CHAPTER 13

Advanced Education for Working People: The Catholic Workers' College, a Case Study

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Introduction

Whether for good or ill, the rapid decline of the standing of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries is a well enough known story. Though a crude measure of anything, it is a striking fact that, in 1932, a Eucharistic Congress, culminating in an open-air ceremony in Dublin's Phoenix Park, could attract an estimated 1 million people, but an equivalent event in 2012 saw unsold tickets left over for a gathering in a rather more modestly sized stadium.[1] In addition to the more general processes of secularisation that have been at work in Europe and elsewhere for decades, if not centuries, and which have had obvious implications for Ireland,[2] a series of scandals related to clerical abuse of children/adolescents have been documented in official[3] and popular publications,[4] some of the latter harrowingly autobiographical.[5] Rightly or wrongly, concern at the undoubtedly repressive conditions in such residential institutions as orphanages, children's homes and so-called Magdalene laundries now often spills over in such a way as to contribute to the construction of a place of fearful repute: 'the Catholic

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school'. In this way, Catholic education in Ireland has come to be thought of as a site of widespread abuse of power. These matters are probably only now beginning to receive systematic academic attention,[6] but some Catholic educational institutions continue to be remembered (or so it seems to me, though this is, admittedly, anecdotal and impressionistic on my part) with affection and respect. One such institution was the Catholic Workers' College(CWC), though it is perhaps better remembered by its later title, the National College of Industrial Relations (NCIR).

The foundation of what would become the CWC was first mooted in 1947 when Irish Jesuit Provincial Thomas Byrne (1904–1978) proposed to establish a 'Social Centre' to which a college for Catholic workers was to be attached.[7] The Social Centre would have been an ambitious project, involving scholarly research and publication, matters that were dealt with in the CWC only as time/resources permitted, which it rarely did, and in a more or less haphazard way.[8] But implementation of the Jesuit Provincial's proposal, even in its eventual, truncated version, did not come about until 1951, in part as a result of the CWC's prospective Prefect of Studies, Edward Joseph Coyne, S.J. (1896–1958), then occupied in giving lectures to extra-mural students at University College Dublin.[9]

Opening its doors to students in a building belonging to the Irish province of the Society of Jesus in Dublin's genteel Ranelagh district in February 1951, the CWC commenced a history of operation that, in a strict sense, has not ended yet. Between 1951 and 1966, it provided lectures on moral and socio-political topics to students from a range of backgrounds, including industrial managers, supervisors and union shop stewards. From 1966 to 1984, what was effectively the same body 'traded' as the College of Industrial Relations (CIR), a change in name intended to reflect the fact that it was 'open for business' to Catholics and non-Catholics, workers and managers, all alike.

Finally, in the early 1980s, as there were no other colleges of industrial relations to rival its claim, it took the more grandiose designation of *National* College of Industrial Relations, though this signified less of a change in mission or culture than that from CWC to CIR. In 1998, in a shift far more profound than either of those that had occurred previously, the NCIR became part of the newly formed National College of Ireland (NCI). This last change was accompanied by a move from its Ranelagh home to one in the recently redeveloped Docklands area, site of the city's then growing financial district. By 2011, the heirs of the original venture were the staff and students of the NCI's School of Community Studies,

which faced closure as a result of cost-cutting measures.[10] Thus, it may be something of a moot point whether or not the CWC any longer exists. The NCI exists, and even thrives as a small, though seemingly effective, provider of vocational higher education, but it is *nothing like* the CWC in culture/ethos. However, my concern is with the CWC, and I proceed now to describe it at its height, in the 1950s and 1960s, and to analyse some aspects of its institutional culture or ethos.

Inspirations and Precursors

By the late 1940s, the idea of a Catholic college for workingmen, as distinct to a Catholic university or seminary, was hardly new. In 1921, in an article published posthumously in the journal *Studies*, founded in 1912 by the influential but controversial priest Timothy Corcoran (1871–1943),[11] the English Jesuit Charles Dominic Plater (1875–1921) described the work he had then been involved in over the course of some years, organising lay retreats. These gatherings, usually for men, had been spiritual in nature for the most part, but Plater emphasised his awareness of the need to cultivate 'a number of well-trained lay people'.[12]

In saying so, he was effectively 'setting out the stall' of the Catholic Social Guild [CSG] that, along with Henry Parkinson (1852–1924), he had been instrumental in founding in 1909, in a belated response to the encyclical *Rerum novarum* promulgated in 1891 by Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci (1810–1903; Leo XIII, 1878–1903). In turn, the CSG was an offshoot of, if not entirely a breakaway from, the older and more conservative Catholic Truth Society (CTS) and the retreats for lay people that became central to the CSG's work were, as Plater readily admitted, inspired by European models dating back the 1880s.[13] Working alongside Plater in the early days of the CSG was another Jesuit, Leo O'Hea (1881–1976) and when Plater died suddenly in 1921 it largely fell to O'Hea to continue the educational work of the CSG. This he did in 1922 by founding what would become Plater College.

