraged, however, by a leading article in the ISW which was dismissive of equal pay. In the article, titled "Teaching as a Profession for Women. Prospects of Lady Teachers under the National Board", the editors stated, "Let the existing scales of salaries be

increased by fifty per cent., as demanded by Congress, and then it will be time enough to discuss the principle of Equal Pay for Equal Work".¹⁸ The article's portrayal of women teachers fits perfectly with that of the prevailing domestic ideology, "woman's true role in life", it stated, "is essentially domestic." It accepted that a considerable number of women were compelled by necessity to work outside the home and "that no duties are more suitable for women than those of a teacher. And the converse of this is true: a woman is specially adapted for the work of the schoolroom."¹⁹ Although the editors did not believe that the time had arrived to discuss equal pay it urged women teachers to join and take active part in the INTO in order to gain better conditions and salaries. The negative view of the editors may have contributed to Mahon's decision subsequently to turn her focus to the question of representation for women on the CEC.

The editors' views were not shared by at least a quarter of the 200 local associations which adopted equal pay resolutions.²⁰ In September 1906 Kathleen Roche felt justified in stating that "a practically unanimous opinion has gone forth from the Associations...The general feeling is in levelling up the salaries of the lady teachers."²¹ Although a considerable number of associations supported the principle of equal pay there appears to have been a sizeable minority which opposed it. Roche believed this minority should be ignored.²² Mahon, in an address given at the inaugural meeting of the King's County Teachers' Association, said she regretted that some teachers were either actively or passively hostile to equal pay. If it could be shown:

...either at the present juncture, or at any future stage in the development of our affairs, that this claim would be injurious to the general interests, I, for one, would forbear to press it at that particular juncture. ²³

Mahon suggested the only argument worthy of attention was the following, "If lady teachers ask to have their salaries levelled up, there is a danger of this being interpreted to mean that the men's remain stationary or be levelled down."²⁴ She asked why men teachers ever made demands to the authorities if they were afraid they would be punished for their temerity by being misinterpreted to such a degree. Mahon went on to state:

The fact is, I do not consider it fair to ask the men to champion our cause in this particular respect, for in doing so they have to encounter a certain amount of hostility and ridicule, and it takes an intellectual giant like

*Herbert Spencer to be impervious to ridicule in advocating the principle enunciated by that famous philosopher - "Equity knows no difference of sex."*²⁵

Women teachers could argue the case for equal pay themselves if they had a place on the Executive, suggested Mahon, and therefore, the issue of lady representation was of greater importance at present to women teachers. Mahon's address to the King's County Association was influential. After its publication the "Lady Teachers' Own Page", while it continued to list the local associations which had passed equal pay resolutions, focussed mainly on the issue of "lady representation".²⁶

The equal pay campaign which began in 1906 had a degree of success. It progressed from its first airing in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" to the stage where a large number of local associations around the country declared support for the principle. However, Congress' referral of the equal pay resolution to the local associations indicated it would make extremely slow progress and Mahon was probably wise to push first for representation on the Executive. At least with women representatives on the CEC there might be some hope of having the question of equal pay dealt with satisfactorily. Although at the end of 1906 the issue of representation preempted equal pay the subject was not forgotten. The influence of the campaign begun in 1906 was evident in 1908 when the CEC decided to seek an equal distribution of the Birrell grant. And the campaign of 1906, eventually, led to equal pay motions being adopted at INTO congresses in 1913 and 1916. These, in turn, helped gain an equal war bonus in 1916.

"Lady Representation" on the CEC

Running parallel with the demands for equal pay in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" was a strong criticism of the INTO for the lack of representation given to women teachers in the Organisation. The question of "lady representation" was to prove a more contentious issue than equal pay had proved so far to be within the INTO. There was no imminent danger of equal pay being granted but women representatives could soon pose a threat to the power structures within the union. Men, initially, resisted efforts to have women on the Executive but they were forced to reconsider their views. As with equal pay Kathleen Roche highlighted the issue in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page". She suggested that if women were not given representation they should set up their own associations. Later, when the issue was being addressed by the local associations Roche and other women

teachers stressed the positive aspects of having women on the Executive. Many men teachers also recognised the benefits of having women on the CEC but they did not want women to contest the Executive elections against the men.

No woman was nominated for the Executive of 1906-1907 and Kathleen Roche took this as proof that the men regarded women teachers as "nonentities".²⁷ Roche was disheartened on reading the preliminary list of delegates for the 1906 Congress. The list consisted of 137 teachers only three of whom were women, whereas Roche estimated that at least forty five of the delegates should have been women. Observing that the likely ratio of masters and mistresses in Irish national schools in ten years time would be 1 to 4 Roche posed the question "Who will then support the Organisation?"²⁸ She repeatedly stressed this point and it is clear from later correspondence that it was given serious consideration by INTO members.

One member of the CEC, George Ramsay of Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, believed the INTO would benefit from having women representatives and that now was an opportune time to grant them representation.²⁹ Ramsay observed that the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in England had several lady members on its Executive and that the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) had a lady Vice-President.³⁰ It was not seemly for Ireland to lag behind. "In many respects", he observed, "our INTO has a very broad platform. Why be stunted in this matter?"³¹ Perhaps his most compelling reason for admitting women representatives to the Executive was his suggestion that, "The election of ladies on the Committee would, in my opinion, be a powerful stimulus to the Organisation."³²

Roche was glad that at least one member of the CEC was in favour of having women on the Executive. She reported how five women teachers of her acquaintance had in the last few weeks replaced men teachers in national schools in Dublin. Roche suggested this trend would continue and she again warned that the INTO's future would be in jeopardy if women teachers' interests continued to be ignored.³³ However, there was no record of a resolution to secure representation on the Executive for women teachers at Congress in 1906 and Roche, referring to this, declared:

*I have pointed out before, and I now do so again, that the exclusion of lady teachers from active participation in the work of the general Organisation is a short-sighted policy, and that it will prove ruinous in the long run if persisted.*³⁴

After Congress the mood in the Organisation changed and there was evidence of more support for women representatives on the Executive. A review of the INTO in the ISW in July 1906 noted that there were few women members in the Organisation and recommended, "They should get a share in the work and responsibility of carrying on the Organisation, and then they would take a far greater interest in it."³⁵ Local associations also began to demand "lady representation". Roche hoped every association in Ireland would follow the example of the Kanturk Association which had adopted both an equal pay resolution, and one proposing the CEC co-opt a woman teacher onto the Executive for the 1906-1907 session. Another example of support for women representatives at local level came from the Co. Tipperary Teachers' Association resolution which stated:

...that two or more ladies might be elected at next Congress, or co-opted afterwards by the CEC for 1907-1908: that for succeeding years they might be elected in the same manner as assistants' representatives.³⁶

In September 1906, Mahon wrote to the ISW saying that the time had come for women teachers to be allowed on the CEC. If all the women teachers in Ireland joined the local associations their numerical strength alone, she suggested, would enable them to nominate and elect a lady representative in any of the districts. She was not in favour of displacing any of the present representatives on the Executive and as the funds, she suggested, would not permit:

complete ladies' representation (and why, dear ladies? Because you do not contribute to them in proportion to your numbers), let us demand that at least two new places be created on the executive for ladies, one to represent the N. and E., one the S. and W., and one of the two assistants' representatives to be a lady.³⁷

There was a vacancy for an assistants' representative on the CEC and Mahon thought this provided an ideal opportunity. She urged women teachers to attend the October meetings and to "nominate a lady assistants' representative for N. and W. for co-option by the CEC. I think any lady could represent them as well as they have been represented of late, and many ladies could represent them much better..."³⁸ Mahon suggested that two of the special duties of lady representatives would be:

...the protesting against amalgamation and consequent lowering of status,

and deprivation of promotion and pension rights of lady teachers, and also against the appointment of the new class of helper known as JAM."³⁹

Reaction to Mahon's letter in the *ISW* was favourable. Roche praised her letter but took a more radical approach to representation. She believed women should have representation in proportion to their numbers in the Organisation rather than just three representatives as suggested by Mahon.⁴⁰ The Executive did not take up Mahon's suggestion that a woman be co-opted to the vacant assistants' representative place on the CEC. It did not nominate a woman candidate for the position. Roche discovered that one member of the Executive had proposed the co-option of a woman but no one would second his proposal.⁴¹ As both the men candidates nominated received the same number of votes the matter had to be deferred to the November meeting of the CEC. Roche hoped that when the assistants' position came before the Executive again it would co-opt a lady representative. "If they refuse to do so", she wrote, "they must be regarded as hostile to the interests of the lady teachers, and this in spite of the fact that the local association have declared otherwise."⁴² Roche recommended Mahon for the position. She said she had no special interest in Mahon's appointment beyond the interests of the Organisation. She had never met Mahon but felt certain that she would give general satisfaction and encouragement to the women teachers. Through Mahon's work the Birr Association had increased in membership from twelve to twenty-four, sixteen of the twenty-four being women. However, when the co-option of assistants' representative came before the Executive for the second time in November no attempt was made to propose a woman teacher for the position.

There was no rule debarring women from standing for election to the Executive and in September 1906 Roche advised women teachers to organise their forces immediately in order to have women candidates prepared for nomination in January 1907.⁴³ By November, from the *ISW* reports, there appeared to be an increase in the attendance of women at local association meetings. Mahon was prominent at local meetings in her own area. She played a significant role in organising the first King's County Association meeting in Tullamore and her address at that meeting was reported in the *ISW*.⁴⁴ It was at this meeting that Mahon stated that the question of "lady representation" was of greater importance than that of equal pay. Using the suffrage axiom, "Taxation without Representation is Tyranny", Mahon

argued that women teachers were seeking the franchise from members of their own profession and:

...it remains to be seen whether the men teachers will follow the example of that Government which they inveigh against, or show consistency between their principles and their actions by granting to the lady members of the profession representation according to their taxation in the Organisation.⁴⁵

She did not agree that the actions of the suffragettes, who were militantly campaigning for the franchise in England, had injured women teachers' claims for representation. She asked "What has the action of the dozen English ladies to do with us in Ireland? Are there not extremists in every movement?"⁴⁶

The question of women's representation was now a major point of discussion for teachers and a series of correspondence in the ISW reflected the opposing views on the issue. The first few letters, most written anonymously, argued the case for and against representation in a heated, unreflective fashion. However, a letter written by James McMillan of Burnbank, Cookstown Co. Tyrone, presented a lucid case for having a limited number of women representatives on the Executive. His letter, although supporting representation, demonstrated how very reluctant men teachers were to relinquish power within the Organisation. Women would be permitted to join the Executive on men's terms and their areas of interest would be clearly defined by men. J. O' Neill of Rathrobin, Tullamore, also agreed that there should be women representatives on the Executive, but again only under certain restrictive conditions. Women, it was argued, must not be allowed to contest elections with men teachers or they might, in future, obtain a majority on the Executive. Women teachers argued the benefits which would accrue to the INTO from having women representatives. The Organisation, it was declared, would expand and become more powerful as a result. Roche no longer argued that women teachers should organise separate associations, probably because the question of women representatives was being given due consideration.

The first letter blatantly hostile to the idea of women on the Executive was penned by a woman, Annie McGovern. She could not, she wrote, "see the advantage of having a lady on the CEC." Nor would it be in good taste, she claimed, for a woman to sit in company with ten or eleven of the opposite sex. Indeed, she had:

...a presentiment almost amounting to conviction that the time at which the first woman enters into the counsels of the Executive will "be the beginning of the end" of the National Teachers' Organisation.⁴⁷

Annie McGovern's letter was challenged the following week by "Antigone" who wrote that she was sure "there was not a lady teacher in Ireland but read with indignation, nor a man teacher but read with contempt, the abjectly self-abasing production of Miss McGovern...".⁴⁸ Another correspondent, Gertrude Collins, was also critical of McGovern whose name, she suggested, was a pseudonym.⁴⁹ "Antigone", writing a second time on the subject, insisted that:

...the lady teachers of Ireland want representation on the Executive, and, what is more they will get it, and get it with the assistance and through the instrumentality of the men teachers, who, throughout the length and breadth of the country, are with them.⁵⁰

In contrast to the above exchanges James McMillan's letter was a measured one which appealed for a degree of representation for women teachers. McMillan first traced the history, as he knew it, of the movement to have women representatives on the Executive. About two years previously a woman member of the Cookstown Association had brought a particular grievance to the attention of the Association. Her average attendance was almost fifty and often she had nearly sixty children in her class. Yet, masters with an average of only thirty-five could have a manual instructress, whereas, she, with an average of nearly fifty was denied one. The meeting was impressed with the strength of the woman teacher's grievance and one member suggested that if women had one or two representatives on the CEC such a glaring injustice would very soon be exposed and remedied as a consequence. The suggestion was approved by the meeting and George Ramsay undertook to bring the matter before Congress.⁵¹ Ramsay failed to get support for the motion from the Audit and Organisation Committee and so the motion did not go before Congress in 1905. He had no more success with his attempt in 1906.

McMillan was of the opinion that given the number of women in the Organisation and the fact that there were still some "scholastic" matters, e.g. the teaching of needlework, which affected them, they were entitled to some representation on the Executive. He suggested that two or three new posi-

tions be created on the CEC which would be assigned to women and for which women could only be nominated and voted for. McMillan believed this would be an equitable arrangement and, would have the least disturbing effect on the constitution of the Organisation. He did not believe that having women candidates coming forward and contesting the seats with men was either attractive or desirable. "In the main", he wrote, "the interests of masters and mistresses are not antagonistic, but identical, and if things are wisely managed there should be no reason for them taking the open field against each other."⁵² Such a condition would, he declared, "lessen chivalry on the one side and womanliness on the other."⁵³ The few matters which were of particular concern to women could be looked after by two or three of themselves, but he believed, and felt the vast majority of women would agree, that the general affairs of the profession would be better left in the hands of men:

And if any are here disposed to press the "equality" closure they should reflect that it was men who founded the Organisation, who nursed it, through its weak and struggling years, who bore the obloquy when it was traduced, who defended it when it was attacked, and now when it has become strong and influential it would scarcely be fair to ask them to relinquish half the positions they have won for an experiment, the success of which would be highly problematic.⁵⁴

In effect, McMillan sought to guarantee men's control of the Organisation. Women teachers could have a place on the Executive to look after subjects of concern to women such as the teaching of needlework and cookery but men would do the real work of the Organisation. McMillan made no reference to the unequal pay of women teachers. He conveniently used the dominant ideology as a prop for his argument. Women's "womanliness" would be tarnished if they competed against men for Executive positions, yet, women's "womanliness" would not be affected if they competed against other women. Going forward for election was not the issue of concern but going forward against men was. McMillan did not mention how men's "manliness" would be affected if they were defeated by women in elections for the Executive. He suggested that women had done little to help the development of the INTO.⁵⁵ How they could have done so when they were excluded from the power base of the Organisation was difficult to understand.

Although the editors of the *ISW* stated at the end of McMillan's letter that the correspondence would end there it did not.⁵⁶ The discussion recommenced in the *ISW* of 9th February 1907 when J. O' Neill, Rathrobin, Tullamore, Co Offaly, wrote giving his opinion of representation. He, like McMillan, favoured limited representation for women on the Executive but for a different reason. He believed that up to now women teachers had been, practically, governed and taxed without being represented and he was afraid of the consequences if this should continue. He noted that, "government and taxation without representation have caused rebellion and upheaval in greater communities and constitutions than our Organisation, and I say, let us men beware, lest it cause the same in ours."⁵⁷ O' Neill may have been influenced in this argument by Roche's earlier warnings that a separate association for women teachers would be set up if their interests continued to be ignored. He was also impressed by Mahon's arguments for representation. He rejected the suggestion that women were represented and their interests and grievances looked after by the men, "you might as well say that my interests and grievances are as well represented by a friend of mine...", he wrote.⁵⁸ O' Neill shared McMillan's distaste for electoral competition between women and men. He believed women teachers would be defeated if they went forward because women were not, as yet, sufficiently organised to be in a majority. However, women teachers could be successful in future elections, an outcome he viewed with foreboding:

*For while I advocate lady representation on the CEC, I would by no means wish, nor do I think they would wish themselves, to be in a majority thereon. I would, therefore, earnestly appeal to the lady teachers not to contest the forthcoming elections, but to give congress one other chance of doing them justice.*⁵⁹

O' Neill suggested that the newly-elected CEC be mandated by Congress to co-opt, at their first meeting, two lady teachers for the year 1907-8 and that in future two lady teachers be nominated and elected by the lady teachers in the same way the assistants' representatives were nominated and elected, that is one for South and East, and one for North and West.⁶⁰

Roche challenged J. O' Neill's letter. She said she was grateful for his general attitude on the question of representation but she could not agree with all his suggestions:

*Mr. O' Neill cannot surely be serious in assuming that half the associated teachers will, or ought to be, contented with one-seventh of the representation. He admits that taxation and representation should go hand in hand, but why not proportionate representation, if any at all?*⁶¹

She questioned O' Neill's advice that women should refrain from contesting the approaching elections. How could he grudge the election of Mahon, of whom he had spoken so approvingly, to the modest position of Vice-President. Besides, assuming the women stood down at the elections what guarantee was there that Congress would grant them any representation at all?⁶² O' Neill, in response to Roche's criticism, said he believed "every beginning must be weak", and some representation was better than none. His suggestion of having two lady representatives was meant as a temporary arrangement to last for some years, it was not meant to be a permanent solution. He also believed that if women teachers insisted on proportionate representation at this stage they would lose all. O' Neill stated he would support Mahon if she went forward for election but he was convinced she would be defeated. And he did not believe that her going forward for election would be any guarantee that Congress would give representation to women sooner than if she refrained from contesting the election.⁶³

Throughout the period these letters were being published "The Lady Teachers' Own Page" never ceased to press the question of representation. Roche urged women teachers to attend the January meetings in full strength in order to ensure the nomination of some women for the March elections. She believed that even if women candidates were beaten at the polls their going forward would impress on Congress the necessity of providing for women representatives in the future.⁶⁴ Roche stressed the benefits of having women on the CEC. She observed that both the English and Scottish teachers' unions had flourished since women were given direct representation and, referring to the success of the woman Vice-President of the Scottish Organisation Roche asked:

*Why should a lady Vice-President not be elected at the approaching elections? Surely the Irish teachers are not less keen than the Scotch in embracing any opportunity that may increase the membership of their Organisation, and I'm sure they are not less chivalrous.*⁶⁵

Roche thought Mahon's "extraordinary enthusiasm, and her almost

superhuman energy are traits seldom met with in one individual, and render her an ideal candidate for the position of Vice-President of the INTO." She asked all true friends of the Organisation, and those who were desirous of its extension and welfare to nominate Mahon at their local associations for the position of Vice-President.⁶⁶

Mahon had not indicated yet whether she would go forward for the office but she urged the election of women both as delegates to Congress, and as representatives on the CEC. She hoped that any associations entitled to two representatives would elect at least one lady delegate to Congress 1907 and she asked the associations to pass a resolution in favour of some measure of lady representation on the CEC and to forward that resolution to the Executive for insertion on the agenda of the 1907 Congress.⁶⁷

Roche's and Mahon's efforts were rewarded when, for the first time in the history of the INTO, women were nominated for positions on the CEC. The list of nominations was published in the *ISW* of 9 February 1907.⁶⁸ Fourteen teachers were nominated for the office of Vice-President, Mahon ranked fifth on the list with nominations from 8 associations. Those ahead of her, Mr. E. Mansfield, 77 nominations; Mr. D. Elliot, 28; Mr. J. McGowan, 17 and Mr. P. Gamble, 14 nominations were already prominent members of the Executive.⁶⁹ Nine men were insufficiently nominated for Vice-President as they had received between 1 and 3 votes.⁷⁰ Mahon was also nominated to represent District 2 on the CEC but as she had received only one nomination, from Carlow, she was deemed insufficiently nominated. As well as Mahon two other women, Miss Toner and Eibhlin Nic Neill, had received nominations as district representatives but again they had been deemed insufficiently nominated.⁷¹ Toner had been nominated by Belturbet association to represent District 6 and Nic Neill had received a nomination from Sinn Fein to represent District 8.⁷² It would appear also that a significant number of local associations had, as suggested by Mahon, forwarded resolutions seeking some form of representation for women on the Executive.

Mahon had not officially declared her candidacy but as soon as the list of nominations was published doubts were raised about her suitability for the position of Vice-President.⁷³ In the *ISW* "Cainteoir" questioned Mahon's ability and eligibility. He claimed that not more than one third of the Birr teachers were members of the INTO. Mahon was secretary of the Birr Association and although "Cainteoir" asserted that he did "not want to blame Mahon for this undesirable state of affairs..." the implication was clear.⁷⁴ Mahon reject-

ed this allegation stating that there were no teachers from the town of Birr in the Birr Association. The town national schools were in the hands of the Presentation Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy who were prohibited by their rules from joining the INTO. Since the formation of an Organisation Committee in July 1906 consisting of four women and three men teachers the membership of the Birr Association had doubled from 12 to 24 and there were not more than a "couple of teachers outside the pale of the Organisation."⁷⁵ "Cainteoir" also claimed that the Birr Association was only two years in existence. Mahon said that on a technical point he was right but he was conveying an incorrect impression. The minute book she was using dated from 1899. In 1902 the Association became defunct through some cause for which the secretary, Mr. Cahill, was not responsible. And if "Cainteoir" asked why Mahon or another woman teacher did not take over the running of the association at that time Mahon would answer:

at that time no Kathleen Roche had arisen to point out our duty to us, or, rather, to disabuse our minds of the idea that, like children, imbeciles, and all such, we should be good and keep silent, and ask no questions. None of the lady teachers then dreamed that it would be right or proper for one of them to open their lips in the way of business at an Association meeting, and I suppose we should be in that condition yet were it not for her, who showed us our duties and responsibilities to ourselves and to our Organisation.⁷⁶

"Cainteoir" rebutted Mahon's response saying he believed there were about forty teachers in the Birr district and he was not satisfied that they had all been approached to join the Organisation. The women teachers had failed to carry on the Birr association when it ran into difficulties in 1902. "Cainteoir" did not think women were now capable of taking the lead and he suggested there were many who believed as he did.⁷⁷

"Cainteoir's" criticism of Mahon was offset by an encouraging letter from H. M. O' Connor of Tervoe, Co. Limerick, who wrote:

I must say we feel we have an ideal candidate in Miss Mahon for V.P. She is possessed of uncommon ability, rare energy and tact. We are grateful to her for placing her brilliant talents at our service, and we have not the slightest misgiving as to her practical commonsense in dealing with our interests, and giving prudent help in the general discussions of the C.E.C.⁷⁸

O' Connor assumed women members would vote for Mahon but she

appealed to the "thoughtful and progressive men" in the INTO to put Mahon at the head of the poll. There were two reasons, O' Connor wrote, why women sought representation. Firstly, they wished to strengthen and popularise the INTO by attracting into the Organisation the thousands of women teachers who had hitherto remained aloof from it because they believed the INTO was conducted, almost exclusively, to promote the interests of men teachers. Secondly, the associated women teachers sought representation because they felt their special interests were completely overlooked as no one on the CEC was conversant with the difficulties of teaching in girls' schools.⁷⁹

Kate Buckley from Coolard Girls' School, Listowel, also supported Mahon's candidature. She thought it was necessary to have women representatives to look after the special interests of women teachers - needlework, cookery, domestic economy - "they belong to a woman's sphere, so by all means have women to deal with them in future; the CEC, as at present manned, cannot do so."⁸⁰ Buckley believed representation was inevitable and that hundreds of men teachers who hated arrogant injustice would "fling their prejudices aside" and vote for Mahon. She thought there could hardly be a woman teacher who would hesitate to vote for her "a lady who by her voice and pen, has become a second Harriet B. Stowe in trying to rouse us from the lethargy into which we have fallen...".⁸¹ If there was such a woman Buckley pitied her "it's no wonder that she should be the slave, not the helpmate, of man...".⁸² Kate Buckley's letter was challenged by "A True Helpmate", who asked women teachers not to lose their common sense, their modesty and their refinement by pushing themselves to the front, "elbowing out men whose words and experience carry weight with those in authority over us."⁸³

Mahon officially declared her candidacy for the Vice-Presidency in the ISW of 16 March 1907.⁸⁴ Her candidature, she believed, now gave the men an opportunity of translating their words into action. The Executive consisted of fourteen members and surely it was not too much to expect "that for the present, at least, one of those members should be a lady."⁸⁵ She pointed out that the membership of the Organisation consisted of approximately 40% women and 60% men, yet as women teachers now constituted almost 60% of the teaching profession the proportion should be exactly the reverse. Taking 10,000 as the possible maximum strength of the Organisation Mahon estimated that there were still over 3,000 women and

nearly 1,000 men unassociated. If, she suggested, women teachers had representatives looking after their interests then the 3,000 unassociated women would join the Organisation and the 1,000 unassociated men would follow their example. This enlarged Organisation would be in a much better position to demand their rights. Women teachers, she believed, would vote for her as a matter of principle as well as a matter of utility. She sought no special consideration from the men teachers on the grounds of being a woman but she appealed to them on behalf of the women teachers and of the Organisation.⁸⁶

As Congress approached, and it was clear that Mahon was going to stand for election, opposition to her candidacy mounted. J. R. Nash, Templemore, Co. Tipperary was angry that Mahon was contesting the election and he warned women teachers that if they voted for Mahon they would not be granted direct representation. Direct representation, or special representation, was a proposal whereby a number of seats would be reserved for women on the Executive. Nash was in agreement with the resolutions forwarded by many of the local associations calling for this type of representation, however, he understood these resolutions were based on the premise that women teachers did not wish to enter into contest against men for places on the Executive. As Mahon was going forward in open contest then where was the need for special representation, he asked. The women teachers could not expect "representation by conquest" and, at the same time, "expect that the Organisation rules will be so amended as to have seats specially reserved for them...They can only expect one or the other means of securing representation."⁸⁷ This was a fair point. The Congress Agenda for 1907 included a motion for special representation for women. The motion, proposed by Mahon and seconded by H. M. O' Connor, Limerick, was as follows, "That Congress do now consider the advisability of having special representation for ladies on future Executive committees ". Mahon in going forward for election as well as seeking special representation must have wanted to force the issue and to ensure that women's demands for representation would be addressed.

Nash went on to argue that if Mahon persevered in her election campaign for the vice-presidency she would sacrifice women teachers' right to special consideration and they would then have to seek election on the same terms as men:

I feel the lady teachers of Ireland would much prefer the other course - to have some seats specially set apart to be contested for among themselves. If they show by supporting Miss Mahon on the election day that they approve of her action, they must bide the consequences, and cannot expect to have favours conferred on them. Not only that, but if she be elected to the position she ambitions, the lady teachers will lose the guarantee which Congress would undoubtedly give them of having always direct representation.⁸⁸

It is interesting that Nash viewed special representation as a "favour" to be conferred on women. He concluded by appealing to Mahon to consider the effects of her action on the cause of women teachers. Would it give a "new impetus or will it rather tend to alienate those male teachers who...have been instrumental to a great extent in giving their (women's) special grievances due prominence."⁸⁹ Perhaps, underlying Nash's concern was a fear that if Mahon was successful in the election men would have to concede power on terms not quite to their satisfaction.

McMillan, writing a second time to the ISW, was also concerned about Mahon's candidacy and the possibility it could set a precedent for proportional representation. Proportional representation might, in future, result in a majority of women on the CEC which, he warned, could be detrimental to the Organisation. McMillan believed teachers who were willing to give their time and energy to advance the interests of the Organisation whether they be men or women should be appointed to the Executive:

But let the efficiency of the Organisation be put in the forefront of all our plans. And it is here, I am afraid, that an Executive, controlled by ladies, as it soon would be if numbers and representation must go together, would be found wanting. Not that I deny that the ladies lack the ability - who would dream of such an unpardonable offence? - but from experience I observe that generally they take very little interest in Organisation concerns.⁹⁰

McMillan, initially, had thought Mahon was making a tactical error in going forward for the position of Vice-President and although he had now changed his mind he would not be voting for her. The rules of the Organisation were framed in their intention, if not literally, on the assumption that men would be its chief officers and he would respect the existing laws. He saw Mahon's candidature as a protest against those rules and he warned that if Congress failed to make provision for direct lady representation then there was a danger that subsequently overwhelming numbers

would co-operate with Mahon, and any other ladies, who "might attempt to get their admitted grievance redressed."⁹¹

Nash's and Mc Millan's letters were harmful to Mahon's prospects of election but a letter by "Scrutineer" was most damaging. He wrote suggesting that Mahon was ineligible for the position of Vice-President. He quoted the election rules which stated that:

*Any association which has cleared with Central Funds for ten or more members may nominate one candidate who has been a member of the Organisation for at least three years immediately preceding the date of nomination.*⁹²

"Scrutineer" advised readers to carefully examine the list of members in the Belfast Congress Programme of 1904. He said it would be deplorable, given there were such admirable candidates, if the Organisation were to be without the services of a Vice-President. "Scrutineer" was right in so far as there was no Birr Association listed in the Congress Directory for the years 1903, 1904. The Congress Directory for 1901, 1905, 1906, etc., lists the Birr Association with Mahon as a member.⁹³ It appeared that Mahon's candidacy was doomed.

Kathleen Roche, although she had been warned by the Editor-in -Chief of the *ISW* not to carry on an election campaign in the "The Lady Teachers' Own Page", urged all teachers to "vote for the one lady candidate."⁹⁴ She was dismayed at the attempts to blacken Mahon's name:

*The attempts made by men - most of whom were ashamed to let their names be known - to make little of the candidature of Miss Mahon, and to spoil her chances on election day, were disappointing in the extreme. Every conceivable argument that could be adduced, fair and unfair, true or false, was brought into play - all with the object of beating a woman! And when Miss Mahon's candidature looked rosy, and when her gallant opponents began to suspect she might win, they fired their parting shot- the only effective weapon they had. They represented that Miss Mahon was disqualified by a rule of the Organisation to act on the Executive even if she were elected.*⁹⁵

Roche believed this last allegation completely spoiled Mahon's chances of being elected. Hundreds would refrain from voting for her thinking that if they did their votes would be wasted. However, Roche believed that the men's action would only stimulate women teachers to work harder. It was

perfectly clear if they wished to succeed they must rely on their own efforts and not on those of men.⁹⁶

Given the campaign to undermine her election Mahon won a significant number of votes in the contest for Vice-Presidency. The results were as follows:

Vice President	
Mr. James McGowan	2174
Mr. E. Mansfield	2073
Miss C. Mahon	987 ⁹⁷

This was a clear indication of support for women representatives. Mahon's good showing in the election, as well as the motion seeking special representation meant women's claims could no longer be ignored and the Audit and Finance Committee recommended to Congress:

For the purpose of giving special representation on the Central Executive Committee to lady teachers and assistant teachers, Ireland shall be divided into two divisions, each division to consist of four electoral districts, and to return one lady representative and one assistant representative. That Congress elect two lady representatives on the C.E.C. for the current year.⁹⁸

Mahon and Mrs. O' Connor (Limerick) enthusiastically supported the proposal and after some discussion both recommendations were adopted. It was also agreed that one of the women representatives would be a principals' and the other would be an assistants' representative. Nearly an hour was spent in arranging the method in which the election for women representatives should take place. All the delegates were entitled to vote and the following was the result of the election:-

Principals

Miss Mahon, 85 votes (elected); Miss O' Neill, 29; Mrs. Herlihy, 27; Mrs. O' Connor, 15; Miss Mc Crum, 10; Miss Anglin, 3.

Assistants

Miss Larmour, 106 votes (elected); Miss Ryan, 33; Miss Curran, 29. ⁹⁹

It is interesting that nine women were prepared to go forward for election as women representatives under this system. It is doubtful if half as many would have gone forward in an open contest with men. Yet, the terms

for special representation suited men best. They gave up nothing. The Executive was expanded from fourteen to sixteen members to accommodate the women representatives and men's positions were, if anything, more deeply entrenched. However, as women could go forward for the higher offices there were, from 1911 to 1916, three women on the Executive.

The two newly elected women representatives wrote to the ISW thanking delegates for their support at Congress and outlining what they hoped to achieve on the CEC. Miss Elizabeth Larmour, a member of the Belfast Association, assured the assistants that she would do everything possible to

improve the position
and prospects of all
women teachers. Since

special representation had been accorded to women she urged every woman unassociated to join the Organisation immediately "...otherwise the pessimists will say with some truth that the innovation of having women representatives has not proved a success."¹⁰⁰ She also suggested that any association which did not have a woman as a secretary should elect one as an assistant secretary at its next meeting.

Mahon also wrote to the ISW thanking everyone who supported her and the cause of women representatives. She had anticipated some opposition at Congress, but she found that on the Audit Committee and in open Congress women's claims were conceded unanimously and that the utmost harmony and



good humour prevailed throughout the entire discussion of the motion for representation. Two new places had been created for women on the Executive and in addition their right to contest for the higher offices had been maintained. She continued, "not only have our special interests been catered for, but our status (of equality) in the Organisation has, at the same time, been upheld."¹⁰¹ The work of organising and the interests of the lady principals would be her chief concern during the coming year and she invited all the lady teachers, both in girls' and mixed schools, to let her know their grievances with regard to programme, increments, inefficiency, unreasonable and impossible conditions of work, etc.¹⁰²

In 1948 in an article on Women Teachers and the INTO T. J. O'Connell wrote that he believed the decision to grant direct representation was taken "not because of any desire to give special representation to women as such but rather to secure to the Organisation the services of such an outstanding personality as Miss Mahon."¹⁰³ This revealing remark acknowledged Mahon's critical role in gaining representation for women on the Executive but also indicated that once she had given her services women might not expect to have representation. Indeed, it is debatable whether, in the long term, the granting of special representation to women on the CEC in 1907 was beneficial to the interests of women teachers. Special representation did not fundamentally address the question of representation. It stunted the process started by women teachers in 1906/1907 of organising and agitating for their rights within the INTO. Questions such as the propriety of opposing men in elections, or, the exact purpose for seeking representation were not properly addressed. If women had to continue to fight for representation in 1907 then practices and procedures might have been established whereby they would have developed the confidence and skills necessary to compete against men teachers. Special representation impeded this process. Women teachers did not clarify in 1907 why it was important to have women representatives. Consequently, when the rules for election to the CEC were altered in 1918 and women were entitled to stand for all positions few women were ready to do so. Special representation insured men's dominance on the Executive. It may partly explain why in an Organisation representing a teaching force 80 per cent women and 20 per cent men only four of the elected sixteen district representatives are currently women.

¹ ISW, 3 February 1906, p. 310. Kathleen Roche appears to have been a principal

- teacher in a girls' national school in Dublin.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 ISW, 10 February 1906, p. 344.
- 6 She was elected secretary of the Association the following year.
- 7 See, *Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association Report for 1906*.
- 8 See, Owens, *Smashing Times*.
- 9 ISW, 3 February 1906, p. 310.
- 10 ISW, 31 March 1906, p. 525.
- 11 ISW, 28 April 1906, p. 662.
- 12 Ibid., p. 654.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Mr. MacDonald (Cashel) said it was a mistake to think this was the first time the question was brought before Congress. He had brought the matter forward 20 years ago. See, ISW, 28 April, 1906, p.654.
- 16 ISW, 28 April 1906, p. 654.
- 17 Ibid., p. 662.
- 18 ISW, 30 June 1906, pp. 225,226. This was the argument used by INTO officials from the 1920s up until the 1950s for not pursuing equal pay. The "Lady Teachers' Own Page" did not refer to the editors' dismissal of the equal pay question, indeed Kathleen Roche was grateful for the attention the editors had given women teachers in their article. See, ISW, 7 July 1906, p. 248.
- 19 ISW, 30 June 1906, pp. 225,226
- 20 The associations which had passed equal pay resolutions by the end of September 1906 included Kanturk, Belfast, Ballaghadereen and Kilmovee, Borrisokane and Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary Teachers' Association, Baltinglass, Templemore and Rathdowney, Ennistymon and Milltown Mallbay, Swinford, Tyrone Central and Arva, Ballinasloe, Edenderry, Curry, Glenties, South Wicklow, North Kerry, Drumcolliher, Mitchelstown, Enniscorthy, New Ross, Castlerea, Ennis, Maryboro' Rathdowney, Belturbet, Cork County, Caherciveen, Ballybay, Ballyshannon, Bantry, Co. Kerry, Castletownbere, Letterkenny, Dingle, Manorhamilton, Cavan, Mohill, Gort and Castlemaine. See, ISW, 2 June 1906, p. 100; 16 June 1906, p. 171; 7 July 1906, p.248; 28 July 1906, p. 318; 11 August 1906, p.368; 18 August 1906, p. 392; 25 August 1906, p. 418; 1 September, p. 442; 15 September 1906, p. 506; 22 September 1906, p. 538; 29 September 1906, p. 570; 27 October 1906, p. 707; 10 November 1906, p. 778.
- 21 ISW, 8 September 1906, p.474. One association, the East Cavan and South Monaghan Association, adopted a resolution which merely sought to reduce the difference between women teachers' and men teachers' salaries from twelve per

- cent to ten per cent. The association was given notice by Miss Toner that she was going to have this proposal rescinded and a resolution demanding equal pay for equal work substituted. See, *ISW*, 1 December 1906, p. 872.
- ²² *ISW*, 24 November 1906, p. 842.
- ²³ *ISW*, 10 November 1906, p. 773 .
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ The Corcraigh, Cappoquin, West Muskerry, Rathmullen Lisnaskea, Templemore, Crossmolina, Rathmore, and Irvinestown Associations had resolved in favour of equal pay. See, *ISW* 19 January 1907, p. 1052; 2 February 1907, p. 1114.
- ²⁷ *ISW*, 17 February 1906, p. 371. Roche may have been conscious of developments in the NUT in England when making this suggestion. In 1904 an Equal Pay League was formed by members of the NUT. Members of the League were also enthusiastic members of the NUT working within the union as a pressure group. When Mahon put forward a similar proposal in 1916 it was vehemently condemned by the men officers of the Executive.
- ²⁸ *ISW*, 31 March 1906, p. 525.
- ²⁹ *ISW*, 7 April 1906, p. 563.
- ³⁰ The NUT had appointed its first woman, Mrs. Burgwin, to its Executive in the 1880s.
- ³¹ *ISW*, 7 April 1906, p. 563.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ *ISW*, 14 April 1916, p. 594. Kathleen Roche also mentioned a letter she had received from a woman teacher in the country who complained of the conduct of men at meetings saying it was one reason why women did not join the Organisation. "Gentlemen think nothing of smoking in the meeting room, and they will walk in and sit down *before* the women and monopolise all the talk."
- ³⁴ *ISW*, 28 April 1906, p. 662.
- ³⁵ *ISW*, 14 July 1906, pp. 277, 278.
- ³⁶ *ISW*, 28 July 1906, p.318. The Tipperary association was a very active one.
- ³⁷ *ISW*, 15 September 1906, p. 501.
- ³⁸ *ISW*, 15 September 1906, p. 502.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 506; *ISW* 10 November 1906, p. 778.
- ⁴¹ *ISW*, 27 October 1906, p. 707.
- ⁴² *ISW*, 10 November 1906, p. 778.
- ⁴³ *ISW*, 29 September 1906, p. 570.
- ⁴⁴ Kathleen Roche praised the women teachers of Birr who had attended the first King's County Association meeting in Tullamore. Seven women teachers had "to travel several miles into Birr to begin with then a brake was requisitioned, and

- they had to drive twenty long miles to Tullamore in very indifferent weather." See, ISW, 10 November 1906, p. 778.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 773.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 774.
- ⁴⁷ ISW, 17 November 1906, p. 824.
- ⁴⁸ ISW, 24 November 1906, p. 837.
- ⁴⁹ ISW, 1 December 1906, p. 869.
- ⁵⁰ ISW, 22 December 1906, p. 956.
- ⁵¹ McMillan noted that a short time afterwards one of the Dublin Associations had passed a resolution to the same effect.
- ⁵² ISW, 29 December 1906, p. 978.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ John Morrin in a review of the INTO in the ISW, 20 January 1906, p. 259, listed Mrs Greene, Clonmellon, and Mrs Orr, Drogheda as among the deputies who had attended the first INTO Congress on 15th August, 1868. In the *Irish Teachers' Journal* account of the meeting these delegates are listed as Mr Green and Mr Orr. See, *Irish Teachers' Journal*, September, 1868.
- ⁵⁶ At the end of Mc Millan's letter the editors stated; "This correspondence is now closed." See, ISW, 29 December 1906, p. 978.
- ⁵⁷ ISW, 9 February 1907, p. 26.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ ISW, 16 February 1907, p. 42. There were 14 members on the Central Executive Committee.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ ISW, 23 February 1907, p.89.
- ⁶⁴ ISW, 5 January 1907, p. 994.
- ⁶⁵ ISW, 19 January 1907, p. 1052.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ ISW, 12 January 1907, p.1028. Mahon also urged associations to adopt, if possible, a resolution regarding the INTO Benevolent Fund.
- ⁶⁸ ISW, 9 February 1907, p. 24.
- ⁶⁹ Kathleen Roche believed if Mahon had intimated her intention of going forward for election she would have got fifty nominations as easily as eight. Wicklow; Dublin Metropolitan; Ballyshannon and District; Clones; North Kerry No. 2; South Carlow; Limerick (New) and Frenchpark had nominated Mahon, Birr Association had voted for Mr. E. Mansfield.
- ⁷⁰ Six was the minimum number of votes required for nomination.

"Lady Principals' Representative"

- ⁷¹ Miss Toner was a member of the Cavan Association and when that association had adopted a resolution seeking a decrease in the differentiation between women and men's salaries from 12% to 10% she had given notice that she was going to have this substituted for an equal pay resolution.
- ⁷² Eibhlin Nic Neill was elected to the CEC in 1911 .
- ⁷³ Mahon gave notice in the *ISW*, 16 March 1907 that she intended to go forward for election.
- ⁷⁴ *ISW*, 23 February 1907, p. 90.
- ⁷⁵ *ISW*, 2 March 1907, p. 122.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ *ISW*, 9 March 1906, p. 157.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ *ISW*, 16 March 1907, p. 187.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.* Harriet B. Stowe was the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ *ISW*, 23 March 1907, p. 216.
- ⁸⁴ *ISW*, 16 March 1907, p. 166.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ *ISW* 16 March, 1907, p. 188.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁰ *ISW*, 23 March 1907, p. 215.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- ⁹³ There is no copy of the 1902 Congress Directory at hand.
- ⁹⁴ *ISW*, 23 March 1907, p. 198. Kathleen Roche had been informed by the Editor in Chief that the *ISW* had always maintained a neutral position in Executive elections.
- ⁹⁵ *ISW*, 30 March 1907, p. 250.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁷ *ISW*, 6 April 1907, p. 271.
- ⁹⁸ *ISW*, 13 April 1907, p. 300.
- ⁹⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 April 1907.
- ¹⁰⁰ *ISW*, 13 April 1907, p. 318.
- ¹⁰¹ *ISW*, 20 April 1907, p. 331.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰³ *ISW*, 29 May and 5 June 1948, p. 290.

CHAPTER IV

"a most energetic member of the CEC"

Mahon's Organizing Work and the Equal Distribution of the Birrell Grant

IN HER FIRST YEAR on the Executive Catherine Mahon established herself as a leading figure within the INTO. She did this through her organizing work which was part of an INTO drive to recruit the 50 per cent of the teachers who were outside its ranks. Mahon was ideally suited to this work. She was an excellent public speaker, with a forceful, inspiring style of address. During the autumn/winter of 1907 and the Spring of 1908 Mahon travelled around the southern half of the country, usually at weekends, to address local and county association meetings. This was not an easy undertaking given the limited means of transport available at the time. Mahon, when seeking "lady representation", had said more women would join the INTO if they were given representation on the CEC and she was determined to achieve this increase. She urged women teachers to join the INTO, to attend local association meetings and to assert themselves at these so that matters of interest to women would be raised and discussed at all meetings. Throughout her organizing campaign Mahon did not refer to equal pay. But when Congress 1908 failed to increase the number of women representatives on the Executive Mahon again focussed on equality issues. Her attention was subsequently directed to the equal division of the Birrell Grant.

Two weeks after her election to the CEC Mahon wrote to the ISW asking the secretaries of the local associations to forward the names and addresses of all the non-associated teachers in their districts to her. With the permission of the Executive Mahon intended to write to these teachers to try, as she wrote, to "awaken them to a sense of honour and duty."¹ The Executive approved of her plan. At its meeting on 27 April 1907, the first CEC meeting at which women members were present, George Ramsay proposed and Elizabeth Larmour seconded the motion, "That Miss Mahon prepare a circular for next meeting for distribution among non-associated teachers."² There was no reference to the circular in the minutes of the next meeting of the Executive on 18 May.³ However, on 1 June, the ISW published a two

page detailed letter from Mahon on the subject. In her letter Mahon emphasised the benefit of having a united force of teachers arguing that it was every teacher's duty to become a member of the INTO. She also pointed out that membership of the INTO was no longer condemned by Catholic managers. The INTO Executive in 1898 had, as a result of the summary dismissal of two teachers by Catholic school managers, issued a memorial to the Commissioners of National Education seeking their intervention to safeguard teachers' security of tenure. The "Maynooth Resolution" which the Catholic hierarchy had adopted in 1894 did not afford sufficient protection to teachers. It was amended, to teachers' satisfaction, in late June 1899. However, the INTO was placed under a ban in the ecclesiastical provinces of Tuam and Armagh in 1899 and although the 1900 Congress apologised for the memorial of 1898 and declared its confidence in the "Maynooth Resolution" a pastoral from the Catholic hierarchy urged teachers "to sever their connections" with the INTO unless the Organisation maintained "unequivocally a correct and becoming attitude towards the bishops and priests of the Church....".⁴ In October 1900 the INTO Executive issued a circular declaring that "any other position than one of correct and becoming attitude towards the bishops and priests of Ireland would never find sympathy, favour, or toleration with us."⁵

Mahon, in her letter, insisted that teachers need no longer be apprehensive about the hierarchy's view because in recent months:

...the work of the organisation has been countenanced by the Hierarchy, by managers, and clergymen of all denominations, by Members of Parliament...and by the most powerful non-political body in Ireland at present - the Gaelic League.⁶

Indeed, she noted, the Bishop of Achonry had criticised teachers for being "too lethargic, listless, and apathetic" and had urged them to "Unite, Combine, and Concentrate" in their legitimate agitation for improved conditions for teachers and pupils.⁷ Mahon concluded with an appeal to all teachers:

I ask you now, unassociated teachers, men and women, principals and assistants, show that you realise the sacred duty which all educated men and women owe to their country, to their profession, and to themselves, by tak-

*ing your stand beside your militant brethren in the ranks of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation.*⁸

The ISW was not the only forum used by Mahon in her campaign to increase INTO membership. She also spoke at local and county meetings around the country. By the end of 1907 Mahon had addressed county meetings in Kildare, Tipperary, Kerry, Limerick and Cork.⁹ Her speeches at both the County Tipperary and County Cork Association meetings are good examples of how, at every opportunity, she encouraged women teachers to join and participate in the INTO. At the Co. Tipperary meeting Mahon began by saying that women teachers' presence at meetings, "will conduce towards harmony, for no man with any pretensions to refinement will be so rude or ill-bred as to give way to anger where ladies are present."¹⁰ Speaking more pragmatically Mahon said she would like to see the lady teachers taking a more active part in the work of the INTO. She regretted that the women teachers at the Tipperary meeting had not proposed a motion dealing directly with their interests and she urged them to express their opinions on the topics under discussion.