Plater was, at first, something of a success, though patently it did not spring full-formed from the brow of some Catholic Zeus (were such a thing possible). Thus, in addition to the direct, if slightly delayed, influence of *Rerum novarum*, other influences were at work in its formation, including what might be called the new trade unionism. The changed and changing Britain of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw increased union militancy but also an upsurge in interest in

political education, exemplified in British secular culture by the Workers' Educational Association and Ruskin Hall (now College).[14] Plater grew and prospered in parallel with these. Operating on a succession of sites in the quaintly picturesque medieval city of Oxford, though not formally affiliated to the university,[15] and closely modelled on Ruskin,[16] it only closed, amidst scandal and acrimony, in 2005.[17] But in 1923, presumably confident that it had a long and productive future ahead of it, O'Hea outlined its work as promoting a: 'right understanding of [social] conditions'. This, he insisted, relied on 'knowledge of Economics and History…[and] Moral Philosophy'.[18]

Elsewhere, directly inspired by the efforts of Plater and O'Hea, the American Laymen's League was created as early as 1911. At first specialising in the organisation of retreats, its founders soon established a School of Social Studies.[19] However, despite some early success, the Laymen's League fell on hard times and from the 1920s was incorporated into Fordham University in New York as the basis of its School of Social Studies, in the process becoming part of a more conventional, albeit still Catholic, educational project.

Labour colleges other than the famous *Catholic* institutions operating in the US in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s included the broad left Brookwood College and the explicitly Communist Jefferson School of Social Science. Nonetheless, by 1948 a recognisable 'sector' of Catholic labour colleges had come into being.[20] Despite some European equivalents (most obviously Plater College and the CWC itself) the labour college movement was always largely a North American phenomenon. Many, though not all, of these American Catholic colleges were Jesuit foundations and their fame in general, and of those in New York especially, was in no small way bound up with the personal charisma of one Jesuit in particular, John Corridan (1911–1984),[21] the son of Irish immigrants to north American and the prototype for the popular ideal, or *one* ideal, of the 'worker priest'.[22] The international nature of the Jesuit order makes it hardly surprising that news of such developments, and the inspiration of such figures as Corridan, drifted over the Atlantic, like seeds on the wind, to take root in Ireland.

Thus, anyone in 1940s or 1950s Ireland intent on founding a college for workers did not have far to seek for examples or models. And it was to America, specifically New York, that a young Jesuit was dispatched, in the hiatus between the decision to found the college and its eventual establishment, to seek inspiration for and advice on the new venture. This young

priest, Edmond Kent, S.J. (1915–1999), later recalled his busy itinerary, making special mention of his encounter with one of the most turbulent figures in modern American Catholic history, Dorothy Day (1897–1980). Day was a Catholic convert and, with Peter Maurin (1877–1949), co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement (CWM).[23] Between them and working at first in the depths of the economic conditions of the 1920s and 1930s, Day and Maurin built a small but significant mass movement of highly committed Catholic lay people which campaigned on social and political causes. Initially, the CWM expressed its convictions amongst the poor and destitute of the Depression years in urban locations but (largely under Maurin's influence) it became more ruralist in outlook, developing self-sustaining, anarcho-communist agrarian communities at sites in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Latterly, largely at Day's behest, it took on the cause of pacifism and became active on a range of political issues. In itself it was never an educational provider and Day founded no college or school personally but, writing in 1952 she felt able to claim that, 'it was *The Catholic Worker* [the movement's newspaper] and its stories of poverty and exploitation that aroused the priests to start labor schools'.[24] She gave no credit to the earlier initiative of the Laymen's League, but even allowing for some exaggeration on her part of the CWM's inspirational lead, there can be no doubt that it did play a significant role in inspiring the emergence of labour schools in America.

Of all those whom Kent met in his whirlwind visit, it was Day by whom he was most impressed, as he later made clear in a description of their encounter in the cramped, dirty office of the CWM in New York:

> She…face[d] me with a look which seemed to say: 'I am a very busy woman; what can I do for you?' I sat down…feeling like a small boy awaiting a lecture from his mother; for there was something motherly about her despite her frigid, business-like attitude.[25]

Despite her apparently intimidating manner and despite the CWM's sometimes awkward relationship with Catholic orthodoxy and its more than occasional forays into anti-clericalism, Kent emerged sure that Day was 'possessed of so many gifts that she could, if she wished, be a person of considerable means' and left invigorated by her 'stress on the dignity of the human person, fashioned in the likeness of God'.[26] He was now determined to follow her lead, and the nascent CWC offered him the perfect opportunity to do so.

The CWC's Founders

Formally, the first head of the new institution was Edward (Ned) Coyne who, when the CWC commenced operation, was already professor of theology at a nearby Jesuit seminary (the Milltown Institute), though his active involvement with the college until his retirement in 1954 does not seem to have been great. However, his influence on the early years of the college's history cannot have been insignificant and some examination of his personal interpretation of the meaning and nature of Catholic social teaching and his relationship to Irish Catholic society generally is relevant to understanding the CWC.

The overwhelming impression to be garnered of Coyne from the available sources is that he was markedly more conservative, socially and politically, than his younger colleague Edmond Kent. Coyne, who had previously studied at University College Dublin (formerly the Catholic University of Ireland) and later returned to teach there, was a pillar of Catholic Irish society in the 1920s and thereafter, and had been involved in organising Catholic 'social order' summer schools since the 1930s, something of a precursor to the CWC's work, though not so explicitly political.[27] In addition to his teaching work and writing, he served on various official and quasi-official bodies largely concerned with labour-management relations and had been a member of the Commission on Vocational Organisation, established in 1938 by Éamon de Valera (1882–1975) to explore options for closer integration of Catholic social teaching into Irish socio-economic life.[28] But Coyne was not concerned only with the needs and conditions of urban, industrial workers and took a keen interest in rural Ireland. To this end, he was closely involved in the formation of the rural lobby group (still extant, though now diminished from its heyday in the 1950s) Muintir na Tíre.[29] He was close to the movement's founder, John Hayes (1887–1957), also a cleric, and evidently shared the latter's 'virulent Anti-Urbanism' and sense that, 'cities were the place of sin, dancing, cinema, materialism, individualism, and above all else of 'foreign' culture'.[30]

Further evidence of Coyne's conservatism is found in his trenchant role in what is typically seen as the single most important conflict between church and secular politicians in Ireland's early history as an independent state, the so-called Mother and Child Scheme debate of 1948–1951. Here Coyne stood foursquare behind the Catholic hierarchy's decision virulently to oppose proposals deemed contrary to the more conservative aspects of the teachings of *Rerum novarum*. Briefly, the radical politi-

cian and medical doctor Noel Browne (1915–1997), then Minister for Health in a weak coalition government, proposed to introduce limited, state-funded antenatal and general medical care for mothers and their children. The scheme was deemed by Catholics contrary to the principle of subsidiarity, the devolving of social and political responsibility to the lowest practical level at every turn. This was then widely interpreted to mean that families ought to be required to make provision for their own medical needs, other than in *extreme* circumstances. As a consequence, and fearing that any change along these lines would generally contribute to an undermining or corrosion of Catholic values, the official church used its not inconsiderable influence to oppose Browne's plans. (Medical doctors of the time also often opposed the scheme for financial reasons).

Ultimately, the government of which Browne was a part fell as some orthodox Catholic politicians withdrew their support in deference to clerical censure. Coyne's was a significant voice raised in support of the claim that, not only had the Catholic hierarchy the right to speak in such matters, it had a duty to do so and governments did well to listen if their members wanted to have their decisions properly aligned with Catholic doctrine.[31]

Thus, Coyne was prepared to defend and promote an ideal of a ruralist Ireland, which employed a rhetorical language that often strongly hinted at the 'soul' of the nation residing outside the major urban centres. He was happy to defend the right of the Catholic hierarchy to interfere in political decision-making and felt able, in conscience, to justify the denial of what some deemed to be basic welfare rights. His was a stern, conservative Catholicism founded on unswerving commitment to hierarchy and authority.

But what of the CWC's co-founder? It might be tempting to tell the story of his relationship with Coyne as that of the Young Turk and the Old Sultan, a tale of generational change and a corresponding drift towards the political 'left', though it may be unhelpfully simplistic to case Coyne and Kent as, respectively, radical and conservative clerics. That said, Kent was certainly the more turbulent of the two priests and I have often used the word radical hereafter to describe him, his policies and the milieu in which he operated. However, this should always be read with the qualification of noting that his was not a secular, political radicalism of the left. Perhaps yoked to the same plough by their superiors so the one (Coyne) might moderate the other (Kent), the CWC's de facto twin founders had a productive relationship nonetheless, with much hinging on a visit Kent made to the US and the lessons he was able to learn there.

Thus, it was important to note that Kent visited New York City shortly before the CWC opened its doors to students with the explicit intention of finding models on which to base the proposed new college. He met Dorothy Day and other figures in the left-leaning Catholic milieu of the time and this must have had some bearing on his actions as Prefect of Studies of the CWC, a role he took up in 1954 and held until after the change from CWC to CIR, the end of the period under study.