Her address at the half-yearly meeting of the Cork Association in December 1907 was almost entirely directed at the women present. The speech, with its keen sense of moral duty, exemplified Mahon's own philosophy of life. It is an amalgam of idealism and pragmatism. There was a tendency in Irish women, Mahon declared, through over zeal to develop into drudges in whatever position they occupied. The first and most important duty of a woman teacher was in her school, the second in her home, but to allow these two, even all-important as they were, to completely absorb all her faculties, "is not only a foolish but a selfish proceeding. She must remember that she also owes a duty to herself- to society- and to the profession to which she belongs."¹¹ If a teacher settled down to a life of unrelieved drudgery for five days a week in school and for one or two days at home and neglected to read and keep in touch with all the questions that affected her life and work, it was inevitable, observed Mahon, that after some years her faculties would become rusty, her standard of intelligence would become lowered, all the ideals which brightened life would fade away and she would ultimately develop into little better than a wage-earning machine and would begin to shrink from going among her peers because she felt that the world had moved on and left her behind.¹² Mahon

had a principled, idealistic approach to women's participation in the INTO. She believed women should take exactly the same interest in the organisation as men. It was, she declared, unfair of women not to fight for improvements from which they themselves would benefit:

*We work under the same system of administration, our interests are identical, our grievances also are unfortunately the same; we also want better salaries, quicker promotions, adequate pensions, rights safeguarded, just the same as our brother teachers...Is it not then quite wrong for us to say, O let the men do all, why should we bother? Should not we rather take our part in the agitation for all reforms, honourably and generously, knowing that we shall participate in any concessions won, and knowing that an attitude of indifference or neutrality on our part lessens or retards the full amount of good that might be achieved?*¹³

It was ironic, she went on to note, how teachers were prepared to give up their Saturdays to attend inservice classes organised by the National Board yet they pleaded pressure of work at home or business in town to excuse their non-attendance at INTO meetings. Mahon advised women teachers:

*For one Saturday every two or three months make arrangements to have stockings mended, blouses ironed, shopping done, and log books filled either before or after, so as to have your Saturday free for the meeting.*¹⁴

She proposed that if women found the meetings dry and uninteresting they should introduce matters for discussion in which they were directly interested.¹⁵ Mahon also suggested that teachers participate in movements like the campaign against T.B. inaugurated by Lady Aberdeen.

Although Mahon's focus, at this meeting, was on women teachers it was not exclusively so. She referred to demands for the establishment of a Court of Appeal for teachers where they would have the opportunity of defending themselves against charges of "inefficiency" by the inspectors. She also raised the question of civil rights for teachers. Restrictions imposed by the Commissioners denied teachers their full rights as citizens. Their attendance at public meetings or meetings held for political purposes, or the taking part by them in elections, except by voting, could render them liable for withdrawal of salary. They could not, therefore, go forward as Members of Parliament, members of county or district councils, poor law guardians etc.

Teachers were also strictly forbidden to keep public houses and the spouse of the owner, or occupier, of any such house was not recognised as a national teacher. Mahon constantly protested at the denial of teachers' civil rights. Public meetings were being held during 1907 to protest against the Irish Council Bill and she believed teachers should be present to argue the cause of education. The CEC had sought the permission of the Commissioners to attend these conventions but Mahon argued that it was time teachers were granted their full civil rights.¹⁶ In 1913, when she gave evidence at the Dill Commission, Mahon put forward a very strong case for the granting of civil rights to teachers. The Cork Association meeting was the last organizing address given by Mahon during this period. However, she continued to organize, in 1908, through the pages of the ISW.¹⁷

Kathleen Roche in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" was impressed with Mahon's work:

*There is no other teacher in Ireland, man or woman, who takes as keen and practical an interest in the Teachers' Organisation as Miss Mahon does, and I venture to say that there is no other teacher in Ireland who does one-tenth the work for the Organisation that she does.*¹⁸

Roche was confident that women teachers were supporting the INTO better than hitherto and that this was due to the influence of the "Lady Teachers' Own Page". She was pleased when women outnumbered men at branch meetings but also criticised them for their absence.¹⁹ For instance, she questioned why, of the 56 women teachers enrolled in the Tipperary Association, only 5 had attended the October meeting and similarly why only 3 of the 34 women members of the Wexford Association had attended their meeting.²⁰

In 1908, in recognition of her work and commitment, Mahon was nominated for a number of positions on the INTO Executive. In a letter to the ISW she wrote that she would not be going forward for the Vice-Presidency but she hoped to make her work for the INTO more systematic and more thorough in 1908.²¹ She had resolved never to leave a CEC meeting until the last item of business was finished. She had done so on one occasion, in order to catch the last train home on a Saturday night, and a ruling had been made which she would have opposed and possibly prevented had she been there and which caused a great deal of friction afterwards. Mahon said she had

now made arrangements by which she could get home on Sunday if business rendered it necessary to remain after train time on Saturday. The ruling Mahon was referring to was probably that made at the December 1907 meeting of the CEC concerning the distribution of the proposed Birrell Grant. The resolution proved to be very controversial as it appeared to favour one section of teachers above others, it will be discussed later. Mahon also noted that although the appeals she had made during the past year had not been responded to by a wholesale inrush of the unassociated there was hope that the seed sown would bear fruit and that every year would see the lady teachers awakening more and more to the advantages of unity and combination. As she observed:

*The habits of a life-time cannot be overcome in a single year; the custom of habitual absence from Association meetings, like habitual absence from Church, when once contracted, is very hard to be counteracted.*²²

Although Mahon had written hundreds of letters to unassociated teachers there were, she noted, 6,000 of them and even if she were to write an average of ten letters each day, it would still take two years for her to contact all of them. Without help from the local associations her work would proceed so slowly that the results would be very disheartening and she urged the formation of local organising committees. Mahon also suggested that County Associations be established in every county in which they did not already exist to help with organising and to promote unity within the INTO.

In her March ISW letter Mahon addressed some of the difficulties faced by women at INTO meetings, which were largely dominated and controlled by men. She wrote that as a rule the men were courteous to the women teachers at the association meetings, yet, little acts of thoughtlessness often repelled the women and caused them to remain away from the meetings:

For instance, the meeting hour is fixed for, say, one o'clock, some lady teachers go to the meeting room at the appointed time - in about half an hour the men begin to drop in and form themselves into little cliques here and there, privately discussing and settling everything beforehand. During all this time the ladies waiting patiently are ignored, and when the business at length commences everything is sprung on the meeting as pre-arranged by

*these little cliques, and the ladies feel that there are inner rings - wheels within wheels - from whose councils they are excluded.*²³

Such procedure was not the best method of encouraging women to participate in the work of the organisation. Mahon suggested that when a woman teacher wished to introduce a subject for discussion or a resolution for adoption she should get every help from the men present. "To be smiled at superiorly", she wrote, "or listened to tolerantly destroys courage in the timid and sensitive, and does not conduce to mutual good feeling."²⁴ In a continuation of this letter in the following week's *ISW* Mahon, having outlined the attractions of the forthcoming Killarney Congress, urged every association entitled to two delegates to send one lady to represent the lady members of the association.²⁵

Roche in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" agreed with Mahon's suggestions. She believed it was a healthy sign that many women were being appointed officers of their local associations. This development was usually followed by an improvement in membership.²⁶ By the end of 1907 the number of women (3,468) in the organisation was nearly equal to that of the men who numbered 3,924. Women's membership had increased by 1,000 since 1905. Roche thought women should now be entitled to nearly half the representation at Congress. The very least that might be done, she proposed, would be to allow for four women on the Executive. She pointed out that this would still be very much below the number which could be claimed in proportion to their membership and she hoped to see men delegates unanimous in their determination to have justice done.²⁷

The year's organisation work culminated at Congress 1908. Mahon's high standing among teachers was acknowledged by the *ISW* and she was asked, by the editors, to give a report on the Congress. Her report, under the heading "Impressions of Congress", was signed Caitrin Ni Mhathghamhna, denoting her enthusiasm for the Irish language. It was carried over three issues of the journal. The report declared the Killarney Congress to have been as near to perfection as possible. "It was influential, representative, practical, business-like, social, and above all, harmonious."²⁸ Mahon was pleased that the Ladies' Committee had distinguished itself on the social side:

Who shall ever say again that the ladies are not willing and able to do their part in the work of the Organisation? Such an assertion would not be toler-

*ated in Kerry certainly, after Killarney.*²⁹

The Ladies' Committee had organised concerts and dances every night during Congress and had "set a grand example for other ladies to follow...". This seems a secondary role for the women teachers to have played, but Mahon was correct in highlighting their contribution to the success of the Killarney Congress. It showed, as she said, that women were prepared to work for the Organisation and the entertainments they organised made Congress a more attractive proposition to women delegates. Mahon was impressed with Lady Aberdeen's speech to the teachers on the subject of tuberculosis. She agreed with Lady Aberdeen's point that, "the ripening of public opinion" was essential to ensure the reform of primary education.³⁰ Mahon took Lady Aberdeen's advice to heart and successfully utilised the press on many occasions. She did so now during her Congress report when she suggested, while commenting on the opening address of the Lord Bishop of Kerry, that the hierarchy could assist the teachers in obtaining a Court of Appeal and their civil rights.³¹

Mahon was dissatisfied with the outcome of the debate on organisation at Congress 1908. It is clear from her account that proposals for increasing the number of women representatives were obstructed. Mahon, along with a Mrs O'Connor, had been elected to the Audit and Organisation Committee chiefly to get an additional woman on to the CEC. They also wanted to amend the method of election of lady representatives "which was only allowed as an experiment" in 1907 but which Mahon believed was imperfect and inconsistent.³² The Organisation Committee had agreed with Mahon that there should be an additional lady representative on the CEC and had arranged that this representative should be an assistant teacher to be elected by the votes of all the assistants. But when this proposal was put to Congress, Mr Nunan, in what appears to have been a stalling tactic, spoke up for four representatives for assistants. Mr Larmour, again effectively stalling, claimed that as lady assistants were double the number of men assistants, they should have double the representation. Mahon tried to explain to Larmour that if she were to act on this principle she should claim six lady representatives to six men, according to the numbers in the Organisation and that even the ladies themselves did not desire to push matters so far:

As the discussion seemed likely to be prolonged, and as considerable misapprehension existed as to what was going on at all, owing to the noise and confusion outside caused by the hammerings and nailing up of packing cases and the Publishers' stalls, Mr. Mc Nellis, feeling the pulse of Congress, stepped in and proposed that as the present arrangement worked so admirably during the past year, matters be left as they were for another year. And even the ladies tired and exhausted as they were after the week, and anxious to get away, voted for this amendment with apparent relief, and allowed it to be carried.³³

Mahon was disappointed but she blamed the time-tabling of the Congress agenda, and the role of the Organisation Committee, rather than obstructionist tactics for the defeat. She believed the Organisation Committee should be disbanded. The Organisation Committee recommended changes in the rules and regulations of the INTO which were adopted or rejected by Congress. Its recommendations were brought before Congress for ratification on the last day of Congress when, as Mahon stated, three-fourths of the delegates had gone and the remaining fourth were so tired that they were in a mood either to agree to anything, or to disagree with everything. Mahon suggested that the Rules and Constitution of the organisation should be dealt with by the whole house.

The Rules and Constitution of the INTO revised by the Killarney Congress 1908 stated that Ireland would be divided into eight electoral districts for the purpose of returning men representatives of principal teachers. For the purpose of giving special representation on the CEC to women teachers and to assistant teachers, Ireland would be divided into two divisions (A and B), each division to consist of four electoral districts and to return one woman representative and one assistant representative. The women representatives would be elected by all teachers in that division.³⁴ In her Congress report in the ISW Mahon appealed to T. J. Nunan, the assistants' representative, to try to get the large number of assistants who were still outside the INTO to join. Mahon hoped that:

If we could add even another 1,000 to the Organisation, we could join our forces, and working in concert go straight next Congress for two additional lady representatives- one lady Principal and one lady Assistant.³⁵

Mahon also appealed to the lady teachers to come into the INTO and to outnumber the men in 1909 for the first time on record. She urged them not to lose courage and heart if they did not see results at once.³⁶

Mahon's emphasis changed after Congress 1908. In her organising speeches and letters she had not referred to equality issues such as equal pay but after her disappointment at Congress she returned to this subject. In May 1908 the ISW published an article by Mahon on "Women Teachers". Mahon first of all stated that she was pleased that Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary, had ensured that women would be represented on the Senate of the new National University.³⁷ This was the second time Birrell had advocated the right of women to a voice in the administration of education, he had also made provision for women on the Education Committees in the defunct Irish Council Bill. Mahon thought if the National Board co-opted a few women on their Educational Council it might infuse some practical commonsense and certainly a great deal of humanity into their codes, rules and regulations. "But," she noted, "unfortunately, there seems little hope of this or anything equally sensible from that direction."³⁸ Mahon then directed her attention to the question of equal pay. The proportion of certificated women teachers in Ireland had increased to 54 per cent. Mahon wondered if there was an international conspiracy to economise on education and whether this was why women teachers were now in the majority in most countries. If this was the case then the remedy was to demand equal pay. Yet, she observed:

... if we make a demand for Equal Pay, we are told we are injuring men teachers' prospects, that we have no originality, we want only what men have, that we should formulate a scheme of our own and leave men's incomes alone, that we do not do equal work as the American women teachers do, because owing to defectiveness in our own education we do not teach higher mathematics, forgetting at the same time that men do not teach needlework or cookery....Irish teachers for some years past have been claiming equal pay with their English and Scotch brethren for equal work, and why should not the same hold equally good between Irish men and women teachers?³⁹

The equal pay agitation, continued Mahon, was killed at Congress 1907 and had since been left in abeyance through the timidity of the women teachers lest it might injure their own or their brother teachers' prospects.

But women teachers' courage would again revive when the time was opportune and "every unprejudiced person will admit that their claim is a just, fair and reasonable one even on its merits....".⁴⁰ Mahon touched on a number of other topics. Issues of civil rights, security of tenure and teachers' residences, she asserted, were as much a concern of women teachers as of men and all teachers were entitled to adequate remuneration for their work. It should not be necessary for women teachers to supplement their incomes by giving private tuitions or by engaging in agricultural or domestic industries:

*She should be free to devote her spare time to preparation for her work, to the study of educational problems affecting the present and future prospects of her pupils, to participation in every good movement of national importance, such as the Gaelic League and the Women's National Health Association.*⁴¹

This article received a mixed reaction. A "Northern Teacher" wrote that this was "the best paper that has ever appeared in your pages." However, J. P. Kelliher wrote:

*it may be prudent and permissible to inquire what have been the effects or results of the feminisation of the schools on the character of the youth of the American Nation. The young men have become ...wild, dissolute Hooligans.*⁴²

Kelliher believed the Irish system should devise its own improvements rather than look abroad for ideas. Mahon did not write on these topics again for some time. From June 1908 she was busy fighting for the equal distribution, which embodied the principle of equal pay, of the Birrell Grant.

In her first year on the Executive, in addition to her organising work, Mahon championed a number of other causes. With the assistance of Larmour, she worked to ease the pressure on women teachers imposed by the demands of the cookery and laundry programmes in national schools. This work came to fruition during her second year on the Executive and it will be discussed in the following chapter. Among the other issues Mahon championed in 1907 was the case of the transition teachers. These were the teachers, mostly ex-monitors, who had entered training college on the understanding that on satisfactorily completing their course they would be entitled to a second class salary, but instead were placed in the new third grade salary category. Mahon proposed that the opinion of Standing

Counsel be taken to see whether these teachers were legally entitled to the fulfilment of their agreements with the Commissioners of National Education. The CEC agreed to this.⁴³

Mahon also sought support for the INTO Benevolent Fund, a fund established to "provide temporary relief to needy members, and to widows and orphans of members." A prize draw held at Congress 1907 had realised £2,000 and was invested to form the nucleus of the Fund. It was hoped to have this amount increased by approximately £10,000. Mahon, along with two other members of the CEC, was appointed to a committee whose special duty it was to promote the Benevolent Fund.⁴⁴ She wrote to the ISW in October 1907 urging that each local association form a committee with the aim of augmenting the Fund.⁴⁵

Mahon believed in the need for a strong teachers' union and she was committed to the principles of the INTO. In her first year on the CEC she worked for a range of issues but her major work was that of organizing. Mahon sought to increase the membership of the INTO, especially women's membership. Their membership was crucial to the future success of the INTO. Mahon's organizing campaign was, in the long term, very successful. Total membership of the INTO rose from 5,681 in 1905 to 8,010 in 1908, women's membership rising from 2,422 in 1905 to 4,070 in 1908.⁴⁶ Membership continued to rise in subsequent years and the INTO's membership profile changed as women began to outnumber men reversing a trend which had existed since the INTO's foundation. Mahon and Larmour did not raise controversial equality issues at CEC level. Had they done so they would have been referred to Congress decisions and their position on the CEC might have become marginalised. Mahon was a very effective CEC representative. She promoted the welfare, not just of women teachers, but of all teachers. Larmour's work on the CEC equalled that of many of the men representatives. Yet, the work of the women representatives was not rewarded at Congress 1908. The proposal to increase the number of women representatives on the Executive did not receive sufficient support. Mahon, frustrated at the lack of support, began to focus almost exclusively on the rights of women teachers. Her attention was subsequently diverted by the opportunity, which she seized, of obtaining an equal pay award for women teachers under the Birrell Grant.

The Birrell Grant

The Birrell Grant awarded women teachers an increase in salary on the same terms as men teachers. The Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, after much lobbying, obtained a supplementary grant of £114,000 from the Treasury for the purpose of increasing teachers' salaries. The Commissioners of National Education proposed that the grant be paid on the basis of capitation and bonuses. Under this scheme women and men teachers entitled to payment would benefit equally from the grant, but a large number of teachers would be excluded from any payment. Teachers debated, acrimoniously, among themselves as to which was the best method of allocation. Some favoured an all-round increase, others favoured capitation without bonuses while more suggested the £114,000 be divided equally among all teachers. Equal pay for women teachers was not a central issue in the debate. Kathleen Roche suggested that the grant provided the ideal opportunity to introduce an equal pay award and a small number of local associations proposed that women and men teachers be awarded the same amount. But these arguments were peripheral to the main debate. Mahon did not participate in the debate until the question was raised for a second time at the CEC meeting in June 1908.

At the June meeting Michael Doyle, Ballymote, proposed and Catherine Mahon seconded a resolution which sought the approval of the CEC for an "equitable distribution" of the grant. The resolution was as follows:

- (a) *That inasmuch as the new Education Grant (as far as can be ascertained) will go only a short way to satisfy the moderate and reasonable claims of the Irish National Teachers, this committee is strongly of opinion that the just and equitable allocation of it among the ordinary National Teachers would be by an equal dividend all round among principals and assistants, independent of grade, university degree, or average attendance.*
- (b) *That our Central Secretary be requested to urge this mode of allocation on the immediate attention of the Chief Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Commissioners of National Education, and the leaders of the various political parties in Parliament.*⁴⁷

The motion was not immediately passed by the meeting. An amendment, proposed by Mr. Ramsay, sought to reiterate the statement unani-

mously adopted by the CEC on 7 December 1907. This was the "all-round increase" resolution which Doyle argued would favour the better off teachers. A vote was taken on the amendment. The proposer and seconder, with Messrs. Cunningham, Thomson, O' Callaghan, and Miss Larmour, voted for the amendment. Messrs. Doyle, O' Herlihy, Morgan, Murtagh, Mansfield, Nealon, and Miss Mahon voted against the amendment. The amendment was lost. The original resolution was then put to the meeting. The seven members who had voted against the amendment now voted for the resolution and the six who had voted for the amendment voted against the resolution. The resolution was declared carried.⁴⁸ It is interesting that Larmour voted for the amendment and not for the resolution. Larmour was not known as an advocate of equal pay but she usually supported Mahon at CEC meetings. Geographical considerations may have influenced her voting on this occasion. She represented Division B, the Northern half of the country, and the proposer of the amendment, Mr. Ramsay, was a Northern representative as were the majority supporting the amendment.

The CEC resolution of 6 June 1908 did not specify that the grant be paid equally to women teachers. But it stipulated that the grant be paid regardless of position, grade, university qualification, or average attendance which suggests that its intention was to include all teachers equally with no distinctions. The resolution's similarity to one proposed by Ballymote teachers, a resolution which Roche had supported in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" as an equal pay resolution, would also suggest that it was meant to include women teachers equally. From the narrowness of the vote it is obvious that there was dissension among CEC members to the idea of equal distribution. If the resolution had boldly stated that women teachers should be granted equal pay then it might not have been carried at all. Congress had not yet approved of the principle of equal pay and it was, perhaps, necessary to be circumspect about this aspect.

The terms of the Treasury grant were laid on the table of the House of Commons on 22 June, 1908.⁴⁹ The grant totalled £114,000. £100,000 was to be paid as a capitation grant to teachers of schools whose average attendance was 35 and above. The remaining £14,000 was to be given, as bonuses, to teachers of schools having average attendances of 70 or above. "Disappointment, bitter and intense..." was how the ISW editors described the feelings of teachers on hearing of the grant's allocation.⁵⁰ On 29 June the CEC met and protested "in the strongest possible manner against the inad-

equacy of the supplementary estimate and against the method of its allocation." It forwarded a statement to the daily papers outlining the reasons for their opposition. They saw the allocation of the grant as:

*... being a gross injustice to the principals with an average of less than 35, as well as to large number of assistant teachers, in depriving them of any benefit whatever from the grant.*⁵¹

The CEC stated that the equitable division of the grant could only be achieved

*... by an equal increase to the salaries of all teachers, irrespective of average attendance, position, or grade, and not by capitation or bonus to a particular section of the teachers, as proposed by the Treasury.*⁵²

The Irish MP's were requested to make every effort to ensure that the grant be distributed, "pending a proper adjustment of salaries, by proportionate division amongst all national teachers."⁵³

The focus of the debate had shifted. Efforts were now directed towards preventing serious injustice to the assistants and to teachers in schools with average attendance under 35. The issue of equal payment to women teachers did not arise at all, perhaps because the Treasury proposal for allocating the grant by capitation and bonuses benefited women and men teachers entitled to them equally. Mahon was to the fore in condemning the proposed terms of the Treasury grant. She was dismayed at the exclusion of the teachers in schools of 35 and under:

*No words can describe the paralysis which seized on the teachers of Ireland when they learned on last Thursday that the 2,867 teachers of schools under 35 are to be excluded from any participation in the increased grant.*⁵⁴

Mahon exonerated Birrell but she believed that the Commissioners were ineffectual in promoting the teachers' interests in their negotiations with the Treasury;

...we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the Treasury officials knew perfectly well that they were dealing with a body more or less out of sympathy with the teachers, and whom they could count on to offer very slight resis-

tance, if any at all, and who would succumb after a very faint and half-hearted protest to Treasury arrangements.⁵⁵

Mahon feared that the proposed distribution would create disunity among teachers. It divided the teachers into three groups viz., the teachers in 1,554 schools with averages above 70 who already received comparatively decent incomes and who were now to get bonuses and capitation; the teachers in 4,046 schools, with moderate incomes, who were to get capitation only; and the teachers in 2,867 schools, with wholly inadequate salaries, who were to get nothing at all. Mahon wondered whether the bonuses offered to the teachers in the large schools would:

...act as a bribe to induce them to keep silent to give tacit consent to the injustice proposed to be inflicted on their brother teachers and brother-members of the Organisation? No, a thousand times no! I venture to say that not one of those who would benefit most by the bonuses would be base enough to be willing to enrich himself by the starvation of his poorer brother.⁵⁶

Birrell, she suggested, might be able to set matters right. He had, she said, two courses of action open to him. He could increase the grant by £20,000 so as to insure that the 2,867 teachers of small schools would not be excluded, or, failing that, he could re-arrange the method of distribution so that every teacher would get a share of the £114,000. Birrell's hand would be strengthened considerably, Mahon insisted, if teachers protested against the proposed distribution and she urged "every individual teacher in Ireland, even those who would benefit most by the bonuses", to write to the Chief Secretary, the Chancellor, their own MPs and every other influential member, English or Irish, friendly to the teachers. Mahon expected that a deputation of teachers would be sent to London and they would have a stronger case if they were "preceded by a volume of correspondence from all parts of Ireland."⁵⁷ Her letter was published in the *ISW*, two days after the supplementary estimate was debated for the first time in the House of Commons, and may not have had an impact on that debate, but her appeal to teachers was effective. No group of teachers argued in favour of their own exclusive interests.

The supplementary estimate was debated in the House of Commons on the 2 July 1908. The Irish members, Nationalists and Unionists alike, along

with some English members of Parliament, unanimously opposed the exclusion of the small schools from the grant.⁵⁸ A total of 20 MPs contributed to the debate most of whom also condemned the paucity of the grant and sought a larger amount. On this point the Chief Secretary held out no hope:

I am quite willing to admit that £114,000 does not meet the necessities of the case, but, at all events, it is quite as large a sum as was in my mind when I went into the lion's den and addressed the teachers of Ireland...I cannot at present hold out any promise that it will be enlarged by one penny.⁵⁹

In reference to the manner of distribution Birrell assumed that it had been decided upon because the government was anxious to reduce the number of unnecessary schools in Ireland. However, he declared that he had been brought up in the Court of Equity, and taught "that equality is equity and equity is equality."⁶⁰ He was unsure whether all teachers should be included in the distribution of the grant, or, whether teachers in schools with average attendance of 20 and below should be left out. He stated:

The course I propose to take is to withdraw the Estimate in its present shape and, after consultation with the Commissioners of National Education, to bring it up again in a form including all schools.⁶¹

Mahon believed the outcome of the debate "ought to be an object lesson in tactics to the Irish teachers for the future."⁶² She praised the unity of the capitulation and bonus men who "threw down the gauntlet on behalf of their weaker brethren, all at more or less personal loss."⁶³ This was an opportune time, she suggested, to review the lobbying strategy of the INTO. She agreed with the proposal of a correspondent to the ISW that only resolutions which had been approved by the CEC should be forwarded to the Commissioners or to public representatives. Otherwise there was a danger that the 209 local associations would send in different resolutions and the public representatives would not know which ones to adopt. The editors of the ISW also believed that the withdrawal of the supplementary estimate was a significant achievement and ought to convince the teachers of the "powerlessness of the Treasury, or any public department, when there is a united Ireland in opposition."⁶⁴

At a special meeting of the CEC held on 11 July it was agreed to send a

deputation to the Resident Commissioner regarding the allocation of the £114,000. It was also agreed that a deputation be sent to London when the supplementary estimate came up for debate again. After much consideration the CEC adopted, with one alteration, the statement which had been put forward at the special meeting on 29 June. The words "proportionate division" were deleted from the last paragraph so that there was no ambiguity about its intention. The resolution clearly stated that the most equitable division of the grant would be "by an equal increase to the salaries of all teachers irrespective of average, position, or grade, and not by capitation or bonus to a particular section."⁶⁵ Mahon, in a letter to the ISW, justified the CEC proposal for equal distribution and showed it was not inconsistent with previous demands made by the Executive. Normally equal distribution of an increased grant would not be recommended. But when all the circumstances were taken into account:

*(1) how the salaries of the Irish teachers have been bungled by the 1900 revolution, (2) the absence of a living wage for young teachers, (3) the inequality in the salaries of teachers in schools of similar averages, (4) the non-payment of any capitation whatever to Assistants in schools of 50 average, and to second, third, etc., Assistants in larger schools, (5) the breach of faith with the Transition teachers, and various other existing defects....*⁶⁶

It was, therefore, impossible for the CEC to formulate a plan which would do justice to every teacher. The only way to combat capitation was to claim equal distribution:

*It is the method which...is the least unjust to the general body, and the most advantageous to those most in need, those, in fact, for whose sake the agitation for increased salaries was mainly carried on.*⁶⁷

Mahon appealed to teachers, and to her colleagues on the Executive, to refuse to accept any allocation which would do injustice to any teacher in the service:

*I beg of the whole body of the teachers to rise up in one unanimous practical protest, and to refuse to touch spoils, however tempting, obtainable only at the expense of a needy brother or sister teacher in every way equally entitled to a just, reasonable, adequate share.*⁶⁸

She did not specifically refer to the inequity of the pay structure with regard to women teachers. Yet, she must have been aware that when advocating the equal distribution of the Birrell Grant she was pressing for equal pay for women teachers. Point 3 above could be taken to refer to women teachers as well as to teachers in general.

The revised supplementary estimate allocated the £114,000 in the following way. £92,976 of the total grant was to go in augmentation of the grade salaries of all teachers, principals and assistants. The rates were:-

£10 to teachers, men and women, in grade 1(1).

£10 to teachers, men and women, in grade 1(2).

£7 to teachers, men and women, in grade second.

£7 to teachers, men and women, in grade third.

Of the remaining £21,024, £17,000 was to go in extra capitation grants to convent and other schools paid solely on capitation and £4,024 was to go in grants of £4 to the salaries of Junior Assistant Mistresses of two years efficient service.⁶⁹ Mr John Murphy, MP, INTO Parliamentary Secretary, believed that the arguments of the London deputation had impressed the Chief Secretary and others as to the importance of an all-round distribution. The editors of the *ISW* also believed the deputation was instrumental in securing a form of distribution "not subject to climatic conditions or the indifference of careless parents."⁷⁰

The distribution of the grant gave general satisfaction. Birrell had acceded to the teachers' requests and had changed the Commissioners' proposals to suit the teachers' demands. The grant was equitably distributed, there were no invidious bonuses. There was some feeling that it was unjust to have the "Excellent" teacher placed on exactly the same level as the "Fair" teacher. But, it was agreed that the smallness of the grant allowed for no alternative.⁷¹ The solidarity shown by the principals of schools of over 35, who could have gained from capitation and bonuses, but, who stood with their colleagues in small schools was praised. The importance to women teachers of the Birrell Grant was not widely acknowledged. Only Roche made reference to its equitable treatment of women teachers. She expressed her satisfaction in the following way:

It affords me considerable pleasure, as it does, I presume, the women teachers all over Ireland, to find that the Treasury or the National Board or both

- have at length recognised the justice of equal payments for men and women. In the late distribution of grants this principle is adopted. Women receive the same addition to their salaries as men....Let us hope that in any future increase to salary this principle may not be forgotten.*⁷²

In the next pay award in 1916 women teachers used the Birrell Grant effectively to argue their case for an equal pay award.

There was one remaining difficulty with the Birrell Grant. The original supplementary estimate stated that the grant was for the year ended 31 March, 1908. The Treasury, however, stated that the new grant was for service given after 1 April 1908. The teachers, Commissioners, Irish MPs and the Catholic Clerical Managers protested at this perceived breach of faith on the part of the Treasury.⁷³ Mahon took the lead in encouraging teachers to take action to ensure they would get full payment. She recommended that the teachers lobby their MP's immediately, or the supplementary estimate would fall at the end of 1908 and teachers would receive nothing. Mahon had met with the Dean of Killaloe, a member of the Central Council of the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association. The result was that the Council protested against the delay in payment.⁷⁴ At a special meeting of the CEC on 12 September, the Executive protested against the non-payment of the grant and demanded that the money be paid in a lump sum immediately. Mahon proposed at this meeting that unless satisfactory assurances were forthcoming the INTO would organize public meetings demanding full payment of the grant.⁷⁵ The Chief Secretary and the Commissioners agreed that the period of payment should be for the year ended 31 March 1908.⁷⁶ Towards the end of September the Treasury conceded the point. Birrell informed the teachers that the full grant would be paid without further delay for the year ended 31 March 1908.⁷⁷ Mahon remained wary, she was afraid the Commissioners might still succeed in revising the method of allocation and she urged the teachers to "pass a strong resolution with the object of securing permanently to every lay teacher the £10 and £7, which is now to be added to their salaries by the Birrell Grant."⁷⁸ Mahon stressed this point again in her address to the County Kerry Teachers' Association on 10 October.⁷⁹ Finally, on 31 October 1908 the Birrell Grant was issued to the teachers. Of 210 Associations at least 200 pronounced in favour of retaining the method of distribution.⁸⁰ Mahon in an address at the County Limerick Teachers' Association said there was a danger that the Commissioners or the

Treasury would try to turn the Grant into a sort of bonus and make the annual payment of it depend on certain conditions, for instance, that the school report was "Good" or "Excellent". She insisted it should be paid irrespective of any condition other than those attached to the payment of the salary itself.⁸¹ This was what happened and the Birrell Grant was paid every subsequent April for the next nine years, when it was merged with the Duke grant.⁸²

The Birrell Grant was significant for women teachers. It was an equal pay award and it set a precedent for a future pay award in 1916. The INTO, in securing the equal distribution of the Birrell Grant, proved the effectiveness of a unified force which skilfully lobbied its public representatives. Mahon played a leading role in this politicization process. She had proved her commitment to the INTO during her first year on the Executive and teachers responded to her appeals to support Executive policy. The solidarity of the "big men" of the profession, their unselfishness and loyalty fired Mahon with "a burning desire to free them from the thralldom of the yoke of the National Board".⁸³

¹ ISW, 20 April 1907, p. 331 .

² ISW, 4 May 1907, p. 392. Larmour seconded three resolutions at this meeting.

³ ISW, 25 May 1907, pp. 487- 489.

⁴ O'Connell, *A History of the INTO*, pp. 58-62.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ ISW, I June 1907, p. 520.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ ISW, I June 1907, pp. 520, 521 . Kathleen Roche believed that any remaining doubts in the minds of some teachers as to the usefulness of lady teachers on the Executive would be dispelled after a perusal of this letter by Mahon, and that nobody would gainsay the fact that she had well earned for herself the future Vice-Presidentship of the INTO. See, ISW, 8 June 1907, p. 558.

⁹ ISW, 14 December 1907, p. 544. County Associations met bi-annually.

¹⁰ ISW, 27 July, 1907, p. 753.

¹¹ ISW, 18 January, 1908, p.684.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ ISW, 18 January, 1908, p. 684.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ ISW, 29 June 1907. Full civil rights were granted to teachers in 1920.

- ¹⁷ Larmour also worked to recruit the unassociated. At the CEC meeting on January 25th she reported that she had attended meetings at Newtownards and Ballymena where there were considerable numbers of women present and where all were enthusiastic regarding increase in membership. See *ISW*, 1 February 1908, p. 765.
- ¹⁸ *ISW*, 28 September 1907, p. 176.
- ¹⁹ *ISW*, 14 September 1907, p. 110
- ²⁰ *ISW*, 19 October 1907, p. 272. Of the 18 men in the Wexford branch 8 had attended the October meeting.
- ²¹ Mahon had stated in the *ISW*, of January 18th that she did not intend to go forward for the position of Vice-President in 1908. Kathleen Roche was disappointed at Mahon's decision. She thought Mahon would have been unanimously elected as no other prominent candidate had gone forward. *ISW*, 25 January, 1908, p. 748.
- ²² *ISW*, 7 March 1908, p. 117.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *ISW*, 14 March 1908, p. 148. Mahon also asked for support for the Benevolent Fund in this letter.
- ²⁶ *ISW*, 7 March 1908, p. 106.
- ²⁷ *ISW*, 21 March 1908, p. 166. Kathleen Roche, on behalf of the lady teachers of Ireland, wished Miss Cleghorn, a candidate for the Vice-Presidency of the NUT, every success in her candidature. The Vice-President of the NUT automatically became President the following year. See, *ISW*, 1 February 1908, p. 768.
- ²⁸ *ISW*, 20 June 1908, p. 579.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 580.
- ³¹ *ISW*, 27 June 1908, p. 611.
- ³² Mrs H. O' Connor, Tervoe, Co. Limerick had supported Mahon at the 1907 Congress in her fight to gain representation for women on the CEC.
- ³³ *ISW*, 4 July 1908, p. 644.
- ³⁴ See, *The Annual Directory of the INTO for the year 1908.*
- ³⁵ *ISW*, 4 July 1908, p. 644.
- ³⁶ *ISW*, 4 July 1908, p. 645. Roche, in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page", was critical of the number of lady delegates at Congress. For instance. she suggested that the number of lady delegates from Belfast should have been eight instead of one if elected in proportion to the women's membership. Roche apportioned some of the blame for this lack of representation at Congress to the apathy of women teachers and their poor attendance at local association meetings. She once again advised them to attend the local association meetings and to take an active part

- in the work of the association during the forthcoming year. See, *ISW*, 2 May 1908, p. 362.
- ³⁷ Mahon believed the Training Colleges for teachers should be connected with the Universities so that the students of the former could participate in all the advantages of the latter.
- ³⁸ *ISW*, 16 May 1908, pp 419-421.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.* Mahon also quoted Ruskin extensively in support of education for girls.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *ISW*, 23 May 1908, p. 457.
- ⁴³ *ISW*, 21 December 1907, p. 560.
- ⁴⁴ *ISW*, 28 September 1907, p. 78.
- ⁴⁵ *ISW*, 19 October 1907, p. 287.
- ⁴⁶ See, *The Annual Directory of the INTO for the year 1906*; INTO, Dublin 1906, *The Annual Directory of the INTO for the year 1909*; INTO, Dublin 1909. When Mahon was addressing the Kildare Co. Association in July 1909 she observed that since ladies began to take an active part the Organisation had increased enormously in numbers and in prestige. Mahon did not claim full credit for the ladies, but it was a happy coincidence.
- ⁴⁷ *ISW*, 13 June 1908, p. 547.
- ⁴⁸ In 1913, when a testimonial was being raised for Michael Doyle on his retirement from the Central Secretaryship, Mahon described how they both, for hours, had argued at the June 1908 CEC meeting insisting that the equal distribution motion be adopted.
- ⁴⁹ *Hansard*, 4th Series, Vol. 190, June 3-June 24, 1908, p. 1267.
- ⁵⁰ *ISW*, 4 July 1908, p. 657.
- ⁵¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 30 June 1908.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ The phrase "proportionate division" proved a contentious one. At a meeting of the CEC on 11th July it was removed from a resolution which otherwise was identical to the statement adopted on 29th June. At their meeting on the 1st August the CEC refused to approve the minutes of the special meeting, 29th June, as there was not a full quorum at that meeting. See, *ISW*, 18 July, p.699; 8 August, 1908, p. 792.
- ⁵⁴ *ISW*, 4 July 1908, pp. 666, 667.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ The INTO had appointed Mr. John Murphy, MP as their Parliamentary Secretary in May, 1907. His brief was to raise matters of concern to the teachers in the

- House of Commons. See, *ISW*, 25 May 1907, p. 487.
- ⁵⁹ *Hansard*, 4th Series, Vol.191, June 25-July 8, 1908, pp. 1064,1065.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,p. 1068.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *ISW*, 11 July 1908, pp. 691, 692.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 686.
- ⁶⁵ *ISW*, 18 July 1908, p. 699.
- ⁶⁶ *ISW*, 1 August 1908, p. 749.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 750.
- ⁶⁹ *ISW*, 1 August 1908, p.765.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 790.
- ⁷¹ *ISW*, 22 August 1908, p.34.
- ⁷² *ISW*, 8 August 1908, p.782.
- ⁷³ *ISW*, 29 August 1908, p.62.
- ⁷⁴ *ISW*, 5 September 1908, p.77.
- ⁷⁵ *ISW*, 19 September 1908, p. 143 .
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141 .
- ⁷⁷ *ISW*, 3 October 1908, p.220.
- ⁷⁸ *ISW*, 17 October 1908, pp. 251, 252.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 285.
- ⁸⁰ *ISW*, 28 November 1908, pp. 460,461.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, p. 164.
- ⁸³ *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*, H.C. 1914 (C. 7480), XXVII, Appendix LII.

CHAPTER V

"no martyr in the cause of cookery"

Mahon and the INTO campaign against the enforced teaching of cookery in primary schools

DURING THE YEARS 1909 -16 Catherine Mahon was one of the most influential members of the CEC and did much to strengthen the position of the INTO. Having established herself as a potential leader in 1907- 8, Mahon, subsequently consolidated her position and was twice elected to the Presidency of the INTO, a special honour which required the abrogation of INTO rules. Her main concern in the year 1909 was to prevent the imposition of cookery and laundry classes on women teachers. At almost every CEC meeting that year Mahon and Larmour proposed and seconded resolutions condemning the enforcement of cookery teaching by the withholding of increments and promotion. The women representatives secured INTO support on this issue which before their advent to the Executive, would have received perfunctory, if any, attention. It was agreed that cookery and laundry were important subjects for girls; what was objected to was the expectation that women teachers would provide utensils and materials at their own expense and teach the subjects in conditions unsuited to their instruction. However, some women teachers were prepared to teach cookery and laundry for the fees earned, it was possible to earn a fee of five shillings for each pupil who had attended 50 per cent of the cookery classes. Mahon brought the issue to Dr. Starkie's attention at her first, and last, deputation to the Resident Commissioner. He assured the deputation that inspectors would not press the subject if suitable provision was not available but Mahon did not have confidence in these assurances and the agitation continued. Its focus was on cookery; laundry teaching was seldom referred to. The agitation was successful. The Commissioners made rule 120, the cookery and laundry rule, less obligatory and made better provision for the first year's instruction in schools. The increase in the number of schools taking cookery declined, indicating that the inspectors were no longer forcing its introduction by withholding increments and promotion to women teachers.