In 1961, in his annual report to the college's Board of Sponsors (which represented, jointly and in more or less equal measure, the interests of employers and trade unions) he 'devote[d] more space than usual [in such a report] to general matters' and gave an outline both of his view of 10 years of the college's operation and his priorities for its future.[32] It is an instructive insight into aspects of his thinking, and even his character. He was conventionally religious, as his position required him to be, stressing that: 'We record [the college's]…successes in a spirit of thankfulness to God' but hinted at a more radical cast of mind than might have been associated with Coyne when he went on to say:

> no system of education can afford to dispense with training such as this College seeks to give. Too frequently, when we speak or think of education here in Ireland, we think of youth preparing for the battle of life in some way or other. That concept fitted well enough a static world where ideas, once learned never changed and were never challenged. It was enough when traditional moral, social, political and cultural values and ideals were accepted, understood, acted upon and taken for granted. But this is no longer so. There are no social systems that are quite secure. There are few personal landmarks which could not very quickly be ploughed under. There can be no final preparation for a way of life the brand mark of which is instability.[33]

While he was not necessarily relishing the 'instability' to which he alluded, this did not smack of the same seeking after a return to bucolic simplicities and certainties with which Coyne had been associated. Over several pages, he continued:

> to this welter of change men [sic] react differently and frequently badly. On the one hand there are the traditionalists…[opposed to] every sort of change.
>
> Other men…resist all change that is detrimental to their own private interests…

> At the other extreme are the so-called Progressives…[characterised by] a rebelliousness or a restlessness with the world as they see it…Progressives believe, implicitly or explicitly, in human progress in every field of human endeavour…Marxism is perhaps the most explicit [version of this]…
>
> Another type of progressive is found among our teenagers and younger men and women. Theirs is more rebellion against the present than concern with the future…they drift from job to job, from place to place, restless and rebellious.[34]

Against all of this, he set out his own vision of a productive radical or progressive stance, one grounded in the ability to analyse current conditions and to understand them in historical context.[35] It was a humane vision of popular intellectualism and of moderate radicalism. As such, it was increasingly removed from the earlier tradition of social action through workers' education that sought to cultivate and instil not criticality but, as O'Hea had said of the CWC's English precursor, 'fearless…loyalty to the Faith'.[36] But does it really entitle us to conclude that Kent was profoundly radical in a way Coyne was not and, further, that the CWC under Kent was a provider of radical education to Irish workers? These are questions to which I return in the concluding section, but it is probably long overdue that we begin an examination of the CWC in practice and it is to this that I turn next.

Teaching and Curriculum

If we are not to confine ourselves to a 'top-down' history of education that is largely concerned with structures and leaders, a more wide-ranging and subtle project sometimes referred to as the social history of the classroom (here taken to make adult, as well as school, classroom),[37] then we must we prepared to ask such questions as: who attended the CWC, in what numbers, with what expectations and what results? However, given the dearth or paucity of certain records (perhaps, at least partly, as a result of a widespread destruction of archives by twentieth century Irish Catholic organisations), this has not entirely been possible. Thus, much of what follows is a more conventional 'acts and facts' history of the CWC than I might like, with correspondingly little emphasis on nuances of students' biographies and experiences.

Coyne and Kent were the major figures instrumental in founding and leading the CWC between 1951 and 1966, but they were not alone in their

work. What was initially 'a small Jesuit staff and a number of dedicated laymen who worked on a voluntary basis',[38] did not grow significantly over the next 15 years, but by 1968 there were seven Jesuits involved with the CWC full-time (including two Jesuit brothers, members of the order in an associate or lesser standing than ordained priests, such as Coyne and Kent, a status phased out following the reforms of Vatican II).[39] The initial number of lay, volunteer lecturers is unclear, but by 1966 it seems to have stood as high as a dozen and this may have risen to as many as 20 by 1988, though it was by then a more 'professional' organisation.[40]

The content of the trade unionism course, the mainstay of the CWC's work, was outlined in a 1960 synopsis by a Jesuit staff member. This began with lectures on 'The Nature and Personality of Man [sic]', progressed through explicitly Catholic social ethics teaching and culminated with an emphasis on practical issues of relevance to trade union officials and members'.[41] A parallel managers' course comprised the same elements of 'Nature and Personality of Man…Social Theory and Social Ethics' to be found in the trade union course, but was augmented by teaching said to, 'deal with industrial and management problems from a specifically human point of view in such courses as Human Relations in Industry and Occupational Psychology'.[42] Supervisors were taught 'twenty lectures on the Nature and Personality of Man and twenty on Human Relations in Industry in the first year…[and] Psychology for Supervision and a discussion forum on practical matters of supervision in the second'.[43] Course examinations were conducted orally until at least 1960.[44]