Rule 120 in the *Rules and Regulations 1906-7* of the Commissioners of National Education changed the status of the cookery and laundry programmes in national schools.¹ Prior to the rule's introduction, instruction in cookery, laundry and domestic economy had been undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, except in convent schools.² The new rule was to become a source of anxiety to women teachers. It stated:

(1) *Cookery and laundry-work should be taught as part of the ordinary school programme to girls enrolled in the fifth and higher standards when suitable provision for instruction in these subjects is available. Girls who have reached the age of eleven years may, if the manager so desires, attend the classes in cookery and laundry-work, even though they are enrolled in a lower standard than fifth.*

(2) *A fee of five shillings may be earned in respect of each girl who is taught cookery or laundry-work in a National school, provided she has attended at least 50 per cent of the meetings of the cookery or laundry-class, but the fee cannot be paid for the same pupil for more than one year in laundry-work, and both fees cannot be claimed for the same pupil in the same year.*

(3) *In order that the full fee may be earned for cookery or laundry-work in a girls' or mixed school the inspector must certify that suitable instruction is given in hygiene. For girls' and mixed schools, under two or more teachers, in which the members of the staff have received training in elementary science, a course of domestic science, including lessons on health and habits, must be included in the curriculum.³*

Section four outlined the requirements for a special roll of the pupils receiving instruction in cookery or in laundry-work, and section five detailed the length of time necessary for instruction and warned that the fee might be reduced or withheld if proficiency was not satisfactory. The rule had an additional section appended to it in the 1907-8 edition of the Commissioners' Rules and Regulations which stated that the fees were to be paid to the manager who should, after defraying the necessary incidental expenditure, pay the balance to the teaching staff.⁴

When rule 120 was first introduced in 1906 there were no women on the Central Executive Committee of the INTO and there was no reaction to its introduction from the Organisation. However, in July 1907, three months

after the election of the "lady representatives", the CEC resolved, at Mahon's and Larmour's instigation, that in all schools in which the teaching of needlework, cookery, laundry work, domestic science or kindred subjects was deemed desirable, special facilities should be provided for instruction and apparatus and requisites should be supplied at no cost to the women teachers. The Executive resolution also stated that teachers' expenses for attendance at cookery, or other classes, should be paid if the centres of instruction were more than three miles distance from teachers' residence or, if necessary, substitute teachers should be provided.⁵ Mahon urged women teachers to make sure the CEC resolution was passed at the local association meetings and to forward a copy of the resolution to the Commissioners.⁶ Kathleen Roche recognised the importance of the CEC's cookery resolution and the impact of the women representatives on the Executive. She believed the resolution would never have been forwarded but for the lady representatives.⁷

Neither Mahon nor Roche were opposed to the teaching of cookery and laundry but they protested at the conditions laid down by the Commissioners. In July 1907 at the County Tipperary Association meeting Mahon stated that she believed in the necessity of domestic training for girls, but cookery could not be taught properly in small over-crowded schoolrooms and she objected to the expectation that teachers would provide materials for its instruction.⁸ While the question of cookery and laundry receded until the Autumn/Winter of 1908, reports that inspectors were withholding increments and promotion rights from women teachers who were not giving instruction in cookery and laundry brought the issue to the fore again.⁹

At the end of October 1908, when the Birrell Grant was satisfactorily settled, Kathleen Roche raised the question of the cookery and laundry programme in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page". She emphasised the points made in the CEC resolution of the previous year - the need for proper facilities and adequate expenses. Roche was critical of the INTO, and of women teachers, for their inaction on the issue but she insisted that she was not opposed to the teaching of cookery. There was not one school in a hundred in Ireland, Roche declared, where cookery could be effectively taught. It was nothing short of downright cruelty to insist on teachers taking up the subject when no proper facilities were provided for its instruction. She knew of "a teacher in a Dublin school who spent over £7 out of her own pocket

during the past year in connection with the cookery class." This teacher, Kathleen Roche believed, would have been much better off if she had never touched the subject.¹⁰ The National Board had established cookery classes for teachers around the country but teachers, unless they lived more than four statute miles from the centre of instruction, were ineligible for expenses. Roche pointed out that a teacher's residence might be 3.75 miles from the centre yet, on a cold winter's night she would be expected to walk 7.5 miles to receive cookery lessons without one penny of expenses. Roche blamed the Commissioners for this but she thought if women teachers had been active members of their INTO branches they could have raised objections and the requirements would have been altered. She suggested if such an imposition had been placed on the men teachers the Executive would have taken up the subject and deputations would have been set in motion in Dublin and London and the battle would soon have been over, but as the matter only concerned women it was not worth fighting over. In expressing these views Roche insisted she must not be taken as objecting to the teaching of cookery, or as looking upon it as a useless fad. In her opinion it was an absolutely essential subject for girls in Ireland, what she objected to was the placing of a burden on teachers which they were unable to bear.¹¹

The CEC, since its July 1907 resolution, had not directed its attention to the cookery and laundry programme but from December 1908 and throughout 1909 the women representatives ensured that the programme received the Executive's full consideration. In a letter to the ISW on 12 December 1908 Mahon said she had sent a number of questions on various issues to John Murphy, MP, the INTO Parliamentary Secretary, to be asked in Parliament - namely, cookery, 127(b) and promotions, transition teachers and JAM's. She had resolutions ready on these for the CEC meeting of 5th December but none of them had been reached on the agenda. Mahon proposed that, if the parliamentary questions and the CEC resolutions failed to obtain redress for those deprived of their increments because of the absence of cookery from the curriculum, a statement be drawn up and circulated appealing for help against this arbitrary rule. She observed that when the men teachers were victimised in a similar manner for the teaching of mathematics, they soon obtained a repeal of the rule, making it an essential subject, and got it relegated back to the position of an extra or optional one. This, Mahon proposed, should be done with regard to cookery.¹² She asked teachers, who had been denied promotion because of the "cookery craze", to send her

details so that she could get a question asked in the House of Commons and demand redress.¹³ She repeated this request in the following week's ISW in order that John Murphy, MP, could follow up the questions asked in parliament.¹⁴

At the CEC meeting on 12 December 1908 Mahon proposed, and Larmour seconded, a resolution strongly protesting against the attempt to make cookery and laundry compulsory subjects in national schools. The resolution stated that the majority of schools had only one room and were unsuitable for the teaching of these subjects; even where a room was provided, many women teachers were expected to bear the expenses of supplying equipment; in any case courses in cookery and laundry were held by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in most towns throughout Ireland which girls, who had reached school leaving age, could attend. The resolution also declared that teachers' increments and promotion should not be made dependent on the teaching of the subjects and it called on the Parliamentary Secretary, and the Irish MPs to take action on the subject. Copies of the resolution were to be forwarded to the Commissioners, the Chief Secretary, Mr. Murphy, MP, and the chairman and secretaries of both Irish parliamentary parties.¹⁵

In the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" Roche continued to stress the financial burden on women teachers and the injustice of having to teach cookery in addition to the normal curriculum for less pay than the men teachers received:

*In brief, we have got to do as much as the men plus Cookery, Laundry, and Needlework! If we do not, we get neither increment nor fee. Therefore, as I've already said, we are doing far more work for far less pay. Verily the emancipation of women has not yet come. To think of it all is enough to drive one into the ranks of the Suffragettes.*¹⁶

Despite the difficulties, the rule was proving effective. By the end of 1908 the Commissioners reported a considerable increase in the number of schools in which cookery and laundry were taught to girls. On 31 December 1907 cookery was taught in 936 schools and laundry in 167; on 31 December 1908 cookery was taught in 1,596 schools and laundry in 227. The Commissioners, who in their 75th Report stated that unless some provision for the teaching of cookery was made in national schools the great mass of the population would remain in ignorance of this vital subject, were "grati-

fied to be able to testify to the zeal and energy shown by a large majority of the managers and national teachers in seconding our wishes."¹⁷

The zeal and energy of Mahon and Roche were aimed, however, at countering this trend. Their reports indicated that the withholding of increments and promotion by inspectors was a significant factor in the increase in the number of schools teaching cookery. Roche reported that both the County Cork Teachers' Association, and the County Tipperary Teachers' Association, had adopted resolutions protesting against the injustice of compelling teachers, under pain of refusal of increment, to procure at their own expense the equipment and materials required in teaching cookery.¹⁸ The Birr Teachers' Association, of which Mahon was a leading member, also objected to the enforcement of the cookery and laundry programme on these terms. The Birr Association declared that in no case should increments and promotion be made to depend on the inclusion of these subjects in the curriculum, "either openly by Commissioners' rule, or secretly by instructions to Inspectors." Mahon's earlier suggestion in the *ISW* that cookery be relegated to an optional subject was developed at the Birr Association meeting. The Birr teachers requested that the 5,606 one-roomed schools in the country be immediately exempted from the teaching of these subjects. In schools of two or more rooms, the subjects should be made optional. The Birr resolution went on to state: "That it is most unfair to the poor children in the majority of schools to require them to provide materials for Cookery, and to carry same long distances to school under very trying circumstances, and it is equally unfair to require teachers to keep up such supplies."¹⁹

The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction specialised in teaching domestic subjects and the Birr Association suggested that the National Board should not be attempting to duplicate its work. The association intended to forward its resolution to the CEC and suggested that it appoint a deputation at its next meeting to interview the Chief Secretary, Mr. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party to seek their help in obtaining the withdrawal of the rule. Mahon, who forwarded the Birr resolution to the *ISW*, said she was going to ask her colleagues on the Executive to allow her to act on the deputations to the Chief Secretary and the other public representatives. She proposed that, in the event of public meetings being organized by the INTO on the pension question, the question of cookery teaching should be put before the public at the same time.²⁰

Mahon succeeded in her objective and at the subsequent CEC meeting

on 30 January 1909 she was appointed to her first deputation.²¹ The Executive resolved:

*That the Resident Commissioner be requested to receive a deputation consisting of Mr. Murphy, M.P., Mr. Gamble, Mr. O'Callaghan, and Miss Mahon, in order to interview him regarding cases of withdrawal of salary, delay of payment, under-graded teachers, monthly salaries, Cookery, and other important matters.*²²

A resolution on cookery was also adopted at the Executive meeting on January 30. The resolution, proposed by Mahon and seconded by Larmour, made no suggestion that cookery be withdrawn altogether. No reference was made to the teaching of laundry in this resolution and henceforth the emphasis was mostly on the teaching of cookery. The resolution was as follows:

*That as we are convinced that, in the vast majority of Irish National Schools, Cookery cannot be effectively taught, we are strongly opposed to the present attempt of the Board to force it on teachers by penal legislation; that we believe it is not only harsh but unjust to make increments and promotion depend on the teaching of any one subject; that, if the Commissioners think Cookery so very important, they should, as in the case of hand and eye training, give equipment grants and materials.*²³

Roche condemned the last part of the resolution. She observed that it gave the impression that should the Commissioners give equipment grants then teachers would happily teach cookery and it undermined the earlier part of the same resolution.²⁴

The CEC deputation met Dr. Starkie at the Education Office on 6 February 1909. Mahon took notes during the meeting and her report of the proceedings was subsequently unanimously adopted by the Executive at its meeting on 27 February 1909. A copy of this report was then sent to each of the local associations.²⁵ In a letter to the ISW in March Mahon urged teachers, especially women teachers, to read the report of the deputation to Dr. Starkie, as it was vital for them to familiarise themselves with the views of the Commissioners on cookery and laundry. Mahon had gone to the Education Office, "specifically to plead against the unjust forcing of the two subjects under existing conditions." The Commissioners had made a number of concessions but Mahon felt these "really in practice amount to nothing, and leave us just where we were before."²⁶ The Commissioners, accord-

ing to Mahon, admitted that it was unfair to force teachers to be at a penny expense, yet, if the teachers did not pay the expenses nobody else would. Managers were paid a five-shilling fee at the end of the year for cookery to recoup them for initial expenses incurred beforehand. "What sort of business arrangement is this," she wrote, "what law in economics does this sort of financial arrangement come under?" Taking a class of 12 girls Mahon estimated that the initial cost would be £13. Even supposing the fee for the full number was paid, which very rarely happened, it would take five years before initial expenses would be cleared, and that did not account for upkeep, repair and fuel. Mahon reported that a Head Inspector had said to a teacher, "that to get a 'good' report, Reading and Arithmetic should be 'very good', and 'fair' progress made in Singing and Cookery." Mahon said it was unfair of the Commissioners to have two sets of rules, those which were published and those known only to inspectors.²⁷ She urged women teachers to make their views on the teaching of cookery clear to the delegates to the forthcoming Congress so that when a motion would be put to Congress the delegates would vote according to the views of the teachers of their own associations. Mahon believed teachers should fight the cookery and laundry programmes on the grounds that they were technical subjects and outside the scope of a primary school in every other country.²⁸

This last point was stressed by Mahon at the March meeting of the Queen's County Teachers' Association. It is interesting that she did so after having met with Dr. Starkie. He had agreed with the deputation of 6 February that the subjects were not taught in primary schools in other countries, but no money could be procured in Ireland for the establishment of separate centres and the national school was the only school available for the majority of children. Dr. Starkie had assured the deputation that it was useless to agitate for the abolition of cookery and laundry as some members of the Board were most enthusiastic on the subject and meant to enforce the regulations. Dr. Starkie had suggested that an agitation for equipment grants and suitable provision would be better advised.²⁹ Mahon ignored this advice at the Queen's County Teachers' Association where she insisted that cookery and laundry should not be taught at all in primary schools. "They can", she noted, "be most profitably acquired by girls when their literary education is finished".³⁰ She did not understand why the National Board was insisting on the teaching of the cookery and laundry to girls of eleven years of age:

*The National teachers have to teach a multiplicity of subjects to eight or ten different classes in an ordinary school, in addition to keeping the children prepared with heavy religious programmes. But this is not sufficient labour. She must also, forsooth, lay the foundation for a domestic economy instructress, who has but two subjects to teach to just one class of pupils.*³¹

Mahon did not develop this argument or return to it again. This may have been because some teachers, whose managers provided suitable facilities and equipment, did not object to the teaching of cookery and laundry and were satisfied with the fees provided for their instruction.

In April the teachers were preoccupied with the Congress programme and elections for the 1909-10 Executive. Mahon had written to the ISW in January 1909, asking for nominations for Lady Representative, District A. She was not going forward for any of the higher positions in 1909-10 as "I find I can do more as an ordinary member of the committee."³² Roche was disappointed that no lady was going forward for one of the higher positions.³³ Six other candidates, besides Mahon, received nominations for the position of Lady Representative of District A. Four of these candidates received one nomination each and two received two nominations each, Mahon received 69. A Miss Goode from Cork was the only real challenger. Mr Deely, a supporter of Miss Goode's, wrote in the ISW stating why he thought Miss Goode would make a sterling representative. He made some critical references to Mahon, claiming she had not proposed a resolution demanding the removal of cookery from the Board's programme, because of her desire to respect the wishes of, "some few teachers who wish to have it retained for the sake of the miserable fees allowed for teaching it."³⁴ In the final analysis there was no question as to Mahon's popularity. She obtained 2,293 votes as against Miss Goode's 240 votes. At the 1909 Congress some alterations were made to the rules governing the elections to the CEC. The rule whereby women were elected to the Executive was changed. Instead of having two electoral districts A and B the revised Rules and Constitution of the INTO now stated that, "For the purpose of giving special representation on the CEC to lady teachers, two lady representatives shall be elected by an all-Ireland vote, one of whom shall be a Principal, and the other an Assistant."³⁵

At Congress a resolution declaring that it was most harsh and unjust to force teachers to provide, supply and upkeep equipment, fuels and materi-

als for cookery and laundry by withdrawal of increments and promotion was adopted. The withholding of increments and promotion was now the critical point in the teachers' opposition to cookery and laundry teaching. In line with the Congress resolution, the CEC on 1 May, adopted a resolution which focussed entirely on the withholding of increments and promotion. The resolution did not seek the withdrawal of cookery from national schools, as Mahon had advocated in March, but rather, the withdrawal of any form of compulsion connected with its teaching. The resolution also proposed the setting up of a sub-committee to draw up a statement on the issue. Mr Elliott proposed, and Mr Murtagh, seconded this resolution as both Mahon and Larmour were proposed as members of the subcommittee. The CEC resolution focussed entirely on cookery, laundry teaching was not mentioned. The resolution was as follows:

That, as it is positively affirmed that increments have been withheld from several teachers in consequence of Cookery being omitted from the subjects of study in their schools, and considering Dr. Starkie's statements to the contrary, we request our Parliamentary Secretary to take steps to ascertain the real decision of the Board on this matter.

That, as it is nothing less than a great injustice to enforce the teaching of Cookery by withholding increments otherwise earned, we hesitate to believe that the Commissioners of National Education will inflict such hardship on teachers in their service; and we appoint Miss Mahon, Mr. Thomson and Miss Larmour to prepare a statement of our opinions on the subject for presentation to each Commissioner, with a view to obtain the withdrawal of any form of compulsion in connection with this subject.³⁶

Mahon wrote on the subject of the memorial in the ISW. She requested teachers who had been intimidated, or penalised by inspectors since 6 February for not having cookery in their schools to send her an account of their case as she, along with Miss Larmour and Mr Thomson were drawing up a memorial on the teachers' grievances on cookery. Mahon was glad to know that many teachers had now received, after considerable pressure, their increments. But she believed, despite Dr. Starkie's assurances given on 6 February, that inspectors were still pressing the subject.³⁷

Another cookery resolution was adopted at the CEC meeting of 26 June. The resolution proposed by Mahon, and seconded by Mr Thomson indicat-

ed a slight change in the CEC's approach.³⁸ The focus was not simply on the injustice to teachers, but on highlighting the dangers of teaching cookery in ordinary schoolrooms. This approach was likely to appeal to a wider audience and win support for teacher opposition to the imposition of cookery. The resolution stated:

That we earnestly request the Commissioners of National Education to leave the introduction of cookery optional with managers and teachers, and we protest against the present system of penalising teachers by withholding increments and promotion on account of the non-introduction of cookery in their schools, and deprecate any proposal to improvise cookery arrangements in a corner of the general schoolroom or in a class-room used for ordinary school purposes.³⁹

The resolution drew the attention of the Commissioners of National Education, the Vice- President of the Agricultural and Technical Department, and the public generally to the following facts:-

- (a) *Instruction in cookery can be imparted efficiently only in separate apartments, properly equipped for the purpose.*
- (b) *It is contrary to the most elementary principles of Hygiene to conduct cookery lessons in any room used daily for ordinary school work.*
- (c) *Most National Schools are destitute of a separate class-room suitable for instruction and practice in cookery.*
- (d) *Few managers have sufficient funds at their disposal to build and equip a special room, and to provide for the necessary annual outlay on utensils, &c.*
- (e) *A small minority of girls under thirteen years of age derive benefit from such early introduction to this subject, while their general elementary instruction is unfairly curtailed.⁴⁰*

The ISW editors approved of this resolution. They did not understand how any person could conscientiously advise the compulsory teaching of cookery in the "dirty, squalid, germ-laden, one-roomed school which is the average type met with in Ireland."⁴¹ This point was emphasised by Mahon at a meeting of the County Kerry Teachers' Association:

...we teachers are not antagonistic to cookery we know that the ability to cook

*and serve food is invaluable to a girl. But, granting that, we do not feel that we are called on to become martyrs in the cause of cookery either in health or in purse by introducing it at our own expense, or under conditions dangerous to health in the corner of our over-crowded, ill-ventilated school-rooms."*⁴²

She suggested if the Commissioners wanted cookery taught they should secure a grant for the erection of a classroom where it could be taught with due respect to health and hygiene and they should also provide a grant sufficient for the supply of equipment, fuel and other things necessary for its efficient teaching. According to Mahon, the managers had raised no objection to the forcing of cookery in the national schools.⁴³

It was not surprising, therefore, that the next CEC resolution appealed to the managers. The resolution adopted at the 31 July meeting of the CEC was proposed and seconded, as usual, by Mahon and Larmour. It stated:

*That we protest against the continued attempt to force cookery and laundry into the schools without making any suitable provision for these subjects, and we request the managers to protect the teachers from being intimidated into introducing these subjects at their own expense by threats of deprivation of promotion and increments. That a copy of the instructions given to inspectors should be supplied to managers and teachers, and that inspectors should get instructions not to force these subjects where there is no provision made for their introduction, or to allow the absence of these subjects to influence them in writing their reports on the general condition of the school."*⁴⁴

A new edition of the Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education was published in the Autumn of 1909 and, as Dr. Starkie had assured the deputation of 6 February it would, contained a number of alterations to rule 120. The modified version of rule 120 in the *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1909-10* made the rule less exacting than the previous version had been. Section (1) now read:⁴⁵

*Cookery and laundry-work form part of the ordinary school programme for girls enrolled in the fifth and higher standard when suitable provision for instruction in these subjects is available. Girls who have reached the age of eleven years should, as a rule, attend the classes in cookery and laundry-work, even though they are enrolled in a lower standard than fifth."*⁴⁶

The phrase form part of rather than should be taught as, (emphasis in the original), was more a general statement than a strong obligation. And the alteration should, as a rule rather than may, if the manager so desires was also less peremptory from the teacher's point of view. An addendum was added to section (2) which stated: "In the case of a first payment to any school for instruction in cookery a total grant of £3 may be made when the ordinary grant calculated under this section would be less than that sum."⁴⁷ In their 75th Report the Commissioners observed that the provision of equipment and utensils for instruction had in many cases deterred the managers from introducing cookery in their schools and it was partly in order to meet this difficulty that they had obtained sanction to make, instead of the grant of five shillings per pupil, a payment of £3, provided that there were at least six pupils in the class. The Commissioners regretted that they were allowed by the Treasury to make this grant only in the first year. The Commissioners noted that the inspectors had reported that cookery was very popular with the teachers and pupils nearly everywhere and that the difficulties anticipated by many managers and teachers in regard to the supply of materials, etc., were proved in practice to be considerably exaggerated.⁴⁸

Mahon was not impressed with the changes in rule 120. She acknowledged, in a letter to the ISW where she reviewed the year's agitation over cookery, that the Commissioners in their latest edition of their rules had made "a small but wholly inadequate financial concession" but, she maintained, the "penal status against the teachers still remain."⁴⁹ Mahon reiterated that the teachers were not opposed to the teaching of cookery under proper conditions, they were "fully sensible of its importance as an essential factor in the life of civilised nations."⁵⁰ She looked to the managers to take appropriate action. The managers, who, as Mahon pointed out, were responsible for the upkeep of the schools and for the well-being of the teachers and pupils, should do one of two things. If there was a suitable classroom available the manager should, if he wanted the subjects taught, arrange for the provision of furniture, equipment, fuel and materials; if there was no suitable classroom available nor funds to build one the manager should not allow the subjects to be forced into congested one-roomed schools under conditions detrimental to health, discipline, and efficiency; and he should protect the teacher from all penal consequences until such time as he could find the means of making proper provision for the intro-

duction of these subjects. The Munster managers had recently demanded that the Board furnish two-thirds of the cost entailed in introducing cookery. Mahon did not believe the Board could afford to do so but she hoped individual managers throughout the country would follow the spirit of another resolution adopted by the Munster managers which stated that it was "unjust that the promotion of teachers, which may be otherwise well-merited, should depend on the teaching of cookery in the schools"⁵¹

In the following week's ISW Mahon focussed on the training of teachers in cookery and laundry. A Head Organiser and ten Assistant Organisers, appointed by the Commissioners, had already started holding night classes for teachers in various centres throughout the country. The teachers, for a radius of twelve miles, were summoned to attend these classes and in some of the memorandums issued it was stated: "In the absence of satisfactory explanation failure to attend may be taken into consideration in connection with the awards of increments and promotion." On the summonses teachers were informed that, "expenses will be paid according to regulations, but the cost of all food materials must be borne by the teachers". Mahon pointed out, as Kathleen Roche had done a year earlier, that women teachers who lived three and three quarter miles from the centre were expected to walk seven and a half miles and attend a cookery class for a couple of hours, in addition to teaching school all day:

*Add to this the danger at present for girls of walking along lonely roads in dark winter nights when the country is overrun with tramps and vagrants, the dregs of the army, navy, and militia, ne'er-do-wells, and out-of-works-constantly tramping the roads to and from the various workhouses throughout the country. Is there a manager in the country who would allow any woman teacher in one of his schools to be required to attend cookery classes under such circumstances?*⁵²

The expenses allowed by the Commissioners amounted to threepence per mile for car hire and Mahon asked the Commissioners, "in what Utopia do they reside where they find car-owners who drive them for threepence per mile."⁵³ She believed the proper course for the Commissioners to adopt, if they wished to have the existing teachers trained in cookery and laundry work, would be to establish courses of day classes in the different centres and to enable teachers to attend these day courses, the Commissioners

should provide and pay substitutes in their schools during their absence. She accepted that this would cost more but she believed it was the proper and humane way.⁵⁴

The sub-committee, consisting of Mahon, Thomson and Larmour, appointed at the CEC meeting on 1 May to draw up a statement outlining the CEC's position on the cookery question, completed its statement at the end of October 1909. The statement was adopted by the Executive at its meeting on 31 October 1909 when it was resolved;

*That copies of the Statement on Cookery and Laundry be sent to each individual Commissioner, to Lady Aberdeen and the Secretaries of the Women's National Health Association, the Bishops, the Secretaries of the different Managers' Associations, the Chief Secretary, the chiefs of the different political parties, and the Press.*⁵⁵

The resolution was proposed by Mahon and seconded by Larmour. The statement went over the ground covered by all the CEC resolutions during the previous ten months and listed a number of provisions deemed necessary if the Commissioners wished to introduce cookery and laundry into national schools.⁵⁶

Roche praised the CEC statement and declared that, but for the power of the Commissioners to refuse increments and withhold promotion, she would have advised women teachers at the outset to refuse to take up the subjects. She felt if every teacher had determinedly made up their minds at the beginning to have nothing to do with these subjects the enforcement of them would probably never have been carried out. She herself had steadfastly refused from the beginning to have anything to do with either cookery or laundry, although cajoled, coaxed, and threatened in turn. Fortunately in her case the Commissioners could withhold neither increment nor promotion, but she expected that their next move would be to reduce her salary.⁵⁷

A second resolution concerning the teaching of cookery was also adopted at the 31 October meeting of the CEC. The resolution, proposed and seconded by the women representatives, referred to the Commissioners' annual report, and as Dr. Starkie had advised the February deputation to do, urged the Commissioners to seek additional funding for the provision of proper facilities, equipment, fees and training. The resolution stated:

That as the Commissioners in their Report have stated in reference to Cookery and Laundry that they have taken steps to press for the inclusion of these subjects, and particularly the former, in the school programme; we trust they will include, in the forthcoming education estimates, the funds necessary for the erection and equipment of suitable class-rooms, for the payment of adequate fees, and for the establishment of day training classes for teachers, with payment for substitutes in their absence.⁵⁸

This request was repeated at the 18 December meeting of the CEC.

The Executive, throughout 1909, had worked consistently to protect women teachers from the worst effects of rule 120. Yet, J. H. Donnellan, of Ballynagarn National School, Carrickmacross, wrote in the *ISW* that he was afraid the whole agitation on the cookery question so far as the general body of the teachers was concerned was very half-hearted. Despite all the protests by the CEC, by the local associations, by the *Irish School Weekly*, teachers bought apparatus at their own expense, inconvenienced themselves and lost money attending classes and tried to teach the subject in unsuitable school-rooms. They even said they were delighted with the subject and experienced no difficulty in its teaching. Donnellan believed the whole agitation about cookery betrayed a great weakness in the machinery of the INTO. He did not dispute that teachers were compelled to teach cookery by the withholding of increments and promotion but this did not always hold and very often the compulsion was very slight.⁵⁹

Mahon wrote the following week defending the INTO's approach to the cookery question. The principle on which the cookery agitation was based, she declared, was that the teachers should not be required or expected to bear any of the expenses connected with these subjects, or be penalised in pocket or in status, for its non-introduction, where the schoolroom was unsuitable, or the expenses not provided. In drawing up the CEC statement Mahon said she had to take cognizance of the fact that cookery was there, that it had come with the consent or connivance of the majority of the managers and of some of the teachers also. Donnellan's contention that the women teachers succumbed too easily to compulsion Mahon granted might be true in some cases. But the alternatives put before them if they did not attend classes and show interest towards cookery were probable loss of increment and promotion, loss of favour with inspectors and perhaps with managers, loss of senior girls and the lowering of averages, often meaning

the loss of an assistant. The fact that some lady teachers professed themselves delighted with it proved nothing, she believed, except that they were trying to make the best of a situation forced upon them. As for fighting against the practice of withholding increments, the INTO Mahon insisted, had never ceased to do that in season and out on the platform in the press both publicly and privately and was still continuing to do so. No matter how gentle the compulsion it was still there and even if the lady teachers had to suffer loss and inconvenience they did so in the hope that it was only temporary and that their agitation would obtain relief for them in the future. Where they could the lady teachers got supplies from the managers and only bore the expenses themselves when forced to do so by direct or indirect pressure. She agreed with Donnellan that if one woman teacher here and there went and voluntarily supplied everything necessary for the cooking such action injured all the other teachers under the same manager and Mahon appealed to those few ladies, if they had money to invest, not to invest it in a manner calculated to injure their sister teachers in pocket and in prestige with managers and inspectors. All should stand together on this question of expense. She denied that the agitation betrayed any special weakness. The principle for which they were agitating was admitted to be just and proper. It was a principle which applied not to cookery equipment alone but to all school supplies.⁶⁰

The last proposal of the year, and more or less the final one in the agitation, was adopted by the Executive at its meeting on 18 December 1909. Mahon and Larmour again proposed and seconded the resolution. The resolution had a more conciliatory and positive tone than previous ones. It repeated the request that the Commissioners seek additional funds in the Estimates to provide for the teaching of cookery and laundry. The resolution stated:

That we request the Commissioners of National Education to give careful consideration to the statement forwarded to them by the CEC. on the teaching of Cookery and Laundry. That since they affirm in their Report that "they attach very great importance to the teaching of cookery" and admit that "many of our school rooms are not well fitted for the best teaching of this kind," we trust that in the Estimates now in preparation they will make application to the Treasury for the funds necessary to ensure the efficient teaching of it under the four submitted in the statement, viz (a) erection and equipment of class rooms; (b) expenses; (c) training of teachers; (d) adequate

fees to teachers. That until the Commissioners first secure from the Treasury and make available to the schools these funds, Cookery and Laundry should not be forced into unsuitable schools; and we request the Commissioners individually, to make it their special concern to see that no teacher is penalised for non-introduction of these subjects under unfavourable conditions. A copy of this resolution to be sent to the Commissioners.⁶¹

After its December 1909 resolution the CEC seldom referred to the question of cookery and laundry teaching. It was included among a list of topics to be discussed with the Resident Commissioner by a CEC deputation appointed on 8 October 1910. It was also listed on the Congress Agenda for a number of years but the topic was no longer a priority issue with the women representatives and they did not continue the campaign in 1910 suggesting that the pressure to introduce the subjects had eased.

When the Commissioners of National Education stated in their Rules and Regulations, 1906-7 that cookery and laundry should be taught as part of the ordinary school programme there was no reaction from the INTO. It was only in July 1907, when the first women representatives were sitting on the CEC, that a condemnatory resolution was adopted. The issue was not referred to again until, at the end of 1908, there was evidence that women teachers were being threatened with loss of increments and promotion if they did not introduce the subjects in their schools. Mahon and Larmour, under the watchful eye of Kathleen Roche, then saw to it that the CEC took action. The CEC adopted resolutions, raised the question with the Resident Commissioner, issued a public statement and secured the support of some of the managers against the imposition of cookery and laundry. The focus of the CEC agitation was on cookery rather than laundry instruction and the objections centred on the injustice of depriving women teachers of increments and promotion and forcing them to teach cookery in schools where there was no proper provision for its instruction at women teachers' own expense. There was, however, a little ambivalence about the topic. Women teachers agreed that cookery and laundry were important subjects for girls. Cookery and laundry were already established subjects in many schools and some women teachers were willing to teach both subjects for the fees granted. Mahon did not pursue her initial suggestion that the teaching of cookery was beyond the scope of primary schools. The danger to health in teaching cookery in one-roomed schools was highlighted to gain the sup-

port of such bodies as the Women's National Health Association. Catherine Mahon took the lead in the agitation against enforced cookery teaching. She initiated all the CEC resolutions, she presented the case to Dr. Starkie, she raised the question at many local association meetings and brought it to the attention of managers and to the readership of the *ISW*.

The agitation was successful. The Commissioners altered the phrasing of rule 120 in their code of 1909-10 which made the rule less binding than previously. A grant of £3 was also provided to assist in defraying the cost of equipment in the first year's instruction. This helped reduce the expenses on women teachers. The success of the agitation can be judged too by the number of schools in which cookery and laundry were subsequently introduced. In 1909, when the inspectors' intimidation was at its height, the number of schools taking cookery classes increased by 746 and those taking laundry increased by 117. In 1910, after a year of INTO agitation, the increase in cookery classes was only 331. There was, however, a trebling in the number of schools taking laundry, proving the INTO was correct in focussing its objections on cookery. The number taking laundry increased by 359 in 1910. In 1911 the number of schools giving instruction in cookery began to decline, a decline counterbalanced by the introduction of the new domestic economy course which combined cookery and laundry. Compared to the previous year 150 fewer schools provided cookery instruction in 1911. The number of schools teaching Laundry increased by 21 and the new domestic economy course was taught in 199 schools. The CEC protests had some effect too on the Commissioners' decision in 1910 to provide for appropriate fittings and furniture in the building of new vested-schoolhouses, and to make arrangements in 1911 for the teaching of domestic economy in Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction centres for national school pupils.

Mahon used the CEC very effectively to resolve women's grievances on the teaching of cookery and laundry. It is doubtful whether cookery and laundry teaching would have featured on the CEC agenda, except for her insistence. In the *ISW* of 1910, and the following years, there was hardly a reference to cookery and laundry teaching. This would suggest that the inspectors were no longer withholding increments and promotion and that the main point of contention had been resolved. The agitation must also have improved the INTO's status among women teachers as it was the first time the INTO had taken on an issue strictly related to them.

- ¹ *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1906-1907*, pp. 33, 34.
- ² See, *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1905* The cookery syllabus for girls in fifth and higher standards was as follows: Setting and lighting fires. Cleaning plates, cups, knives, forks, spoons, kitchen utensils, &c. Laying table. Preparing for cooking, and cooking potatoes and other ordinary vegetables; making colcannon; boiling, poaching, and frying eggs; cutting and buttering bread; making tea and coffee, porridge, gruel, whey, bread, Irish stew, beef-tea, and broth; cooking fowl and bacon; choosing, preparing, and cooking the fish obtainable in the locality. Lentil soup, pancakes; making apple or other fruit dumplings; stewing fruit; making jam, pies or tarts, puddings. Cookery instruction was not to be given during the summer months. *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1905* p. 95.
- ³ *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1906-07*, pp. 33,34.
- ⁴ *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1907-8*, p. vi.
- ⁵ ISW, 13 July 1907, p. 703 .
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 708.
- ⁷ ISW, 20 July 1907, p. 742.
- ⁸ ISW, 27 July 1907, p. 753.
- ⁹ A rule introduced in 1906-7, number 123, which applied to the teaching of extra subjects such as Irish and mathematics stated, "the increments of salaries and the promotion of the teachers to the higher grades depend in a large measure on the successful teaching of such branches. " See, *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1906-7*. This rule was altered in the 1907-8 code, and Irish and mathematics reverted to the status of extra subjects but teachers suspected that inspectors were applying similar qualifications to the teaching of cookery and laundry. See, ISW, 21 November 1908, p. 434.
- ¹⁰ ISW, 31 October 1908, p. 336.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Mahon was referring to rule 123.
- ¹³ ISW, 12 December 1908, p. 542.
- ¹⁴ ISW, 19 December 1908, p. 574.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 572.
- ¹⁶ ISW, 2 January 1909, p. 622.
- ¹⁷ *Seventy-fifth Report of the Commissioners of National Education for 1908*, H.C. 1909, (Cd. 4873), XX, p. 627.
- ¹⁸ ISW, 9 January 1909, p. 652.
- ¹⁹ ISW, 30 January 1909, p. 747.
- ²⁰ Ibid. Since Autumn 1908 the INTO had been mounting a campaign for the reform of the Pension Act.

- ²¹ Kathleen Roche in September 1908 asked if the ladies ever had a chance on the Executive? What power did they possess in the deliberations of the Executive? They were outnumbered six to one. They had not yet been appointed on a single deputation connected with the Executive, though there certainly had been no lack of such deputations since their advent to the CEC. See, *ISW*, 26 September 1908, p. 174.
- ²² *ISW*, 6 February 1909, p. 790. At this meeting Mahon was also appointed, with Messrs Mansfield, Murtagh, Thomson, and O' Herlihy, to a sub-committee to prepare resolutions for Congress programme. Larmour was the proposer of the motion for this sub-committee.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *ISW*, 13 February 1909, p.806.
- ²⁵ Mahon's Report of the Deputation to Dr. Starkie later became the source of major controversy.
- ²⁶ *ISW*, 27 March 1909, p. 182.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland) 1913, H.C. 1914 (Cd.7235), XXVIII, pp. 981,982.*
- ³⁰ *ISW*, 27 March 1909, p. 165.
- ³¹ *Ibid*
- ³² *ISW*, 9 January 1909, p. 668.
- ³³ *ISW*, 23 January 1909, p. 716.
- ³⁴ The correspondence between Mr. Deely and Mahon continued in the *ISW* after the elections. See, *ISW*, 15 May 1909, p. 414; 22 May 1909, pp. 444,445; 29 May 1909, pp. 477,478.
- ³⁵ *ISW*, 24 April 1909, p. 312.
- ³⁶ *ISW*, 8 May 1909, p. 361. Dr. Starkie had assured the deputation of February 6th that not one increment had been denied because of the absence of cookery. When Mahon said that she knew teachers who had not got increments because they did not teach cookery, Dr. Starkie had replied these teachers were only threatened and the increments deferred and that threatening was different from actually doing. If the teacher told the inspector that it was the expense of providing equipment which stopped her from teaching cookery the inspector would go to the manager about this. See, *Vice-regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)1913, H.C. 1914 (Cd.7235) XXVIII, p. 982.*
- ³⁷ *ISW*, 22 May 1909, pp. 441,442.
- ³⁸ Larmour had wired to say that illness prevented her from attending the CEC. meeting.
- ³⁹ At the deputation of February 6th Dr. Starkie asserted that it was useless to say

that cookery could not be taught in a one-roomed school, he had motored throughout the country and had seen cookery efficiently taught in numerous one-roomed schools, on ordinary grates, the teachers had told him they had been opposed to it at first, but that now they were delighted to be teaching it.

⁴⁰ ISW, 3 July 1909, p. 617.

⁴¹ ISW, 17 July 1909, p. 694.

⁴² ISW, 24 July 1909, p. 733.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ ISW, 7 August 1909, p. 780.

⁴⁵ The underlined words indicate the modifications to the rule.

⁴⁶ *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1909-10*, pp. 32, 33.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1909-10*, pp. 32, 33.

⁴⁹ ISW, 2 October 1909, p. 213.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² ISW, 16 October 1909, p. 277.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ ISW, 6 November 1909, p. 355.

⁵⁶ ISW, 20 November 1909, p. 446.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 424.

⁵⁸ ISW, 6 November 1909, p. 355.

⁵⁹ ISW, 11 December 1909, pp. 534, 535.

⁶⁰ ISW, 18 December 1909, p. 564.

⁶¹ ISW, 25 December 1909, p. 587. The Report referred to in the resolution was the 75th Report of the Commissioners of National Education for 1908.

CHAPTER VI

"going forward for the Vice-Presidency"

Mahon banned from the Education Office; her election as Vice-President of the INTO

IN 1910 CATHERINE MAHON became embroiled in controversy with Dr. Starkie over a report she had written regarding the deputation to him on 6 February 1909. The report had been the subject of debate among teachers during the previous summer when William Deely of Cork wrote to the ISW criticising Mahon for not demanding the removal of cookery from the Board's programme. Mahon, in response to Deely's criticism, said this attack on her was unfair, particularly from Cork city, as it was from there the agitation against cookery had been dealt the greatest blow. Mahon wrote that on the deputation to Dr. Starkie a deputationist had stated that he, "knew Cork lady teachers who would be glad to take up Cookery if allowed to drop Experimental Science", and he made the statement without any qualification for the provision of a special room or even for the supply of equipment. Deely replied that there was no reference to this in the report of the deputation to Dr. Starkie. He would not quote directly from this report because it was marked "Private and Confidential" and he considered Mahon to have been wrong to disclose any portion of an interview which was granted under the condition that the matters discussed should be regarded as private and confidential.¹

Mahon, in a letter to the ISW on 29 May, said that what she had written was the truth and could be verified by the other members of the deputation.² The question did not rest there. Mr Gamble, the deputationist who had asserted that Cork teachers would be glad to take up cookery, wrote to the ISW on 5 June and claimed cookery had been taught for years in every girls' school in Cork. Mahon refuted this with evidence from the "Blue Book" which gave the exact number of schools in which cookery was taught and with the resolution adopted at the County Cork Teachers' Association meeting. Referring to the strictly private and confidential nature of the deputation report Mahon said that it was only the statements made with regard to

managers that were alluded to as "Private and Confidential" and these necessitated the marking of the whole document "Private and Confidential". There were no private and confidential statements made with regard to the subject of cookery. In any case if she had created a precedent by disclosing what took place on a deputation she hoped it was a precedent that the teachers for their own sakes would insist on following in the future. She pointed out that when a deputation went to London a verbatim report was taken and published in the press for the information of all concerned. Mahon asked; "Why should not the same be done with regard to the deputations to Tyrone House?" Previous deputations had generated years of suspicion and irritation with successive CECs, because no verbatim reports had been forthcoming. Mahon said it was time to change the procedures at deputations to the Education Office and have verbatim reports taken by a professional note-taker.³

The deputation on 6 February 1909 was Mahon's first deputation to the Resident Commissioner and she was not as familiar with the procedure as she was later to become. When examined, during the Dill Commission, on the marking of the report "Private and Confidential" Mahon said the reason it was given such a marking was to prevent its publication in the press, not simply because of statements made regarding the managers.⁴ The "Private and Confidential" nature of the report became the central issue of a controversy involving the CEC and Dr. Starkie in 1910. Mahon's opinions, expressed in the correspondence with Deely during May and June 1909, were not alluded to during this controversy. Yet, they may have had some bearing on Dr. Starkie's refusal to receive Mahon as a deputationist in 1910. In the *ISW* in June 1909 Mahon did not deny that she had disclosed what had taken place on the deputation when discussing Gamble's contribution on cookery. Her opinion that verbatim reports should be taken at interviews with Dr. Starkie and that everything should be disclosed to the teachers was unlikely to endear her to the Resident Commissioner.

A letter by P. Doherty, chairman of the Tipperary Teachers' Association, in the *Freeman's Journal* on 19 July 1909 initiated the controversy. Doherty referred to a letter written by Father Curry, Secretary to the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association, in April which stated that Dr. Starkie had told a deputation that it was the representatives of the managers on the Board who were opposed to the granting of civil rights to the teachers.⁵ M. A. Phelan, on behalf of the Office of National Education, immediately responded to

Doherty's assertions in the following day's *Freeman's Journal*:

The Resident Commissioner desires me to give an emphatic contradiction to the representation of what he said to the deputation. It would appear that Father Curry adopted as his authority for the quotation in his letter of 12th April, 1909, the garbled report of a confidential interview, which was most unwarrantably published without being submitted to Dr. Starkie.⁶

Doherty replied that he had frequently pointed out the absurdity of having a document, the contents of which were to be disclosed to eight or nine thousand persons, marked "private and confidential". Besides, Father Curry's letter had been published three months previously and it was a little late for the Education Office to be contradicting it now. Mahon, as the writer of the report, also responded to Phelan's letter. She did not refer to the private and confidential nature of the report but emphasised its accuracy refusing to allow her report to be discredited, even by the highest authority. She wrote in her own justification:

I did my best to produce a detailed verbatim report of the interview as faithfully and accurately as I possibly could in the absence of a knowledge of shorthand, and taking into account the fact that Dr. Starkie is the chief of the department under which I work in my capacity of teacher it is but natural to suppose that I should take particular pains to be as courteous and diplomatic as possible, while at the same time striving to adhere firmly to the truth. I had also the assistance of a verbal report made on the same day to a sub-committee, and the further help of the memory of the sub-committee afterwards with regard to this verbal report.⁷

Mahon said she had nothing to do with the report being published without its being submitted to Dr. Starkie. But, she expected that Dr. Clarke, INTO Central Secretary, who had many years experience dealing with such deputations, had followed the customary procedure.

Mahon's report was affirmed at the CEC meeting on 31 July 1909. A resolution proposed by David Elliott, Ex-President, and seconded by Edmond Mansfield, Vice-President, upheld the accuracy of the report and was unanimously adopted. The resolution was as follows:

That as the accuracy of the printed report of a deputation from this Committee to Dr. Starkie in December last has been publicly discussed in the "Freeman's Journal," and as the particular portion of this report, which is questioned is the following; "Dr. Starkie stated the managers were opposed

to the granting of civil rights", we now desire to state, that the deputationists were unanimous in reporting this statement, and we adhere to our opinion that the printed report is an accurate representation of what occurred at the interview in December last.⁸

Kathleen Roche in the "Lady Teacher' Own Page" declared that the women teachers of Ireland would note with pleasure the complete vindication of Mahon's action by the Executive. Roche favoured the termination of such interviews with Dr. Starkie in future unless given in the presence of a shorthand reporter.⁹ Gamble, however, who was no longer a member of the CEC, disagreed with the statement. He wrote that he did not report that Dr. Starkie had made the statement attributed to him by the CEC. Gamble insisted that Dr. Starkie said "some" managers were opposed to the granting of civil rights and that if Dr. Starkie had said the managers as a whole were opposed to civil rights Gamble would have challenged him as he knew that the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association had passed a resolution in favour of civil rights for teachers. Mr John Murphy MP had acted as secretary to the deputation and he did not represent Dr. Starkie as making any such statement as that contained in the CEC resolution.¹⁰

Mahon, writing from the Irish Summer School in Dingle, challenged Gamble's statements. She had taken notes at the interview with Dr. Starkie, whilst Gamble took none. She had written her report immediately after the deputation from her notes, Gamble spoke from memory alone after an interval of six months. If Dr. Starkie had used the word "some" she would have put it in her report as she was anxious to adhere to the truth. Gamble had said that John Murphy, MP, in the report he furnished, did not represent Dr. Starkie as making any such statement as that contained in her report, but Murphy's report was only a general account of the interview and in a general account many things were necessarily omitted which would appear in a detailed report. The CEC preferred a detailed report and had adopted hers. Mahon said she was not concerned with the result of the controversy as she was perfectly convinced that she had been absolutely correct in her report. She would not trouble readers further with a report which had narrowed down into a personal dispute as to whether the adjective "some" was or was not used by Dr. Starkie.¹¹

David Elliott, Ex-President of the INTO verified the accuracy of Mahon's account. He had chaired the meeting at which the report of the deputation had been adopted. Elliott stated that he had given ample time for discussion

at the meeting and no objection had been raised as to the accuracy of the portion on civil rights by any member of the deputation. Gamble, in his letter, had said he would have corrected Dr. Starkie if he had said that the managers were opposed to civil rights. Elliott suggested "A man who was prepared to correct the Resident Commissioner surely would not have permitted an incorrect report to be sent to the Associations".¹² The issue rested there until 1910 when Dr. Starkie refused to receive Mahon as a CEC deputationist.

There were two occasions in 1910 when Dr. Starkie refused to receive Mahon. On the first occasion, in July 1910, her exclusion was not brought to light. INTO members were not informed that she had been banned from the Education Office and it is unclear whether all the CEC members were aware of her exclusion at the time. Mahon did not disclose her barring from the Education Office in July because she wanted to ensure that the business of the July deputation, which was at a critical stage, would proceed without hindrance. However, as a result of another embargo on Mahon in October 1910 a controversy erupted and the INTO resolved not to send deputations to Dr. Starkie in future. The description of events furnished in the ISW is supplemented by Mahon's evidence to the Dill Commission and the INTO statement submitted to the Commission in 1913.

The July 1910 deputation arose out of an attempt by the CEC to prevent the dismissal of the principal teacher in Mullinahorna Girls' School, Dungarvan, County Waterford. The principal had been threatened with dismissal unless she qualified to teach the bilingual programme by a specified date.¹³ The teachers attributed this decision to pressure from the Gaelic League.¹⁴ In order to settle the Mullinahorna dispute, and a number of other differences between the Gaelic League and the INTO, an Arbitration Committee was appointed.¹⁵ The committee consisted of five members; the chairman, Professor Eoin Mac Neill, Vice-President of the Gaelic League; Messrs. C. Mac Sweeney and P. Ward, national teachers and members of the Gaelic League, appointed by the Coiste Gnotha of the Gaelic League; Mr. J. Mc Gowan and Miss C. M. Mahon appointed by the Executive Committee of the INTO. The arbitration committee met on June 11 1910 and it was agreed that it would seek a meeting with Dr. Starkie and:

*...press for the immediate appointment of a competent bi-lingual teacher as assistant in Mullinahorna N.S.; or for the postponement of the bi-lingual programme until the average attendance warrants such appointment.*¹⁶

The deputation was to proceed as soon as possible to the Resident Commissioner. This information was published in the ISW of 27 August 1910 as part of the Report of the Arbitration Committee Meeting. The report was forwarded to the ISW by Mahon in her capacity as secretary of the committee and was dated 22 June 1910.¹⁷ Added to the report was a note saying that a deputation of three members, Messrs. McGowan, McSweeney and McNeill, had proceeded to Dr. Starkie on Saturday, 2 July. A report of the deputation had been presented to the CEC but had not been adopted.¹⁸ The arbitration committee would hold another meeting to consider what further steps to take with regard to this. Mahon, in her report did not mention that Dr. Starkie had refused to receive her as a deputationist.¹⁹ But it is clear from the INTO statement handed in to the Dill Commission in 1913 that she had written to Starkie requesting him to receive the deputation. Dr. Starkie had asked for the names of the deputationists and had refused to receive Mahon. When he refused to see her as part of the deputation Mahon, knowing the other three teachers would not go if they realised she had been banned and not wishing to jeopardise the position of the Mullinahorna principal facing imminent dismissal, decided to withdraw from the deputation. She arranged the interview for the other four members of the committee on 2 July and notified them of the arrangement. McGowan, who acted as secretary to the deputation, submitted a draft report of the deputation to Dr. Starkie to avoid any difficulties. Dr. Starkie made an amendment to McGowan's report which the deputation rejected and so the arbitration committee had to meet again and the deputation had to return to Starkie on 17 September 1910 to ensure the original agreement stood.²⁰

Once the Arbitration report was agreed the CEC took measures to clarify the question of deputations to the Resident Commissioner. There was no mention in the minutes of the CEC meeting of 8 October that Starkie's refusal to see Mahon was discussed. Nevertheless, her appointment to a deputation to the Resident Commissioner would suggest that the Executive wished to establish Dr. Starkie's grounds for refusing to receive her. At its meeting on Saturday, 8 October 1910 the CEC appointed two deputations to wait on Dr. Starkie. The first of these was appointed after resolution 11 was adopted. This stated:

That a deputation be appointed to wait upon Dr. Starkie with respect to the new mathematical programmes, and the percentage necessary to obtain fees; also with respect to the present position of the heating and cleaning question,

*cooking and laundry, tenure of assistants, monthly salaries.*²¹

Following the adoption of resolution 11 it was resolved; "That the President, Miss Mahon, and Messrs. Thomson and McGill form the deputation to Dr. Starkie in reference to resolution 11." A second deputation was appointed with respect of the undergraded teachers and Messrs. O' Callaghan and Cunningham were selected as the CEC deputationists.²² When the INTO Central Secretary, Michael Doyle, forwarded a copy of resolution 11 to Dr. Starkie with the request that he would receive the deputation and name a convenient date he received the following reply:

*The Resident Commissioner desires me to inform you in reply to your letter of the 15th inst. that he will be willing to receive a deputation regarding the matters you mentioned to consist of the following members only viz.: Messrs. Mansfield, J.M. Thomson, and J.T. McGill.*²³

The Central Secretary, on receiving this reply, informed Mahon and Edmond Mansfield, President of the INTO, asking what was to be done about Mahon's exclusion. The President suggested that Executive members be wired for their opinions. Seven of the Executive, including Mahon, replied that the deputation should proceed without her. Seven wired that the deputation should not proceed. Mansfield cast his vote against the deputation proceeding.²⁴ The Central Secretary, not wishing for the deputation to fall through, wrote to Dr. Starkie on 26 October 1910 asking him to reconsider the matter. His request illustrated the high regard Mahon was held in. Doyle pointed out that Mahon, with perhaps the exception of the President, was the best and most widely informed of the deputationists and her absence would be a serious drawback to the usefulness of the deputation. In response to this appeal the Central Secretary received a reply stating that the Resident Commissioner was not prepared to receive Mahon for reasons which had been indicated to her in a letter sent on 27 June 1910. Doyle then telegraphed the President to bring forward the CEC meeting in order to discuss the deputation crisis on 5 November.²⁵ In an effort to safeguard the undergraded teachers deputation, Doyle wrote on 2 November asking if Dr. Starkie would receive this deputation at his convenience. Dr. Starkie replied on the 3 November that he had no objection to receiving a deputation regarding the question of the undergraded teachers, as well as the other deputation, so long as no member of the 6 February 1909 group (with one exception) was included it.²⁶ This was the first time Dr. Starkie indicated

that, except for Mr Gamble, the ban extended to all members, of the 6 February 1909 deputation. It prevented George O'Callaghan, one of the proposed deputationists on the undergraded teachers deputation, from going to the Education Office.

Prior to the special meeting of the CEC, Mahon on 26 October 1910, wrote to Dr. Starkie defending her actions. She said that on 22 June she had received a letter from Dr Starkie stating that, having regard to certain incidents that followed his reception of a deputation of national teachers early the previous year, he was not prepared, at present, to receive any deputation of which Mahon might happen to be a member. In her reply, withdrawing her name from the Arbitration Committee deputation Mahon had written:

With regard to your objection to myself and the cause of same, I shall, with your permission (which I shall take for granted unless you specially forbid) write out and send you a copy of my own vindication of myself in the matter.²⁷

Mahon believed, since Dr. Starkie had eliminated her name from the deputation appointed at the CEC meeting of 8 October, that he was labouring under a misconception with regard to her. She, therefore, drew up a statement outlining events leading to the present crisis and she placed it before Dr. Starkie as the "true history of the incidents you allude to as responsible for your reluctance to allow me ever to see you again." In her statement, Mahon described how she had acted as secretary to the deputation on 6 February 1909 and how her report had been adopted by the CEC and ordered to be published as a "Private and Confidential Report". She outlined the correspondence on the report which had featured in the *Freeman's Journal* during July and August. Mahon said she could not be held responsible for the fact that the statement with regard to managers in the report of the deputation became public in the *Freeman's Journal*, but when it did she had no alternative but to defend herself. "My reputation for veracity is as dear to me as the King's is to him," she wrote.²⁸ With regard to Dr. Starkie's criticism that the report of the deputation of 6 February 1909 was printed and circulated without being first submitted to him, Mahon said that no report of any previous deputation had ever been so submitted and she asked, why should this one? When a report of a deputation to Dr. Starkie in 1907 fell into the hands of some Western managers and the Connaught Managers' Association subsequently passed a condemnatory resolution Dr. Starkie did not then, or, at any subsequent time, express any wish to see the

reports before publication. Thus, it could not be consistently charged against the CEC, or Mahon, that the report was "unwarrantably published" without Dr. Starkie's censorship. Other deputations had waited on Dr. Starkie since and they had not been required by him to submit a copy of their report, nor did they until Mr McGowan, of the Arbitration Committee deputation, to avoid a repetition of the unpleasantness which Mahon had experienced, voluntarily submitted an advance copy of his report. Dr. Starkie had made amendments in the advance copy and the deputation had to return to get these amendments eliminated. In her statement Mahon claimed the right to put the views of her constituents before Dr. Starkie whenever she was chosen to do so. Her personal views as to the value, or otherwise, of such deputations had nothing to do with the matter. Mahon said she had acted:

...perfectly straight, honourable, and above-board from beginning to end, and, since I was first elected by the teachers to work for their advancement, I have tried to fulfil the trust reposed in me without one selfish thought, or one selfish desire of gaining favour for myself on the shoulders of my constituents, and I hope to continue so to the end.²⁹

She was confident that time would vindicate her, if she could only wait with patience.

Dr. Starkie replied to Mahon's "statement" on 31 October 1910. In his reply Starkie claimed that Mahon had breached the "private and confidential" nature of the report of the deputation on 6 February 1909 and he criticised Mahon for refusing to be corrected. Starkie said it was distinctly understood at the meeting that the proceedings of the interview were of a confidential nature and that, "were any report of them issued, it should consist merely of a brief summary of the subjects that were discussed." He accused Mahon, in spite of this understanding, of writing a report from memory and of issuing it to INTO members and others throughout the country. The report, when issued, was not even marked "confidential" and it was not surprising that a letter quoting a portion of this supposedly confidential report was published in the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Nation*. Starkie said, in view of what was agreed at the interview, it was a gross breach of good faith to issue such a report without the Resident Commissioner's sanction. In addition, when he had drawn attention to the appearance of certain inaccurate extracts from the report in the press Mahon had treated his letter "with great discourtesy by refusing to accept the cor-

rection and persisting in declaring the published report to be accurate." The letter went on to say that Mahon's statement merely attempted to justify, rather than excuse, her action and the Resident Commissioner adhered to his intention to refuse to receive her in deputation or, indeed any of the other teachers who had been on the 6 February deputation with the exception of Gamble, "who publicly dissociated himself from the action of his colleagues."³⁰ Mahon did not respond to Starkie's reply immediately. It was only to clarify questions raised by teachers that she did so on 12 November 1910.

Meanwhile, the special meeting of the CEC convened by the President, Mansfield and the Central Secretary, Doyle was held on 5 November 1910. The first and special business of the meeting was the question of the two deputations. The CEC "debated and criticised at considerable length" the letters and telegrams regarding the deputations. It eventually, decided to publish the correspondence, together with Mahon's vindictory letter to Dr. Starkie and his reply, for the information of the teachers.³¹ Mr Thomson and Mr McGill, then sought the appointment of a deputation to Dr. Starkie to discuss the issues which the deputation appointed on 25 October had been mandated to raise with the Resident Commissioner. The resolution stated:

*That a deputation from the CEC. be appointed to wait upon Dr. Starkie with respect to Heating and Cleaning, Civil Rights, Mathematics, Tenure of Assistants, Deductions from Salaries of Deputationists, and Monthly Salaries.*³²

An amendment to this resolution was proposed by Mr. Nash and seconded by Mr. McSweeney. The amendment stated; "That no deputation to Dr. Starkie proceed from the CEC. while he refuses to receive certain members of this body." Messrs. O' Callaghan, Nash, McSweeney, Nunan, Fenighty, Cunningham, O' Connell, and Miss Mahon voted for the amendment. Messrs. McGowan, Thomson, McGill, Ramsay, Joyce, and Miss Larmour voted against the amendment. The amendment, on being put as a substantive resolution, was carried by 8-6, the members voting as before.³³ The narrowness of the majority indicated how contentious the issue was, it was mostly the northern representatives who voted against the amendment. All those who voted against the amendment, except Mr. Thomson, had joined with the rest of the Executive in July 1909 in affirming Mahon's report when Dr. Starkie challenged it in the *Freeman*. Thomson had not been present at that meeting.³⁴ If the CEC. had submitted to Dr. Starkie's conditions,

it would have given him, as was pointed out at Congress in 1911, a veto on Executive deputations, which would result, eventually, in his having a controlling voice in who would be elected onto the CEC. In the interests of the Organisation's independence therefore, the majority refused to send the other three members to the Resident Commissioner.³⁵

The CEC decision did not meet with the approval of some correspondents to the ISW. In the issue of 19 November, the week after Mahon's and Starkie's letters and statements were published, J. McGrath, B.A., Ballaghaderreen and Kilmovee, wrote criticising the Executive and questioning Mahon's motives in allowing her name to go forward on the proposed deputation.³⁶ McGrath said that the associated teachers of Ireland would read with surprise and pain the report of the specially convened meeting of the CEC. Pain at the impasse to which the relations of the CEC with Dr. Starkie had come and surprise that they had not been taken into the confidence of the CEC before now. Mahon knew of Starkie's objections to her presence on a deputation since the previous July yet, knowing this, allowed her name to go forward for a second deputation:

The associated teachers are entitled to know what was Miss Mahon's object in doing this. Was it to assert her own and the teachers' right? Was it to force a fight on Dr. Starkie?If Miss Mahon wished to assert her own and the teachers' right, why did she not place her cause in the hands of the teachers since last July? Had she and the CEC openly taken the Associations into their confidence, she would, have had the chivalry of the National teachers at her back from the beginning no deputations would have been named, and Dr. Starkie and the CEC would have been saved from the painful positions in which both are now placed towards each other.³⁷

It was unfair of McGrath to blame Mahon for the decision, rather than the Executive as a collective body, especially as she had said that the deputation should go ahead without her. Mahon's telegram also proved that she was not interested in making an issue of her exclusion for her own sake. Her reason for not making her exclusion from the Education Office public in July was that she did not want to endanger the Mullinahorna principal's position. McGrath was probably right in suggesting that the motive for selecting Mahon on the second deputation was to assert teachers' rights but, he did not favour confronting Dr. Starkie. McGrath was doubtful whether anything could result from the present muddle but a continued and bitter

wrangle till next Congress. In his opinion it was the associations, and not the Executive, who must decide as to whether things were to be left as Resolution No. 1 of the last meeting left them, or whether the resolution had to be rescinded and the way paved for future communications by deputation with the Resident Commissioner. He noted that, "Dr. Starkie has proved himself generally a good friend of education and of the teachers, and his friendship must not be lightly thrown aside for a small matter."³⁸

Mr Doherty of Newtown N.S., Tipperary, whose letter to the *Freeman's Journal* on 19 July 1909 had sparked the controversy, responded to McGrath's letter. Doherty was firmly behind the CEC decision not to send a deputation to Dr. Starkie and he dismissed the imputation on Mahon's character. He thought there was no advantage in "private deputations" to the Resident Commissioner. They tended to be demoralising and to create feelings of mistrust of one another among CEC members. Yet, they appeared to have a type of fascination with some of them. On all sides, wrote Doherty, "Mahon's ability, earnestness, and strenuous work on behalf of the teachers are known and appreciated." Yet, lest a chance of sending a deputation should be lost, the message "let her stay at home" was telegraphed, and then "published to shock the sense of decency of the 12,000 men and women who are engaged in the work of training the minds of the children of the nation in the ways of ordinary politeness." Doherty made the important point that four out of the six who had voted for the deputation to proceed without Mahon were present when Mahon's report of the February 1909 deputation was adopted, and that five of the six were present on the subsequent occasion when the CEC unanimously stood by her report when its accuracy was challenged. Doherty agreed with McGrath that it was time the associations decided the deputation question. Deputations to Dr. Starkie in the past, he observed, had brought no advantages to the general body, they were demoralising and they had damaged reputations. He suggested that a member of the Board who would refuse to receive a deputation representative of the teachers in the open, in the presence of newspaper reporters, but would consent to receive such a deputation in private, was not a friend, but an enemy of the teachers and ought not to be approached by them.³⁹

The next letter on the subject in the *ISW* was critical of the CEC's decision not to proceed with a deputation to Starkie. This gave a two to one majority, in the letters' page of the *ISW*, against the Executive's decision. S. Freckelton, Ballyshannon, wrote to protest against the "silly and stupid"

action of the Executive in requesting Starkie to receive a deputation from that body and then by a majority refusing to send a deputation when he consented to receive it. He called it a "gross piece of impertinence" that eight members of the CEC should determine that no deputation proceed to Dr. Starkie while he refused to some of its members. Freckelton said it was admitted on all sides that Starkie was an ardent educationist and had the interests of the teachers at heart. Would it therefore be to the credit of the teachers of Ireland, he asked, if they allowed such buffoonery as eight of their representatives had just performed, "to pass without expressing their disapproval of same? I think it would not".⁴⁰

Mahon, although she had hoped that the matter was at an end, felt it necessary to give an explanation to the "unpleasant questions" asked about points in Dr. Starkie's response to her "statement". She wrote to Dr. Starkie on 12 November 1910 refuting his argument that she had gone outside the terms agreed at the deputation on 6 February 1909.⁴¹ Dr. Starkie had said "that it was distinctly understood... that were any report to be issued it should consist merely of a brief summary of the subjects that were discussed." Until she got Dr. Starkie's reply to her statement of 26 October 1910 she had never heard of any such understanding being entered into. She said that she would not act on any deputation under condition of such an understanding. No member of the present CEC had a knowledge of such understanding as far as she could ascertain. The late Dr. Clarke, who had been Central Secretary at the time of the deputation, "was the soul of honour" and had never instructed the deputation that he had agreed they should publish only a summary. She believed that the fact that she had furnished a full report to the CEC and the members of the associations was a subject of merit, not censure, from the associated teachers. In Mahon's view the associated teachers were entitled to a full report of what transpired on these deputations. The omission of "private and confidential" on the report was inadvertent. When Mahon had received a copy of the report from Dr. Clarke and noticed the omission, she had written at once to Dr. Clarke who immediately wrote to all the secretaries asking them to insert the words on the copies received and he marked all that lay in his hands "Private and Confidential" in red ink. Mahon wrote a note in the *ISW* to the same effect.⁴² Mahon said she would not trouble Dr. Starkie again with any further correspondence, but it was due her and the associated teachers, to forward this explanation of the points raised in his reply.⁴³ She stressed these points during her exam-

ination at the Dill Commission when she said that it was understood the deputation was to be confidential in the ordinary sense, that is, it would be marked "Private and Confidential" but that no deputation ever came to an understanding with Dr. Starkie that no report, or only a summary should be published.⁴⁴

Dr. Starkie responded to Mahon's letter of 12 November on 6 December 1910. He said he had no desire to enter into further discussion concerning the deputation of February, 1909. He wished, however, to remind the CEC that in Mr Phelan's letter to the Central Secretary on 14 July 1908, he laid down the conditions under which he was willing to receive deputations:

*Before Dr. Starkie consents to receive this deputation he will require to have an assurance that the proceedings at the interview will be regarded as confidential, as experience shows him that observations made in the course of past interviews have been disclosed, and that even erroneous accounts of what took place have been published.*⁴⁵

Dr. Starkie further wished to remind Mahon that on the occasion of the deputation on 6 February 1909 he spent a considerable time in explaining what he meant by "confidential", and his reason for requiring that interviews with him should be treated as such. He pointed out that the untrammelled interchange of ideas was the chief value of interviews between the teachers and the head of the administration and that this would become impossible if, as on many recent occasions, isolated expressions of his were published, possibly in a garbled form and certainly without the careful qualifications which, though out of place in conversations, were indispensable in a statement intended for publication. The Resident Commissioner was asked by a member of the deputation, who to the best of his belief, was Mahon, whether he objected to a report of the proceedings for the purposes of the Organisation and he replied that anything of the nature of a detailed confidential report was out of the question. Experience had shown that, in the absence of shorthand writers, verbal accuracy was unattainable and that its confidential nature could not possibly be preserved if communicated to some thousands of teachers, but that he would consent to a general report of the proceedings being circulated. Furthermore, throughout the interview he had repeatedly impressed on the deputationists the confidential character of many of the remarks which were subsequently published in a garbled form by the Organisation. In view of these circumstances the Resident

Commissioner felt the "good name" of the CEC, or at any rate the deputationists, was gravely affected because they had sanctioned the "verbatim" report of the interview, which he had expressly forbidden and, by having it circulated without taking precautions that its confidential character should be preserved. The Resident Commissioner regretted the decision which had been forced on him by the violation of a definite understanding.⁴⁶

Neither Mahon nor the CEC responded to this letter and there was no further correspondence between them and Dr. Starkie on the subject of the deputation of 6 February, 1909. However, Mahon, in relation to Dr. Starkie's response, said in her evidence at the Dill Commission that what she had done was in accordance with her understanding of "private and confidential" and that Starkie understood it in a different way. She denied that Starkie ever said "anything in the nature of a detailed confidential report was out of the question" or that she had circulated a verbatim report of the interview which Dr. Starkie had expressly forbidden. Mahon insisted the customary procedure had been followed. The deputation report had been sent to the 210 Associations and she had ensured it would be marked "Private and Confidential" to prevent its publication in the press.⁴⁷

Although the correspondence was concluded the issue was still a matter of controversy among teachers. At the CEC meeting on 17 December Mr Thomson gave notice that he would be proposing a motion rescinding the CEC resolution of 5 November which prohibited deputations from the CEC interviewing the Resident Commissioner.⁴⁸ Mr Thomson did so at the CEC meeting on 28 January 1911 when he proposed:

*To rescind the resolution passed at the CEC of the 5th November - ...that no deputation to Dr. Starkie proceed from the CEC while he refuses to receive certain members of this body.*⁴⁹

Mr Nunan proposed an amendment to Mr Thomson's motion:

*That this committee holds itself open to consider the conditions on which the Resident Commissioner agrees to receive any deputation from the CEC, and if the conditions are not acceptable to us we refuse to send such deputations; that the refusal of the Resident Commissioner to receive any member of a deputation appointed to him by us is, in the opinion of this Committee, a condition we cannot agree to.*⁵⁰

Miss Mahon, and Messrs. Nunan, Mc Sweeny, Nash, Cunningham,

Fenighty, Joyce, O'Connell, O' Callaghan voted for the amendment. Miss Larmour, and Messrs. Thomson, Ramsay, Mc Gill, Mc Gowan voted against. The amendment was carried.⁵¹ The phrasing of the amendment was, perhaps, more measured than the CEC resolution of 5 November but essentially it was the same. Mr. Joyce was the only CEC member who had changed his mind since November.

The CEC majority was determined to assert its independence and not bow to Starkie's displeasure. Consequently the two deputationists whom he had refused to meet, Catherine Mahon and George O' Callaghan, went forward for election for the highest offices in the INTO. In the correspondence page of the *ISW* of 14 January 1911, O' Callaghan wrote that he would be a candidate for the office of President at the forthcoming elections. Beneath O' Callaghan's letter was one from Mahon which stated:

*In response to the wishes of the lady members of the Organisation, I have decided to go forward for the Vice-presidency this year, if your nominations indicate that you are willing to award me that honour.*⁵²

No comment was made about the significance of having the two deputationists whom Dr. Starkie had banned going forward for election but the implication must have been clear to INTO members. Mr Thomson, who was on the opposite side of the deputation question, also decided to go forward for the position of President. In a letter in the *ISW* in March 1911 Thomson said that he was grateful to the associations who had spontaneously nominated him for the Presidency. As circumstances developed he felt compelled to accept the invitation and he now placed himself at the services of all those who judged him worthy of the position, and who approved of his action in the past and the line of policy he held to be best for the interests of the Organisation.⁵³ Mahon was elected, unopposed, to the Vice-Presidency of the INTO in April 1911. The Organisation as a whole showed its approval of the CEC decision on the deputation question. O' Callaghan, the second deputationist who Dr. Starkie refused to meet at the Education Office, won the election for the presidency with 4,171 votes to Thomson's 2,273.⁵⁴ Mahon's controversial actions had been vindicated by the ordinary members of the INTO and they had demonstrated the regard in which they held Dr. Starkie's decision.

Mahon believed that the CEC stance on the deputation question was very significant. During an address at the King's County Association meet-

ing on 1 July 1911 she declared that since the Executive had taken:

this manly and independent course of action, a course ratified and confirmed by Congress, the teachers' cause had made rapid headway. No longer open to the taunt of being what a certain divine styled "Starkie's creatures," the teachers had rapidly gained the confidence of all sections of the community, as far as was possible under the Civil restrictions which the Board still hung round their necks.⁵⁵

As one who had some part in removing the "shackles of serfsh servility" to the Education Office, and "removing the scales from the eyes of the teachers", Mahon said she hoped that no representative deputation would ever proceed to the Education Office until it was received with honour at the front door and called into consultation with a representative Education Committee of the Commissioners. This in fact was what happened. The CEC did not return a deputation to the Resident Commissioner. It did send deputations to the Board itself or to a representative body of Board members. This procedure was facilitated by Mr Ward, the Teacher Commissioner on the Board of National Education. Mr Ward had been appointed Teacher Commissioner to the National Board in September 1910. Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary, had used his influence, at the INTO's request, to bring his appointment about.⁵⁶ In her evidence to the Dill Commission, Mahon emphasised the importance of standing up to Dr. Starkie declaring that if it had not done so the INTO would have become, practically, "an annexe of the Education Office, a sort of back-kitchen to Tyrone House."⁵⁷

The INTO's willingness to confront, rather than to submit, to pressure from the Resident Commissioner illustrated a new found confidence and vigour in the Organisation. Mahon's refusal to have her report discredited and her willingness to challenge Dr. Starkie led to the deputation crisis. If she had accepted, or ignored, Starkie's criticism of her report the INTO might not have withstood the Resident Commissioner's wishes. Or if Dr. Starkie had refused to meet a less prominent, or tougher, member of the CEC than Mahon the CEC might not have made such an issue of his refusal. But, as is evident from the Central Secretary's letter to the Resident Commissioner, Mahon was held in esteem by her colleagues on the Executive and they would not allow her to be rejected in such a fashion. Mahon's own indomitable spirit played a part in the controversy. Her report of the deputation on 6 February 1909 was controversial from the beginning.

Despite some negative reaction and an attempt to have the decision rescinded, the majority of the CEC held firm and refused to send a deputation to the Resident Commissioner while he excluded any of its members. The majority decision was vindicated by the ordinary members of the CEC when Mahon and O' Callaghan, were elected as Vice-President and President of the INTO in 1911. As a result of asserting its independence during the deputation crisis, the INTO was in a stronger position in 1911, with relation to the Education Office, than it had been before.⁵⁸ And Mahon's position as a leader of the INTO was affirmed.

¹ ISW, 22 May 1909, p. 445.

² ISW, 29 May 1909, p. 478.

³ ISW, 12 June 1909, pp. 542,543.

⁴ *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*. 1913, (Cd. 7235), 1914 XXVIII, p. 930. [Hereafter, Dill Commission].

⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 19 July 1909.

⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 20 July; ISW, 24 July 1909, p. 728.

⁷ *Freeman's Journal* 23 July 1909; ISW 31 July 1909, p. 760.

⁸ ISW, 7 August 1909, p. 780.

⁹ ISW, 14 August 1909, p. 812.

¹⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 August 1909; ISW 21 August 1909.

¹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 August 1909; ISW 21 August 1909, p 20. The ISW editors had been requested by Mr. Gamble to publish his letter in the ISW. They thought in fairness they were bound to publish Mahon's reply but they believed further continuance of the controversy was undesirable.

¹² ISW, 28 August 1909, p. 54.

¹³ ISW, 5 March 1910, p. 67. The CEC., at their meeting on 26th February 1910, had declared that it viewed with alarm the action of the Commissioners in withdrawing the salary of the assistant teacher in Mullinahorna N.S., on the ground that she had been unable to satisfy the requirements of the inspector in her knowledge of oral Irish, and the threat to the principal that unless she qualified before 1st July to teach the bilingual programme her appointment would be terminated.

¹⁴ The Mullinahorna school was situated in the all Irish speaking district of Ring.

¹⁵ The other subjects of complaint the teachers had were; the general attitude of Gaelic League officials towards national teachers; a dispute between Coiste an Condae in Mayo and the national teachers in Mayo; and the general attitude of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the Gaelic League's official organ, towards the teachers.

¹⁶ ISW, 27 August 1910. p. 850.

- ¹⁷ Mahon. in a covering letter to the ISW, said that many teachers had written to her about the report and seemed to be impatient with regard to its non-publication.
- ¹⁸ The report had been presented at the CEC meeting of 23rd July. Messrs. Cunningham and Nash, had proposed that the report be adopted, but a second resolution proposed by Miss Mahon and seconded by Mr. Cunningham referred the report back to the Arbitration Committee for further consideration. See ISW, 30 July 1910, p. 752.
- ¹⁹ ISW, 27 August 1910, pp. 850,851.
- ²⁰ *Dill Commission*, p. 979.
- ²¹ ISW, 15 October 1910, p. 1068.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ ISW, 12 November 1910, p. 1195 .
- ²⁴ All the Northern members of the Executive voted for the deputation to proceed without Mahon. Mr. Thomson's telegram peremptorily stated "Let her stay at home." Mr. Mc Gill's telegram likewise stated "Let Miss Mahon stay at home." Both Messrs. Thomson and Mc Gill had been appointed with Miss Mahon and Mr. Mansfield to the deputation to Dr. Starkie. Miss Larmour voted for the deputation to proceed without Mahon on the ground that "No deputationist can be forced on any person."
- ²⁵ The CEC. was due to meet on November 12th for its regular monthly meeting. See, ISW, 15 October 1910, p. 1068.
- ²⁶ *Dill Commission*, pp. 987,988.
- ²⁷ The ISW published Mahon's letter dated 26th October 1910 and her statement of vindication to Dr. Starkie in its November 12th issue. The correspondence is also included in the *Dill Commission*, pp. 989, 990.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 1198.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ ISW, 12 November 1910, p. 1198 .
- ³¹ These were published in the ISW of 1 2th November 1910.
- ³² Cookery and laundry which had been included in the original resolution were absent from Mr. Thomson's.
- ³³ ISW 12 November 1910, p. 1196.
- ³⁴ ISW 7 August 1909, p. 780.
- ³⁵ *Dill Commission*, p. 980. Belfast teachers were very concerned with inspectors' reports which had lowered the grades of a great many teachers in the Belfast area. They were anxious to meet Dr. Starkie to discuss these cases with him.
- ³⁶ J.M. Mc Grath was subsequently elected to the Executive.
- ³⁷ ISW, 19 November 1910, p. 11246.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ ISW, 26 November 1910, p. 1263 .

- ⁴⁰ ISW, 26 November 1910, p. 1277. Mahon, in a letter in the same issue of the ISW, mentioned the November 5th meeting of the CEC in connection with the INTO Benevolent Fund but made no reference to the controversy over the deputations to Dr. Starkie.
- ⁴¹ Mahon's letter was written before Messrs. Mc Grath, Doherty or Freckleton had theirs published in the ISW Mahon did not forward her own letter for publication until December 3rd.
- ⁴² Mahon did not allude to the earlier controversy with Deely about the "private and confidential" nature of the report as Dr. Starkie had not referred to it.
- ⁴³ ISW, 10 December 1910, p. 1325 .
- ⁴⁴ *Dill Commission*, p. 930.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ ISW, 10 December 1910, p. 1326.
- ⁴⁷ *Dill Commission*, pp. 930, 931.
- ⁴⁸ ISW, 24 December 1910, p. 1389.
- ⁴⁹ ISW, 4 February 1911, p. 131 .
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² ISW, 14 January 1911, [Supplement], p. 4.
- ⁵³ ISW, 18 March 1911, p. 340.
- ⁵⁴ ISW, 22 April 1911, p. 60.
- ⁵⁵ ISW, 22 July 1911, p. 464.
- ⁵⁶ *Dill Commission*, p. 991.
- ⁵⁷ *Dill Commission*, p. 927.
- ⁵⁸ It must be noted that Mahon's contribution to the CEC in 1910 did not consist solely of her work for the Arbitration Committee or her defence of the CEC's right to select its deputations. Mahon also campaigned in 1910 to secure scholarships in secondary schools for brilliant pupils of the national schools. She proposed that at least one half of the County Council Rate in aid of the University be used to found scholarships in secondary schools for brilliant pupils of the national schools, so that the children of the ratepayers might benefit from the University rate to be paid by their parents. See, ISW, 15 October 1910, p. 1067. Mahon wrote to the ISW on at least four subsequent occasions on the topic of scholarships for national school pupils. See, ISW 22 October 1910, [Supplement], p. 2; ISW, 29 October, 1910, p. 1148; ISW 5 November 1910, p. 1170; ISW 19th November 1910, p. 1229. Also during 1910 Mahon sought the support of the teachers, especially the women teachers, for the newly set up Benevolent Fund Scheme. She encouraged them to pay a shilling per quarter extra into the Fund. See, ISW 1 October 1910, p. 1016; ISW October 1910, p. 1031; ISW 15 October, p. 1088; ISW 26 November 1910, p.1277.

"this rule should not apply to any woman teacher"

The campaign against rule 92(j), the maternity rule

THE NEXT ISSUE OF SPECIFIC CONCERN for women teachers arose in 1911 when the Commissioners introduced rule 92(j). Rule 92(j) obliged women teachers to take three months maternity leave and to employ qualified substitutes at their own expense. The INTO protested against the rule and sought the support of the managers in its opposition to it. Men teachers, particularly those married to women teachers, took a prominent part in the protests. Objections to the rule came to focus on the principle of vested rights. The rule met with the managers' approval and was put into force. Mahon, Vice-President of the INTO thought, therefore, that the best option was to look for provision and payment of substitute teachers by the State. This option would safeguard the maternity leave of new entrants to the service and was not simply a limited defence of women already in the Board's employment. Mahon's favoured option was not agreeable to all members of the CEC and did not conform to Congress demands. Two events hindered Mahon's attempts to gain teacher support for her option. Edmond Mansfield, Vice-President of the INTO, was dismissed by the Commissioners from his position as principal teacher in Cullen Boys' N.S., Co. Tipperary. Also the Commissioners conceded the vested rights of women teachers who were in the employment of the Board on 30 June 1911 and reduced the required period of absence to two months. Mahon, preoccupied with the Mansfield crisis, accepted that the rule was not being applied to new teachers and did not pursue the matter. The men teachers, for the most part, were satisfied with the maintenance of vested rights. It was a victory for the trade union principle of vested rights but it was not a victory for the rights of women.

Rule 92(j) in the *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1911-1912* stated:

Notwithstanding anything contained in the preceding portions of this rule, married women teachers are required to absent themselves from their schools for three months continuously during the period preceding and succeeding

child-birth, and to provide qualified substitutes, at their own expense, for such portion of the three months as is not included in the ordinary vacation of the school.¹

It was understood that the Board favoured the division of the period of absence into two months before and one after the birth. Before rule 92(j)'s introduction women teachers had taken their maternity leave under rule 92(b) which allowed for one month's paid leave of absence on production of a doctor's certificate.² If women required more than a month's maternity leave they took the extra leave at their own expense. The new rule meant that a married woman teacher would lose a quarter's salary, at least £11, at the birth of each of her children and that she would be deprived of the one month's paid sick leave that every other teacher was entitled to.³

Teachers were first made aware of the new rule when a circular issued to the managers was published in the newspapers in April 1911. The circular stated that the new regulation would come into effect immediately and would "apply to all cases of child-birth occurring after the 30th June 1911."⁴ At Congress, Easter 1911, at which Mahon was elected Vice-President of the INTO, Michael Doyle, Central Secretary, was ordered to telegraph the following resolution to the Board:

That we emphatically call for the immediate withdrawal of the rule as being most cruel, unjust, unnecessary, and insulting, and express our firm determination to prevent its operation by every legitimate means in our power.⁵

This strong condemnation of the rule gave the Executive the right to do everything within its power to force its withdrawal. Although there were now three women on the Executive it was the men representatives who, in the beginning, took the lead on this issue. J. R. Nash, of Loughmore N.S., Templemore, County Tipperary, a CEC representative, who was to play a prominent role in the opposition to the rule, was the first teacher to respond, as an individual, to the new circular in the pages of the *ISW*. He thought the circular would lead to the introduction of a marriage bar as most managers would compel women teachers, on their appointment, to enter into an agreement to resign their schools on their marriage. Nash examined the motives which might have inspired the Commissioners to take such a course of action. From the lists of the coveted Carlisle and Blake awards Nash saw that of the nine women teachers who won these distinctions in the

years 1907 and 1908 five were married. The Commissioners could not, therefore, claim that the rule was introduced for the progress of primary education because married teachers were at least as successful as their unmarried sisters in the profession. Nash suggested that, perhaps, the Board's intention was to create vacancies for unemployed teachers. He could understand this motive but the new rule was not the solution to the problem of a surplus of trained teachers. What the Board ought to do, he proposed, was reduce the number of entrants to the Training Colleges. Nash then raised the point which appeared to be the critical issue for the majority of men teachers. This was the question of vested rights. In arguing that the vested rights of teachers should be protected Nash was putting forward a limited defence as it ignored the effects of rule 92(j) on new entrants to the service. Nash stated that in all other Departments the vested rights of the workers were secured when any drastic regulation was introduced, but in the case of national teachers the Commissioners acted as if the teachers had no vested rights. Nash hoped that the managers and teachers would take immediate and "concerted action to nullify the latest contemplated encroachment on the privileges hitherto enjoyed by women teachers....".⁶

The CEC was also hopeful that the managers would combine with the teachers and reject rule 92(j). At its first meeting since Congress the CEC adopted a resolution emphatically condemning the new rule declaring that:

we consider it an extraordinary state of affairs that while the niggardly British Treasury is willing to pay full salary during a month's illness, the National Board destroys this Treasury concession, inflicts a serious fine of £12 or £15 on the lady instead, and, at one stroke, destroys the vested rights of many thousands of teachers.⁷

There were two grounds, propriety and efficiency, on which the CEC attacked the rule. From the point of view of propriety it protested "against the senseless squeamishness which would cast the slur on motherhood and introduce French ideas of propriety into this country."⁸ From the point of view of efficiency the resolution declared that it ought to be apparent to anybody that the married woman would be much more efficient than a substitute. The Executive, who wished to gain the support of the managers, suggested that in the opinion of the Board the managers, mainly clergymen, were not fit and proper persons to be entrusted "with the care of the propriety, moral tone, and education" of the schools which they managed.

Therefore, from every point of view the rule was unnecessary and unjust and the CEC stated that it was looking, "to the Bishops, the managers, and the clergy generally, to preserve the robust moral tone and the educational efficiency of the country by refusing to recognise the rule."⁹ Although the women representatives had proved their ability to propose and second resolutions during the agitation over the cookery programme it was not they who moved this resolution. T. J. Nunan, the assistants' representative, and E. Mansfield, Ex-President, proposed and seconded the resolution.¹⁰

Following the CEC meeting T. J. Nunan wrote to the ISW. His letter focussed on the question of vested rights. The rule, he said, was another example of the Board's total disregard for vested rights. There was a contract between the Board and every woman teacher in the service, that in the case of marriage and childbirth a month's leave of absence, without loss of salary, would be permitted. This contract was now being broken without any consultation with the other parties to the contract. He said he was not qualified to discuss the moral issues involved so he would content himself with quoting the words of a priest and manager who had seen life in England and America and had observed, regarding the rule, "All I say...is, if the rule leads to the calculated family of England, France and America, God save Ireland from the rule." Nunan believed that the managers would be on the teachers' side and that a combined stand by the teachers and clergy would mean victory.¹¹

If a combined stand by teachers and clergy meant victory then a divided stand augured defeat. The Central Council of the Catholic Managers' Association did not support the teachers' demands for the removal of rule 92(j). The Catholic Managers' Association approved of the rule, although it recommended that the substitutes be paid by the Commissioners.¹² A resolution of the Munster Managers' Association indicated the managers' views on the issue. They regretted that the Board, before issuing the rule, had not secured from the Treasury a grant sufficient to enable married women teachers to pay their substitutes as they were of the opinion that the rule inflicted a serious hardship on married women teachers who were obliged to provide substitutes at their own expense for twelve weeks.¹³ It was hardly surprising that the managers took this view. A marriage bar was being enforced in the Diocese of Down and Connor at the time. Requests by the INTO to have this ban revoked had proved unsuccessful. It seems that before the introduction of rule 92(j) Dr. Foley, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, who

was also a Commissioner, sanctioned the action of managers in his diocese who required women teachers to take maternity leave when they, the managers, thought it was in the interests of the women teachers to do so.¹⁴ Mahon, on the subject of the marriage bar in the diocese of Down and Connor, said she would not advise any lady to get married and have her school taken from her.¹⁵

The CEC, not yet aware of the managers' decision, continued to appeal to them to obtain the withdrawal of rule 92(j).¹⁶ The rule featured prominently on the agenda of the CEC meeting of July 8th 1911. The main resolution on the question sought the immediate withdrawal of the rule, it did not mention vested rights. Resolution 6 was proposed by Mahon and seconded by J. R. Nash, it stated:

*That we call for the immediate withdrawal of the recent rule of the National Board with regard to married lady teachers, and that a deputation from the Committee be sent to the Countess of Aberdeen, Mr. Birrell, the Managers' Association, and the Standing Council of the Bishops, to elicit their support in obtaining the withdrawal of this unjust and retrograde rule of the Board.*¹⁷

The other resolutions were mainly concerned with the appointment of deputations. Resolution 10 proposed that Mahon, and Messrs. O' Callaghan, Mc Sweeney and Nunan form the deputation to Lady Aberdeen and the other parties mentioned in resolution 6. Resolution 11 moved:

*That the Commissioners be requested to receive a deputation, consisting of the President, Mr. Thomson, ex-President, and Mr. Mc Gill on the following subjects:- (a) New rule re married ladies. (b) Undergraded and paper promotion, and the transition teachers. (c) Inspectors, inspection, and the recent circular from the Commissioners. (d) Civil rights. (e) Half-timers at schools.*¹⁸

The last resolution in relation to rule 92(j) was one which proposed that a statement regarding the rule about married ladies be drafted for the next meeting by a sub-committee consisting of Miss Mahon and Messrs. Mc Gowan, Nash and Nunan.

Following this meeting Mahon, in a letter to the ISW, wrote that the INTO was determined to oppose the rule which "puts a slur upon matrimony, a premium upon celibacy and another nail in the coffin of the National Board."¹⁹ The ordinary rules were sufficient, suggested Mahon, to cope with all cases of maternity even when preceded or succeeded by any longer peri-

od of ill-health than one month. With the introduction of rule 92(j), however, a woman teacher could be in perfect health but would still have to retire and forfeit three months' salary, "which she never required so urgently as at this particular time".²⁰ Mahon also criticised the violation of the vested rights of women teachers:

An edict proclaiming that all ladies appointed after the 1st July, 1911, would be required to sign an agreement that in the event of marriage they should retire for three months at periods of dislocation would be intolerant but honest; to spring such a rule on those already appointed is intolerant and not honest. Worse still, to require a teacher appointed without such conditions to obey them at her own expense ought, if there is any justice to be had in the land, to be pronounced illegal in law and liable for damages for infringement of rights.²¹

Mahon urged women teachers to remain teaching until the last day if they felt able to do so, to take their month's leave of absence and a week or two in addition off their vacation if required and if the Education Office officials docked their salary they should tell the CEC and they would fight the case. "Do not be coerced or intimidated", she wrote, "into signing away your free-will or your rights in this matter." Mahon was both surprised and disappointed with the resolution of the Central Council of the Catholic Clerical Managers. Their resolution, approving of the regulation, but recommending that substitutes be paid by the Commissioners was, according to Mahon, a weak and ineffective one. She thought even if the managers approved of the rule they should stand firm by the teachers and tell the Board that until it provided and paid substitutes on such occasions they would refuse to allow such a rule to be put into operation against either their present, or future, married lady teachers. Mahon concluded her letter by exhorting the women teachers not to give in, not to despair, and "above all, ignore the rule till the Commissioners plank down the money to pay the substitute. If you do this it simply cannot be enforced."²²

The deputation appointed at the CEC meeting of 8 July met with the Chief Secretary in August 1911. Birrell said he had not been consulted by the Commissioners about the introduction of the rule but now that it had been brought to his attention he would look into the matter.²³ No action was taken by the CEC for the next couple of months to prevent rule 92(j)'s implemen-

tation. Indeed, Mahon, at this time, was also engaged in fundraising activities in her local community. She was the secretary of a committee whose purpose was to raise money for the building of a new school in Carrig and for repairs to the Catholic church.²⁴

Teachers' attitudes towards the rule were changing, probably influenced by the managers' acceptance of it. By January 1912, judging by resolutions adopted at local associations, there was a tacit acknowledgement that the rule was there to stay, but many associations urged that the substitute be paid, not by the woman teacher on maternity leave, but by either the Treasury or the National Board.²⁵ Kathleen Roche believed the agitation against rule 92(j) should not be allowed to slacken. She was in favour of the rule if the Treasury was to pay the substitutes, "but we must rouse the conscience and spirit of the country against an arrangement which flagrantly ignores vested rights and attaches a penalty to motherhood."²⁶ The public were not, however, to be roused on this issue.²⁷

While the teachers' attitudes, as evidenced by resolutions at the local associations, were beginning to change the CEC would not relent. It continued to demand the withdrawal of rule 92(j). No reference to payment of substitute teachers was made either in its Congress Agenda or in a resolution adopted at its February meeting.²⁸ The February CEC resolution was a straightforward demand for the withdrawal of the rule:

*That Rule 92(j) of the National Board, which penalises women teachers to the extent of at least £11 in every maternity case, is unjust and a gross violation of vested rights, and we call for its immediate withdrawal.*²⁹

J. R. Nash, CEC representative, who had already written on the subject, wrote a detailed letter on the effects of rule 92(j) in the ISW of 16 March.³⁰ He again condemned the violation of vested rights and argued that although, it was claimed that the rule was being introduced in the interests of the mother and child, there was no evidence that the health of either had been undermined by the mother's attendance at school before her confinement. Nash was sure that there was "no solid ground for the seemingly paternal and philanthropic interest manifested by the members of the National Board of Education when they framed Rule 92 (j)."³¹ If anything the rule would have an injurious effect on the mother's health. When women teachers married the National Board entered no objection. But now women teachers would be

at a loss of at least £11 on the birth of each child so that the Commissioners were setting a premium on childless marriages. In all other cases of illness the Commissioners allowed each teacher a month's sick leave but as Nash pointed out:

...should a married woman teacher commit the unpardonable offence of adding a unit to the country's population not only is she denied the privilege of sick leave, but she must, according to the same body, hide herself away as a sort of pariah or leper for a period of three months, and pay a substitute for the interval out of her paltry income.³²

The rule, from a moral or educational point was, according to Nash, injurious and reactionary and should be withdrawn. He had been informed that even when the birth occurred during the holidays and when the teachers were not absent from their schools large portions of their salaries were withheld by the National Board. He believed these cases should be tested in the Law Courts.

At Congress 1912, where Mahon was invested President of the INTO, the CEC was criticised by Mr. Gamble of Cork. He pointed out that the 1911 Congress had demanded the withdrawal of rule 92(j) and shortly afterwards teachers were advised to ignore the rule completely with the result that those who had followed this advice had their salaries deducted for three months. Gamble said the CEC had failed in its duty with regard to the rule. The rule was now established and would not be withdrawn and, "before long married women would be compelled to resign altogether." Gamble stood for vested rights. It would be fair if the Board made rules which teachers on entering the service would be informed about and be obliged to keep but it was unjust, he insisted, that such a regulation should be forced on teachers already in the service.³³ A resolution was adopted at Congress 1912 protesting emphatically against rule 92(j) "as being a gross violation of vested rights and against the interests of humanity, morality and efficiency."³⁴ In an account of Congress by a "lady delegate" Mahon is described as wearing a "white hat, with white clustering plumey feathers, a soft boa to match, and her walking costume was a magnificent white furry motor coat. With her fair delicate complexion, and truly feminine cast of features, the pure white was most becoming."³⁵

At its meeting after Congress on 20 April 1912 the CEC resolved that the

Commissioners be again requested to receive a deputation regarding rule 92(j) and that the members of the deputation be Messrs. Nash, Nunan, McGrath, and McGill. These four were also appointed to a sub-committee to take all the steps deemed necessary to safeguard the rights of the teachers affected.³⁶ The complete lack of input of the women representatives in this resolution would suggest that they were not in full agreement with it. A resolution from the Birr Association indicated that Mahon favoured the payment of substitutes from state funds. The Congress resolution did not allow her to promote this option as INTO policy yet, if the other members of the CEC had not been so adamant about focussing solely on the question of vested rights Mahon might have succeeded in gaining the Organisation's support for the payment of substitutes. It is surprising that neither Miss McNeill nor Miss Larmour took a more active role on the issue. They may have disagreed with the line taken by the majority of the CEC or they may have lacked confidence to go on the deputation.

At the subsequent CEC meeting in June Mahon proposed a resolution which, while it protested against the violation of vested rights and urged 92(j)'s withdrawal, did not mention the payment of substitutes. T.J. O'Connell's presentation of his wife's case which was published in the *ISW* of 8 June may have prompted this resolution. Kathleen O'Connell was the principal teacher in Streamstown Girls' National School, County Westmeath. On 18 February 1912 she gave birth to a baby which survived for less than an hour. Mrs O'Connell was greatly distressed at the death of her baby. She had failed to get a substitute for her school, although she had advertised, and it was left in the charge of the Junior Assistant Mistress. At the end of a month her doctor advised Mrs O'Connell, for the sake of her health, to return to her normal duties. She did so on 18 March with the manager's full approval. According to rule 92(j) she should not have returned for another two months. On the occasion of the school's annual inspection Mrs O'Connell explained her circumstances to the senior inspector for the district and he expressed the greatest sympathy for her. Notwithstanding this she was deprived of three months' salary, £18.7s.6d., less a fortnight's vacation at Easter which was allowed, for failing to comply with rule 92(j). T.J. O'Connell, at a meeting of the Westmeath Teachers' Association, outlined the effects of the rule on women teachers and stressed the question of vested rights. Mahon who was present at this meeting stated that before the imposition of the rule "the Board should first procure the £7,000 necessary if

the substitutes had to be paid."³⁷

This demand was not included in the resolution adopted at the CEC meeting of 8th June. At the meeting Mahon proposed and Mr McGill seconded: "That the Maternity Rule formulated by the National Board is a gross violation of vested rights, is morally and educationally unsound, and should be withdrawn".³⁸ The meeting also resolved that the members of the sub-committee appointed at the last meeting be directed to draft a statement on the question, with the view of having it printed and circulated.