A more general course in political studies was offered from 1956, encompassing practical aspects of Irish politics and constitutional law and the rather polemical sounding 'philosophy of National Patriotism'.[45] Some advanced teaching was available on moral and theological matters for selected students, though 'adapted to the required intellectual level'.[46] Diplomas and certificates were awarded annually to members of various groups, the first awards for supervisors being made in 1964,[47] and the supervisors' course, sometimes referred to as Course D, remained significant until at least 1976.[48]

But alongside, and perhaps at odds, with such socio-economic or political courses there were also marriage preparation classes. Teaching of the latter kind began in 1955 and was still being undertaken in the mid-1970s.[49] Preparation of soon-to-be-married couples began with emphasis being placed on the particularly Catholic view of the threefold nature of marriage, 'as an institution…a sacrament and…a vocation'.[50]

The aim was to present marriage as being 'based on the union of Christ with his Church…develop[ing] a union of heart and mind as complete… mutual, exclusive and durable as Christ's for his Church'.[51] An unashamedly gendered view of roles in married life was promoted, with lectures on 'The Distinctive and Complementary Qualities of Men and Women'[52] and much stress placed on 'pitfalls resulting from the ignorance of the distinctive differences of man and woman'.[53] Time was given over to promoting Catholic education for children, outside the home and within its confines, and to stressing the importance of 'domestic spirituality'.[54] But, there was also provision made for more practical matters, including 'simple home crafts',[55] 'making up a household budget',[56] 'the preparation of the trousseau, reception, wedding and honeymoon…[including] such details as seating, speeches and toasts [at the wedding]'.[57] In these respects, what was on offer may not have differed greatly from anything that might have been found in many secular advice manuals of the 1950s and early 1960s. But the Catholicity of the teaching was, it seems, rarely, if ever, far to seek. Thus, although lay speakers contributed on topics such as children's health and welfare, the marriage preparation courses were clerically led,[58] and the highest aim of those who contributed to this always significant strand of the CWC's teaching was to promote 'union in marriage', which, in turn, required 'union with God's will'.[59]

Patently, the CWC was a Catholic college, and it would be unreasonable, even perverse, to expect its staff to confine their teaching to non-religious matters. The domestic sphere, understood in that way, was a legitimate part of the CWC's interests. But, that said, although Kent had been influenced or inspired by Dorothy Day, the 'uncompromising laicism' of the American CWM, which made it, 'quite different from devotional Catholicism'[60] had little or no equivalent in 1950s Ireland and thus, however radical the CWC could seem in certain respects, it was straightforwardly Catholic in others.

Ethos: Mary or Joseph?

By the 1950s, Marian devotion was a significant element of Irish Catholic religiosity. Only shortly before the CWC began operations in 1951, Eugenio Pacelli (1876–1958; Pius XII, 1939–1958) had promulgated the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary. Hardly the most politically radical of twentieth century Catholic leaders, he has been described as filling a 'vacuum created by the suppression of dynamic, creative theology

in the postwar period' with, 'a popular combination of private devotion and exhibitions of mass loyalty and fervour…[crowned by] papal exaltation and triumphalism'.[61] Indeed, the belief persists in some quarters that he might have gone so far as to '[declare] Mary Co-Redemptrix with Christ', a move that would certainly have been 'even more earth-shattering than…the Assumption'.[62] That aside, there can be little doubt that the cult of Mary dominated Irish Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century, though its hold was considerably lessened in and after the 1960s.[63] Certainly, the terrain of Irish Catholic conservatism was crowded. One highly visible expression of this was the Maria Duce group, founded in 1942 by Denis Fahey (1883–1954) to agitate for the adoption of Catholicism as something akin to a state religion,[64] but other groups, although less specifically Marian in their focus, were active in the period of 1920–1950 lobbying in avowedly conservative terms on various issues. Maria Duce had a mass membership far outstripping that of either of its principal confreres (or rivals?) of the time, An Rioghacht and Christus Rex, but it did not long outlast Fahey personally and was soon defunct after he died.[65]

By contrast, the Legion of Mary (LoM), founded in Ireland in 1921 by Frank Duff (1889–1980), had both mass membership and longevity, making it the most successful organisation of its kind to operate in the period—though it may be misleading to bracket the LoM straightforwardly with the avowedly social conservative An Rioghacht and Christus Rex, as the LoM has a more complicated or contested history.[66] However, these groups aside, one other bears mentioning, the Jesuit-run Our Lady's Sodality (OLS). Dating back to 1563, OLS had been open to women only from 1825, though by the 1950s in Ireland they comprised the majority of its members.[67] Despite waning religious influence in general, as late as 1978 it was possible for the sodality to organise a major national convention in a Dominican girls' school in Dublin's Donnybrook, only a short distance from the CWC, with several hundred delegates attending.[68] Thus, there were significant links between the Irish Jesuits and popular Marianism in the 1950s and early 1960s. But the overwhelming impression of the life and ethos of the CWC in the same period is that it was dominated by the attention paid to the image of Joseph. If the Marianism of Pius XII and others represented conservatism, tradition, domesticity, piety and even mysticism, Joseph, as the workers' saint, could seem to stand for very different things.