The deputation reported on its interview at the Education Office to the CEC meeting of 20 July 1912. The deputation were in general agreement as to the matters submitted but differed vitally on one very important point regarding present and future unmarried teachers.³⁹ The point the deputation appeared to differ on was a suggestion that the vested rights of existing women teachers would be protected but that a marriage bar would apply to new teachers.⁴⁰ Mahon wrote a letter to the ISW regarding the deputation's report the week after the CEC meeting. She said that, pending the decision of the Board on the arguments put before it by the deputation of 9 July for the complete and absolute withdrawal of the rule, in strict accordance with the instructions from Congress 1912, she could not say any thing definite as to the result of the deputation or the fate of the rule. But she would say if "the present married teachers are to be relieved from their maternity penalties at the expense of future married teachers, the Central Executive will never consent to such conditions."⁴¹ Nor did she believe would the Organisation. Her woman's intuition told her that "our name would be anathema, if we, of this generation, bartered away the marriage rights of the future lady teachers. And that, too, under an unmarried lady President!"⁴²

T. J. Nunan, assistants' representative on the CEC, also feared that the outcome of the rule would be a ban on married women teachers. If this was so then it became a national question not simply a teachers' question. He suggested that if a marriage bar was introduced it would mean the schools in a short time would be manned:

*or rather womanned by two classes of lady teachers, and - I say this without wishing to hurt anybody's feelings...- the schools would be filled by either besoured, bespectacled maidens of fifty, or young ladies whose sole object should be to make the school a stepping-stone to the gaining of a husband.*⁴³

Nunan appealed to the managers who had agreed the rule was a good

one provided the substitutes were paid, to support the teachers and demand that the rule be abolished until there was money to pay the substitutes. Nunan, in seeking the managers' support for this solution, was going in a new direction, he was conceding that the rule was acceptable as long as the substitutes were paid.

T. J. O'Connell was critical of the "vacillation and indecision" on the part of some of the CEC representatives on the question of Rule 92(j). During the Education debate in the House of Commons, John Dillon MP, Irish Parliamentary Party chief spokesperson on education, had suggested with regard to rule 92(j) that the period of absence should be reduced to two months and that the teacher should not be called upon to pay a substitute. O'Connell wanted to know whether Dillon had made the suggestion on his own initiative or had he been prompted to do so by the CEC London deputation. O'Connell pointed out that Congress, the supreme authority of the INTO, had sought on two occasions the immediate withdrawal of rule 92(j). Was Dillon informed that reduction of the "time limit" and the payment of a substitute would not be accepted as a settlement. O'Connell insisted that neither the CEC nor any individual member of it had any right to alter in any way a Congress demand without the express permission of the associations. He accepted that there might not be complete unanimity among the members of the CEC as to the best course to be adopted, it was a matter of rumour that at least one member of the London deputation favoured the payment of substitutes as a solution to the difficulty.⁴⁴ "But", he wrote, "this is not a matter in which individual opinion should be allowed to interfere with, or override the definitely expressed opinion of the supreme authority of the Organisation."⁴⁵ It was his fear that this had occurred in the case of the maternity rule and his knowledge of the consequences which a want of unity of demand entailed that had prompted him to write his letter.

O'Connell brought Kathleen O'Connell's case to the attention of Dillon and Walter Nugent, his local Westmeath MP. They raised questions on the issue in the House of Commons on 20 August 1912. Birrell, in reply, said the case was "surely the *reductio ad absurdum* and that anything more harsh could hardly be imagined." His view of the matter, which he would bring before the Commissioners, was that teachers who were married before the rule came into operation were entitled to exceptional treatment.⁴⁶ Birrell's response was published in the *ISW* of 24 August 1912.

The question was also debated at length at the CEC meeting on 7

September 1912.⁴⁷ On the proposal of Mahon, the report of the deputationists to the Commissioners in July was ordered to be printed and circulated confidentially to the associations in time for the October meetings. A resolution on the subject was also adopted at this meeting. The resolution proposed by Mr Nash and seconded by Miss Larmour stated:

That as the Rule of the Commissioners of National Education by which married women teachers are compelled to absent themselves for periods of three months in maternity cases, and pay substitutes out of their slender incomes is a gross violation of vested rights, is morally and educationally unsound, and inflicts serious hardships on the teachers affected by it, we demand its immediate withdrawal; that copies of this resolution be sent to the Secretaries of the National Board, and to the Chief Secretary, Mr. Birrell.⁴⁸

This was reiterating the Congress resolution and there was no indication that the CEC would accept the rule even if substitutes were paid out of state funds. O'Connell's letters probably had an impact on this resolution. The CEC also resolved that the Lord Lieutenant be requested to appoint a small commission composed of representatives of the National Board, and of the national teachers, presided over by an independent chairman to inquire into the administration of the National Education system "under the following heads; Maternity Rule, Inspection, Grading of Teachers, Monthly Salaries, Standard Numbers, Salaries in General, Promotion and other pressing grievances."⁴⁹ The fact that rule 92(j) received priority indicated the CEC's commitment to the issue.

The issue also continued to be the focus of debate in the ISW where J. R. Nash had a letter, his third on rule 92(j), published on 28 September 1912. Nash stated that the rule was the most unjust and inhuman regulation introduced in the history of the Board of National Education. He accepted that the Commissioners might have been acting with the best of motives but if they could realise the "worry, anxiety, and pecuniary embarrassments" that the operation of rule 92(j) would entail on many married women teachers "they would not, unless they were impregnable to human sympathy, tolerate the Rule for a single day." Nash maintained that the rule was neither in the interests of morality, nor of education and was, besides, a gross violation of vested rights. "Many teachers at present in the service would never have entered it had they anticipated such a regulation", he wrote. A "medical

expert", with whom Nash had discussed the question had said that "the normally healthy woman was better off at school than at home." The effect of the rule would be to consign women to early graves. He trusted the Commissioners would revoke their action by expunging rule 92(j).

Mahon also contributed to the debate in the ISW. In a caustic reference to Nash's letter she wrote that she was not going to treat her readers to a "Medicated Maternity Essay," telling them what some doctor said. Neither would she write a "Moral Maternity Essay", since the ecclesiastical guardians of morality who were called on to curse, had turned and publicly blessed, the rule. She was not going to eulogise the Commissioners, or make-believe that they were actuated by the best of motives. And she did not trust that when they saw her letter they would repent and expunge 92(j), "for I know they will do nothing of the kind", she wrote. References had been made to regulations applying in England antagonistic to married women teachers. Mahon had made inquiries. Taking the London County Council as an example she found that there were over 2,000 married women teachers in their employment. Under their rules a teacher had to inform the Council of the expected date of her confinement at least three months before the date. Teachers were required to absent themselves from school for at least four weeks before the notified date and to remain absent for not less than 13 weeks after their confinement "or in the event of the child not living, for a period to be determined after consultation with the medical officer (Education), provided that such period be not less than four weeks." During the period of absence full pay was allowed for the first eight weeks and half pay for the remaining nine weeks. In all cases in which the child lived an absence of 17 weeks was compulsory. Leave of absence beyond this period could be granted without pay to a maximum period of 12 months. The substitute was employed and paid by the Council which kept a list of unemployed teachers called the unattached list. According to Mahon, the prospective mother had neither trouble nor worry, all she need do was give notice to the Council and it did the rest. "This is real humanity", she proclaimed. Mahon asked teachers to discuss whether the Executive should adhere rigidly to the Kilkenny Congress resolution for absolute withdrawal without any alternative, or:

seeing that the Commissioners have already made this rule, that it is there, that the principle of it is approved by Cabinet Minister, public men, the

Hierarchy, and the managers of the schools, seeing the procedure in England, and considering that it is to Englishmen unfortunately we must appeal for redress, would it be better policy for our own sakes, while calling for the withdrawal of the present atrocious and unjust rule, to demand as an alternative, if the Commissioners persist in enforcing it, that they provide and pay substitutes and suspend all maternity retirement till the Treasury sanction is obtained to these conditions.⁵⁰

Mahon reminded the teachers of what had happened in the case of rule 127(b). Its unconditional withdrawal had been demanded but the teachers had not succeeded on this occasion even with the support of the managers until eventually in 1910 the teachers had to alter their demands and seek for preservation of vested rights. In the case of 92(j) the managers were not condemning the rule but approving, and enforcing it. Which was better, Mahon asked:

to continue to knock our heads unconditionally against a stone wall with practically no support outside our own body, or make the best terms we can in which we shall have the support of those who can aid us, in other words, drop the moral and educational view and go, as we had ultimately to do in the case of 127(b) for preservation of our vested rights.⁵¹

Some INTO branches did as Mahon requested and adopted resolutions seeking the protection of vested rights rather than the complete withdrawal of the rule.⁵² However, many associations were so preoccupied with the dismissal by the Board of Mr Mansfield, Vice-President of the INTO, that they did not do so. For instance, the Birr Association of which Mahon was president, discussed the report of the deputation to the National Board on the maternity question and regarded it as unsatisfactory. But it did not adopt a resolution on rule 92(j) whereas it passed two resolutions on Mansfield's dismissal.⁵³

The issue of vested rights was conceded by the Commissioners of National Education at their meeting on October 29th 1912 when they decided that rule 92(j) would not apply to women teachers in their service on or before 30th June 1911. They issued a circular to the managers which stated that:

while the Rule is to continue in operation in the case of teachers appointed for the first time since 30th June, 1911, its provisions are not to apply to

women teachers recognised on or before that date until such time as the Commissioners may be in a position to pay the substitute employed by the teacher during the enforced period of absence.

Kathleen Roche considered the withdrawal of the maternity rule as "another striking proof of the helplessness of the Commissioners. They enact only to withdraw!"⁵⁴ Mahon was not as jubilant. In a letter to the teachers in the ISW of 23 November 1912 she noted that although the maternity rule had been somewhat modified there was still work to be done before teachers were clear of 92(j) and its injurious effects. They had gained one point, a tardy and belated recognition of the principle of vested rights. "To complete that step we must insist on full and complete restitution being made to all the victims of this Rule", she argued. Mahon insisted that she would oppose, with all her resources, the forcing of the rule on new entrants to the Board's service since June 30 1911. She believed that:

*The provisions of this rule should not apply to any women teachers, past, present, or future, till substitutes provided, not by the teacher, but by the Education Department, from an Unemployed List to be kept in their office, are paid by the State. Let this be our aim and let us keep hammering away to this end.*⁵⁵

Mahon gave "a lion's share" of credit to T. J. O'Connell for bringing his wife's case to public attention so that the chief secretary entered into correspondence with the Commissioners on the subject. She asked every teacher who had lost a penny through the operation of the rule to send her a return of all losses. O'Connell had a letter published the same day also urging women teachers who had been deprived of salary or who had to pay substitute teachers to send details to their respective MP's and ask them to press for immediate and satisfactory settlement.⁵⁶

The CEC at both its November, and December meetings resolved:

*That we request the Chief Secretary for Ireland to direct the Commissioners of National Education to recoup those teachers who suffered pecuniary loss by the enforcement of the Maternity Rule 92(j) now withdrawn. That copies be sent again to the Chief Secretary, Messrs. Redmond and Dillon, Captain Craig and Sir E. Carson.*⁵⁷

There was no reference in the resolution to the impact of the rule on

teachers employed after June 30 1911, nor was there a demand that a panel of substitute teachers be established. The majority of the Executive was satisfied that the vested interests of women teachers had been maintained and once teachers who had suffered financial loss were recompensed there was no further action taken. It was reported that 439 women teachers had suffered financially in the eighteen months since the rule had been enforced. 152 had income withheld because they could not provide substitutes as required and 287 employed and paid substitutes. The Treasury, subject to certain conditions, sanctioned a refund to teachers who were in the service before due notice of rule 92(j) was given.⁵⁸

The rule appeared on Congress Agenda of 1913 where Mrs. O' Shea of Cork, sought its withdrawal, observing that it was still enforced on all women teachers appointed after 1 July 1911. Mahon was also anxious about this aspect but thought it had been resolved. She said she knew of cases of teachers appointed for the first time after 1 July 1911 who had since got married and come under the rule but whose fines were refunded. "So it appears that the Commissioners as at present circumstanced have deemed it wiser (and perhaps more merciful), to leave it in abeyance altogether with regard to all lady teachers", she observed.⁵⁹ On this understanding the agitation against rule 92(j) practically ceased. Teachers, and Mahon in particular, were by then preoccupied with the Dill Commission which had been established as a result of Mansfield's dismissal. In her evidence to the Dill Commission in September 1913 Mahon was more conscious of rule 92(j)'s application to women teachers employed since 30 June 1911 and she adamantly opposed it. It was inexplicable, she stated, that the Commissioners would not allow a mother take the one month's paid sickness leave that every teacher was entitled to even if they insisted on her taking an additional month as well. Mahon once again approvingly cited the London County Council system where substitute teachers were provided at no trouble or expense to the married women on maternity leave. She made it clear that these were her own views and that the INTO demanded the complete withdrawal of the rule in its present form. Congress 1914 demanded the withdrawal of rule 92(j) but the INTO took no further action on the issue. The Commissioners, after 29 October 1912, made no other alterations to rule 92(j). The rule applied to all women teachers employed after June 30 1911.⁶⁰

The introduction of rule 92(j) was significant to women teachers yet, it was men teachers who, initially, were to the fore in opposing it. They wrote

to the ISW, proposed resolutions at CEC meetings, went on deputations and spoke on the question at Congress. The INTO demanded the complete withdrawal of the rule and protested against the violation of the vested rights of women teachers who were in the service on 30 June 1911. Mahon also protested against the rule and urged that the vested rights of women teachers be maintained. But when it became clear that the school managers approved of the rule and were prepared to enforce it Mahon's demands changed. Knowing that without the managers' support the rule would not be withdrawn she sought payment for maternity leave substitutes out of State funds. She was not empowered, however, to advocate this as INTO policy. There was friction on the CEC as members disagreed as to the best course of action to take. Miss Larmour and Miss Mc Neill, the two lady representatives, did not take an active role on the issue.⁶¹ The CEC was reminded by T. J. O'Connell, who brought his wife's case to the attention of the chief secretary, that it could not go beyond the mandate given it by Congress. Mahon, however, proposed that teachers change their demands and empower Congress to seek the payment of substitute teachers for women on maternity leave. At the end of October 1912 the Commissioners altered rule 92(j) so that it was not applicable to women teachers in the service prior to June 30 1911. The period of absence was also reduced from three to two months. The men teachers, who had vociferously fought the issue on the principle of vested rights, were satisfied that these rights had been maintained. The dismissal of E. Mansfield, Vice-President of the INTO, diverted teachers' attention away from rule 92(j) so that the injustice to women teachers who entered the service after 1 July 1911 was not properly addressed. Mahon protested on behalf of these teachers but as she understood that the rule was not being applied to newcomers to the service she did not pursue the agitation. However, rule 92(j) remained in force and women teachers who had entered the service of the Board after 30 June 1911 were required to take two month's leave and pay their substitutes during their absences.

Although, and perhaps, because Mahon was Vice-President of the INTO in 1911 and President in 1912 she did not have the same success with rule 92(j) as she had with other issues. Her demand that maternity leave substitutes be provided and paid for by central funds did not match Congress demands and as Vice-President and President of INTO she could not be seen to betray the organisation's supreme authority. As lady representative she could, perhaps, have taken a more independent position and argued that

she was fulfilling the mandate of her constituents. But as a higher officer of the INTO she could not focus exclusively on women's issues. Mahon, for much of the time that 92(j) was under discussion, was involved in pension negotiations. Also when the matter was coming to a head and she was mobilising support for her favoured option modelled on the London County Council scheme Mansfield was dismissed and a major crisis ensued. Mahon subsequently maintained her position in variance with the INTO's mandate that the rule should be withdrawn. Her stance was the most propitious to women on maternity leave.⁶²

¹ *Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education 1911 - 1912*, p.24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³ It was always made clear that the rule pertained to *married* women teachers.

⁴ *Dill Commission*, p.993.

⁵ *ISW*, 29 April 1911, p. 86.

⁶ *ISW*, 13 May 1911, p. 152.

⁷ *ISW*, 20 May 1911, p. 167.

⁸ The requirement that a pregnant married woman should absent herself from the school two months prior to the birth of her child was, suggested T. J. O'Connell, an insult to motherhood because in effect it said that a woman about to become a mother was unfit to be seen in public. See, O'Connell, *A History of the INTO*, p. 277.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Both Nunan and Mansfield were married to national teachers.

¹¹ *ISW*, 1 July 1911, p. 379.

¹² O'Connell, *A History of the INTO*, p. 276.

¹³ *ISW*, 23 September 1911, pp. 704,706.

¹⁴ *ISW*, 7 June 1913, p. 377; *ISW*, 14 June 1913, pp. 409, 410; *ISW*, 21 June 1913, p. 440.

¹⁵ See, *ISW*, 7 June 1913, p. 377.

¹⁶ The Central Council of the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association made its decision at its meeting on 22 June 1911. But the press report of the meeting contained no reference to rule 92(j). See, O'Connell, *A History of the INTO*, p. 275. It is clear, however, from a letter written by Mahon in the *ISW* of July 29th that the teachers were informed of the decision soon afterwards.

¹⁷ *ISW*, 15 July 1911, p. 423. Lady Aberdeen was President of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland which sought, as one of its aims, to draw public attention to "the insanitary conditions under which many of the schools in country districts suffer". At its annual meeting in 1911 the Association received messages from Michael Doyle, Central Secretary of the INTO, from Mahon and from

- Dr. Starkie congratulating and thanking it for its work in gaining a grant for the heating and cleaning of national schools. See, *Women's National Health Association Annual Reports*, National Library.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ ISW, 29 July 1911, p. 484.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid., p. 485.
- ²³ *Dill Commission*, p. 993. The Birr teachers at their quarterly meeting in January 1912 said they were "very dissatisfied with the attitude of Mr. Birrell on the married lady teachers' rule..." See, ISW, 10 February 1912, [Supplement], p. 8.
- ²⁴ See, *The Midland Tribune*, 14 October 1911.
- ²⁵ Ibid., pp. 12,29,30,31.
- ²⁶ ISW, 2 March 1912, p. 1436.
- ²⁷ The ISW noted in November 1912 that the maternity question did not appeal to the public whereas the dismissal of a highly efficient teacher whose character was above reproach did. This was in reference to the dismissal of E. Mansfield. See, ISW, 16 November 1912, p. 570.
- ²⁸ ISW, 20 January 1912, p. 1258.
- ²⁹ ISW, 2 March 1912, [Supplement], p. 2.
- ³⁰ It is probable that Nash was married to a teacher.
- ³¹ ISW, 16 March 1912, p. 1512.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ ISW, 20 April 1912, p. 1655.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 1658. Hugh O' Donnell wrote to the ISW criticising the CEC for its inactivity on the question of rule 92(j). He pointed out that rule 92(j) had been the last item on the Congress Agenda and delegates had not had sufficient time to discuss it. See, ISW, 20 April 1912, p. 1675.
- ³⁵ ISW, 27 April 1912, p. 1692.
- ³⁶ ISW, 27 April 1912, p. 1687.
- ³⁷ O'Connell, *A History of the INTO*, pp. 276, 277. ISW, 8 June 1912.
- ³⁸ ISW, 15 June 1912, p. 1911. At this meeting it was also resolved that the President, Catherine Mahon, be added to the deputation to London on the pension and other questions.
- ³⁹ ISW, 27 July 1912, p. 75.
- ⁴⁰ Mahon later revealed that one of the deputationists, who had no authority to do so, suggested during the interview with the Resident Commissioner that the rule should be withdrawn but that a marriage bar should apply to women teachers entering the service after 30th June 1911.
- ⁴¹ ISW, 27 July 1912, p. 91.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ ISW, 3 August 1912, p. 112.

⁴⁴ O'Connell was referring to Mahon.

⁴⁵ ISW, 10 August 1912, p. 140.

⁴⁶ *Hansard*, Vol. 41, 1912, No. 109, Col 2177.

⁴⁷ Nunan, who up to now had been very active on the issue was not listed as having participated in the discussion.

⁴⁸ ISW, 14 September 1912, p. 214.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ ISW 19 October 1912, p. 444.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Amongst these were the Dungannon Association which resolved "That 'maternity rule' should not apply to teachers in service at the time the rule was promulgated" and the Roscrea Association which resolved "That since the complete withdrawal of rule 92(j) seems improbable, we consider the vested rights of teachers already in the service should not be violated." See, ISW, 26 October 1912, pp. 461, 462.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ ISW, 23 November 1912, p. 592.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 600, 601.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ ISW, 4 January 1912, p. 780.

⁵⁸ See, ISW 4 January 1913, p. 798; 15 February 1913, p. 974.

⁵⁹ ISW, 31 May 1913, p. 347.

⁶⁰ The rule is still listed in the current edition of the Rules of the Department of Education published in 1965. Rule 119 states: "A married woman teacher is required to absent herself from her school for two calendar months continuously during the period preceding and succeeding child-birth, and to provide a qualified substitute at her own expense, for such portion of the two months as is not included in the ordinary vacation of the school." See Rules for National Schools under the Department of Education, p. 69. A number of Departmental circulars and Acts of the Oireachtas have, however, superseded rule 119. Circular 19/75 stated that from 1st January 1975 substitutes for teachers on maternity leave would be paid by the Department of Education.

⁶¹ Neither Miss Larmour nor Miss Mc Neill was on the following year's Executive. Mc Neill decided she would not go forward for election in 1914 and Larmour was defeated by Miss Maisie Mangan for her place on the Executive.

⁶² Today substitute teachers for maternity leave are paid by the State but as yet there is no panel of supply teachers who automatically step in when a woman teacher takes her maternity leave.

CHAPTER VIII

"we are all proud of the President"

Mahon and the INTO Presidency 1912-1914

Catherine Mahon's term as INTO President during the Mansfield dismissal crisis was acknowledged as having been brilliant. Her leadership helped to secure public support for the INTO and persuaded the Chief Secretary to grant an inquiry into the relations between the teachers and the Board of National Education. The teachers, confident of Mahon's ability revoked the rule confining the President's term of office to one year and Mahon was elected President for a second consecutive term. Her testimony before the Dill Commission, where she adeptly dealt with hours of close questioning, fully justified the teachers' confidence in her. The INTO was generally satisfied with the report of the Commission of Inquiry but regretted that it had not recommended Mansfield's reinstatement. In November 1915 a CEC deputation agreed terms for his reinstatement which Mahon, on principle, could not accept. She tendered her resignation to the CEC but withdrew it in the interests of the Organisation. Her objection to the non-recognition of Mansfield's service for salary proved well founded. Mahon did not go forward for CEC elections at Congress 1916, she thought it was time the CEC was rejuvenated with new members.

On 15 October 1912 Edmond Mansfield, Vice-President of the INTO, was summarily dismissed by the Board from his post as principal of Cullen Boys' National School, for a speech he had made at a meeting of the County Tipperary Teachers' Association urging the removal of a senior inspector from the district.¹ His speech had been published in the *Clonmel Chronicle* and he was asked by the Board of National Education to publicly repudiate his remarks. Mansfield refused to do so saying it was his private view, which he still firmly believed, and that he was not violating any rule of the Commissioners. His dismissal was immediately condemned by the INTO. Mahon, from her base in Carrig, issued a statement to the press which was carried by the daily newspapers. Public bodies around the country rallied behind the teachers and denounced Mansfield's dismissal.² At its meeting on 26 October the CEC issued a statement which congratulated Mansfield on the manly and honest stand he had taken in the cause of teachers. It con-

demned the unjust and tyrannical action of the Board in summarily dismissing the Vice-President of the INTO and demanded his immediate reinstatement.³ Mahon, Mansfield and David Elliott, INTO Treasurer, were appointed to proceed to London to seek both Mansfield's reinstatement and an immediate inquiry into the administration of the National Board - with special reference to the duties of inspectors.⁴

The prospect of having an inquiry granted did not look promising as the Chief Secretary, Birrell, had stated, "I have gone into it most carefully, and I cannot see how, in any way, I would be justified in setting on foot an inquiry into this matter, and I do not mean to do so."⁵ Birrell had also refused Mahon's written request to meet the Mansfield deputation. Nevertheless, the deputationists, at Mahon's instigation, decided to travel to London and arrived there on 4 November 1912. At Westminster they were advised by the Irish MPs that it was hopeless to try and get Birrell to change his opinion on Mansfield's reinstatement, that they ought instead to seek an interview with Birrell on the question of a general inquiry and that this should include Mansfield's case. The three deputationists agreed with this proposal and were granted an interview with Birrell on 5 November 1912. At the interview Mahon appealed to Birrell, "not only in the interests of the teaching body but in the interests of education in Ireland, to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the whole administration of the National Board." David Elliott, INTO Treasurer who was from Belfast, seconded Mahon's appeal and said the desire for an inquiry came from all creeds and parties of teachers in Ireland. Birrell, in reply, said that the deputation was a very formidable one and represented a united body of opinion, Catholic and Protestant, north and south, which he felt himself unable to resist. He agreed to set up an inquiry with terms of reference to include the whole relations of the Board with the national teachers of the country.⁶ An extract from the Belfast newspaper the *Irish News* indicated the impact Mahon made at the interview with Birrell. It was reported that:

..Miss Mahon's remarkable speech was quite evidently the influence which operated upon the Chief Secretary's mind when he promised a full inquiry into the entire system of inspection under the National Board. When the Irish teachers chose Miss Mahon as their President, they did well... She is certainly one of the most gifted speakers who has figured for many years as a member of a deputation to any Minister in the Houses of Parliament. Her statement of the case for the teachers was a masterpiece of simple and natur-

al eloquence and clear reasoning. The facts were at the lady's fingers' ends. Her manner was calm and deliberate; and her indictment of the present system of inspection in Irish National Schools was so convincing and impressive that Mr. Birrell, who came to the meeting prejudiced in favour of the Commissioners and Dr. Starkie, was forced to admit the strength of Miss Mahon's case, and to promise that an inquiry would be instituted.⁷

Kathleen Roche also praised Mahon. She declared that never before in the history of the Organisation was there such a crisis, and the way in which Mahon had responded "must win the respect and admiration of all. We women especially are proud of our President."⁸

In December 1912 the ISW reported a suggestion that Mahon should be requested to continue at the "helm until victory crowns the efforts of the Organisation in its war against despotism."⁹ The ISW editors agreed with this suggestion. Mahon's personality, they argued, "her earnestness as a pleader, her determination that justice be done, and above all her belief in herself", had resulted in the Commission of Inquiry.¹⁰ The work of the Commission they suggested, required guidance and Mahon was possibly the only teacher in Ireland who could supply the guiding principle. "She has risked much, and in her ability, honesty, tact and perseverance the teachers have utmost confidence. Many say that she is indispensable to the success of the work in hand", the article continued.¹¹ The editors acknowledged that the rules of the Organisation allowed for a President to serve only one year. But they said the present crisis was a state of war, "and the general, who has in every encounter routed the enemy's cavalry, must be retained at the head of the forces."¹² The editors urged teachers to nominate Mahon for a second year.

In the following week's ISW there were six letters from teachers around the country endorsing the editors' views. One correspondent, Richard J. Walsh, Tuam, noted that Mahon had struck a vital chord and, "whatever the outcome may be it has certainly tended towards the ennoblement and elevation of the individuality of the teaching body."¹³ There was not, however, unanimous approval of the idea on the CEC. At the CEC meeting on 21st December 1912 Messrs. McGrath and Nunan proposed:

That this Committee desire to express its opinion that in view of the crisis through which our Organisation is now passing, it would be a judicious thing to retain Miss Mahon in her position as President for another year. We respectfully suggest to the Associations the desirability of falling into line with this view by refraining from nominating any other teacher to the Presidentship.¹⁴

This resolution was vehemently opposed by Messrs. O' Callaghan and Nash as "a gross and most unnecessary violation of Congress Rules."¹⁵ Messrs. Mac Sweeney, Fennighty, Mansfield, Mc Grath, and Nunan voted for the resolution. Messrs. O' Callaghan and Nash voted against. Miss Mc Neill, Miss Larmour and Messrs. Cunningham and Mc Gill abstained.¹⁶ The ISW of 8 February 1913, reported that Mahon had been nominated by almost all the associations for the Presidency.¹⁷ In March it was confirmed that Mahon was returned a second time unopposed as President of the INTO.¹⁸ At Congress 1913, Mahon's re-election was carried with acclamation. Mr. Todd (Belfast) in proposing a vote of thanks to Mahon for her services during the year, said there was nothing he could say in her praise that she did not deserve and that their hearts could not endorse. Mahon, acknowledging the vote of thanks, expressed her pleasure at being able to do something for a body which had deserved it so well. Throughout her two terms as President, Mahon continued teaching in Carrig N.S.¹⁹

The terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education Ireland were as follows:

*To inquire and report whether the rules, regulations and practice of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland with regard to the inspection of schools and to the awarding of increments and promotion to teachers, and the methods adopted by the Inspectors in carrying out their inspection, are conducive to sound education, to efficiency on the part of the teachers, and to fairness and uniformity in their treatment; and whether any, and, if so, what changes are desirable in the system of inspection; and also to report upon the relations of the Commissioners and their Inspectors to the teachers, and upon the rules and regulations of the Commissioners with regard to the conduct of the teachers, and especially as to whether such rules and regulations unduly restrict the liberty of the teachers in any respect and whether in any cases some notice of the intention to make new rules should be published, and whether due facilities for appeal and means of access to the Board are allowed to the teachers.*²⁰

The members of the Commission were Sir Samuel Dill, M.A., Litt.D., LL.D., Professor of Greek at Queen's University Belfast (chairman); the Most Reverend Denis Kelly, D.D., Bishop of Ross; Sir Hiram Shaw Wilkinson, member of the Senate of Queen's University; John Coffey, LGB Inspector; Henry Harrison, M.A., H.M. Inspector of schools in England; Jeremiah Henly, M.A. Professor at Kildare Place Training College; Walter Mc

Murrough Kavanagh, D.L., Borris, Carlow; Thomas Kettle, Professor of National Economics, National University of Ireland.

The Commission, at its first meeting in January 1913, decided that evidence would be taken in private. The INTO Executive, which had been preparing its case since November 1912, protested at this decision and resolved not to tender evidence before the Commission unless its proceedings were open to the press and the public.²¹ Mahon explained, in an article in the *ISW*, that the only chance Mansfield had of getting justice was from the strong pressure of public opinion and this would not be possible if evidence was heard in private.²² The CEC maintained its position even when the Commission guaranteed that no teacher would suffer any penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, owing to evidence he or she might give before the Commission and that all evidence would be taken down verbatim and published from time to time.²³ Congress 1913 approved of the CEC decision. An amendment by Belfast teachers in favour of allowing individual teachers to give evidence was withdrawn in the interests of unity.

In her Congress 1913 address Mahon reviewed the history of the administration of Irish national education for the past thirteen years and appealed for its immediate reform. She began her address with an example of the satisfactory relationship teachers had with Mr. Redington, Dr. Starkie's predecessor. She then outlined the unsatisfactory relationship they had with the National Board since the advent of Dr. Starkie as Resident Commissioner. Her address took more than six pages of the *ISW* and was a cutting indictment of Starkie's administration. Mahon proposed that the National Board should be replaced immediately by a popular and elective Board. The reformed Board should consist of representatives from the General Council of County Councils, as representing the people; the Managers' Association (Catholic and Protestant), and the Teachers' Organisation. Each of these bodies should elect five members for the Board. And the State, as it collected and distributed the Educational Finances, should also select five members. The Board should be elected for a term of either 3 or 5 years, preferably 3, at the end of which time there would be an election and all unsatisfactory members would be replaced. Mahon observed that as half the teachers were women, half the school children were girls so a "proportion of the members of the new Board should be women, and either the Director or Sub-Director should be a woman."²⁴ Mahon also suggested that if Dr. Starkie "had been assisted in his duties by a woman of firm will, tenacious purpose, and

strong national and democratic sympathies, things would not have come to the present pass."²⁵ An amendment to the resolution on salaries, claiming a rate of payment for women teachers equal to that given to men, was adopted by a large majority at Congress 1913, probably, as a tribute to Mahon.²⁶

Kathleen Roche reported that everyone was proud of Mahon who had exceeded all expectations in her magnificent address and in her management of the affairs of Congress.²⁷ She described Mahon as being, "most becomingly dressed in a Saxe-blue satin robe, with chiffon and Oriental embroideries, over which she wore a white Claddagh coat. Her hat was also of Saxe-blue, trimmed with ostrich plumes."²⁸

In June 1913, in view of the publication of several misleading statements made by higher officials of the Board which seriously reflected on the character of teachers, and on the advice of MPs, the CEC unanimously agreed that it would be in the best interests of teachers and of education for teachers to appear before the Commission:

*...to sustain their complaints, vindicate their character, and contradict the many erroneous and unfounded statements which have been made by the highest officials of the board, to the detriment and injustice of the teachers.*²⁹

Subsequently evidence was given by Mansfield and by teachers from the Belfast and Tipperary areas as well as a small number of teachers from other districts. Mahon, as President, gave evidence on behalf of the Organisation as a whole. T. J. O'Connell believed her great ability was never so well displayed as when she appeared before the Dill Commission.³⁰ Mahon began her evidence on Tuesday, 9 September 1913. She had met with an accident to her foot, which compelled her to use crutches, and when some of the members of the Commission expressed sympathy to her she is reported to have said: "My present condition is symptomatic of the condition of Irish education as administered by the National Board."³¹ Mahon appeared again on the 10, 16 and 17 of September. Her evidence was wide ranging and comprehensive, she gave a detailed account of teachers' grievances with the inspectorial system and strenuously attacked the Board's autocratic procedures, placing the responsibility for the despotic regime at Dr. Starkie's feet.³² Mahon commandingly dealt with hours of cross examination on the INTO statement handed in to the Commission. She refused to be intimidated or brow beaten. For instance, Mahon was challenged by the Bishop of Ross about her suggestion that the INTO should nominate five members of

a reformed Board. The Bishop said a very large number of teachers were outside the INTO. Mahon disagreed with him and said there were about 2,600. The Bishop then asked what provision she would make for their representation on the Board and Mahon replied she would make none. The Bishop pressed her on this point. He asked Mahon did she think it was in accordance with the principle of the British Constitution to which Mahon had previously appealed "that those teachers who had not joined your Organisation should be left without a vote?" Mahon asserted that "Women in general are members of the British Constitution, and they have no vote." The chair, Sir Samuel Dill, insisted that this discussion was outside the terms of reference of the Commission but the Bishop demanded a reply. He regretted that the INTO had not thought of the numerous teachers outside its ranks. Mahon responded:

*Why should we? We are working and slaving and spending our money upon agitation, and they get the benefit of the reforms obtained by our Organisation. We consider that they ought to join us in seeking for any reforms that may be desirable.*³³

The unanimous report of the Committee of Inquiry was issued on 31st January 1914. The report was satisfactory from the teachers' point of view, their criticisms of the Board's procedures were vindicated. It recommended improvements in the inspectorial system, the granting of annual increments, the more rapid promotion of teachers, and that all instructions by circulars issued to inspectors be simultaneously issued to managers and teachers and that before the adoption of any new regulations managers and teachers would be given the opportunity to lay their views before the Board. However, the report did not advocate Mansfield's reinstatement.³⁴ The INTO Congress of 1914, viewed with amazement the lack of public spirit displayed by the Committee of Inquiry and demanded Mansfield's unconditional reinstatement as the Commission had clearly proved the injustice of his dismissal.³⁵ Mahon, in her Presidential Address at Congress 1914, described the developments leading up to the Inquiry, the teachers' attitude to the Commission, Dr. Starkie's evidence and the Commission's recommendations. She summarised the demands of Congress as follows:

- (1) *Recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry to be enforced without delay; and arising out of these recommendations-*
- (2) *Restitution to the inspectorial victims in Tipperary and Belfast, the*

first act of restitution to be the

(3) *Reinstatement of Mr. Mansfield;*

(4) *Removal of the Resident Commissioner (not to his detriment, but to the mutual advantage of both the teachers and himself) and*

(5) *Reconstruction of the Board on elective principles.*³⁶

After Congress Kathleen Roche noted with regret that Mahon was no longer President of the INTO.³⁷ She observed, however, that as ex-President, Mahon would do much to direct the policy of the CEC during the year and she declared:³⁸

*The two years during which Miss Mahon occupied the presidential chair of the Teachers' Organisation were those in which official hostility was most in evidence. Thanks, however, to the virile campaign initiated by the President in October, 1912, and since pursued with unflagging energy, undaunted courage, unflinching resolution, and conspicuous ability the snake has been scotched, if not killed.*³⁹

Mahon's presidential term was praised by all sections of teachers. The Congress report stated that the speakers on the vote of thanks to Mahon "highly eulogised" the services she had rendered to the Organisation.⁴⁰ T.J. O'Connell attempted to organise a testimonial for Mahon. His proposal was immediately seized upon as an excellent one by teachers. William Knight of Rosemount Gardens, Belfast, wrote:

*Our President has put to shame "mere man" during the past two years. Her unflagging energy in the teachers' cause has been remarkable, and has gained for her the admiration of every friend of education in Ireland.*⁴¹

Knight believed that teachers could not allow Mahon to retire without some tangible expression of their gratitude for her work on their behalf. Mahon, he believed, had expended ten years of nervous energy, and more in mental worry and anguish during the past two years "than tongue can tell."⁴² He suggested that teachers should endow her with an annuity of £52. J. Ryan from Castlecomer approved of T. J. O'Connell's suggestion regarding a testimonial for Mahon. He thought a shilling should be the minimum subscription.⁴³ Anne Aylmer, Tullamore, also agreed with this proposal. She said it had been suggested at the King's County meeting that the testimonial, or part of it, should consist of a motor car.⁴⁴ Mahon, however, was adamant that she would accept neither presentation nor testimonial, nor

any gift of any kind. She withstood all attempts to persuade her to accept a gift at Congress in 1914. The service she had given the INTO, she explained in the ISW, was honorary:

...and as such incorruptible and unpurchaseable, and absolutely voluntary and independent. Now if I were to debase that honorary service by accepting payment for it retrospectively in the shape of a presentation or testimonial, or anything you like to call it, I should inevitably, by doing so, discredit all my past efforts, nullify their effects, and simply ruin the cause which I worked so hard to advance during all these years.⁴⁵

Mahon thought testimonials were a burden on teachers and should be discontinued. She was acting on this principle in refusing to accept any presentation.⁴⁶ Kathleen Roche regretted Mahon's refusal but she knew all efforts to dissuade her would be fruitless and she bowed to Mahon's decision.⁴⁷ When Mahon's term as Ex-President ended in 1916 and she retired from the CEC, she again refused to accept a testimonial. By then, Easter 1916, Mahon's extraordinarily high standing in the INTO had been diminished, a little, because of her opposition to the terms of Mansfield's reinstatement.

Despite the findings of the Committee of Inquiry, the Commissioners of National Education refused to reinstate Mr Mansfield. In an attempt to resolve the dispute Mansfield, towards the end of 1914, sent the Commissioners a statement which he was prepared to sign on the understanding that his signature would mean restoration of full salary and other rights for his wife and himself. In the statement he expressed regret for the tone of his observations, which were made while labouring under a sense of injustice and which he then, and still, believed to be true. The Board agreed to accept Mansfield's expression of regret and was prepared to restore the grants to Cullen Boys' School as from the date on which the apology was received in the Office. But payment of salaries for the services rendered in the school during the dismissal period would involve Treasury sanction and "this sanction the Commissioners must decline to apply for in view of your past conduct."⁴⁸ In late summer 1915 Cork County Council demanded an immediate settlement of the Mansfield case on fair and just terms. This resolution was adopted by public bodies throughout the country and led to further discussions and informal meetings. Mahon suggested that Cork County Council might ask the Board to recognise Mr Mansfield and Mrs Mansfield's service since his dismissal, and refund both of them the salary

withheld from them.

On 9 November a CEC deputation consisting of Messrs. O' Callaghan, Ramsay, Maher and McGrath and accompanied by Mansfield went to the Education Office to discuss Mansfield's case with a committee of the Board. Terms of settlement were agreed at this meeting which provided that, on signing the statement of regret, full restoration of salary, service and pension rights would be restored to Mrs Mansfield. Mansfield's own service during the dismissal period would count for increment, promotion and pension purposes, but his salary would only date from the date of his reinstatement.⁴⁹

Mahon, on reading the report of the conditions of reinstatement, wrote in disbelief, to the ISW. The ISW must, Mahon declared have been misinformed because:

After the fullest discussion the Central Committee unanimously decided that the recognition of Mr. Mansfield's services for Salary, Promotion, and Pension, the Salary especially, as the other two follow as a natural corollary to the salary, and without it leave a missing link, without which no Treasury Auditor need accept the chain of services - promises notwithstanding - was the IRREDUCIBLE MINIMUM which the deputation was to accept.⁵⁰

A full explanation of the deputation's agreement was given at the CEC meeting of 4 December 1915 and published in the ISW on 11 December 1915. The deputationists had met the night before their interview with the Board and had decided on modes of procedure, the order in which they would speak, what each would say, etc. Messrs. Ramsay and Maher drew up statements that night which were discussed, and to which they adhered to strictly at the interview the following day. The deputationists were fully aware of the decision of the Executive to hold out for full salary and there was no discussion of compromise. At the interview with the committee of the Board on 9 November, the deputationists followed on the lines laid down until McGrath suggested a settlement whereby Mansfield's services would be recognised for increment, promotion and pension but salary to remain in abeyance. The President, George O' Callaghan, was asked by the committee of the Board if this would meet with the approval of the INTO and of Mansfield and, after a good deal of hesitation, conceding that the main point concerning the prestige of the Organisation was satisfactory, he agreed. When the deputation informed Mansfield, who was waiting outside, of the agreement made he at first refused to ratify it. He pointed out that the dep-

utation had exceeded their instructions, which they admitted. Mansfield thought better terms could have been obtained from the Board and he requested time to consult the CEC and to give the matter due consideration. The deputationists pointed out that they had guaranteed the statement of regret would be signed before the Board met that afternoon, that the settlement on the whole was honourable to the INTO and if Mansfield did not sign he would have to bear the consequences. The Board would not re-open the matter again. As the deputationists had assured the Committee of Mansfield's approval, seeing that the honour of the INTO and his own demanded it, Mansfield signed. He said he signed although it was "personally bitter to him." He believed that the deputation did what they considered best for the teachers and while he had reason to expect more, the prestige of the INTO had not suffered. He hoped that recriminations would cease and that none would "indulge in the suicidal and hopeless policy of crying out "Defeat", because there is not an absolute victory." Teachers should be content with an honourable peace.⁵¹

At the CEC meeting on 4 December after the deputationists had given their account of the proceedings at the interview with the committee of the Board a long and heated discussion ensued. Mahon and Miss Mangan spoke strongly against the deputationists. As did Mr Nunan. Mansfield then stated in his report of the CEC meeting in the ISW:

It is for me a sad thing, and bitter to have to record that one who was most prominent in the fight, who led the Organisation brilliantly and fearlessly during her term of Presidency, and who proved to me a staunch friend in a long and strenuous struggle, tendered her resignation as the result of the proceedings. Needless to say, the Executive refused to accept it....⁵²

Mahon's resignation from the CEC was published alongside Mansfield's report. It stated:

As a protest against the unauthorised and unwarranted surrender of principle and salary in addition to an apology in the Mansfield case, by the deputation to the Board, in direct and deliberate violation of their definite and emphatic instruction to stand by the Irreducible Minimum unanimously agreed on by this committee...I refuse to be responsible any longer for the actions of this committee as at present constituted, and I therefore, at this meeting regretfully tender to the Organisation my resignation from the CEC.⁵³

McGrath who was the fourth and last deputationist to speak on the deputation also wrote explaining his action. He believed it was pointless merely to reiterate the demands of the three previous speakers. He did not want the deputation to end in failure and he knew that it was not the actual amount of salary, but the removal of the aspersion on Mansfield's character, which was the crux. He put forward his proposal as pointing a way to preserve the dignity of the Board, while the Board, by acknowledging the services rendered by Mrs and Mr Mansfield since the dispute commenced would show that they were anxious for peace with the Organisation. McGrath claimed to be perfectly within his rights in doing this.⁵⁴

Mansfield, now that his salary was restored by the Board, placed his resignation as Central Secretary in the hands of the President. He stated that on no account would he retain the position longer than 20 December 1915.⁵⁵ In the following week's ISW Mahon wrote regarding the Mansfield deputation. She first of all expressed her keen personal regret that Mansfield was leaving the post of Central Secretary, and praised his contributions to the INTO:

*His extraordinary brains and inexhaustible energies were employed unstintedly at his work...His exertions on the pension question alone...are a sufficient record of work for a life-time.*⁵⁶

Mahon criticised McGrath severely for his action at the deputation's meeting with the committee of the Board. His action, she argued, was inexcusable but the chief responsibility for the decision lay with the President, Mr O' Callaghan. "He has trailed the flag of No Surrender - which I handed to him inside the walls of Derry", she wrote.⁵⁷ Mahon had refused to be named on a deputation once Mansfield had agreed to give an apology as she considered her position would be untenable and inconsistent with her evidence at the Dill Commission. She had assumed that when the deputation would return from the Board a referendum of all the members would be held on the Board's terms for Mansfield's reinstatement. But the Organisation did not get this opportunity. For good or ill the settlement was closed and those who did not like it would just have to swallow it as best they could. Nevertheless:

If four men can go deliberately and do what they were expressly ordered not to do, and come back to the CEC appealing for a post-mortem approval of their disobedience without strongly and effectively marking our disapproval, there is no further necessity for a CEC. All that is required is a standing dep-

*utation to go about and act as they please without mandate or limitation.*⁵⁸

Mahon concluded her letter with the wish that no one who had ever been through a fight would experience her feelings at the last CEC meeting listening to the account "of the profuseness of the apologies offered to the Board by the quartet...."⁵⁹

McGrath responded to Mahon's charges in the new year. He believed Mahon's attitude on the Mansfield reinstatement was simply a refusal to change from an uncompromising position:

*Times and conditions may change, and circumstances alter, but Miss Mahon never, even at the sacrifice of friends, even at the cost of the stake. This is a glorious attitude for a Martyr, but not for a Leader of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation.*⁶⁰

McGrath refuted Mahon's claim that the deputation had abandoned the aims of the INTO in the Mansfield case by surrendering at the finish. He believed the aims of the INTO were secured by an honourable compromise without loss of dignity to the INTO or anyone else concerned. McGrath held that the INTO had been reduced to a state of impotency on the question of the reinstatement of Mansfield. The INTO had used every method in its power to obtain the re-instatement of Mansfield, but to no avail. McGrath pointed out that the Congresses of 1913 and 1914 had demanded Mansfield's reinstatement but had made no conditions with reference to recognition of service or salary.⁶¹ When Mansfield, on his own initiative, started to negotiate his reinstatement with the Commissioners he concluded his letter of acceptance by stating that he trusted "that the form once signed the Board would grant official recognition to the services rendered by himself and his wife." The Board refused to sanction payment for Mansfield's services during the period of dismissal and no influence could be brought to bear on the Board to change its position in this regard. McGrath, taking into account that Mansfield's manager would not live for ever, that neither Mrs Mansfield nor Mr Mansfield were afforded the protection of the Maynooth resolution, that the circumstances of the Cullen school were not as good as in 1913, that Mansfield was threatening resignation from the Secretaryship, settlement or no settlement, and "that there was even a whisper of Mahon herself retiring from the scene next Easter", McGrath thought it was time to bring about an honourable settlement by honourable means and to have peace.⁶²

Mahon was absent from the 1 January meeting of the CEC but she forwarded a letter which stated that for the sake of the Organisation for "which I am prepared to make any sacrifice short of principle" that if Mansfield withdrew his resignation and continued in the position of Central Secretary, Mahon, for her part, would not persist in her resignation. She would return and work until Easter when the Organisation would have an opportunity of righting itself through the elections and Congress.⁶³ Mansfield explained his position with regard to the Central Secretaryship and said that in order to meet the difficulties which would ensue if he immediately resigned and "to meet, in some degree, Mahon's request" he would continue as Central Secretary until his successor was elected at the Easter Congress.⁶⁴

The four deputationists, Messrs. O' Callaghan, Ramsay, Mc Grath and Maher stated their position with regard to Mansfield's reinstatement in a letter to the ISW. They regretted the letters and statements in the Press by "a lady member of the Executive, and one association" which suppressed all the good points of the Mansfield settlement and brought the one unsatisfactory point into the limelight.⁶⁵ The four deputationists pointed out that from the beginning teachers and public demanded (a) the reinstatement of Mr Mansfield; (b) that reinstatement should be on honourable terms; (c) as time went on a demand also arose for the recognition of services from the time of dismissal. The deputationists believed all three points had been achieved. True, salary had been withheld for the present, but Mansfield's services had been recognised for increment, promotion and pension and, they asserted, the matter of salary would naturally right itself. The deputationists had not exceeded their instructions, they insisted, as the question of salary had never been fully discussed at Congress or at any meeting of the Executive. Compared with the terms of settlement the Board had offered the previous year these terms were very satisfactory as the principle for which the Organisation fought had been fully conceded.⁶⁶

McGrath wrote a separate letter on the issue. His main point was that Mahon had adopted an uncompromising position and was refusing to move from it. Mahon had objected to any deputation, or any approach towards peace, no matter what became of the Organisation or Mr. Mansfield. "And why", he asked, "Because she gave a certain line of evidence before the Commission of Inquiry, and she likes to be thought consistent."⁶⁷ Mc Grath said the deputation had arrived at the best solution and their action had saved the Organisation by bringing the matter to a close before it was too

late and before the Organisation was reduced to impotence.⁶⁸ It is clear that INTO members were anxious to have the Mansfield case settled and perhaps, these were the only terms that the Commissioners would have agreed to. But it is also clear that the deputation had exceeded its mandate and had reneged on INTO policy, as stated by Mahon at the Dill Commission, that the Organisation would accept no compromise in seeking Mansfield's unconditional reinstatement as principal of Cullen Boys' N.S. The non payment of salary for Mansfield's period of dismissal did not conform to this demand and was to have repercussions for his pension rights.

In the following week's *ISW* Mahon wrote to say she would remain on the Executive until Easter in order to safeguard the interests of the INTO, and to retain Mansfield as Central Secretary until his successor was appointed. Her one desire before she left the CEC was to see it rejuvenated "by a liberal infusion of new blood...". And she hoped the associations would not elect those who had already disobeyed and ignored their instructions. She herself was not going forward for election:

*I have worked for the Organisation now for nine consecutive years. I stated to you publicly when seeking the position of Vice-President and President that I intended when I got to the top to step out and make room for others. I now redeem that promise. The Mansfield settlement or the deputation fiasco has nothing to do with it.*⁶⁹

Mahon refused, as she had done in 1914, to have any form of testimonial made out for her. She thanked the Organisation for the whole-hearted support given her during her nine years' representation, and especially during the "two stirring years of her presidency and since the present time."⁷⁰ She thanked the Unionist teachers for their forbearance on the occasions when she had allowed her political aspirations to obtrude in her speeches on platforms bound to strict neutrality. Although she would be retiring from the CEC she would not be retiring from the Organisation and, wherever and whenever her pen was needed it would be at the disposal of the teachers. She stated that the manifesto of the four deputationists in the previous week's *ISW* ignored altogether the principle involved in the Mansfield case and dealt with it as if it were merely a matter concerning a stoppage of salary. Mahon warned that the Treasury would take the obvious step as the question of salary had been surrendered and would not allow pension for the duration of Mansfield's dismissal.⁷¹ Mahon said she would deal with the

attacks made on her collectively and individually by the deputation in the following week's ISW.

In the ISW of 22 January 1916 Mahon observed that McGrath, in his defence, had shifted the ground from the public to the personal. She pointed out that Mansfield was dismissed not on personal grounds, but on public grounds and that the INTO had fought his case not as a married man with family cares, but as a high official in the INTO and the case should have been settled on these terms. In his letter McGrath had made allusions to personal and local circumstances which Mahon believed to be unfair to Mansfield who had never pleaded them to the CEC. Mahon maintained that McGrath was wrong to have departed from the accepted procedure at deputations by opening up a different line of argument to the three previous speakers at the deputation. She believed the other deputationists should have insisted that they had no authority to make the offer or to agree to it.⁷² Mahon did not think that the salary question could right itself in the natural course of time as the deputationists had suggested. The salary question had been voluntarily and deliberately given away and could not be re-opened then or by any future deputation.⁷³

In a continuation of her statement on the Mansfield reinstatement in the ISW of 29 January, Mahon wrote that deputations on pensions had to go to London and Dublin again and again to bring back word to the CEC at every stage. If McGrath had been on these deputations he would have conceded much ground because of his impatience to conclude the business. The claim that the Organisation never made salary a condition of reinstatement was according to Mahon mere quibbling:

for what honest teacher ever thought of reinstatement...otherwise than as from the day of his dismissal.... It was one of those obvious things that no one even deemed necessary to specify and as for the CEC instructing Mr. Mansfield, where was the necessity when he declared over and over again that he would never yield even if the whole CEC and Organisation were to order him to do so? The CEC discussed the salary question amply, anyhow, when instructing the deputation, and behold the result.⁷⁴

Mahon insisted that the deputation had given way on the matter of principle without consulting the Organisation and she suggested that the INTO suffered a loss of prestige.⁷⁵

In a letter to the ISW Mr. Adair, a Northern teacher, wrote that he yield-

ed to no other teacher from Slyne to Howth and from Benmore to Mizen in his admiration of the "courage, tact, and talent" which had been displayed by Mahon. He also respected the members of the CEC who had negotiated the settlement. It was now an accomplished fact. The Mansfield case would not be re-opened by the Board and no useful purpose would be served by an internecine struggle concerning it. Adair therefore, respectfully appealed to Mahon on one side and to the negotiators on the other to let the matter drop.⁷⁶ Mahon, in response, said that she did not intend to say any more on the Mansfield deputation until Congress, unless absolutely compelled to do so in self-defence, or defence of the truth.⁷⁷ There is no record in the *ISW* of Mahon's defence of herself at Congress, 1916. But the approval of the general body of teachers to the settlement can be judged by the result of the CEC elections. Each of the four deputationists was returned to the CEC, and George Ramsay was elected President of the INTO. The teachers were clearly glad to have the Mansfield case settled and to have the Organisation free to undertake other pressing business. Mahon was active at Congress. Kathleen Roche said that one could not enter the hall but see Mahon taking the floor, or advising a speaker on business or generally looking after the interests of the underdog.⁷⁸

Mahon, however, was accurate in her assessment that payment of salary would be crucial for Treasury considerations. In June, Mansfield's manager received notification from the Commissioners that the Treasury did not agree that Mansfield's services for the period from 15 October 1912 to 30 September 1915 would make him eligible for superannuation purposes under the Pension Act of 1914. Rule no. 4 of the pension regulations of 1914 defined "service" as the period for which the teacher had been in receipt of "salary". As Mansfield had received no salary from the Commissioners for the period in question he was not eligible for pension rights.⁷⁹ In 1934, a special statutory regulation was introduced by the Irish government to grant Mansfield his pension rights.⁸⁰

Mahon's handling of the crisis surrounding Mansfield's dismissal was acknowledged as brilliant. She successfully mobilised teacher and public opposition to the Board's action and her impressive presentation of the teachers' case before Birrell was a factor in his decision to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the Board's relations with national teachers. The INTO had complete confidence in Mahon's leadership. The rule restricting the President's term of office to one year was abrogated so that Mahon

could continue as President for 1913-1914. Mahon appeared before the Dill Commission as representative of the INTO and for days withstood a searching cross-examination "from which she emerged with all the honours."⁸¹ The report of the Commission of Inquiry was generally satisfactory to the teachers but they were disappointed that it did not recommend the reinstatement of Mr. Mansfield. In November 1915 a CEC deputation accepted terms of reinstatement which Mahon believed betrayed the principles on which the case had been fought. She tendered her resignation to the CEC but, in the interests of the INTO, reconsidered and remained until her term ran its course at Congress 1916. Mahon's stance was not endorsed by the general body of teachers who were glad to have the affair brought to a conclusion. However, Mahon's opposition to the non-payment of Mansfield's salary during his period of dismissal was later proved justified. Mahon, who ended her term on the CEC, somewhat disenchanted with its policy was subsequently to challenge the Executive's policy on a number of occasions.

¹ ISW, 19 October 1912, pp. 428-430.

² Among the public bodies which forwarded resolutions condemning the action of the Board in dismissing Mr. Mansfield were, for example, Sinn Fein National Council; Dublin United Trades Council and Labour League; Louth County Council. See, *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 14 January 1912, pp.29-32.

³ Miss Mc Neill dissented from this resolution.

⁴ ISW, 2 November 1912, p. 491 .

⁵ ISW, 9 November 1912, p. 521.

⁶ Ibid., p. 527~

⁷ ISW, 16 November 1912, p. 557. .

⁸ Ibid., p. 562.

⁹ ISW, 14 December 1912, p. 698.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 700.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ISW, 21 December 1912, p. 732.

¹⁴ *Dill Commission*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. There were more letters from teachers supporting Mahon's retention as President in the ISW.

¹⁷ ISW, 8 February 1913, p. 939.

¹⁸ ISW, 1 March 1913, p. 1036.

¹⁹ For many of her absences on deputations Mahon was not allowed her salary. See, for example ED 4 1715, Roll number 16166, National Archives.

²⁰ See, *Dill Commission*.

- ²¹ ISW, 15 February 1913, p. 973 .
- ²² ISW, 1 March 1913, pp. 1035,1036.
- ²³ ISW, 8 March 1913, p. 1070.
- ²⁴ ISW, 29 March 1913, pp. 54-60. Dill Commission, p. 997.
- ²⁵ ISW, 29 March 1913, p. 60.
- ²⁶ ISW, 5 April 1913, p. 78.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 90.
- ²⁸ See, ISW, 29 March 1913, p. 42.
- ²⁹ ISW, 28 June 1913, p. 455. In July 1913 Kathleen Roche had urged Mahon the absolute necessity of taking some rest. See, ISW, 26 July, p. 578.
- ³⁰ T. J. O'Connell in the ISW, 6 and 13 March 1948, pp. 111, 112.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² It was said that of the hundred and more witnesses who appeared before the Committee of Inquiry two were outstanding- Dr. Starkie for the Board, and Mahon for the teachers. See T. J. O'Connell, ISW, 6 and 13 March 1948, p. 112.
- ³³ Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)1913, (Cd. 7235), H.C. 1914, XXVIII, p. 896.
- ³⁴ The ISW reported in February 1914 that the almost unanimous verdict of the Press on the findings of the Viceregal Committee of Inquiry was that the teachers had proved their case. See ISW, 21 February 1914, p. 657.
- ³⁵ ISW, 11 April 1914, p. 77. Mansfield's reinstatement was really outside the terms of reference of the Inquiry.
- ³⁶ ISW, 18 April 1914, p. 108.
- ³⁷ The INTO President, according to the rules of the Organisation, was to serve no more than one term consecutively, this rule had been abrogated in Mahon's favour at Congress 1913 and she had been appointed President for a second term. Mahon was held in such high regard that in 1914 she was nominated by 98 local Associations to serve for a third term of office. See, ISW, 14 February 1914, p. 619. Mahon did not go forward for the Presidency but retained a place on the CEC as ex-President.
- ³⁸ ISW, 25 April 1914, p. 140.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ ISW, 25 April 1914, p. 123 .
- ⁴¹ ISW, 28 March 1914, p. 46.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ ISW, 28 March 1914, p. 46.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ ISW, 30 May 1914, p. 262.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ ISW, 6 June 1914, p. 276.
- ⁴⁸ ISW, 29 April 1916, p. 680.
- ⁴⁹ ISW, 13 November 1915, p. 1025.
- ⁵⁰ ISW, 20 November 1915, p. 1045.
- ⁵¹ ISW, 11 December 1915,pp. 1140.
- ⁵² Ibid., pp. 1139,1140.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 1141 .

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 1142.

⁵⁶ ISW, 18 December 1915, p. 1171 .

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1173.

⁵⁸ ISW, 18 December 1915, p. 1173 .

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ ISW, 1 January 1916 p. 22.

⁶¹ The 1914 Congress had sought the "unconditional reinstatement" of Mansfield which implied that Mansfield should not be penalised in any way.

⁶² ISW, 1 January 1916, p. 23.

⁶³ ISW, 8 January 1916, p. 29.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁶⁵ Mahon later said that she had refrained from writing to the press on the subject, she had only used the columns reserved in the newspapers for teachers' reports.

⁶⁶ ISW, 8 January 1916, p. 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁹ ISW, 15 January 1916, p. 59.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 60.

⁷² Mahon gave as an example the action of Mr. Nash at the maternity deputation in 1911. When one of the deputationists stated that the INTO would have no objection if the Board made a rule requiring women teachers appointed after 1911 to resign on marriage, Nash had jumped up and promptly and emphatically stated that the deputation had no authority to make such an offer.

⁷³ ISW, 22 January 1916, pp. 100, 101 .

⁷⁴ ISW, 29 January 1916, p. 116.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ ISW, 29 January 1916, p. 118.

⁷⁷ ISW, 5 February 1916, p. 142.

⁷⁸ At Congress 1916, Mahon proposed an equal pay resolution which was unanimously adopted.

⁷⁹ ISW, 10 June 1916, p. 566. The pension question was resolved in the Autumn of 1914. Under the new rules it was essential to have forty years service before maximum pension could be obtained. The statutory age for retirement was 60 for women and 65 for men. The Commissioners agreed to retain women teachers after 60 years of age provided their service was deemed efficient by the inspectors. Kathleen Roche objected to this and demanded recognition for service after 60 years as a right, and the CEC resolved that women teachers be allowed to complete the service necessary for full pension on the same terms as men. See ISW, 17 October 1914, pp. 762, 771, and O' Connell, *A History of the INTO*, pp. 284-286.

⁸⁰ O' Connell, *A History of the INTO*, p. 413.

⁸¹ T. J. O' Connell in the ISW, 6 and 13 March 1948, pp. 111, 112.

CHAPTER IX

"and the women the same"

The Equal War Bonus of 1916

When the question of an equal war bonus came to a head in 1916 Catherine Mahon was no longer on the INTO Executive but she played a leading role in the campaign for its equal distribution. War bonuses were regarded as temporary additions to salaries. They were to meet what were considered to be exceptional and temporary rises in the cost of living and were to cease when things returned to normal.

The INTO had accepted the principle of equal pay for equal work at its Congresses in 1913 and 1916. The Central Executive Committee of the INTO in its original submission to the Commissioners of National Education sought an equal war bonus. The CEC was supported in its demands by the local teachers' associations. Dissatisfied with the response of the Commissioners the CEC sent a deputation to London to lobby for a war bonus. Prior to its departure the deputation was warned by women teachers not to accept a bonus on civil service terms. The civil service bonus granted 2s. a week to women civil servants and 4s. a week to men civil servants. The deputation was successful in securing the support of both nationalist and unionist MPs in London, however, the Chancellor's offer was disappointing. He proposed to give teachers the same bonus as that awarded to the civil servants. When pressed by Sir Edward Carson, the Chancellor said that if a case could be made for differentiating between women civil servants and women teachers, he would reconsider the position of women teachers.

Teachers, on learning of the Chancellor's offer, immediately organised a series of protest meetings. The inadequacy of the bonus, its discrimination against women teachers and the absence of arrears of payment were the main objections to the proposed bonus. Through the efforts of women teachers and especially of Mahon, the issue of inequality became the predominant one and ultimately the only one successfully addressed. Mahon led a vigorous and sometimes contentious campaign for an equal bonus. Her letters to the daily papers commanded public attention and helped gain sup-

port for the teachers' demands. While many lobbyists frequently argued the case of women teachers on the grounds of necessity, Mahon based her argument on the principle of equal pay for equal work. She suggested that if the CEC did not push for this principle, then women teachers should organize themselves separately from the main body of the INTO. The CEC, therefore, had to on this occasion prove its commitment to the principle of equal pay for equal work.

From the beginning of 1916 local INTO associations began to forward requests to the Commissioners of National Education seeking a war bonus, teachers also lobbied their MPs to the same end.¹ One of the MPs lobbied, Sir Thomas Esmonde, asked the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, whether he would:

*consider the question of granting a war bonus to national school teachers in Ireland in view of their difficulty of meeting the increased cost of living out of their limited incomes, and if he will accede to their request to have their salaries paid monthly at least while the war lasts.*²

Birrell, replying to Esmonde's question in the House of Commons, said that he could hold out no prospect of a war bonus being granted to the national teachers.³ In addition, when asked by Patrick Meehan MP whether he was aware "that many teachers with families are verging on actual want", Birrell said he regretted that "all persons suffer when the cost of living is so greatly increased. I could not deal with the question of the national teachers alone."⁴ The Commissioners when given notice of Meehan's question had responded by saying that they had no doubt that :

*...in common with other members of the community national school teachers feel the financial strain resulting from the increased cost of living caused by the war, but in view of the communications which they have received from the Irish Government and the Treasury they have been precluded from submitting any proposals in connection with their estimates for the years 1915-1916 and 1916-1917 which would involve an increase in the grants for primary education.*⁵

This was, more or less, the same reply they gave to the CEC after a deputation, consisting of Mrs Byrne and Messrs. G. O' Callaghan (President), R. Judge, J. T. McGill and E. Mansfield had met with them on 28 March 1916. The deputation had raised, among other issues, the question of war bonus-

es but the Commissioners had stated that they "would appear to be precluded from submitting any proposals on this head to the Treasury during the continuance of the war."⁶

The CEC, at its meeting on 8 July, decided that it would be best to go to London and lobby on the question there and a deputation was appointed "...in connection with the questions of Monthly Salaries and War Bonus."⁷ Messrs. Ramsay, Mansfield and MaGill were appointed to the deputation. At the time there were two women on the CEC, they were Mrs Byrne, the lady principals' representative and Miss Margaret Doyle, M.A., the lady assistants' representative. Neither was appointed to the deputation, but Byrne, who happened to be in London at the same time as the deputation, appears to have accompanied the deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁸ Mr. Donohue of the Dublin Central Teachers' Association also joined the deputation at its meeting with Mr. Samuel of the Home Office.⁹ The deputation was successful as far as the payment of monthly salaries was concerned, the Chancellor agreeing to initiate a system of monthly payments.¹⁰ The London deputation had pressed for a war bonus but had not succeeded on this point. The INTO President, George Ramsay, believed that it was up to another deputation to start out to gain the war bonus.¹¹

The ISW now began to fill with editorials, reports and letters arguing the case for a war bonus. Statistics were quoted which demonstrated the huge rise in inflation rates. In July 1916 Board of Trade figures showed these had risen by 65 per cent since the beginning of the war.¹² War bonuses granted to other public servants were also reported in the ISW. W.G. Doyle, a teacher in the boys' school Moone, Co. Kildare, wrote that the RIC had secured a substantial war bonus and staffs in the Post Office, Civil Service and in various government offices and departments had been successful in obtaining a bonus.¹³ Kathleen Roche expressed the hope in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" that another deputation would be sent "to demand a war bonus for the lady teachers such bonus to bring the JAM's salary to a living wage." She went on to suggest that the President of the INTO, George Ramsay:

...can make his demand large for a bonus for all, and if he fails in the first demand, he can next demand that at least women should get such an increase as would bring their grade salaries up to the level of those of men, that food prices and clothing prices were equally dear on both, and that it was impossible for women to subsist now at the lower rate. If he fails in the establish-

ment of this as a permanent principle let him ask that women's salaries be raised to the level of men's temporarily and provisionally for the duration of the war, and an interval after it, till prices become normal.¹⁴

Throughout this period Roche kept the issue of equal pay alive in the ISW. Her constant promotion of equal pay helped ensure that the principle would not be forgotten when the CEC came to state precisely its demand for a war bonus. The "Lady Teachers' Own Page" noted when teachers' associations passed equal pay motions. For instance, Kanturk Teachers' Association was congratulated for unanimously adopting the following resolution:

That as the Commissioners, by prescribing the same programmes for boys' and girls' schools, and so requiring lady teachers to do the same amount of work (with the addition of needlework), as is performed by men, we demand as a right that the salaries of lady teachers should be raised to at least the same level as those of men.¹⁵

Roche also reported on the various kinds of non-traditional work women were undertaking during the war. She referred to an article in the *Weekly Irish Times* which listed the current occupations of women in England. Women were driving lorries, doing the postman's round, the ploughman's furrow, the sweep's chimney, the bank clerk's arithmetic and were entering the most conservative realms, including those of the doctor, the dentist, the chemist, the accountant and the architect.¹⁶ Roche suggested that as everything was in a state of flux and as women were proving their indispensability in peace and war occupations this was the opportune time to push for equal pay. Roche's reports and constant advocacy helped lay a groundwork of support for equal pay which later benefited the campaign for an equal bonus. Perspicuously, Roche forecast that when the war was over men would want their jobs back and the chances of equal pay "...will have receded again into the background of supercilious indifference as in pre-war times."¹⁷

The editors of the ISW and the "Educational News of the Week"(ENW) column of the ISW, while constantly urging the granting of a war bonus were not as explicit in their demands for an equal one. In an open letter to the new Chief Secretary, H. E. Duke, an ISW editorial urged him to grant a war bonus to teachers pointing out that there were 2,500 teachers working in Irish schools for under 10s. a week.¹⁸ These were earning less in a week

than an unskilled workman in the dockyards was earning in a day. The editorial went on to suggest that the low pay of teachers was the reason why only 192 suitable candidates applied for a potential 272 places in the training colleges for men.¹⁹ The Educational News of the Week column also sought to inject a sense of urgency into the topic. It suggested that the war might be over sooner than most people expected. Ireland would then have its own parliament and its own "household" to look after. The ENW did not hold out much hope for the financing of Irish education and the payment of increased salaries to teachers in that event. It declared, "Now is the time for pushing, as hard and strenuously as men ever pushed, for the securing of an immediate war bonus....".²⁰

A special meeting of the CEC, held on 16 September 1916, dealt exclusively with the formulation of a definite demand for a war bonus and of a suitable plan of campaign.²¹ The following resolution was unanimously adopted:

*That we, the Central Executive Committee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, hereby demand on behalf of the National Teachers of Ireland a war bonus of 7/6 per week for all those whose present salaries are under £2 per week, and 5/- per week for those whose salaries are over £2 per week. That as practically all State-paid servants have now received a war bonus, and as our claim is at least as urgent as any of those to whom a grant has been made, we hereby earnestly request the Commissioners of National Education and the Irish members of Parliament to give all the support in their power to our just and reasonable demand.*²²

There was no question of differentiating between women and men teachers in this resolution. Perhaps, in support of the equal nature of the resolution, both women members of the executive were appointed to deputations. Margaret Doyle was appointed to the deputation to the Lord Lieutenant along with Messrs. Cunningham, Hayes and O'Connell and Mrs Byrne, along with Messrs. Ramsay, Maher and O'Connell, was appointed to the deputation to the Chief Secretary.²³ The CEC recognised that many teachers would not be satisfied with the amount demanded in the resolution. But the report of the meeting stated that these figures had been arrived at "after long and careful consideration of all the circumstances, and it is hoped that they will be loyally adopted throughout the country." United and organised action was called for. Secretaries of the local associations were requested to

interview their MP's and to work with the CEC in forwarding the resolution adopted.²⁴ On the same date, 16 September, a deputation from the CEC, on which there were no women, was received by the Resident Commissioner. Dr. Starkie, who continued as Resident Commissioner until his death in 1920, agreed with the necessity for a bonus in view of the one which had been granted to the civil servants. He stated that he would give general support to the teachers' claim and that he would bring the matter before the Commissioners.²⁵

The CEC's resolution did not, however, meet with all round approval. A meeting of national teachers in Belfast rejected the Executive's resolution in favour of one demanding a permanent increase in salaries.²⁶ Roche in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" believed that a bonus of 40 per cent, instead of 12 per cent, should have been asked for. If teachers asked for 40 per cent then they might be offered 12 per cent. Aware that a civil service bonus might be offered Kathleen Roche, vigilant as ever for the rights of women teachers, warned that the civil service bonus:

*differentiates very injuriously against women. Now we must guard against this. Whatever bonus is given must be an equal dividend for men and women alike, as in the case of the Birrell grant.*²⁷

Later events proved this to have been excellent advice. It was also the first categorical statement that only an equal bonus would be acceptable. Roche approved the appointment of the two women members of the Executive to the deputations to the government officials and she reminded Byrne and Doyle to state "emphatically and unmistakably" that women must be treated equally. Roche also recommended the inclusion of the JAMs in the bonus and urged that it be paid retrospectively from the beginning of the calendar year.²⁸

In Dublin a public meeting, held in the Mansion House, organised by the County Dublin Teachers' Association supported the CEC's resolution for a war bonus. It also drew attention to the INTO's duty to its women members.²⁹ Mr. Cummins, of the Dublin Association, when proposing a vote of thanks, recognised the unjust treatment of women teachers. He stressed that the INTO must look after the rights of lay assistants and junior assistant mistresses:

*Women are paid at a lower rate than their brothers in the profession; this is especially so in the case of lay assistants in convent schools and junior assistant mistresses. As these teachers have never been paid a living wage, it is the duty of the INTO to insist on their getting a full share of whatever bonus may be granted.*³⁰

Kathleen Roche regretted that no woman had spoken at the meeting in the Mansion House. She acknowledged a debt of gratitude to Mr. Cummins but she was disappointed that no speaker had voiced the claim of women for an equal bonus or that the bonus should be retrospective from 1st January 1916.³¹ Roche urged women to attend their local meetings and have resolutions adopted which would advance the cause of equal pay. She had asked the Central Secretary of the INTO, T. J. O'Connell, who "has been a very staunch advocate of the ladies' claims", whether there was any danger of women teachers being treated like the women civil servants. He had replied that if they were they had no one to blame but themselves. Roche feared that the absence of women speakers at the Mansion House might prove him right.³² Ironically, O'Connell subsequently reprimanded women teachers when they took matters into their own hands.

The Commissioners had not yet decided to recommend a war bonus and the CEC was impatient for action.³³ Experience had taught the Executive that results could be obtained by negotiating directly with London.³⁴ At their meeting on 30 September the CEC agreed that the President, George Ramsay; General Secretary, T. J. O'Connell; and T. J. Nunan, Assistants' Representative, would proceed as a deputation to London on the opening of Parliament.³⁵ The CEC, practised in the art of lobbying, took the necessary measures to ensure maximum success for the London deputation. The General Secretary wrote in the *ISW* that he hoped when the deputation arrived in London that no Irish member of parliament would have it to say that he "heard nothing from his constituents" of the deputation's proposed visit.³⁶ Ramsay, in a letter to the *Irish Times*, asked would "all friends by wire or letter to the Chief Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Irish MPs further our efforts during the next few days...".³⁷ Teachers responded to these calls and lobbied their MPs. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Unionist Party both pledged their support for the deputation.³⁸ The deputation, however, was not assured of universal approval. The Belfast Teachers' Association

maintained its disapproving stance and refused to endorse the CEC deputation. The association, at a meeting on 14 October, adopted a resolution declaring that the deputation appointed by the CEC "does not represent the feelings of the Belfast teachers as their demands are absolutely inadequate."³⁹ The outcome of the Belfast meeting was not mentioned, perhaps deliberately, in the ISW.

The CEC deputation met with the Chancellor of the Exchequer at Whitehall, London on Thursday, 19 October in 1916. The Chancellor was accompanied by the Right Hon. H. E. Duke, Chief Secretary for Ireland; Mr. Hewby and Mr. Leithe Ross from the Treasury and Mr. Hamilton, Private Secretary. Sixty one Irish MPs, including John Redmond and Sir Edward Carson, accompanied the deputation. Redmond introduced the deputation noting that the presence of a large number of Irish MPs from all parties was indicative of the public support for the teachers' demands. George Ramsay, INTO President, put the claims of the teachers before the Chancellor pointing out that sheer necessity dictated their claims. Ramsay's statements "regarding the treatment of women teachers and junior mistresses especially were received with cries of "Shame" from the Irish members."⁴⁰ T. J. Nunan dealt with the claims of the assistants and T. J. O'Connell "emphasised the point that no distinction should be made in the treatment of men and women teachers."⁴¹ The Chancellor in reply declared:

You are not Civil Servants.....But on Mr. Duke's advice we have decided for this purpose that we should treat you as if you were Civil Servants, and give you the equivalents of the Civil Servants' bonus (hear, hear). I know that it is not as much as you have asked for.

Sir Edward Carson- Will you state what it is?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer- It is 4/- up to 40/-, and 3/- over 40/-.

Sir Edward Carson- And the women the same?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer- No ; the women half. That is the bonus which has been given to the Civil Service throughout the country, and they have accepted it. But I am sure that everyone in the room will appreciate that it would be impossible for the Treasury to sanction an advance beyond the scale which has been given to the Civil Service.... ⁴²

The Chancellor also noted that teachers in England had not been granted a bonus by the state. Some local authorities, at the behest of the government, had granted teachers a bonus, but Irish teachers were being given the

"exceptional benefit" of the equivalent of the civil service bonus. The Chancellor believed he had done as much as could possibly be hoped for in the circumstances. The difficulties of raising money at the present moment meant that he did not feel justified in going beyond the recommendation the chief secretary had made to him, although he would have been glad to have been able to promise a larger bonus. Sir Edward Carson said he saw the difficulty of getting money and he was sure teachers would be grateful for whatever they got, but he continued to press the Chancellor on the position of women teachers:

...as regards the women teachers it is really a pathetic case (hear, hear). I know a great deal about this matter. Just fancy a girl of 18 getting £24 a year and having to appear, as she must appear before her scholars, as a person properly clothed and dressed, and holding a proper position in the face of the village, or wherever she is (hear, hear). I do hope what you have said may not be quite final upon that matter (hear, hear).⁴³

Carson also requested that the bonus be made retrospective from the beginning of the war. The Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that he would be :

...quite glad to look into the special circumstances of women, and to see if any proper distinction can be drawn between their case and the case of women Civil servants.⁴⁴

However, if no distinction could be drawn, the Chancellor did not think he could hold out any hope of giving women teachers a bonus which was not equally applicable to the whole of the service. Carson replied that he doubted there were any civil servants earning only £24 a year. The Chancellor responded:

We must look into the question....but unless there are some circumstances which specially distinguish their case, and circumstances which, with Mr. Duke's assistance, I would be very glad to consider, as favourably as possible - unless there are such circumstances, I do not think you could really expect me to go beyond the scale which has been given to the whole of the Civil Service.⁴⁵

The Chancellor also said he could not possibly backdate the bonus to the beginning of the war "...there again we should be going far beyond any con-

cession that has ever been made to anyone." He stressed he was not laying down any precedent that the teachers were to be treated as civil servants. Ramsay expressed keen disappointment at the offer. He explained that the deputation was not in a position to accept or reject the Chancellor's offer without consulting with its colleagues in Ireland and he repeated what Sir Edward Carson had said with regard to the position of women teachers.⁴⁶

It was a significant achievement, at a time when the Easter rising in Dublin had intensified the divisions between the unionist and nationalist parties, for the teachers to have gained the support of both Irish parties. George Ramsay, INTO President, from Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, and a prominent member of the Protestant Teachers' Union, was probably responsible for recruiting Carson in support of the teachers. It was a fortuitous move. Carson was leader of the Unionist party and was one of the key politicians in the House of Commons at the time. He had resigned his position as Attorney General in the Autumn of 1915 because of Cabinet refusal to take action in support of Serbia. He was now chairperson of a committee of Conservative backbenchers who co-operated with like minded Liberals and put pressure on the Government to improve the war machine. Carson's harassment of the Government was reaching its peak during the period the teachers were lobbying for the war bonus. On 8 November the Carsonites initiated a debate which resulted in a vote of confidence in the Government. The government carried the day but it was clear that further attacks must eventually result in its defeat. In the subsequent weeks Lloyd George, Carson and Bonar Law entered into discussions designed to end the life of Asquith's Coalition Government. A crisis arose, Asquith resigned and on 7 December Lloyd George was appointed Prime Minister. Lloyd George offered the Chancellorship to Carson who refused the offer but accepted the position of first Lord of the Admiralty. This gave Carson the right to attend Cabinet meetings when naval matters were being discussed.⁴⁷

There was an immediate negative reaction in Ireland to the deputation's meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Teachers in Belfast, Mullingar, Donegal, Birr and Roscommon rapidly organised meetings condemning the proposed bonus. Three aspects of the bonus were especially objected to - its inadequacy, the absence of arrears of payment and its discrimination against women teachers. Later, through the efforts of women teachers, the discriminatory nature of the bonus became the focus of the protest campaign and this was the only aspect of the proposed bonus which

the government changed.

Teachers at a special meeting of the Belfast Teachers' Association, held on 21 October, two days after the deputation's meeting with the Chancellor, were highly indignant at the offer. Mr. C. H. Todd, who presided at the meeting, said the bonus was miserable "and ladies and gentlemen should participate equally in it." Miss K. Flynn told of the grave-diggers in Dublin who were asking for a 7/- bonus and said that "An offer of 1/6 to women was ridiculous. Factory girls would not take it." Mrs Byrne, of the CEC, said that women teachers had repudiated the bonus, they would not take the 1/6. The Belfast meeting agreed that the proposed bonus was "utterly inadequate" and it protested "emphatically" against the proposal to discriminate between men and women, however, despite these protestations, the association expediently agreed "on the principle of taking all they got and demanding more", to accept the bonus, but to continue campaigning for a permanent increase of salary.⁴⁸ The decision did not seem to augur well for women teachers, yet, within the week Belfast teachers had organised two further meetings, one of which was specifically to address women teachers' grievances.

Westmeath and Donegal teachers were equally appalled at the bonus' inadequacy, its discrimination and the absence of arrears.⁴⁹ The Chair of Westmeath County Council, Mr. J. J. Coen, presided at a public meeting held in Mullingar where it was unanimously agreed "That we consider the recent war bonus granted to teachers entirely inadequate, especially in the case of lady teachers, whose work is of equal importance."⁵⁰ Resolutions stating that all public servants had already received a war bonus and protesting at the continued injustice to Ireland in the distribution of Imperial grants were also passed. A telegram was sent from the Mullingar meeting to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This demanded:

*... full war bonus for teachers claimed by recent deputation. We further claim that there be no discrimination between men and women, and same be made retrospective from the beginning of the war.*⁵¹

Monaghan teachers also took prompt action. They sent a deputation to Mr. Lardner, MP pointing out the need to back date the bonus and to ensure the equitable treatment of women teachers. He was also asked to secure the inclusion of pensioners in the war bonus. Lardner promised to do his utmost to help the teachers in their demands.⁵²

Birr Teachers' Association was the only association which at this early stage gave the issue of equality priority. The meeting condemned the bonus' inadequacy and lack of arrears but it concentrated its attack on the treatment of women teachers, probably due to Mahon's influence. The Birr Association also put strong pressure on the CEC to take action. A resolution unanimously adopted at the meeting declared the demand of the CEC inadequate and "as women teachers have to do equal work with men teachers, we call on the CEC to insist on equal bonuses for men and women teachers."⁵³ The resolution requested that a special meeting of the CEC be convened and another deputation, which would include a lady representative, be sent at once to London to demand an equal bonus.⁵⁴

The rapidity with which these meetings were organised and the strong resolutions passed at them was impressive. They demonstrated teachers' commitment to obtaining a war bonus and they also indicated that support for an equal bonus was not limited to a small section of women teachers or to a select group of INTO leaders. Yet, while there clearly was support for an equal bonus, the support was generally no greater than that given to demands for a more adequate bonus and arrears of payment, only the Birr association had concentrated specifically on the question of equality. If it was going to concede an equal bonus the government had to be convinced that it was an issue of paramount importance to the teachers and the evidence so far would hardly have swayed it. However, through the efforts of Mahon this was to change and the question of equality was to become the central issue.

Since Easter 1916, when her term on the Executive had concluded, Mahon had not featured significantly in INTO affairs. She had, however, come to the attention of the Commissioners when she was reported as saying "I see nothing in the events of Easter week to be apologetic or shame-faced about, but much to admire and be proud of."⁵⁵ Mahon had made this statement at a meeting to establish a branch of the National Aid Association in Birr, Co. Offaly. The National Aid Association was founded to collect and distribute funds to the dependants of those dead or imprisoned as a result of the Easter rising.⁵⁶ Mahon had formally proposed the resolution which established the Birr branch. In her address to the meeting Mahon referred to Cardinal Mercier's war pastoral to the Belgians which had stated that patriotism came next to religion. She also noted how the former Chief Secretary, Birrell, had paid unstinted tribute to the beauty and sublimity of the ideals

of the Sinn Feiners. He had excused the idealists' actions on the grounds of their gradual loss of faith in the constitutional developments of the previous decade. Mahon, in her address, compared the women who had participated in the Easter rising to the Spartan women of ancient Greece. "These Grecian women were nothing to the Irish women of 1916", she noted.⁵⁷ Mahon said that the dependants of these men and women had been left to the guardianship of the Irish nation. She hoped that those present at the meeting would be true to this sacred trust. A committee of 12 was formed at the meeting. Two women were appointed to the committee, Mahon and a Mrs. Fanning.⁵⁸

The Commissioners had requested Mahon to state, through her manager the Very Rev. J. Dean Scanlon, D.D., P.P., V.G., of St. Brendan's, Birr, whether she had been correctly quoted.⁵⁹ Mahon's reply was evidently satisfactory and the Commissioners ordered:

*That Miss Mahon be informed that, as in her explanation she disclaims any intention of acting disloyally, the Commissioners do not propose to take any action against her on the present occasion beyond warning her to abstain in future from making speeches of a similar character.*⁶⁰

Mahon, however, maintained her nationalist sympathies. She corresponded with Thomas Ashe, former principal of Corduff N.S., Co. Dublin, while he was in Lewes prison. Ashe who, because of his role in an ambush at Ashbourne during the Easter rising, was no longer recognised as a teacher by the Board, died of hunger strike in 1917.⁶¹ On the day of his funeral Mahon closed her school and marched the children over to the church as a form of protest.

In October 1916 Mahon wrote her first letter to the newspapers on the question of war bonuses. She pointed out that she had succeeded in getting two INTO Congresses to adopt the principle of equal pay and have it incorporated in the INTO's programme "awaiting only the time when the policy of the Executive admits of its being pushed actively forward."⁶² The Birrell Grant and the Pension Scheme of 1914 where "the conditions are alike for men and women, both pay the same premium percentage and get the same fraction as Pension." were cited by Mahon as precedents for equal pay. The offer to women of half the bonus offered to men teachers was she declared "a most retrograde step, humiliating, unjust, and intolerable." She noted that Sir Edward Carson appeared to have been the only MP to speak up for the

rights of women teachers, "and he only on the grounds of their necessities" and she was surprised that the deputation "consisting entirely of men" had not instantly vetoed it. Teachers, Mahon suggested, had none of the advantages of civil servants in respect of salary, promotion or prospects. The civil service was divided into various grades and classes and it might be argued, she continued, that "because women are doing different work from men their work is less important." But women and men teachers, no matter what their grade or class, were all doing the same work. In addition, Mahon claimed that women teachers were entitled to higher bonuses than men because:

Dr. Starkie, the head administrator of the National system of education, with 16 years actual experience of the work of the teachers throughout Ireland, has repeatedly stated, and even as recently as the Viceregal Inquiry, that the women teachers are doing their work better than the men. If there was any difference to be made, on their merit women are entitled to higher bonuses.⁶³

The larger bonus was being offered to the men with the smaller salaries and on the same principle, she suggested, women teachers whose salaries were less than either class of men, should get bigger bonuses, their need being greater. She also observed that shopkeepers and business people did not differentiate between women and men when charging for their commodities.

Mahon then challenged the CEC to take effective action. She believed the women teachers "would not stand for such unjust and humiliating differentiation." She pointed to the numerical strength of the women members of the INTO and was critical of their comparative representation on the CEC. "Out of nearly 10,000 members in the Teachers' Organization the women members number 5,000, or half- though on a Central Executive of fifteen members they have but two lady representatives," she wrote. Mahon suggested that if the Executive acted at once on behalf of the women teachers and refused to touch the bonus until the women got at least equal terms with the men then victory would be assured. The government could not afford to have 10,000 discontented teachers in Ireland at the present time. However:

If the Executive refuse to act, or act only in a half-hearted, unsuccessful manner, then I do not see that it will be any further advantage to the women teachers to remain members of the Organization, contributing equally to its funds, and sharing equal responsibility for all liabilities incurred by it.⁶⁴

This was a serious threat to the INTO, one which Mahon was in a position to carry out and which would have seriously undermined the Organisation's position.

When making this suggestion Mahon may have been influenced by events at the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in England.⁶⁵ An "Equal Pay League" was formed by members of the NUT in 1904. The League advocated equal pay for women teachers of the same professional status as men. Initially, members of the League were also enthusiastic members of the NUT working within the union as a pressure group. They worked for the stated aims of the NUT, trying to induce women to join the NUT, to secure the election of women delegates to conference and to promote the election of women to the Executive of the union. The League, however, had little success in getting an equal pay policy adopted by the NUT. In 1909 the League changed its name to the "National Federation of Women Teachers" (NFWT). The NFWT consciously involved itself in suffrage agitation which provoked a huge outcry among leading male members of the NUT. At the NUT conference in Buxton, in 1916, an amendment to establish equal pay as a principle of the NUT's proposed salary scales was ruled out of order. As a result of this defeat many women teachers believed it was useless to try to work in the NUT for equal rights and left the union.⁶⁶ The INTO adopted the principle of equal pay at its Congresses in 1913 and 1916.⁶⁷ Mahon, who continued with her involvement in the suffrage organisations, in October 1915 she had given a lecture on "Women Teachers and the Vote" at a public meeting in the Mansion House organised by Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association, now challenged the CEC's commitment to this principle.⁶⁸ This challenge and her criticism of the deputation were very much resented by the Executive.⁶⁹

Although the CEC did not approve of Mahon's letter of the 24th it drew a favourable response from "A Woman Teacher" in Co. Leitrim. This teacher believed that Mahon had expressed the feelings of the women teachers of Ireland who were sorely disappointed that "there was not a man among our representatives to raise his voice in protest at the manifest unfairness of the proposal to offer women half the sum offered to men." "A Woman Teacher" was glad to see that fair-minded men in different associations were registering their protest against the bonus. She called on the teachers who formed the deputation to act quickly.⁷⁰

On 25 October, the day after Mahon's letter appeared in the press, Sir

John Lonsdale, an Irish Unionist Party MP, asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what provision he was prepared to make for the payment of a war bonus to Irish national school teachers and whether he had further considered the case of the women teachers.⁷¹ The Chancellor stated that the Treasury had agreed in principle to a grant of a war bonus to teachers on the same lines as that recently granted to the civil service. He was in communication with the Chief Secretary on the case of the women teachers. John Redmond then asked was it not true that according to the civil service scale women only got one-half what the men got and as there were over 2,000 women teachers in Ireland in receipt of salaries of under £28 a year was it not a mockery to offer them as a war bonus 1s. 6d. or 2s. a week. The Chancellor stated that he was not in a position to discuss the question of the rates of pay to the women teachers in Ireland. Questions on this point should be addressed to the Chief Secretary. He reiterated that he was in communication with the Chief Secretary on the case of the women teachers.⁷²

In the Ulster Hall, Belfast, on 26 October a public meeting was held in support of the teachers' claims.⁷³ The resolutions adopted at this meeting were more strongly in favour of an equal bonus than those of the Belfast meeting of 21 October and may have been influenced by Mahon's letter of the 24th. At the meeting on 26th clergymen of different denominations proposed and seconded a resolution calling for an equal bonus. The Rev. Dr. Bingham, ex-Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, moved the first resolution. It declared the proposed bonus to be "utterly inadequate" and stated "that, in view of the important services rendered to the State by the women teachers, we claim that their bonus should not be less than that granted to men teachers...".⁷⁴ The resolution also considered that all teachers, no matter what their salary, should participate in the bonus and that it should be dated from 1 April 1916. The motion was seconded by Very Rev. P. Convery P.P. Mrs Byrne, speaking on behalf of the women teachers, asked "Why in the name of justice and fair play, should there not be equal pay for equal work?" She suggested that if all arguments failed "...they could only call upon their brother colleagues to reject their bonus until the women were treated equally."⁷⁵ Here Mrs Byrne was echoing Mahon's point that the CEC should refuse to accept the bonus until women got the same as men. Mrs R.J. Mc Mordie, ex Lady Mayoress Belfast, said they should raise such a strong feeling of indignation in the public mind that the government would be forced to take some action.⁷⁶ Joseph Devlin, Irish Parliamentary Party MP

for West Belfast, argued that women teachers were entitled to a larger bonus because they had the lower wage. He went on to note how the teachers had the support of both the Irish parties. He said they had been told in Parliament that if the Irish people would only agree among themselves England would do anything for them. He did not know of another question on which the two leaders of the two Irish parties could come together. He called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to prove his own bona-fides by conceding an equitable demand put forward by a body of public servants seeking just and honourable treatment at the hands of the State.⁷⁷ Resolutions seeking an immediate and substantial augmentation of teachers' salaries and supporting the national teachers of Belfast in their demands for better remuneration were also put to the meeting.⁷⁸

On the same day, 26 October, a second letter from Mahon was published in the daily press. She wrote that the amount offered was so trifling that it was not worth while drawing distinctions between those under and over £2 per week.⁷⁹ It would, she suggested, "...simplify the question completely to demand an equal dividend for all. The Birrell Grant can be quoted as precedent."⁸⁰ Mahon had changed course slightly. The thrust of her argument was that all teachers, no matter what their salary or sex, should receive exactly the same amount. Mahon believed that asking for an:

...equal division of bonus all-round independently of salary or sex would be the easiest and most satisfactory way out of the crux which has arisen, and should be acceptable to almost every teacher. In addition, of course, the deputation which goes to London about it ought press to have it quadrupled, and paid from the beginning of the war.⁸¹

Perhaps, Mahon felt that a bonus modelled on the Birrell Grant would be more acceptable to the government. The government could claim that it was following precedent and women and men teachers would be paid the same. Yet, Mahon's proposal, while ensuring equal pay to all teachers, did take the focus off the issue of equal pay between the sexes. And although Mahon suggested that the bonus be quadrupled and paid retrospectively from the beginning of the war she stated this without much conviction and did not argue the point.