From its foundation, the CWC was associated with Joseph. This somewhat shadowy figure, whose nature and even employment are only ever hinted at (Matthew 13:55), featured prominently on the CWC's original crest. A statue of its spiritual patron (carved, appropriately, in rough and gnarled wood) was added to the college's premises in 1958. The feast day associated with Joseph, 1 May, was the centre of the CWC's symbolic calendar. Reports of the gatherings of students convened to mark the feast day and the speeches by lecturers from the college's staff that they often heard appeared in national newspaper reports frequently in the 1950s and early 1960s.[69] And all this was in keeping with the tone of the US labour colleges, where Joseph often bulked large in teaching.

> The [American] Jesuits' decision to concentrate on St Joseph was of course not surprising. They saw in episodes of his life numerous opportunities to reinforce the message which they hoped to communicate…present[ing] him to workers as a colleague who shared a common identity with them.[70]

Viewed one way, the Marian tendencies of the Irish Jesuits (tendencies that emphasised the traditionally *feminine* role in the social order and barely, if at all, touched on concerns that might be described as *feminist*, making them profoundly conservative) could appear to be at variance with the more radical Christianity of the CWC and its cult of Joseph. This might seem to entail conflict. But I suggest any 'conflict' between the paradigms is illusory. Ultimately, given the masculinist history of trade unionism that, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was typically as socially conservative as it was politically radical, with a particular stress on gender hierarchy at home and in the workplace, this largely reflecting fear that the feminisation of labour and 'dilution' would drive down wage rates, it may be no surprise that more emphasis was placed on the masculine figure of Joseph than the feminine Mary.

Analysis

Although attendance at the CWC was never limited to Catholic workers, it cannot be doubted that they formed the majority of students over the years. In 1954, a representative of the Plumbing Trades Union addressed the annual conference of the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC), a pan-national or cross-border body that had members in both the Republic and Northern Ireland and historically close links to the British Trade Union

Congress and which was to merge with the more nationalistic Congress of Irish Trade Unions in 1959 to form the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. He insisted that workers' education in Ireland should, above all else: 'be Christian education…Irish and Christian' because it was, 'necessary to be a Christian both at work and at [union] meetings'; he added: 'I am afraid that the Irish worker is frightened of the trade union movement's educational schemes', claiming that this would remain so until it was clear that such schemes were informed by 'Christian as well as trade union principles'.[71] Although he did not allude to the CWC directly, he contrasted the spectre of more secular workers' education with that being organised by such Catholic leaders as Alfred O'Rahilly (1884–1969; President of University College Cork, 1943–1954) and may have been correct in his reference to a wariness of teaching conducted under such secular auspices as the People's College, with which the ITUC was then closely involved. The CWC might well have seemed a safe alternative for many intellectually curious Catholic workers in the period, as opposed to this more radical seeming option, founded in 1948 and still extant in 2014.[72] But, ultimately, my account of the CWC will not, I sincerely hope, be seen as an antiquarian piece on Irish church history. The College's story belongs to a much broader mobilisation on the part of the Catholic Church: the Catholic social action 'project', an attempt to locate Catholic workingmen's lives in a religiously authorised political and social orthodoxy—keeping them untainted, so to speak, by socialism (and the apparently more pernicious threat of communism).

Conclusion

Nothing I have said, I trust, makes the CWC appear as a mere curiosity or failed experiment in education. But are we warranted in thinking of it as a significant case study and if it *is* a case study, then of what? Patently it is case of a labour college; it is also a case of (terrible cliché that it might be) a grass-roots educational organisation and it is a case of Catholic social action at work. It would take more time or space than is available here to locate it any wider tradition of the establishment and operation of informal/adult/working-class education in Ireland but it might also be a case for such purposes. Perhaps more important is the question of whether or not it constitutes an important precedent or can provide some *inspiration*. In other words, even if it has not been so thus far might it be, however long we have to wait, a model for a new sort of university in Ireland?

I have suggested elsewhere that institutions of a kind markedly different to the CWC are 'on the march' and making significant inroads in Ireland, much as they are in other parts of the world. These other providers of higher education may be private, unashamedly money-making ventures or they may be, much like the NCI, notionally not-for-profit but thoroughly imbued with a certain neo-liberal spirit or ethos.[73] Admittedly, against this background it could seem as though any alternative vision is naïve at best. Yet I remain determinedly optimistic.[74] The inchoate, quasi-anarchistic Occupy Movement of 2011 and 2012 amounted to little in the short-term. But informal universities (perhaps properly so named in a very literal or etymological sense) sprang up in protest camps in various cities, including Dublin.[75] For all its faults (and as one who is not Catholic I am troubled by some features of the CWC, especially its gendered curriculum), I simply assert that the *very fact* of the CWC having existed is evidence that other (nobler?) things are possible.