Mahon had confidently and honestly stated her views leaving herself open to criticism. T. J. O'Connell, General Secretary of the INTO, wrote to

the press on 27 October attacking Mahon's recommendations.⁸² O'Connell's letter stated that no good would come of individual teachers putting forward "hasty and ill considered" proposals as to how the amount already promised should be distributed. These proposals, "as well as any threats of division in the ranks of the teachers' organization, are at this stage highly mischievous", he argued.⁸³ They were pointing an easy way out for the Treasury or offering an inducement to refuse the offer already made. The assumption of some correspondents that women's claims were neglected by the deputation was, declared O'Connell, unfounded. One of the deputationists had specially emphasised the fact that no distinction should be made between men and women teachers even before the Chancellor had made his offer. In addition, the interest taken by Sir Edward Carson was probably due to the interview the deputationists had with him at his residence. At this interview the special attention had been drawn to the claims of women teachers. O'Connell reminded his readers that the offer had been neither accepted nor rejected and would not be until the case of women teachers had been considered by the Chancellor. The decision to accept or reject would not rest with the deputationists.⁸⁴

O'Connell had some grounds for criticising Mahon's proposal that a method of distribution along the lines of the "Birrell Grant" be adopted. Her proposal would have ensured that women and men teachers were treated equally but at this stage it would have been precipitate to accept the amount offered as a *fait accompli*. As O'Connell pointed out, the Chancellor was still considering the position of women teachers and to have accepted the proposed amount, even if it was divided differently, would have been a mistake because the total sum would have been less than if they held out until women and men were granted 4/- and 3/- a week. To continue to press for the original demand was probably the best course of action. It was also wiser to concentrate demands on the single issue of equal pay between the sexes rather than to diversify and demand equal pay for every teacher regardless of salary. If all efforts failed and women teachers were not granted 4/- and 3/- on the same terms as men then Mahon's solution would have been the most equitable one. But the time for such action had not arrived yet. Mahon did not argue on the basis of an equal bonus regardless of salary again.

O'Connell's letter showed that Mahon had succeeded in challenging the CEC. O'Connell had defended, at length, the efforts the London deputation

had made to secure an equal bonus for women teachers. He had also pointed out that the deputationists had not accepted the proposed bonus and that no decision would be taken by the CEC until the Chancellor had finally decided on the position of women teachers. But O'Connell did not indicate what the CEC was proposing to do to secure the equal bonus. His position was defensive. Mahon had taken the initiative and the CEC had to justify its actions. Her letters also ensured that the CEC could not allow the issue of an equal bonus to recede.

As well as O'Connell's letter in the *Irish Independent* of 27th there was another written by Madge Rodgers, from Falcarragh, County Donegal.⁸⁵ This letter referred to the Chancellor's request for evidence as to why a distinction should be made between women teachers and women civil servants. Rodgers compared the salaries and training of girl clerks, female learners and female typists in the Post Office and government departments with those of women teachers. For example, a female typist in a government department whose commencing age limits were 18 to 30 years earned a salary of £46 per annum rising by automatic yearly increments to £91 per annum. The female typist had to pass an examination in 7 subjects. A fully qualified teacher spent 3 years as a monitor and 2 in a training college, passed an examination in 18 subjects and earned a salary of £51 per annum less 2/9- for pension - roughly a salary of £48 per annum. The teachers could not qualify younger than 20 years of age. If the teacher was in a school of a sufficiently high average and if she was "blessed with an inspector who is only subject to the amount of prejudice any ordinary mortal is" and if a number of other conditions were fulfilled she might get a triennial increment of £7. When she had nine years service and all the aforementioned "ifs" were fulfilled her salary would be £77 per annum. If she was an assistant teacher that was the maximum she could hope to earn. Rodgers asked was a person "so placed capable of training up good citizens, temperate in word and act, peaceful and law abiding."⁸⁶

The teachers were putting forward a strong case and were gaining public sympathy. An editorial in the *Irish Independent* of 27 October was very supportive of the teachers. It observed that by comparison with primary school teachers in Great Britain, the national school teachers of Ireland were very poorly paid. The editorial noted how railwaymen had been granted a bonus at an estimated cost of £6,500,000 and how generously munition workers, male and female, were paid. It was critical of the government's

proposal and in particular of its treatment of women teachers:

In the case of female teachers the bonus offered is a mockery. It is no wonder that the teachers feel indignant, and that the public at large share their indignation at the extreme shabbiness of the Government. The Irish members should not relax their efforts in Parliament until full justice and fair treatment are accorded to the National Teachers.⁸⁷

The effectiveness of teachers' lobbying is clear from the *Irish Independent's* editorial which, while condemning the bonus to women teachers, made no reference to how unjust the same bonus was to women civil servants. The editorial and the indication of public support was an encouraging boost to women teachers. So was a short article the following day which stated:

The lady teachers have assuredly made good their claims for better treatment in the matter of the war bonus. The Chief Secretary would be doing a just, as well as a popular, act by obtaining for them at as early a date as possible the concession asked for.⁸⁸

Significantly, the above article gave credit to women teachers for making good their own claims. This was hardly surprising, as since the 24th, a steady stream of letters from women teachers regarding the equal bonus had been published in the *Irish Independent*.

Women teachers, with Mahon in the lead, were also ensuring that the INTO would back their demands fully. In the ISW women teachers aired their views and pushed the question of an equal bonus to the fore. The 28 October issue of the ISW had contributions from Mahon, Mrs. Byrne, the lady principals' representative, Margaret Doyle, the lady assistants' representative and Roche's "Lady Teachers' Own Page".⁸⁹ They all argued the case for an equal bonus marshalling every possible point in its favour. Firstly, to satisfy the criteria set by the Chancellor the women correspondents highlighted differences between women teachers and women civil servants. But, more importantly and this was especially true of Mahon, the women teachers argued on the basis of equal pay for equal work. Women teachers also used the precedent of the Birrell Grant and the basis on which the bonus was granted - to alleviate the high cost of living - to support their case.⁹⁰ The women teachers' letters and articles were filled with a strong sense of injustice and outrage and conveyed their determination to refuse

anything less than an equal bonus. They also demonstrated women teachers' willingness to fight for the equal bonus themselves rather than rely solely on INTO procedures.

Mahon's letter which had been published in the daily newspapers on 24 October was printed in the *ISW* of 28 October. Letters from Byrne and Doyle were also published in this issue. Byrne, writing from Belfast, thanked Sir Edward Carson for his "championship" saying that it was due to him that the Chancellor was prepared to consider the question of an equal bonus for women teachers. She then listed the reasons why women teachers were different to women civil servants. Women civil servants did not undertake the same duties as men and they were automatically granted an increment of not less than £5 annually, while Irish women teachers taught a more extensive programme than their male colleagues and were fortunate if they obtained a triennial increment of £7. Women teachers were penalised in both salary and pension "solely because they are women", should not be further penalised by receiving only half the bonus granted to men. There was no discrimination of sex in the Birrell Grant, nor did the Chancellor make any distinction between men and women when imposing taxes. The bonus was being granted because of the increased cost of living and Byrne was not aware that women were being charged less than men for their commodities.⁹¹

Margaret Doyle, the lady assistants' representative, suggested that bearing in mind the salaries paid to the younger women assistants, to the lay assistants in convent schools and to the JAMs the offer was a "mockery". She hoped that every woman teacher in Ireland would voice her "decided disapprobation of any scheme which does not concede a Bonus in equal amounts to men and women."⁹² Kathleen Roche reiterated these points in the "The Lady Teachers' Own Page" and also argued that:

*If the helpless women in the Civil service who were so shamefully treated, and who bore it in silence because they have no powerful Organisation, like the Teachers' Organization, to stand up for them, because they have no woman leader to fight for their rights, no Central Executive Committee with two lady representatives to champion their cause, are we, women teachers, also to lie under the ignominy offered us in this half size War Bonus, microscopical at its best?*⁹³

She suggested if the distinction in the proposed war bonus was allowed

then the women teachers would "sink back deeper than ever into the background, branded with the badge of inferiority, for another generation".⁹⁴

George Ramsay, President of the INTO, also wrote on the topic of the war bonus in the *ISW* of 28 October. Ramsay believed the bonus on civil service terms was a small concession, "but we must accept what is offered, and like *Oliver Twist*, keep asking for more." He said there were two points of concern, equal rates for women and men and arrears of payment.⁹⁵ Ramsay believed the Chancellor of the Exchequer was open to conviction on these two issues but that its inadequacy would not be redressed. He appealed to teachers and especially to the secretaries of associations to write to the Chancellor and to the Chief Secretary. In demanding the equal rate teachers should draw attention to the fact that there was a:

*huge disparity between women clerks in the Civil service and women teachers, both as regards remuneration, age and service rendered to the State, and that no discrimination should or can be made between women and men teachers, considering the duties performed by both.*⁹⁶

This was the kind of information the Chancellor had requested. Although Ramsay urged teachers to lobby their MPs for an equal bonus he did not do so with quite the same insistence or urgency which Mahon had employed. It is conceivable, therefore, that left to the CEC alone and without the compelling lobbying of Mahon the equal bonus would have suffered the same fate as that of arrears - non payment. Ramsay was gratified at the support the teachers had received from both Irish parliamentary parties. He believed this combined support underlined the justice of the teachers' requests.⁹⁷ Finally, Ramsay reported on the interview the teachers had with a committee of the Commissioners of National Education on 23 October. The teachers had urged the Commissioners to secure equal rates, and Dr. Starkie had assured them that the Commissioners supported their claims.

Indeed the Resident Commissioner raised the question of equal bonuses at a meeting of the Board on 24 October where it was agreed:

*That the Irish Government and the Treasury be asked to grant the same terms of War Bonus to women teachers as to men, and that their attention be directed to the difference of the conditions of work done by women teachers as compared with women civil servants.*⁹⁸

This was a prompt and positive response to the INTO's request. It may have facilitated the awarding of an equal war bonus. If the Commissioners had prevaricated or answered in the negative at this juncture their silence, or rejection could have been used as a reason for refusing the teachers' demands for equal payment of the war bonus. The Commissioners had not been known to accede with alacrity to CEC requests in the past and it is interesting that they did so on this occasion. It was not until after their meeting on 24th that the Commissioners received resolutions emphatically demanding an equal bonus. However, the Commissioners must have been aware from newspaper reports that the teachers, generally, condemned the government's offer and its treatment of women teachers. They would probably have read Mahon's letter of 24th which attacked the proposed bonus for its discrimination against women teachers. Nevertheless, it was to the Commissioners' credit that they so promptly amended their recommendation and requested an equal bonus at this relatively early stage in the controversy.

In the *ISW* the "Educational News of the Week" column argued that even though the proposed bonus was wholly inadequate, teachers would be unwise to refuse to accept it.⁹⁹ The *ENW* seems to have been conceding defeat here. Unlike Ramsay it did not advocate pursuing arrears of payment or an equal bonus. This again illustrates the importance of women teachers' own efforts. If they had not pushed for the equal bonus themselves it might not have been obtained. As it was the *ENW* was taken to task by Roche who, in the following issue, stated that she had inquired and found that the *ENW* had advocated acceptance on the understanding that women would be granted an equal bonus. An *ISW* editorial also observed that although O'Connell had presented the women's case with tact and persuasiveness the most suitable and effective advocate of women's claims before the Chancellor would have been a woman.¹⁰⁰

A women teachers' meeting, held in Belfast on 28 October, gives further evidence of women teachers' commitment to the equal bonus.¹⁰¹ The Belfast meeting was the only formal women teachers' meeting organised during the controversy. That is not to say, of course, that women teachers were not meeting informally to discuss and take action on the issue. Belfast women teachers had decided to hold their meeting prior to the publication of Mahon's first two letters but the proceedings of the meeting itself were clearly influenced by her letters.¹⁰² At the Belfast women teachers' meeting a

resolution very similar to Mahon's proposal of the 26th was passed. It stated:

*That in pursuance of the policy of the Organisation, we regret the terms which do not comply with the essential principle of equal treatment for men and women teachers. That, as the number of teachers under £2 per week constitutes the great majority of teachers, we request that no distinction be made, but that an equal bonus be given all round, independent of salary or sex, as in the case of the Birrell Grant.*¹⁰³

A copy of the resolution and a list of reasons why women teachers were different to women civil servants was forwarded to the government and the leaders of the Irish parliamentary parties. The list included all the reasons which had been cited in the letters of Mahon, Byrne and Doyle. The list was as follows:

*Women in the Civil service have better initial salaries.
Have an annual automatic increment.
Are not called upon to perform the same duties as men.
Irish women teachers begin with small salaries.
Have only small triennial increment.
Are called upon to teach a more extended programme than men.
They pay equal percentage to Pension Fund.
And are the great majority of the teaching profession of the country.*¹⁰⁴

The Belfast women teachers called on the CEC to hold a special meeting on 4 November to press for an equal war bonus for men and women teachers.¹⁰⁵

Mahon's lobbying in the press was achieving its aim. The question of the teachers' war bonus was being referred to as a national question and the issue of equality was now to the fore at public meetings around the country. For instance, a public meeting held in the Court House, Tralee, deplored the discrimination against women teachers in the proposed bonus.¹⁰⁶ It was reported that Mrs Maud Walsh, District Councillor:

*...a lady of great influence in Kerry public life, and sister of the present Solicitor-General for Ireland, dealt most effectively with the special claims of the lady members of the profession.*¹⁰⁷

Mr T. O' Donnell, MP proposed a motion at the Kerry meeting similar to the CEC's original resolution. He declared that the bonus was a question on which all Irishmen were united. The Irish teachers, especially the women, had been scandalously treated.¹⁰⁸

Mr Cullinan, MP, expressed a similar opinion at a meeting in Thurles, Co. Tipperary. He believed that the bonus offered to women was a "gross insult, a shame, and a scandal." Cullinan said that every Irish MP would strenuously fight for the teachers in Parliament.¹⁰⁹ The Irish Women's Reform League, a suffrage organisation, at its general meeting also passed a resolution in support of the women teachers. The resolution was sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary, John Redmond, Sir E. Carson. It stated:

*That this meeting of the Irish Women's Reform League protests strongly against the proposal to give to Irish women teachers only half the war bonus given to men, a differentiation which is particularly unjustifiable in view of the fact that women teachers have to meet the present high cost of living with smaller salaries than those of men.*¹¹⁰

Teachers meeting in Carlow and Dungannon sought equal war bonuses as did the Co. Dublin National Teachers' Association and the Dublin Metropolitan Teachers' Association.¹¹¹ The Dublin Metropolitan Association expressed:

*most emphatic disapproval of the intention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to discriminate between men and women teachers - no matter what bonus may eventually be decided upon - as the increased cost of living presses equally on women and men, especially assistant and junior assistant mistresses.*¹¹²

The association proposed that the case for women teachers be immediately laid before the Chancellor, "if not by the deputation already appointed from the CEC by one which includes representative women teachers."¹¹³ Women were believed to have been in the majority at the Dublin meeting.¹¹⁴

Mahon maintained continuous pressure. On 1 November her third letter in just over a week was published in the press. Here again Mahon moved ahead of the CEC campaign as only O'Connell had written to the daily press and his letter had been a largely defensive exercise. But Mahon was relentless in pushing forward the case for an equal bonus and ensuring the issue

was kept in the public eye. She also continued to challenged the status quo in the union with regard to women teachers. Mahon said there was not a woman teacher in Ireland but should feel thankful to the *Irish Independent* for its leading article on 27 October and for its appeal to the Chief Secretary, H.E. Duke, to do the just and popular act by the women teachers. Mahon believed that Duke's influence would be the determining factor in the Chancellor's decision and so she was sending him a copy of the correspondence in the *Irish Independent*, together with a statement of the women's claims for equal treatment with the men. Mahon asked every lady teacher in Ireland to write to the chief secretary to support her statement to him. She suggested they point out:

...that equality of treatment is an essential principle of our Organisation, adopted by our Congresses composed of men and women as a matter of simple justice because of the fact that we do equal work with the men, and that ignoring or flouting our just and equitable claim will mean adding a reinforcement of more than 9,000 women teachers to the already existing volume of discontent in this country.¹¹⁵

Although Mahon said that she did not wish to criticise the INTO Secretary because she was well aware that he had done his best on the deputation, nevertheless, she opposed his suggestion that teachers wait until a final and definite offer was made by the Chancellor. Mahon believed that such procedure would be absolutely fatal. "Now", she stressed, "and not when finality is arrived at, is the time for the women to agitate,". Mahon was correct in advocating immediate action. If the teachers had done nothing while the Chancellor was making up his mind he might not have changed his offer of a war bonus on civil service terms.

Mahon also clarified her proposal for a special Organisation for women teachers:

The present crisis brings to a head an idea which I have long had in my mind, viz., the desirability of establishing a special association of women teachers. It would work in sympathy with the Organisation; its officers would constitute a Standing Council which in a time of crisis like the present would have locus standing to speak and act officially for all its members, and would obviate and be much more effective than isolated and uncertain individual action....¹¹⁶

Mahon's idea of a special association working in "sympathy" with the INTO would not have posed a threat to the INTO, although it is likely that the Executive would have seen it as such. Her proposal appears to suggest a cohesive pressure group working specifically on behalf of women's interests within the INTO rather than a separate group working independently of it. In this respect it resembles the early women's group in the NUT in England.

In the *ISW* of 4 November T. J. O'Connell, perhaps in an effort to stem criticism, gave a full report of the deputation's activities in London. O'Connell wrote that he and Ramsay had made further representations to the Chief Secretary, the Chancellor and to Redmond and Carson. They had pointed out, "the insufficiency of the terms offered, especially as regards women teachers."¹¹⁷ O'Connell commented on the fact that every MP the deputation had met had been written to and interviewed by the teachers in their constituencies. He proudly related that the deputation had been told that the INTO was the only organisation in Ireland which could successfully bring together the members of all parties and enlist their enthusiastic support to the extent to which the INTO had done. In reference to Mahon's suggestions, he stated that the unity demonstrated on this occasion should prove a valuable lesson to those who, due to a temporary disappointment, "would seek as a remedy to cause dissension in our ranks or set one section of teachers against another."¹¹⁸ The deputation had now supplied the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor with statements and arguments showing that there was no parallel between women teachers and women clerks in the civil service. In a separate letter George Ramsay, President of the INTO, said he was optimistic about the eventual shape of the bonus. He reported that the Commissioners had made a strong claim for the equal bonus rate for women. He believed that this, along with pressure brought to bear from every other source, would ensure success.¹¹⁹

In the same issue of the *ISW*, Mahon wrote criticising the deputation for not immediately giving reasons to the Chancellor as to why women teachers should not be treated like women civil servants. She suggested that teachers were regarded as civil servants when it was to the government's advantage, but they were not reckoned such when it would be to the teachers' advantage. Mahon suggested that all the deputationists need have said was:

*We are here as the embassies of a powerful Organisation, the programme and policy of which is equal rights for men and women teachers. We shall accept nothing less for the women than for the men.*¹²⁰

At the deputation's meeting with the Chancellor Ramsay had expressed keen disappointment at his offer but he had, in no way, indicated that the teachers would refuse it because it discriminated against women teachers. Mahon suggested that even if the amount offered was ten times more women teachers should, on principle, get equal bonuses. On grounds of necessity women teachers should have been offered more than men teachers, yet, Mahon declared, if women had been offered more than men "they would not accept it for an instant until their brother members of the Organisation shared equally with them."¹²¹ The women teachers looked to the CEC to call a special meeting at once and to send another deputation to try and obtain an equal bonus.

Roche took up this line of argument and urged the men teachers to refuse the bonus until women were granted an equal one. She, optimistically, believed men teachers would say in the final analysis:

*...not a penny of it will we touch till you average it and give our sisters an equal share. Not for you, not for anyone, not for life itself, shall we violate the principles of our organization or trample on the rights of our Irish sisters.*¹²²

An article, apparently written by the editors of the *ISW*, stated that an influential member of the government had said "that the Chancellor would almost certainly concede the same bonus to women "if sufficient pressure is brought to bear upon him." In an implicit criticism of the deputation the article supported Mahon's view. It said that it was through ignorance the Chancellor had offered only half bonuses to women teachers. If an explanatory document had been given to him claiming equal terms for men and women and submitting substantial and incontrovertible reasons for the claim they believed the Chancellor "would have adopted equality as his watchword." The editors reported that they had heard many men teachers saying they would prefer to do without the bonus altogether rather than have the lady teachers subjected to the humiliation of half a bonus. But, they also believed that if women teachers had supported their local associations better they would have a lot more sympathy.¹²³ The editors urged teachers to

continue to organise meetings and to write personal letters to the Chancellor.

Joseph Devlin, Irish Parliamentary Party MP for West Belfast, who had attended the Belfast Teachers' Association meeting of 26 October proved himself a good advocate of the women teachers' case. In a letter to the Chief Secretary, a copy of which he forwarded to the daily press, he wrote:

*The proposals put forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer...are justly considered to be scandalously unfair. The distinction sought to be drawn between the male and female teachers is invidious, unjust, and unwarranted, and has aroused widespread resentment.*¹²⁴

The question of the war bonus had ceased to be one merely affecting the teachers themselves, it was, he declared, "a National issue of the first magnitude."¹²⁵ Devlin outlined how the salaries of Irish teachers compared poorly with those of English and Scottish teachers. He criticised the low pay of women teachers which he said was a "...deplorable and outrageous condition of affairs."¹²⁶

The ISW editorial praised Devlin's "powerful and arresting letter" to the Chief Secretary.¹²⁷ It also praised Mahon and acknowledged the "yeoman service" she had given since the campaign commenced for equal treatment for men and women and for less miserly war bonuses. The editors thought her letter to the Chief Secretary, perhaps the "most eloquent and powerful appeal yet made on the subject." This was the letter Mahon had forwarded to the Chief Secretary, the Chancellor and to leading politicians to which she referred in the *Irish Independent* of 1 November. The ISW published a copy of the letter which asked the Chief Secretary and MPs to represent to the Chancellor:

*...the justice and necessity of granting to women teachers exactly the same bonus as men teachers. It is a question of a principle at stake. Equal pay and equality of treatment to men and women teachers alike is now an essential principle of the Teachers' Organisation....*¹²⁸

Mahon, in this letter, observed that Lloyd George, when Chancellor, had not flouted the women teachers' claim for equal terms in the Pension Scheme of 1914. If the Chancellor persisted in differentiating between

women and men teachers he would create a formidable body of opposition which would add another agitation to the volume of discontent existing in the country. Mahon said the Commissioners of National Education and the Irish press of all political shades supported the women's claims. Birrell, when petitioned by the INTO, had divided the Birrell Grant equally without differentiation of sex.¹²⁹ The women teachers now looked to the Chief Secretary to go to the Chancellor and say;

*Whatever Bonus is given to the Irish men teachers, let the women teachers be given exactly the same. Let there be no differentiation on the ground of sex, but let the women's hard-won principle of Equality, based on Justice and merit, be respected.*¹³⁰

In a separate letter to the ISW Mahon asserted that there was no friction between herself and the General Secretary of the INTO. Both were working towards the same objective. She stressed that the CEC should fight the women's claim to a finish and should not accept any offer as final until an equal bonus had been obtained. She again urged every woman teacher to write to the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor in support of her statement.¹³¹

On 11 November the CEC met and decided that as the question of the war bonus was still under consideration by the Irish Government and the Treasury, no definite action would be taken other than continuing to demand:

- (1) *The original terms asked for.*
- (2) *Equal terms for women and men.*
- (3) *Bonus to date from 1st April, 1915.*

Fifty associations had forwarded resolutions to the CEC practically all of which had objected to the war bonus' inadequacy and its treatment of women teachers.¹³² Following the CEC meeting the President of the INTO wrote to the *Irish Independent*. He said he was not prepared to compare the differences between women and men civil servants, but he was prepared unhesitatingly to say that services rendered by women and men teachers were practically identical. Ramsay did not expand on the principle of equal pay for equal work. Instead he wrote that the cost of living for women

teachers was very high "...owing to the many school calls upon their slender incomes which men are as a rule immune from." The higher bonus was being awarded to teachers with the lower income and on the same principle women should get at least the same bonus as men:

*The principle has been conceded that the lower the salary the greater the bonus. Why not, then, do the honourable act, and, instead of cutting down the bonus for women, raise the scale to at least that of the men?*¹³³

Ramsay pressed for the original demand of 7/6 and 5/. This was in line with the CEC resolution of November 11th but it differed from Ramsay's previously stated view that teachers must accept the 2/- and 4/- offered by the Chancellor. Ramsay also demanded that the bonus be dated from 1 April, 1915.

Public bodies were continuing to support the teachers' demands. The Irish Parliamentary Party at a meeting in the House of Commons decided, in view of what the party regarded as the unsatisfactory way in which the war bonus to Irish teachers had been dealt with by the Treasury, to press the Government to concede the demands of the teachers especially in regard to (1) more adequate provision for lower grade teachers; (2) putting women teachers on the same scale as men; (3) applying the operation of the war bonus to pensioners and workhouse teachers.¹³⁴ Kathleen Roche was pleased the resolution included workhouse teachers, pensioned teachers and JAMs but she believed the lay teachers in convent schools should also have been included. Roche reported that the bonus offered to women teachers had "aroused the indignation of every woman's society in Ireland."¹³⁵ A resolution protesting at the unequal bonus had been passed at a conference of women's societies in Dublin.¹³⁶ The proposer of the motion was Mary Hayden, professor of modern Irish history at University College Dublin and a member of the Senate of the National University of Ireland, the seconder was Lady Dockrell. The meeting believed the inequitable war bonus was a "poor earnest" of the statements by government ministers who proclaimed that they had been won over to the rights of women because of their war work.¹³⁷ Hayden was a founder member of Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association of which Mahon was also a member.

Roche also reported how English women teachers were viewing the situation. She quoted an extract from the *Schoolmistress* which had inferred that

the reason women had been granted only half the bonus given to men was because "MEN DO NOT REPRESENT WOMEN."¹³⁸ The *Schoolmistress* article had also asked "Is it not time for a federation of women teachers in Ireland?"¹³⁹ The absence of a woman representative on the deputation, which by now had been criticised by Mahon, the editors of the *ISW* and the *Schoolmistress* article came in for more criticism from Katie Tierney, Treasurer of the Cork County Association; Secretary, Mallow Teachers' Association. Tierney wrote to the *ISW* asking why neither of the lady representatives were on the London deputation.¹⁴⁰ She reported that many women teachers in Co. Cork felt convinced that the presence of a woman on the deputation "would have spared us the insulting offer of a charwoman's bonus."¹⁴¹

By the time teachers read the 18 November issue of the *ISW* they would have been aware already of the Chancellor's decision regarding the bonus. On 14 November 1916 in the House of Commons Hugh Law MP asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he was now prepared to grant an increase of war bonus to the Irish national schoolteachers and to place the women teachers upon an equality with the men and whether he was also prepared to extend such bonus to meet the case of retired teachers? The Chancellor replied:

*After consultation with my right honourable friend the Chief Secretary I find that the position of the women teachers in Ireland is such as to justify the payment to them of war bonus at the same rates as have already been announced in the case of the men teachers.*¹⁴²

With regard to the pensioned teachers he said that under the Irish Teachers' Pension Rules there was no power to pay a war bonus out of the Teachers' Pension Fund and there was no hope of any increase in the amounts of the war bonus already sanctioned.¹⁴³ Joseph Devlin MP asked the Chief Secretary whether the bonus was to include assistant teachers who were paid £24 a year. The Chief Secretary assured him:

*I have no doubt that is so. Their claims were particularly brought to the attention of the Treasury and the Irish Office by the honourable Member and other honourable Members from various parts of Ireland, and I am quite sure that it is intended to cover every woman teacher who is drawing a salary under the Board of Education.*¹⁴⁴

Devlin declared his satisfaction at the concession made to female teachers but he stated his intention to press forward their claims for a larger bonus and for the inclusion of the workhouse and pensioned teachers.¹⁴⁵

The teachers were pleased that the equal bonus had been granted. Yet, reaction in the ISW was muted and restrained. This was probably due to the response of the INTO President and General Secretary to the award. Only the women teachers were in any way celebratory of the achievement. Mrs. Byrne wrote that the women teachers had a right to be "very proud of this country to obtain the concession of a great Principle, viz., Equal pay for equal work - men and women alike."¹⁴⁶ She thanked Devlin for his efforts and hoped he would press on for adequate salaries for Irish teachers. Byrne, however, did not dwell on the attainment of the equal bonus. She turned her attention to what she considered to be the next issue of importance to women teachers - women representatives on deputations to the National Board of Education when the new curriculum was being discussed. Mahon, however, saw the achievement of the equal bonus as a great victory, because:

*...it is a victory for principle, the principle of equality with men, based on justice and merit. The precedent created by the division of the Birrell Grant helped, but this further recognition of the same principle, in such a public and striking manner in connection with the Bonus, creates a further precedent in favour of women teachers for all time.*¹⁴⁷

Mahon believed the bonus was too small but she was satisfied, knowing that any increase would be shared equally, to leave that point to the CEC. However, victory was incomplete, she declared, until every retired woman teacher was included in the bonus. She was now going to campaign for them and she appealed to teachers to organise and agitate on behalf of the pensioners. Kathleen Roche rejoiced that every woman teacher, nuns and their assistants, whether religious or secular, and JAMs would be included in the bonus. She also called on women teachers to make a determined fight for the inclusion of the pensioners.

T. J. O'Connell wrote to the ISW but his letter was not in the least congratulatory. Taking a full page of the ISW he voiced strong disapproval of the amount and nature of criticism the London deputation had received. He emphasised that the deputation had stressed the claims of women teachers

in their interviews with MPs and especially with Sir Edward Carson. O'Connell responded to the complaints that there was no woman on the deputation by pointing out the deputation had been unanimously selected by the Executive.¹⁴⁸ He doubted whether the most eloquent woman teacher in Ireland could have voiced the women's claims better than Sir Edward had done. And he was sure the Chancellor would not have gone one inch further than he did regardless of anything any other deputation might have said. Another of the complaints was that the deputation did not, there and then, give the Chancellor reasons why women teachers should not be treated as civil servants. O'Connell, in an apparent reference to Mahon, wrote that "anyone who had been on similar deputations should understand" that when the Chancellor made the offer to look into the question and consult with Mr Duke he could not be expected to do so immediately. O'Connell outlined everything the deputationists had done to achieve the equal bonus. He said they all had "a personal interest in securing the best terms possible for women teachers."¹⁴⁹ It was incomprehensible to him why some women had blamed the men for what had happened. He had never heard any man teacher state during the negotiations that women should be paid at a lesser rate than men. The men teachers throughout the country without exception had backed the women's claims strongly and consistently. As far as he knew any advantages gained by the INTO had been gained equally for men and women, this was the first time a distinction had been sought to be made and the attempt had been defeated by the organisation through its representatives and was not likely to be repeated. O'Connell then proceeded to attack Mahon's suggestion that women teachers should form a separate body:

*That any lady teacher should, in these circumstances, consider for a moment the splitting up of the Organisation and the placing of men and women in different and, possibly, opposite camps is a matter which deserves the serious attention of the Organisation as a whole; and I say deliberately that any proposal which would have such a far-reaching and, to my mind, disastrous effect should be met with the condemnation which such a proposal deserves.*¹⁵⁰

In the following week's issue Ramsay made another attack on Mahon's proposal:

*The equal rate has been won, not by hysterical appeals in the Press advocating one plan of campaign after another if the concession could not be obtained, but by reason and arguments placed in black and white before the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary.*¹⁵¹

He said he and the deputationists had laid facts and arguments before the Chief Secretary regarding the women teachers. He was grateful for the extra support from outsiders, "the more pressure the better, so long as it is done on proper lines." Obviously, Mahon had not followed the correct lines. According to Ramsay, "at one time in the negotiations we were afraid we were going to be beaten owing to rash and unwise suggestions from some who should have known better." He strongly disapproved of any suggestions of disunity in the union and he called on women members to ignore such suggestions:

*It is deplorable to see in some quarters vague threats and hints for marking out a line of future action for the women teachers as separate from the men. This is highly mischievous, and as a sincere defender of women's rights, I call upon all lady teachers to give such a movement the cold shoulder. Ramsay defended the INTO's position with regard to women's rights within the union.*¹⁵²

He concluded with an appeal to teachers to campaign for an increase in the bonus. T. J. Nunan, the third member of the deputation, also wrote to the ISW. He said credit for obtaining the equal bonus was not due to any man or woman but to the organisation:

*The Organisation won the concession, absolute necessity was the driving force, and the Executive, the deputationists, and other workers were but the channels through which the force was applied.*¹⁵³

Nunan protested at the attacks made on the deputation.

O'Connell and George Ramsay clearly believed Mahon capable of organising a separate Organisation for women teachers. Their bitter attacks demonstrate how seriously they took her threat. In defending themselves the deputationists practically dismissed the achievements of the women teachers during the campaign. O'Connell gave no credit to their efforts, he attributed the success of the equal bonus to the INTO's representatives.

Ramsay's acknowledgement was minimal and guarded. T. J. Nunan also attributed the achievement of the bonus to the combined efforts of the "organisation". No person or group of people was to be singled out for praise. Yet, despite Nunan's avowal, the impression given by the three deputationists was that it was through their efforts the bonus had been obtained. Others had merely played a peripheral role. The deputationists ignored the fact that their failure to obtain the two other concessions could have been because no one had launched as vigorous a campaign for them as Mahon had for the equal bonus. But Mahon had publicly criticised the CEC deputation and challenged its commitment to equal pay and they wished to ensure that this would not occur again.

The deputationists were successful in deflecting recognition from the achievements of women teachers. After their letters appeared in the *ISW* hardly any mention was made of the equal bonus and those references were subdued. The editors, who had supported Mahon's criticism of the deputation and praised her advocacy of the equal bonus, were silent and made no comment on the achievement of the equal bonus. Mahon did not defend herself but chose to ignore the implied criticisms of her in O'Connell's and Ramsay's letters. She concentrated on obtaining the war bonus for the pensioners. She said she was "both irritated and disappointed" that no mention was made of the pensioners in the General Secretary's long letter. And she criticised his letter because, "I cannot for the life of me make out what its object is at all." Focussing on the pensioners Mahon continued:

...it does seem childish to waste three columns of print arguing about "Who killed Cock Robin?" while there is a life and death struggle yet to be made for the grand old "Heroes (and heroines) of the Conflict"... ¹⁵⁴

Kathleen Roche in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" did not refer to O'Connell's letter at all.¹⁵⁵ Nor did Mrs Byrne, although she appealed for support for the campaign to include pensioners in the war bonus.¹⁵⁶ In the subsequent issue of *ISW* Byrne made an oblique reference to the criticisms by stating that "The wide publicity just given to our condition has resulted in nothing but good."¹⁵⁷ Kathleen Roche elaborated on this point in the December 16th issue. She quoted an extract from the *London Times* which referred to the teachers' meeting in Birr where Sir Edward Carson had been thanked and also mentioned Mahon's letter condemning the absence of a

woman on the deputation. Roche agreed the publicity had done nothing but good, "especially for the lady teachers."¹⁵⁸ She went on to explain the absence of a woman on the deputation. According to Congress rules cross-Channel deputations were limited to three members and one of these had to be an assistant's representative. The most experienced of the assistant's representatives was chosen in this case. The presence of the President was required to attach prestige and importance to the deputation and the General Secretary was necessary to facilitate negotiations and correspondence. Roche suggested that the rule confining a cross-Channel deputation to three members should be changed by Congress. Deputations should be expanded to four members, one of whom should be a woman.¹⁵⁹ The rule was not altered but in 1918 when teachers were seeking an additional war bonus a woman representative was included in the London deputation.

Mahon's fight had a mixed long term result. Teachers' war bonus was doubled as part of a revision of salary scales in 1917 to 8s. and 6s. per week, depending on salary. The teachers sought further increases in 1918. Civil servants had received increases in their war bonuses and the teachers applied to the Conciliation and Arbitration Board claiming that they should receive the increases granted to the civil service on 8 May 1917, 17 December 1917 and 9 July 1918. The regulations of the Arbitration Board provided that before the Board would agree to hear or arbitrate on a claim, both parties, the applicants on one side and the government representatives on the other, were obliged to give an undertaking that the decision of the Board would be accepted and implemented. Katie Tierney, Mr O' Farrell and T. J. O'Connell were appointed by the CEC to attend the hearing in London on 22 October 1918. The Arbitration Board decided to increase the teachers' war bonus to an all-round flat rate of 12/6 per week for men and 10/- per week for women. Thus, the hard fought principle of equality for war bonuses was lost after two years. Perhaps, the critical point in the Arbitration Board's decision was that the teachers had sought the increases granted to the civil servants and as we have seen the civil service bonus discriminated from the first between women and men.

The ENW column of the *ISW* declared that, "The teachers appealed to the Arbitration Board to fix the Bonus, and they are now bound by the decision."¹⁶⁰ The ENW column, while disappointed at the amount awarded, made no comment on the disparity of payment between women and men teachers. Kathleen Roche made the only reference in the *ISW* to this aspect

when she declared despondently, "The blow has fallen. In the first shock of it I felt crushed, humiliated, utterly paralysed, to see my poor equal pay gone to the winds."¹⁶¹ The CEC asked teachers to refrain from public criticism of the award until they had received a circular from the Executive. Mahon writing to the *Irish Independent* said she would obey the CEC's injunctions and refrain from criticism but she wished to state a few facts. She outlined how the equal bonus had been gained in 1916 and how the Treasury had observed the principle of an equal bonus in 1917 but these gains, she declared, were now lost and women teachers would receive less than half the bonus of men teachers. She was critical of the Executive for not denouncing the treatment of their "sister teachers".¹⁶² There were at least two other letters in the *Irish Independent* on the same theme, one of the correspondents suggesting that women teachers should "establish a lady teachers' national federation".¹⁶³

In 1919 the teachers claimed a further increase of 6s. 6d. a week for women and 4s. a week for men from the Arbitration Board. This would have levelled the differentiation between women and men teachers and was an indication that the teachers had not given up on the notion of an equal bonus. The Arbitration Board decided that the war bonus should be increased for all teachers by £12 a year from January 1919.¹⁶⁴ So the differentiation remained. A third application was made in May 1919 and agreement was reached without putting the matter to arbitration. In June 1919 the bonus was raised to an annual rate of £60 for men, £50 for women and £40 for the JAMs.¹⁶⁵

The securing of an equal war bonus in 1916 was an important achievement for women teachers. The government's initial offer of a war bonus was condemned for its inadequacy, its inequitable treatment of women teachers and the absence of arrears of payment. Women teachers, with Mahon leading, ensured that the differentiation between women and men teachers became the focal point of the protest campaign which ensued. Only this aspect of the proposed bonus was changed. Mahon played a major role in winning public support for the equal bonus. In a series of letters to the press she outlined the injustice of the Chancellor's offer. Mahon consistently argued on the basis of equal pay for equal work, a principle accepted as INTO policy. She challenged the CEC's commitment to this principle. Her suggestion that women teachers should form a separate body if the CEC did not gain an equal bonus was severely criticised by INTO officers. Yet, the

pressure she mounted on the Executive undoubtedly helped secure the equal bonus. One need only look at subsequent war bonuses, even that granted in 1945 where women got half the bonus of men, to realise that such pressure was not unwarranted. The Executive, in conjunction with all sections of the INTO did work for equal bonuses in 1916, teachers lobbied with such effectiveness that MPs declared the issue to be a "national" question. Yet, without the relentless lobbying and pressurising of women teachers themselves, mostly at Mahon's instigation, it is questionable whether an equal bonus would have been obtained.

- ¹ In January 1916 eight teachers' associations forwarded resolutions to the Commissioners asking for increments to their salaries. The rise in the cost of living was the basis for all the demands. Sligo and Derry City and Counties associations requested an all round increase in salaries whereas the other six associations, North West Donegal, South Antrim, Clonbur and Cong, Clonmel, Co.Cork, and Omagh, rather than seeking an all round increase, claimed a war bonus. See, *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 28 March 1916.
- ² *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 14 March 1916.
- ³ Hansard, Fifth Series - Volume LXXX. 1916 15th Feb-16th March.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 14 March 1916.
- ⁶ Ibid., 23 May 1916. The other issues the deputation sought to discuss with the Commissioners were the estimates, monthly salaries and salaries of Junior Mistresses; promotions and increments; averages and the rules bearing on them; and some outstanding cases of hardship in the Clonmel circuit.
- ⁷ ISW, 15 July 1916, p. 694.
- ⁸ ISW, 12 August 1916, p. 79.
- ⁹ ISW, 29 July 1916, p.28. Kathleen Roche stated in the Lady Teachers' Own Page that monthly salaries was "essentially a ladies' question. The lady is the house-keeper and the home maker...." Ibid., p. 31.
- ¹⁰ ISW, 29 July 1916, p. 28.
- ¹¹ ISW, 19 August 1916, p. 100.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 106.
- ¹³ ISW, 26 August 1916, p. 123 . W.G. Doyle in a postscript to his letter stated that "The words "he," "his," "him," also applies to the ladies."
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 127.
- ¹⁵ ISW, 2 September 1916, p. 151. In the subsequent issue Kiltimagh was praised for adopting a similar resolution.
- ¹⁶ ISW, 8 July 1916, p. 663.

- ¹⁷ ISW, 9 September 1916, p. 175.
- ¹⁸ The editors were referring to the Junior Assistant Mistresses.
- ¹⁹ ISW, 2 September 1916, p. 158.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 152.
- ²¹ K. Roche believed that Mrs. Byrne was instrumental in calling this special meeting because the Belfast teachers were suffering so acutely under the financial strain. See, ISW 23 September, 1916, p. 224. By the end of September the Commissioners had received resolutions from teachers' associations in Cork, Monaghan, Wexford, Belfast, Donegal North West, Dundalk, Drogheda, Glenties, Wexford, Tyrone and Ballina. There is no indication in these resolutions whether it was hoped that the bonus be distributed equally between the sexes. Requests for war bonuses for teachers were also forwarded to the National Board by public bodies such as the Killadysert Rural District Council; Donegal Co. Council; Galway Co. Council; Presbytery of Coleraine; Bray Urban District Council and the King's Co. County Council also forwarded resolutions to the Commissioners. Many of the public bodies also requested that the teachers be paid their salaries on a monthly rather than on a quarterly basis. See, *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 28 March; 20 June; 26 September; 19 December 1916.
- ²² ISW, 23 September 1916, p. 219.
- ²³ The CEC itself was lobbied by teachers pressing for a war bonus. During the course of the meeting the CEC received two deputations- one from the Dublin Central Association and one from Dublin County Association in connection with the demand for a war bonus.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ ISW, 30 September 1916, p. 243. The Commissioners at their meeting on 10 October ordered: That the request of the National Teachers for a War Bonus be recommended to the Irish Government and the Treasury for favourable consideration, and that the rates of War Bonus that have been granted to Civil Servants be asked for as a minimum. See, *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 10 October, 1916.
- ²⁶ *Irish Times*, 25 September 1916.
- ²⁷ ISW, 30 September 1916, p. 247. Rumours may have reached the teachers that the Commissioners were about to recommend a bonus similar to the civil service one.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ ISW, 7 October 1916, p. 268. It is difficult to ascertain from the reports exactly on what date this meeting was held. But it appears to have been held on Friday 29th September, 1916.
- ³⁰ Ibid. The specific inclusion of lay assistants in convent schools and junior assistant mistresses demonstrated an awareness of their difficulties and treated them

equally with all other teachers. In England the NUT did not allow uncertificated teachers to join the union. Therefore, it did not represent the interests of thousands of uncertificated teachers, mostly women, working in national schools. Many JAMs would not have had any certification.

³¹ The resolution adopted at the meeting implies that an equal bonus was intended. Kathleen Roche may have been disappointed because no one explicitly referred to equal pay.

³² ISW, 14 October 1916, p. 296.

³³ Between the end of September and 24th October the Boards of Guardians of Kilkenny, Omagh, Milford and Drogheda (who combined with the Meath Rural District Council), the Killadysert Rural District Council, the Joint Diocesan Synods of Dublin, Glendalough and Kildare, and Wexford Teachers' association forwarded resolutions to the Commissioners. These echoed the CEC's resolution for a war bonus of 7s. 6d. for teachers earning below £2 a week and 5s. for teachers earning above £2. None of these requests, however, specifically demanded that the bonus be distributed equally. See, *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 24 October 1916.

³⁴ The CEC meeting took place ten days before the Commissioners agreed to recommend a war bonus for teachers to the government.

³⁵ ISW, 7 October 1916, p. 267.

³⁶ ISW, 7 October 1916, p. 278.

³⁷ *Irish Times*, 16 October 1916.

³⁸ The Letterkenny Presbytery, Limerick County Council and Limerick Corporation also passed resolutions in support of the CEC's demands.

³⁹ *Irish Times*, 16 October 1916.

⁴⁰ ISW, 28 October 1916, p. 338. *Irish Independent*, 20 October 1916.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² ISW, 28 October 1916, p.338. Verbatim report of the Chancellor's reply.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ ISW, 28 October 1916, p. 339. The ISW report, perhaps in an effort to preempt likely attacks, emphasised the case made by the deputation and the MPs for women teachers.

⁴⁷ A. T. Q. Stewart, *Edward Carson* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), pp. 97-100. H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson* (London: Constable, 1974), pp.406-414.

⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 23 October 1916.

⁴⁹ Ibid. T. J. O'Connell, INTO General Secretary, was a leading member of the Westmeath Teachers' Association.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

- ⁵¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 October 1916.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Irish Times*, 24 October 1916.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ *Midland Tribune*, 1 July 1916.
- ⁵⁶ The Irish Volunteer Dependants Fund had been founded for the same purpose. Kathleen Clarke the founder of the I.V.D.F., believed the National Aid Fund had been started and was controlled by the Irish Parliamentary Party. Because of this Kathleen Clarke refused, at first, to amalgamate with the National Aid Fund. Eventually through the efforts of John A. Murphy, a Clan na Gael member from the U.S.A., the two movements did amalgamate on Kathleen Clarke's terms. The amalgamated body was known as the National Aid and Volunteers Dependants Fund. See Kathleen Clarke *Revolutionary Woman: Kathleen Clarke 1878-1972 an autobiography* (Dublin: O' Brien Press, 1991), pp. 121-138.
- ⁵⁷ *Midland Tribune*, 1 July 1916.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 18 July 1916. Very Rev. J. Dean Scanlon, D.D., P.P., although not present at the National Aid meeting, had opened the subscription list with a cheque of £5. See, *Midland Tribune*, 1 July 1916.
- ⁶⁰ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 8 August 1916.
- ⁶¹ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 26 September 1916. See also, S. O Luing, *I Die in a Good Cause: A study of Thomas Ashe idealist and revolutionary* (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1970), pp. 108, 110.
- ⁶² *Freeman's Journal*, 24 October 1916; *Irish Times*, 24 October 1916; *ISW* 28 October, 1916, p. 341.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ It is clear from references in the "Lady Teachers' Own Page" that the Irish women teachers kept themselves informed on the activities of their colleagues in England.
- ⁶⁶ Owen, Patricia. "Who would be free, herself must strike the blow. The National Union of Women Teachers, equal pay, and women within the teaching profession", *History of Education*, 1988, vol. 17, No. 1, pp.83-39.
- ⁶⁷ It was 1919 before a majority, (19,965), of NUT members voted in a referendum to accept equal pay as union policy.
- ⁶⁸ See, "Women Teachers and the Vote", Address given by Catherine Mahon at the ICWSA, Box No. 396 - 11 (4) - 396.1 (494), Fawcett Library, London.
- ⁶⁹ T. J. O'Connell in a letter to the press on 27th October and to the *ISW*, 25th November criticised Mahon's statements and proposals.
- ⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 26 October 1916.

- ⁷¹ Mr. Lonsdale was one of the MPs who had accompanied the INTO deputation at their meeting with the Chancellor on 19th October.
- ⁷² Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol. LXXXVI. Oct. 10 Nov.2., p. 1117.
- ⁷³ The special meeting of the Belfast Teachers' Association on 21 st October would not have been open to the public whereas this meeting was.
- ⁷⁴ ISW, 11 November 1916, p.404.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 405.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ ISW, 11 November 1916, p. 405; Freeman's Journal, 27 October 1916.
- ⁷⁸ ISW, 11 November, 1916, p. 404.
- ⁷⁹ This letter was not published in the ISW.
- ⁸⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 26 October 1916.
- ⁸¹ Ibid.
- ⁸² The *Irish Independent* of 27 October gave a substantial amount of cover to the question of the teachers' war bonus. An editorial and two letters from teachers were devoted to the topic.
- ⁸³ *Irish Independent*, 27 October 1916; Freeman's Journal, 27 October 1916.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Miss M. Rodgers had unsuccessfully contested the election for lady representative in 1916.
- ⁸⁶ *Irish Independent*, 27 October 1916
- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ *Irish Independent*, 28 October 1916. On the same day a letter from another woman teacher, Kathleen O' Toole, 6 Aughrim Villas, Dublin was published in the *Irish Independent*. O' Toole wrote giving her reasons why women teachers should be treated differently to women civil servants. She pointed out that girls who worked in the G.P.O. got 15s. paid weekly and had definite prospects of increments. The teachers who had taught them after long apprenticeship and long years of service got a sum of 15s. 4d. a week, paid quarterly, and had no prospect of increment.
- ⁸⁹ The ISW, as a weekly paper, was at a disadvantage in times of crisis. By the time it was published on Saturday much of its content was already known to its readers and it ran the risk of merely repeating what had already been covered in the daily papers. To some extent this was the case with the 28th October issue during of the equal bonus controversy.
- ⁹⁰ Ramsay's point on the difference in age and service between women civil servants and women teachers was not developed in the arguments of the women teachers.
- ⁹¹ Mahon and Mrs. Byrne were, understandably, primarily concerned with pro-

moting the sectional interests of women teachers, but, their lack of solidarity with women civil servants was a little surprising.

⁹² ISW, 28 October 1916.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 344.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 340.

⁹⁶ Women civil servants were required to resign on marriage this may be why Ramsay referred to age.

⁹⁷ Ramsay also stated that the support of both Irish parties in the House of Commons demonstrated the non political, non sectarian foundation of the INTO.

⁹⁸ *Minutes of the Commissioners of National Education*, 24 October 1916.

⁹⁹ ISW, 28 October 1916, p. 346.

¹⁰⁰ The Commissioners denied that women teachers were required to pay anything extra out of their own pocket for materials for needlework, but, it seems to have been a commonly held belief that this was the case.

¹⁰¹ It had been proposed to hold a women teachers' meeting at the Belfast Teachers' Association meeting on 21st October. ISW, 4 November 1916, p.364.

¹⁰² It is interesting that whereas the Belfast women teachers received the support of their male colleagues in the Belfast Teachers' Association, Mahon was severely reprimanded for her suggestion to women to leave or regroup within the INTO. This may have been because the CEC recognised Mahon's suggestion as a long term threat to the Organisation while the Belfast meeting was seen as a once off event.

¹⁰³ ISW, 4 November 1916, p. 364.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 370,371.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 October 1916.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 30 October 1916.

¹¹⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 30 October 1916.

¹¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 30 October 1916; *Irish Times*, 31 October 1916; *Freeman's Journal*, 31 October 1916.

¹¹² *Irish Times*, 31 October 1916.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ ISW, 4th November 1916, p. 370.

¹¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 1 November 1916.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. In a postscript to her letter Mahon mentioned that she had received numerous requests from pensioned teachers asking her to take up their case for participation in the bonus. But as the lady teachers' case was enough for her, she asked

- Mr D. Elliott B.A. J.P. a pensioned teacher himself, to take up their cause. In the previous day's *Irish Independent* Michael Doyle of Ballymote had stated that if the women teachers' claims were not met then the bonus offered them should be refused but he believed that the case of the pensioned teachers was glaringly worse.
- ¹¹⁷ ISW, 4 November 1916, p. 363 . The dates given by T. J. O' Connell in this account do not correspond with earlier descriptions of proceedings.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 364.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., p. 365.
- ¹²² Ibid., p. 368.
- ¹²³ Ibid., p. 365.
- ¹²⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 4 November 1916.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid. Kathleen Roche thought Devlin was not as clear as she would have liked on the women's claim. See, ISW, 11 November 1916, p. 392.
- ¹²⁷ ISW, 11 November 1916, p. 395.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 389.
- ¹²⁹ Mahon, when referring to Birrell observed in relation to the Easter rising that "he was not responsible for anything that recently happened, as history will yet show." See, ISW, 11 November 1916, p. 389.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid.
- ¹³¹ Kathleen Roche hoped every woman teacher would respond to Mahon's appeal, she was of the view that the women's cause was progressing, but it was by no means won.
- ¹³² ISW, 18 November 1916, p. 411 .
- ¹³³ *Irish Independent*, 15 November, 1916.
- ¹³⁴ ISW, 18 November 1916, p. 418; *Irish Independent*, 23 November 1916.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 416.
- ¹³⁶ Roche may have been referring here to the Irish Women's Reform League meeting which had been reported in the *Freeman's Journal* of 30th October.
- ¹³⁷ ISW, 18 November 1916, p.416.
- ¹³⁸ Some of the Local Education Authorities in England had granted an equal war bonus to teachers.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁰ Katie Tierney later became a member of the CEC herself. Ironically she was on the deputation to the Conciliation Arbitration Board in London, in November 1918, which granted a war bonus of 2s., 4s., and 10s. to women teachers and 4s. 6d., 6s. 6d., and 1 2s. 6d. to the men.

- ¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 430
- ¹⁴² Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Commons, 1916, LXXXVII, November 7 to November 23.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 November 1916.
- ¹⁴⁶ ISW, 25 November 1916, p. 437.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ T. J. O'Connell's emphasis on the *unanimous* decision of the CEC was probably, to illustrate that the women members of the CEC voted for the all male deputation.
- ¹⁴⁹ O'Connell was referring to the fact that the wives of all three deputationists were teachers.
- ¹⁵⁰ ISW, 25 November 1916, p. 436.
- ¹⁵¹ ISW, 2 December 1916, p. 459.
- ¹⁵² Ramsay went on to say women teachers had an equal voice with the men in selecting Presidents, Vice-Presidents, District Representatives, etc., "...while at the same time giving direct lady representation." Ramsay wondered whether the time had come when direct representation might cease. "It might be better", he noted, "for the women teachers. They would then have to come openly into the field and contest six or eight seats which hitherto the men have monopolised."
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 459, 460.
- ¹⁵⁴ ISW, 2 December 1916, p. 460.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 464; ISW, 9 December 1916, p. 488.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.470.
- ¹⁵⁷ ISW, 9 December 1916, p. 486.
- ¹⁵⁸ ISW, 16 December 1916, p. 512.
- ¹⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁰ ISW, 2 November 1918, p.277.
- ¹⁶¹ ISW, 9 November 1918, p. 304. The "Lady Teachers' Own Page" was reduced from a full page to less than a half page.
- ¹⁶² *Irish Independent*, 31 October 1918.
- ¹⁶³ See, *Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1918; *Irish Independent*, 5 November 1916; 6 November; 7 November; 8 November 1918.
- ¹⁶⁴ ISW, 8 March 1919, p. 92.
- ¹⁶⁵ O' Connell, *A History of the I.N.T.O.* p. 187.

CHAPTER X

"an honoured place in the annals"

Mahon's opposition to the McPherson Education Bill and the conclusion of her involvement with the INTO

CATHERINE MAHON was an idealist who always took a principled approach to matters even if this proved unpopular or left her isolated. This characteristic was demonstrated in her opposition to Mansfield's terms of reinstatement in 1915 and in her challenge to the Executive's commitment to equal pay in 1916.¹ It was also evident in a dispute concerning striking agricultural labourers in Carrig in 1919 when, because of her sympathetic attitude to the strikers, fifteen farmers withdrew their children from Carrig N.S.² In 1920 her idealistic stance led Mahon to vehemently disagree with Executive policy on the Education Bill, a bill introduced by Chief Secretary McPherson, and based on the recommendations of the Killanin and Molony Committees of Inquiry. Her public quarrel with the Executive on this occasion was to bring to an end her leading involvement in the INTO.

The Killanin committee had been established by the government in August 1918 to:

...inquire and report as to possible improvements in the position, conditions of service, promotion and remuneration of teachers in Irish national schools and in the distribution of grants from public funds for primary education in Ireland with a view to recommending suitable scales of salaries and pensions for different classes of teachers.³

Lord Killanin, Commissioner of National Education, was appointed chair of the committee.⁴ The Molony committee, chaired by the Lord Chief Justice Thomas Molony, was appointed to enquire into the question of the financing of intermediate education.

Both committees published their reports in March 1919. The Killanin report recommended improved salaries and pensions for teachers. It also recommended the setting up of local school committees which would have

the power of striking a local rate and which would enforce the school attendance acts and look after the maintenance, heating, cleaning and equipment of schools.⁵ The Molony report recommendations dealt mainly with teachers' salaries and conditions of employment but it also recommended the co-ordination of the different levels of education under a central administrative body and that a rate be levied for education.⁶ On 5 April 1919 the Chief Secretary stated in the House of Commons that he proposed to ask a departmental committee of experts to consider both reports to see what proposals could be formulated and embodied in a bill.

When the Killanin report was issued the INTO sought the immediate implementation of its recommendations. An INTO deputation pressed this point with the Commissioners who recommended to the government that the Killanin findings be put into operation as soon as possible. The INTO also sought an interview with the Chief Secretary but he considered it premature to discuss the report with the teachers at this juncture although he promised to do so at a later stage. At the INTO Congress, held during the week of 22 April 1919, a resolution calling on the government to give immediate effect to the recommendations of the Killanin report was unanimously adopted.⁷

The Killanin report, however, did not meet with universal approval. Cardinal Logue in his Lenten Pastoral of 1919, condemned the proposal regarding local rate aid which was seen as a threat to the church's control of school management. Mahon, also had reservations about its recommendations. Writing in the *Irish Independent* on 30 April 1919 she was critical of the report on a number of grounds. She objected to the recommendation that schools under 30 average would be excluded from capitation and declared that it was on the whole:

*...a report most favourable to big schools and city teachers, and this is only natural, considering the personnel of the teachers' representatives. The rural lady teachers had on it no representation whatever; neither had the small rural schools any representative... whereas in addition to the CEC members, the city principals had three of their cleverest to look after their special interests.*⁸

She regretted that the report had been adopted without reservation by Congress. Mahon concluded her letter with a criticism of the Executive urg-

ing teachers to "stamp out the slavish practices of the toady, the sycophant, the trimmer, and the trickster" and to establish "purity and disinterestedness of service" in the CEC once again.⁹

In the same issue of the *Irish Independent* a letter from the standing committee of Catholic Bishops declared that "to discontinue the existing semi-independent Boards, whatever their defects may be, for the purpose of placing education in Ireland under the control of a Minister responsible, not to Irish but to British public opinion, would be an altogether retrograde proceeding...."¹⁰ A resolution adopted at a meeting of the Central Council of the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association in June also signalled the Catholic church's opposition to proposed changes. The resolution stated:

*That in the legislation proposed for adoption, bearing on primary education in Ireland, any interference with the present managerial system, or with the influence of managers in safeguarding the religious interests of our Irish children, will meet with the most strenuous opposition of this Association.*¹¹

A letter written by D. Humphrys, P.P. Killenaule, probably expressed the concerns of many Catholic managers. He suggested that the real object of the proposed bill was "to get in the thin end of the wedge for local grants for educational purposes, and thereby secure local control and management of schools, the destruction of the present managerial system, and the introduction of Godless education."¹²

It had been expected that the departmental committee of experts would draw up the education bill without delay and that it would be introduced to the House of Commons before July 1919. Teachers waited anxiously throughout the summer but when there was no evidence of the bill being introduced the INTO Executive called a special congress in October 1919 to consider the situation.¹³ Teachers were angry that in England and Scotland recommendations for increases in teachers' salaries had been implemented without any reference to a departmental committee of experts. A resolution, protesting against the delay in enforcing the Killanin recommendations and supporting any action that might be taken by the CEC, was adopted at this special congress.¹⁴

The Education (Ireland) Bill had its first reading in the House of Commons on 24 November 1919 and was published on 29 November.¹⁵ The Bill proposed the co-ordination of primary, secondary and technical educa-

tion under a new department and the abolition of the existing boards of education.¹⁶ It was proposed that the Chief Secretary would be president of the new department and that the other members of the department would consist of a vice-president and a permanent member. This triumvirate would be assisted by an advisory board of experts. Authorities for local administrative purposes would be created for every county council and county borough. 50 per cent of the members of these committees would be elected locally and the new department would nominate the other 50 per cent ensuring that at least half of their members would be managers of primary schools and head masters of secondary and technical schools. The bill proposed the introduction of a local rate in aid of education.¹⁷

The nationalist press reacted unfavourably to the Bill. The *Irish Independent* observed that the government should have waited until the larger question of Home Rule was settled so that an Irish parliament could then produce its own bill.¹⁸ The *Freeman's Journal* shared that view and stated that "The mere introduction of such a Bill into Parliament while the Home Rule Act is on the Statute Book is a constitutional outrage."¹⁹ The *Irish Times* which on the whole welcomed the bill suggested that its proposed local rate for education was "its misfortune and chief merit - its misfortune because the principle will be opposed bitterly by influential persons in this country; its chief merit because this principle at last brings Ireland into line with progressive democracies."²⁰ The Protestant churches welcomed the bill as did the Unionist press in Belfast.²¹

The INTO Executive, concerned that the bill contained no reference to teachers' salaries, met with representatives of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI) and the Council of Technical Teachers. The three unions agreed to work together to safeguard their common interests and to send a joint deputation to London to press for immediate payment of the money long overdue to teachers.²² This deputation met with the Chief Secretary on 10 December 1919. He told the deputation that the Treasury could not contemplate giving teachers additional money unless the improvements, as provided for in the bill, were carried out. The deputation pointed out that salary scales had been introduced by the government on other occasions without legislative procedure. However, the Chief Secretary was adamant, as the *Freeman's Journal* put it, that the "betterment in salaries would be contingent on the passing of the Bill."²³

At this stage the Catholic church's opposition to the bill began to mount.

On 9 December the Standing Committee of the Irish Bishops adopted a detailed resolution strongly condemning the proposed bill. The resolution first outlined the fundamental importance of education stating that "In itself and in its bearing on religion, education holds a foremost place of importance in public affairs".²⁴ The bishops suggested that the new department was being set up at the instigation of an "intolerant minority in one angle of the country" and that the department might be "manned without either an Irishman or a Catholic upon it".²⁵ They implied that the question of the management of schools might be dealt with unsympathetically by this department. While the bishops saw the need for reforms in education and for increasing the salaries and pensions of teachers they believed these reforms could best be carried out under the auspices of a native government. The only education department the vast majority of the Irish people would tolerate, the bishops declared, was one set up by its own parliament.²⁶ The nationalist press approved of the bishops' statement, the *Freeman's Journal* noted that the criticisms of the bishops "reflects the objections that Nationalists and democrats everywhere had instinctively formed."²⁷ The INTO Executive made no official comment on the bishops' statement. On 12 December the Irish County Councils' General Council, at its annual meeting, also condemned the proposed bill.²⁸

The second reading of the Education Bill was to have been held in the House of Commons on 12 December 1919 but was postponed through a tactical manoeuvre of Joseph Devlin of the Irish Parliamentary Party.²⁹ The INTO Executive agreed at its meeting at the end of December that no useful purpose could be served by a discussion of the Education Bill at this stage.³⁰ However, in January 1920 T. J. O'Connell, General Secretary of the INTO, wrote a series of letters analysing the proposals under the bill and comparing them with the existing situation. He argued that under the bill the position of religion was, if anything, strengthened, that there would be no change in the power of managers to appoint or remove teachers, that financially the Irish education system would be improved under the proposals of the bill, and that the establishment of local education committees would make the administration of education less bureaucratic and centralised.³¹ Subsequently, at its meeting on 10 January 1920, the INTO Executive agreed to issue a statement detailing the benefits to teachers and pupils and the improvements to the education system contained in the proposed bill. The statement addressed some of the objections raised against the bill and

explained why the CEC, while urging teachers to seek amendments, in particular, amendments to have the personnel and composition of the department changed and to have the advisory board enlarged, was supporting the introduction of the bill.³² The Executive statement was published in the daily newspapers on 12 January.

O'Connell's letters gave rise to a great deal of controversy much of which was played out in the letters page of the daily newspapers. Reverend Dwane of Limerick was the first to respond to O'Connell's letters. He was severely critical of O'Connell's and T. J. Nunan's, the INTO President, support for the bill and he questioned whether they were representing the views of Catholic teachers. O'Connell and Nunan ably defended themselves against this and subsequent attacks by Reverend Dwane. A number of teachers had written to the papers expressing their views individually on the topic. Edmond Mansfield, ex-president of the INTO and one of the most prominent members of the Organisation whose dismissal had given rise to the Dill Commission of Inquiry, wrote on at least four occasions to the press, expressing his criticism of aspects of the bill and suggesting improvements.³³ Mansfield, however, never criticised his colleagues in the INTO. Indeed the Executive position gained the support of a majority of teachers as was evident from the reports of the January meetings of the local branches.³⁴

On 20 January 1920 Mahon wrote the first of her attacks on the bill. She said she wished to avoid censure of the Executive "for it is just what the teachers have made it." None of its members, she suggested, could be "accused or credited with Sinn Fein sympathies" indeed she believed that no member of Sinn Fein could "consistently be a member of any such body". Although the opposition to the bill in the nationalist press could have led Mahon to this conclusion it was unfair of her to make such an assumption about members of the Executive especially as Sinn Fein had not indicated what its views were. Mahon went on to note how the officers of the Executive each had brothers priests and she knew them to be "the best of practical Catholics" but she questioned their motives. The CEC's statement in January she described as "an apology for the British Government in Ireland." She suggested that, apart from the Chief Secretary and a few teachers, all were opposed to the bill and although she was aware of the need for salary increases she had no hesitation in saying that:

...a crisis has come in which are involved greater issues than money, and I

am absolutely confident that the great bulk of the teachers of Ireland will, with me and Mr. Mansfield and many others not hesitate for an instant in taking the only possible and honourable course open to us at the present moment.

It was understandable, given Mansfield's letters, that Mahon presumed he would be opposed to the bill. However, she had misjudged him, as indeed she misjudged teachers' reactions to the bill. Mahon in conclusion suggested that the CEC should:

concentrate on the increase of salaries, which the proposals in this Bill are an admission we are entitled to...and refuse to be dragged into the vortex of controversial politics in opposition to the country, an area which by the present rules we are not allowed to enter under any other circumstance.

The Executive, it appeared, had been tied into supporting the bill because of the Chief Secretary's insistence that increases to teachers' salaries would not be granted until the bill became law. It could be argued, as Mahon was doing, that the linking of teachers' salaries with the bill should have been firmly resisted and that the Executive had played into the Chief Secretary's hand. Mahon also had a valid point when saying that the Executive should not have been drawn into public controversy on the issue. O'Connell, in his letters to the press, had made an effective and courageous case for the bill on its merits, however, one of the fundamental principles of the INTO was that it was a non sectarian, non political Organisation and should therefore not enter into political controversy.

Although there was some critical reaction to Mahon's letter it did not give rise to huge controversy. Mansfield wrote saying he resented the use of his name as an indication or encouragement of division in the INTO and insisted there was no essential difference between the CEC attitude and his. He also defended O'Connell's and Nunans's "absolute sincerity and patriotism."³⁵ However, it is worth noting that subsequently at a meeting of the Tipperary Teachers' Association Mansfield stated that the country might be assured that if the bill in its final form was unacceptable the Irish teachers would do the right thing, presumably meaning they would reject it.³⁶ Charles Mc Morrow also wrote defending O'Connell and Nunan, he declared that Mahon's letter "had pained and surprised not a few of her

most ardent admirers." Her letter is "devoid of judgement, narrow minded in the extreme and is entirely unworthy of one who has held the most honoured position the gift of the teachers' Organisation. The extreme politician and not the educationist, is written large over her letter."³⁷ Mc Morrow also challenged Mahon's claim that the new department would have the power to appoint whoever it chose as manager.³⁸ O'Connell's only reference to Mahon's letter was to state that Sinn Fein thoroughly agreed with the Executive in that there was no essential difference between a Board nominated by the Lord Lieutenant and a department appointed by the British Parliament.³⁹

Mahon wrote again on the subject of the bill on 30 January 1920. She observed that the Executive's mandate was to secure increases in teachers' salaries and that it had overstepped this mandate. She again cast a shadow on the Executive's motives saying the explanation for its "somersault round in favour of the bill" was now "pretty well known."⁴⁰ The Executive, Mahon declared, ought to have consulted with the teachers before issuing its statement and the statement should have pointed out that the bishops had condemned the bill and that any attempt by the teachers to "annex the support of the people against the Bishops, even if possible of contemplation, was bound to end in failure unless the Irish people were dead to all sense of gratitude."⁴¹ That it was doomed to failure with such united national opposition against it was a fair point. However, most of the other points of this letter were dismissed by O'Connell and Nunan who responded angrily to this second letter of Mahon's. Nunan categorically denied her claim that the Executive had abused its powers. He also dismissed her suggestion that the Executive should have pointed out that the church was opposed to the bill as "everyone who had even glanced at a newspaper" would have been aware of the church's position.⁴² O'Connell, in his response, declared that the INTO had made more progress in the one year since Mahon left the Executive than it had during the eight years of her connection with it.

O'Connell elaborated on this in the *ISW* where he listed the achievements of the INTO since Mahon's departure from the Executive. These included, he asserted, monthly salaries; direct payment; annual increment; abolition of standard numbers; promotion for assistants and the securing of a sum close to one and a half millions annually for teachers. He also dismissed the suggestion that Mahon's involvement had helped increase the INTO's membership, illustrating his point with membership figures for the

years 1910 to 1915. Mahon, he pointed out, had been Vice-President in 1911, President in 1912 and 1913 and Ex-President in 1915, yet membership during these years had declined. In 1910 membership was 8,955; in 1911 it was 9,116; in 1912 it was 9,241; in 1913 it was 9,080; in 1914 it was 8,453 and in 1915 it was 8,771. This was an unfair representation, Mahon's greatest impact on recruitment was in her first years on the Executive when she had focussed on the issue and when membership had risen from 6,445 in 1906 to 8,010 in 1908. O'Connell himself was concerned that the numbers for 1920 were down by 400. In addition, such issues as annual increment and the promotion of teachers had been recommended by the Dill Commission, where Mahon had played such an important role, and the INTO had also begun negotiations for monthly salary payments while she was on the Executive.

Mahon, in a letter on 5 February, defended her achievements in the INTO. She pointed out that during her time on the CEC membership of the INTO had almost doubled "as the women teachers crowded into the Organisation when I fought and won for them women representation, and was elected one of their first representatives."⁴³ She also stated that when she left the CEC the INTO was regarded as an important element in the national as well as the educational life of the nation but that it was now placed "on the same par in the mental and moral order as the armed forces of the Crown are in the physical order, to be henceforth treated with suspicion and distrust by our fellow countrymen in all their further struggles for their ideals and aspirations."⁴⁴ She asked why the CEC did not try to raise opposition to the unfair "No Bill, no money" issue and seek as much support for teachers' salary increases as they were doing for the adoption of the bill. She urged teachers to "wake up" and take back into their own hands the "reins of government of the Organisation, and insist that all questions, great and small, that crop up between congresses be submitted to us beforehand by a referendum".⁴⁵ Mahon also proposed that a special consultative conference be held to decide the best method by which teachers would get their increases without these being made dependant on the bill.

Mahon's central point that the Executive should focus on seeking support for salary increases was legitimate. The critical issue for teachers was increases in salary and given the widespread opposition to the bill, and the recognition that teachers were due increases, it probably would have been a more judicious course for the Executive to take. Her view that in supporting the bill teachers were betraying the nationalist cause was obviously influ-

enced by the press and the Catholic church's reaction to the bill as well as her own ardent nationalism.

Mahon wrote again on 10 February. In this letter she implied that those defending the bill were "placemen, job-hunters," or "prospective office holders in the proposed department".⁴⁶ She stated that her aim was not to discuss the bill either educationally, politically or financially but "to save the name teacher from being handed down to history as a synonym for traitor...."⁴⁷ In his book *One Hundred Years of Progress* O'Connell noted that at this time rumours were circulating around Dublin that the INTO President and General Secretary would be appointed to high administrative positions in the proposed Education Department, if and when, the bill was enacted. Both of them were dismayed that Mahon, whom they held in high esteem, accepted these rumours and was indeed fostering them. Nunan challenged Mahon to substantiate her statements regarding the offer of jobs or to withdraw them.⁴⁸ Nunan also suggested that Mahon would "have us put up a selfish fight for pensions and salaries, and fling to the winds the other valuable portions of the bill."⁴⁹

Mahon, in response, noted that her comments re jobs had evidently "got home" and said that she stood by every statement both "expressed and implied in my four letters - both as regards the Education Bill, the action of some of the CEC regarding it and the reasons for that action."⁵⁰ On the same day, 13 February, a letter from J. F. O' Farrell of Drogheda, former member of the Executive, alleged that the President had been unofficially negotiating with a highly placed government official during the period when the bill was being drafted. Mahon, in a letter on 16 February accepted O' Farrell's allegation as support for the rumours that the INTO officers were to be appointed to posts in the new department.⁵¹ As to Nunan's point, that the bill would benefit both teachers and pupils, Mahon said that it had been repeatedly shown that these benefits "could and should be ensured to both children and teachers irrespective of any Bill whatever, if the Government was sincere in its pretensions."⁵²

The Education Bill was condemned in the Lenten Pastorals of the Most Rev. Dr. Harty, Bishop of Cashel and Emily, Most Rev. Dr. Foley, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and the Most Rev. Dr. O' Sullivan, Bishop of Kerry.⁵³ Their condemnation was reported in the newspapers on 23 February which also contained an official statement from the CEC. The statement stressed that the INTO had "no desire that religious teaching or the present religious

control of Catholic schools should be interfered with in the slightest degree", neither would the INTO "countenance, much less support, any measure which would have this effect."⁵⁴ The statement also asserted that the INTO had neither approved nor accepted the Bill but had protested against the constitution and personnel of the new Department.⁵⁵ This was a disingenuous underplaying of its earlier position.

Mahon was not satisfied with the CEC statement. In a letter published in the *Irish Independent* on 25 February she said that although the CEC had protested against the constitution and personnel of the proposed department it had failed to object to the principle of the bill. The principle of the bill was, according to Mahon, the setting up of a new British department to control Irish education at a time when an Irish settlement hung in the balance. She expressed her hope that the CEC would organise a plebiscite of all members of the INTO to ascertain their views of the bill.⁵⁶

On 5 March a letter from Cardinal Logue addressed to the Irish bishops proclaimed a special novena to be held to "enlist the powerful aid of our National Apostle, St. Patrick" to protect and to "avert from us the threatened calamity" of having the Education Bill enacted.⁵⁷ The cardinal also urged that "as the question bears on religion," the "fathers of families in each parish should be invited to assemble in the parish church after the devotions on Passion Sunday and afforded an opportunity to register their protest against a measure which trenches on their parental rights".⁵⁸ Apart from Mahon there was no public comment on the novena made by teachers. Mahon noted that Dr. Foley, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, who had written to the newspapers pointing out that there was no legal guarantee in the bill for the maintenance of the managerial system or the giving of religious instruction as at present practised in the national schools, had corroborated her interpretation of the bill. Referring to the pledge signing protest on Passion Sunday she stated her readiness to act as collector of the signatures of teachers who had neglected to sign the protest.⁵⁹

Mahon's insinuation that the INTO General Secretary and President were promoting the bill out of self interest was unfounded and deeply offensive to the two men concerned. The INTO Executive had sought legal counsel and had been advised that Mahon's allegations were libellous. At the Executive meeting held on 20 March 1920 the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

That having before us the opinion of our Legal Advisor to the effect that the allegation of corruption made by Miss C. M. Mahon in the Press with regard to the President and General Secretary are actionable, we hereby authorise the President and General Secretary to institute legal proceedings in accordance with counsel's instructions.⁶⁰

A letter was sent to Mahon inviting her to say whether or not she had written the letters which appeared over her name in the press on the dates mentioned. Mahon did not reply to this letter or to two reminders which followed. She was asked to name a solicitor who would accept service of a writ claiming damages for libel. Mahon ignored this and the writ was served in the ordinary way. At the court hearing Mahon entered no defence against the action and judgment by default was awarded against her. Mahon was then informed that the plaintiffs would be applying to the court for damages and she was warned that the damages could be substantial if she did not appear in court. Mahon did not respond to this warning either. At Congress 1920 during the debate on the Education Bill an account of the proceedings was given to the delegates.⁶¹ During the discussion which followed a delegate said he understood that Mahon had refused to defend herself in a British court. Legal counsel had pointed out that the Sinn Fein courts could not hear a libel action, however, the General Secretary stated that if Mahon would be prepared to attend and answer charges in the Sinn Fein courts the Executive would see to it that she would be given every facility to do so. The delegate undertook to inform Mahon of this, but Mahon did not withdraw or substantiate her charges.

The only significant indication of support Mahon received at this time was from her own branch, the Birr Teachers' Association. At a special meeting of the association, held on Easter Saturday, just before the INTO Congress was to begin, the following resolution was adopted in order to have it placed before Congress:

(a) That we protest against the proposed misuse of the Organisation funds on a projected lawsuit against Miss C. M. Mahon, a member of this Association and a past President of the Organisation, who in the recent controversy on the Education Bill, endeavoured against such serious handicaps to vindicate and maintain the honour of the Teachers' Organisation and to exculpate its members from the charge of National apostasy to which it was

laid open by those who, embarking with a high hand and without authority from its electorate on a policy of support for the device of attaching salary increases to a contentious Bill, thereby alienating from Irish teachers the esteem and respect of our fellow-citizens.

(b) That if this lawsuit be persisted in, we hereby request Congress to rule that it be undertaken by these members at their own expense. That if the funds of the Organisation subscribed by Miss Mahon and the large number of teachers who approve of the part which she took in such a supreme National crisis be attempted to be used in legal action against her, Congress should order, in common justice and fair play that the Organisation funds should likewise be placed at her disposal also, for her defence against such action.

(c) That we request Congress to so amend Rule 20 by adding clauses making it more definite and specific and, by attaching deterrent penalty to its violation, that future Executives will be compelled in any question of policy or of important proceedings that crops up between Congresses, to take the course which at this late stage in the business the present CEC proposes to do - viz., to ask the teachers to formulate a policy on the matters at stake, and which in connection with the Education bill it should have done three months ago, and at the various important stages since, before it ran amuck as it did on its own initiative.⁶²

There is no indication in the report of Congress that this resolution was put to the floor, although it may have been discussed at the private debate on the Education Bill, but it is clear that the Executive's stance on the bill was overwhelmingly endorsed by the delegates and the members at large.⁶³

Mahon, once legal proceedings had been initiated did not contribute further to the debate on the Education Bill and the Executive decided that as Mahon, by her refusal to appear in court and substantiate her allegations, had allowed judgement to be recorded against her, it would proceed no further with the matter.

The government did not proceed with the education bill but teachers secured an interim grant of £350,000 as payment of arrears due from the Killanin recommendations and in November 1920 secured an agreement on permanent salary scales which was to their satisfaction.

The lawsuit must have been a humiliating experience for Mahon. She

had voiced her sincerely held views on the bill but had also made unfounded allegations about the INTO officers. Her disagreements with the Executive since 1916 may have led to her loss of faith in them but there was no justification for her allegations of jobbery. O'Connell in his book suggests that Mahon was exploited by others and convinced by them that only she could save the INTO by "exposing" the "guilty ones". Mahon confirmed this in conversation with O'Connell almost twenty years after the event. Apart from the unfounded allegations regarding O'Connell and Nunan, Mahon had a right to express her criticisms of the Executive. Her view that the bill was both anti-national and would undermine the clerical control of school management was undoubtedly influenced by the Catholic church's strong opposition to the bill. Her point that the Executive should have focussed on the salary increases rather than promote the education bill was worthy of consideration as was her contention that the members should have been balloted before the Executive decided on its policy. However, as the majority of teachers agreed with the Executive's stand point, Mahon's views on these issues did not gain support. O'Connell when discussing Mahon's intervention in the Education Bill debate, commented, with some justification, on her tendency to over state and her failure to check her facts. Yet, it is interesting to speculate whether a libel charge would have been taken against someone of less significance than Mahon and whether the lawsuit was also an effort to stop her before her views gained influence. The law suit did silence Mahon and brought to a somewhat bitter close Mahon's leading involvement with the INTO.

There were only two other occasions, both of them largely ceremonial, when Mahon featured in INTO affairs. In 1939 she was invited, along with other past Presidents, to a function where they were presented with a replica of the newly designed presidential badge. According to T. J. O'Connell none of the past Presidents was so warmly received as Catherine Mahon. At the ceremony the INTO President paid "eloquent tributes to the men he saw about him, and to Miss Mahon, their lady Past President who had earned and who still retained the respect and esteem of the INTO."⁶⁴ In her address at the presentation ceremony Mahon said she had expected when she "broke the ice" that the INTO would elect a woman President at intervals. She noted that there had been many women Presidents in Scotland and England, but only one in Ireland and she asked, "Are the women of the Gall cleverer or more energetic or handsomer than the women of the Gael?" She

went on to say "All my life I have worked for the three F's - Freedom for the Country, Freedom for the Language, Freedom for the Teacher."⁶⁵ She said she had lived to see all three objects attained, but the result amounted only to the shattering of illusions.

In 1946 Mahon was invited to address the INTO Congress, where Mrs Kathleen Clark, the first woman to be elected President since Mahon, presided. Mahon expressed the hope that it would never be so long before another woman would occupy the Presidential chair and she made a "fighting speech" to the delegates who had just begun what was to develop into a seven month long strike. She also noted the remarkable coincidence of having women Presidents lead the INTO in the most stormy periods of its history.⁶⁶ Mahon was moved by the very warm reception she received from the delegates, most of whom had never heard or seen her before.⁶⁷



Group taken at the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on Saturday, September 2nd, when the INTO Past-Presidents were presented with replicas of the Presidential Badge of Office.

Irish School Weekly, September 16, 1939.

Although Mahon after 1920 did not involve herself with INTO affairs she

did not retire from public life. She continued to engage in local issues, for instance, she was honorary President of the Tipperary Cottage Tenants' Association.⁶⁸ She was also an active member of the Fianna Fail party and in July 1934, having retired from teaching at Carrig N.S., she was elected to North Tipperary County Council, the first woman to achieve this distinction.⁶⁹ She was appointed to several committees on the Council including the Health Board, where she acted as vice-chair, and the Vocational Education Committee. She also represented the council on the General Council of County Councils.⁷⁰ Mahon, along with her sisters Mary Daly, a widow who had a drapery shop in Ennis, and Margaret Barry, also a widow who had a small grocery shop in Ballindangan, North Cork, bought a house in Balbriggan, County Dublin. They were familiar with the town as their brother Michael and his wife had lived there. The sisters along, with their mother Winifred, who had lived with Catherine Mahon in Carrig, moved to Balbriggan in 1937. Mahon, resigned from North Tipperary Health Board but continued to attend the annual general meetings of the county council until her term ended in 1941.⁷¹ In Balbriggan she became active in local affairs, including the Red Cross movement, and P.J. Burke, the local Fianna Fail TD, suggested to her that she stand for election for the Dail but she declined.⁷²

Catherine Mahon died on 27 February 1948 and was buried in Balbriggan cemetery alongside her mother, her sister Margaret died the following day. The President of the INTO, S. Brosnahan, its Treasurer, D. Kelleher and General Secretary T. J. O'Connell attended her funeral and paid their final respects to her.⁷³ O'Connell, in an obituary in the ISW, highlighted her contribution to the Dill Commission. He believed that Mahon's "great ability was never so well displayed" as when she gave her evidence to the Committee.⁷⁴ It was, he observed, comparatively easy to deliver a prepared address or to make a considered statement for publication but it was something different to withstand the ordeal of a most severe and searching cross-examination. He suggested that in the "annals of the INTO the name and deeds of Catherine Mahon will occupy a large and deservedly honoured place."⁷⁵ The *Midland Tribune* also wrote a warm tribute to Mahon. It noted how during her period as principal of Carrig N.S. she had gained the "undying appreciation of the people of the district and the respect of various generations of their children who passed through her hands."⁷⁶ She was, it continued, a woman of great character with a pleasing,

yet impressive manner. During her period on the County Council she had devoted herself, the tribute observed, to imparting new ideas for the social advancement of the people and in particular, to improving the living conditions of the less well off. The tribute concluded by declaring "Gone is a great and true hearted woman, who gave her all for the welfare of others. Miss Mahon's life's work remains a monument to her memory....".⁷

- ¹ According to O'Connell, Mahon also advocated the setting up of a rural teachers' association in 1917 because she believed the terms of a proposed government grant to teachers did not meet their needs. See, O'Connell, *A History of the INTO*, p. 173. However, this researcher has not found any evidence to substantiate this.
- ² See, *Midland Tribune*, 11 October 1919.
- ³ *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into primary Education (Ireland) 1918. 1919 (Comd. 60) XXI 741.*
- ⁴ Its members included Most Revd. Dr. O' Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe; Right Revd. B. J. Plunket, Bishop of Tuam; Dr. Goligher, Trinity College; Mr. Martin, a Belfast businessman; Mr. Bonaparte Wyse, secretary of the Board of National Education; Mr. Headlam, representing the Treasury; Robert Judge, President, INTO; T. J. Nunan, Vice-President INTO; George Ramsay, ex-President INTO; Margaret Doyle, Lady Assistants' Representative INTO; W. B. Joyce and William O' Neill, Dublin and W. Hazlett, Belfast who were all members of the Principal Teachers' Union and Mr. J. M. Flood, B.L. who was secretary of the committee. Three clerical managers were later co-opted to the committee.
- ⁵ *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into primary Education (Ireland) 1918. 1919 (Comd. 60) XXI 741.*
- ⁶ *Report of the Vice-Regal Committee on the Condition of Service and Remuneration of Teachers in Intermediate Schools. and on the Distribution of Grants from Public Funds for Intermediate Education in Ireland. 1919 (Cmd.66)XXI 645.* The Molony Committee did not recommend that there should be any difference in salary between men and women.
- ⁷ See, O'Connell, *One Hundred Years of Progress*, pp. 290, 291 .
- ⁸ *Irish Independent*, 30 April 1919.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 26 June 1919.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 9 August 1919.
- ¹³ O'Connell, *One Hundred Years of Progress*, p. 292.
- ¹⁴ *Irish Independent*, 25 October 1919.
- ¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 29 November 1919.

- ¹⁶ See, Bill to make further provision with respect to education in Ireland and for other purposes connected therewith. 1919 (214) i 407.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 29 November 1919.
- ¹⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 29 November 1919.
- ²⁰ *Irish Times*, 29 November 1919.
- ²¹ See, *Belfast Newsletter*, 29 November 1919.
- ²² *Freeman's Journal*, 1 December 1919.
- ²³ Ibid., 11 December 1919.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 10 December 1919.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid. See also, O'Connell, *One Hundred Years of Progress*, pp.297-300.
- ²⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 December 1919.
- ²⁸ *Irish Times*, 13 December 1919.
- ²⁹ *Irish Independent*, 15 December 1919.
- ³⁰ *Irish Independent*, 23 December 1919.
- ³¹ See, *Irish Independent*, 7, 8, 9 January 1920.
- ³² ISW, 24 January 1920, p. 546.
- ³³ See, *Irish Independent*, 15 December 1919, 12 January 1920; *Evening Telegraph*, 1 January 1920.
- ³⁴ See, ISW, 31 January, 1920, p. 594; 14 February 1920, p. 642.
- ³⁵ *Irish Independent*, 21 January 1920.
- ³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 26 January 1920. Mansfield, although he was elected an incoming member of the CEC, did not attend the INTO Congress of 1920 where the Executive's position received resounding support.
- ³⁷ *Irish Independent*, 27 January 1920.
- ³⁸ *Irish Independent*, 20 January 1920.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 30 January 1920.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² *Irish Independent*, 4 February 1920.
- ⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 5 February 1920.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ *Irish Independent*, 10 February 1920.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 13 February 1920.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ *Irish Independent*, 16 February 1920.

- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ *Irish Independent*, 23 February 1920.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid; ISW, 28 February 1920, p. 690.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ *Irish Independent*, 25 February 1920.
- ⁵⁷ *Irish Independent*, 5 March 1920. See, O'Connell *One Hundred Years of Progress*, for an account of teachers' reaction to the novena.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ *Irish Independent*, 4 March 1920.
- ⁶⁰ ISW, 27 March 1920, p. 786.
- ⁶¹ This debate was held in private and there is no account of it in the *ISW*. The description of events is taken from O'Connell's *One Hundred Years of Progress*.
- ⁶² *ISW*, 24 April 1920, p. 895.
- ⁶³ For instance, two candidates with opposing views on the bill went forward for election as vice-president, J. Harbison who supported the Executive Organisation's position won 4,065 votes compared with J. F. O' Farrell who secured only 1,720 votes. See, *ISW*, 17 April 1920, p. 862.
- ⁶⁴ *ISW*, 9 September 1939, p. 868.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ *ISW*, 4, 11 May 1946, p. 183.
- ⁶⁷ See, O'Connell, *One Hundred Years of Progress*, p. 325.
- ⁶⁸ See, *Midland Tribune*, 15 December 1934.
- ⁶⁹ Mahon topped the poll in the Borrisokane area. See, *Midland Tribune*, July 1934.
- ⁷⁰ See, Minutes Tipperary N.R. County Council, Book IV.
- ⁷¹ See, *Midland Tribune*, 22 May 1937 and Minutes Tipperary N.R. County Council, Books V and VI.
- ⁷² Paddy Barry, Catherine Mahon's nephew, remembers her declining to go forward for election as a TD.
- ⁷³ *ISW*, 6, 13 March 1948, p. 112.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ *Midland Tribune*, 6 March 1948. Indeed, Mahon's contribution to her local community merits further research.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Catherine Mahon's work, which had a significant impact on the development of the INTO, has not been widely acknowledged. Mahon, a suffragist, fought for equality issues within the Organisation. She, along with Elizabeth Larmour, was the first woman elected to the Executive. She was the first woman President and she is the only President to have served a second consecutive term since the rules governing elections were adopted in the early 1900s. During her presidency equal pay was adopted as part of INTO policy, several years before it was adopted by the NUT in England. Her recruitment drive set the INTO on a course of expansion, doubling women's membership and ensuring the Organisation's future as a representative body. Her campaign against the enforced teaching of cookery in national schools was the first occasion the INTO addressed an issue of specific concern to women teachers. Her firm stance against Dr. Starkie, Resident Commissioner of National Education, helped to underline the INTO's independent status. She wisely advocated the establishment of supply panels to provide substitute teachers for women teachers on maternity leave. Her leadership during the Mansfield dismissal crisis and her evidence at the Dill Commission were recognised as having been outstanding and won public and political support for the INTO.

In the ninety years since Mahon was first elected to the Executive there have been only nine women presidents. The question may be asked why more women did not follow Mahon's lead. O'Connell's treatment of her provides an obvious clue. Mahon publicly challenged the INTO leadership on two occasions, when she questioned the Executive's commitment to equal pay and when she opposed CEC policy on the Mc Pherson Education Bill. O'Connell, newly elected General Secretary of the INTO and anxious to establish firm control of the Organisation, brooked no challenge to his position. He denounced Mahon's campaign for an equal war bonus in 1916 and served her with a libel writ in 1920. Neither of these actions would have induced women teachers to take a leading role within the INTO and a tradition of active participation by women did not, therefore, evolve out of Mahon's pioneering achievements. O'Connell always argued that women had the same right as men to go forward as CEC representatives but there was little to encourage them to do so. Women's issues such as equal pay, the marriage bar and the requirement for women to retire at sixty years of age

were not a priority for the Organisation and it is clear that its structure did not facilitate their participation.

Since the late 1970s efforts have been made to address women's concerns and to increase their participation in the INTO. Important gains like equal pay, improvements in maternity leave, the appointment of an Equality Officer, the establishment of an Equality Committee and the promotion of gender equality generally have led to progress. Yet, much remains to be done, particularly at national level, to ensure that women's membership in the INTO is reflected in the power positions of the Organisation. Perhaps, recognition of the achievements of women, such as Catherine Mahon, may serve as a further step towards accomplishing that end.

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