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Notes

1. J. McCarthy, 'Pilgrims are Yet to Flock to Congress', *Sunday Times*, June 10, 2012, News section, Irish edition.
2. L. Fuller, *Irish Catholicism Since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin, 2002).
3. Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse* (Dublin: Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse, 2009).
4. See, for example: E. McCann, *Dear God: The Price of Religion in Ireland* (London, 1999).
5. See, for example: P. Toucher, *Fear of the Collar: My Terrifying Childhood in Artane* (Dublin, 2010). And for some thoughts on the experience of *knowing* a clerical abuser, see: Mary Kenny, 'When a Priest is Named as a Paedophile', in *Something of Myself and Others* (Dublin, 2013), 135–148.
6. Paul Michael Garrett, 'Review Article: 'It is with deep regret that I find it necessary to tell my story'—Child Abuse in Industrial Schools in Ireland', *Critical Social Policy* 30, no. 2 (2010), 292–306.
7. Interim Report on Province Ministries, undated, National College of Ireland archive [NCIA] item 69.
8. The CWC's principal research output in the 1950s and 1960s came in the shape of a series of pamphlets on Catholic answers to common industrial

relations problems. For example: T. Hamilton, *The Challenge of Collective Bargaining* (Dublin: Catholic Workers' College, 1963) and A. Ryan, *God, Law and the Unions* (Dublin: Catholic Workers' College, 1964). But it would seem reasonable to say that this was only an adjunct to the work of teaching.

9. The best general accounts of the college are: E. Kent, 'Education for Industrial Relations', *Studies* 218 (1966), 139–46, the same author's 'History of the College', in *College of Industrial Relations: Silver Jubilee*, (Dublin: Catholic Workers' College, 1976), 10; T. Morrisey, 'From Catholic Workers' College to National College of Ireland, 1951–1998', *Studies* 347 (1998), 291–6 and A. Seery and L. McKenna, 'The Catholic Workers' College Dublin: A Personal History', *Saothair: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, 39 (2015), 45–53.
10. Seán Flynn, '10 to Lose Jobs as Part of College Cost-Cutting Plan', *Irish Times,* January 14, 2011 www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0114/1224287488725.html (accessed August 23, 2013).
11. Corcoran exercised significant influence on education policy in newly independent Ireland, particularly on the adoption of Irish language as a compulsory subject in schools and espoused a conservative, even racist nationalism. B. Titley, 'Rejecting the Modern World: The Educational Ideas of Timothy Corcoran', *Oxford Review of Education* 9, no. 2 (1983), 137–45.
12. C. Plater, 'Retreats for Working-Men', *Studies* 37 (1921), 97–108, 106
13. Ibid., 97.
14. J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (Yale, 2001), especially 282–297.
15. D. Chiles, *A Silken Thread: The History of Plater College, 1921–1996* (Oxford, 1996). No doubt Plater had some Irish students in the 1920s–1950s.
16. On Ruskin, named after the mercurial medieval revivalist and arts and crafts pioneer John Ruskin (1819–1900), see: B. Harrison, 'Oxford and the Labour Movement', *Twentieth Century British History* 2, no. 3 (1991), 226–71 and J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life*, 256–307.
17. 'Objectors Drop College Action', *Oxford Mail*, November 9, 2005, www.oxfordmail.co.uk/archive/2005/11/09/Oxfordshire+Archive/6643546.Objectors_drop_college_action (accessed August 23, 2013).
18. L. O'Hea, 'A Catholic Labour College', *Irish Monthly* 598 (1923), 165–70, 167. It went without saying that 'right understanding' on socio-moral questions was the Catholic view of the matter.
19. J. McShane, 'To form an elite body of laymen': Terence J. Shealy, S.J. and the Laymen's League, 1911–1922', *Catholic Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (1992), 557–80.

20. At its height in the 1940s and 1950s, this loose sector or movement probably boasted as many as 60 members and their operations were known in Ireland. For example: F. Corley, 'Education for Workers: Catholic Labour Schools in the United States, Part I', *Irish Monthly* 901 (1948), 296–302 and 'Education for Workers: Catholic Labour Schools in the United States, Part II', *Irish Monthly* 902 (1948), 366–72. On non-Catholic/secular colleges, see, variously: C. Howlett, *Brookwood Labor College and the Struggle for Peace and Social Justice in America* (Lewiston, NY, 1993) and M. Gettleman, 'No varsity teams': New York's Jefferson School of Social Science, 1943–1956', *Science and Society* 66, no. 3 (2002), 336–59.
21. History and legend have long since become blurred where Corridan is concerned, partly as a result of sensationalist contemporary depictions (see, for example: M. Johnson, 'Father Gangbuster of the Docks', *The Catholic Digest* 16, no. 6, 1952, 22–33) and partly because a version of his story was told in *On the Waterfront*, directed by Elia Kazan (1909–2003), scripted by Seymour Wilson 'Budd' Schulberg (1914–2009) and starring Marlon Brando (1924–2004) and Karl Malden (1912–2009), the latter as the thinly disguised Corridan. More sober treatments of his life and work are: J. Fisher, 'John M. Corridan S.J. and the Battle for the Soul of the Waterfront, 1948–1954', *US Catholic Historian* 16, no. 4 (1998), 71–87 and C. Davis, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets': Father John Corridan, S.J. and New York Longshoremen in the Post-World War II Era', *Catholic Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2000), 66–84. On Corridan's contemporaries in this work more generally, see: J. McShane, 'The Church is not for the cells and the caves': The Working Class Spirituality of the Jesuit Labor Priests', *US Catholic Historian* 9, no. 3 (1990), 289–304. And on the film itself, now widely regarded a classic, see: J. E. Rapf, [Ed.], *On the Waterfront* (Cambridge, 2003) and L. Braudy, *BFI Film Classics: On the Waterfront* (London, 2005).
22. The essential difference between men such as Corridan and those in the other worker-priest tradition, for example in France, is that Corridan was primarily a priest *amongst* workers while some took the role more literally and *became* workers, preaching only as an adjunct to a more visceral ministry that involved living a certain life in sympathy with those for whom there was no alternative. See also: G. Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society: Complete History of the Worker-Priests and the Present Dilemma* (London, 1964) and J. Mantle, *Britain's First Worker-Priests* (London, 2000).
23. E. Kent, 'Dorothy Day: An Interview', *Studies* 154 (1950), 176–86, 176.
24. Dorothy Day, 'Labor', (extract from *The Long Loneliness*, 1952) in R. Ellesberg [Ed.], *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings,* (NY, 2005), 240.
25. E. Kent, 'Dorothy Day', 179.
26. Ibid., 186. Much as Kent's account hinted, Day was a notoriously 'difficult' character and the paradoxes of her life are many and various. See:

D. McKanan, 'Inventing the Catholic Worker Family', *Church History* 76, no. 1 (2007), 84–113.

27. E. Coyne, 'The Social Order Summer School', *Irish Monthly*, 771 (1937), 577–87. On older forms of Catholic social action in Ireland, see, for example: S. L'Estrange, 'The community of communities': Catholic Communitarianism and Societal Crises in Ireland, 1890s–1950s', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 20, no. 4 (2007), 555–78.
28. D. O'Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: The Search for a Christian Social Order* (Dublin, 2000), 74–8.
29. People of the Land.
30. E. Devereux, 'Saving Rural Ireland: Muintir na Tíre and its Anti-Urbanism, 1931–1958', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991), 23–30, 23.
31. D. McCullagh, *A Makeshift Majority: The First Inter-Party Government, 1948–51* (Dublin, 1998).
32. E. Kent, *Education in a Changing World: Report of the Prefect of Studies, 1960–1961* (Dublin: Catholic Workers' College, 1961), 2.
33. Kent, *Report*, 3.
34. Ibid., 4–6.
35. Ibid., 7.
36. L. O'Hea, 'A Catholic Labour College', 168.
37. The case for such a revitalised form of history of education is powerfully made in various contributions to, and an editorial introduction in: Ian Grosvenor et al., [Eds.], *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom,* (New York, 1999).
38. E. Kent, 'History of the College', 10.
39. The implications of this dramatic change in the culture of the Jesuit order are discussed more fully in: P. McDonough, 'Metamorphoses of the Jesuits: Sexual Identity, Gender Roles, and Hierarchy in Catholicism', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32 (1990), 325–56.
40. 'National College of Industrial Relations', *Education* 3, no. 5 (1988), 7–15, 7.
41. T. Hamilton, 'The Catholic Workers' College in Dublin', *Christus Rex* 16, no. 3 (1960), 191–9, 194.
42. Ibid., 196. Original curricular documents from the earliest history of the college seem not to have been preserved, often leaving us to depend on secondary accounts compiled by contemporary observers, but later course outlines are available (see, for example: Management and Business Relations Course, 1964, NCIA item 35) and there is little evidence of major change. The standard textbook on social justice for Jesuits in the 1960s and 1970s was Jean-Yves Calvez and J. Perrin, *The Church and Social Justice: The Social Teaching of the Popes from Leo XIII to Pius XII, 1878–1958* (Chicago, 1961).

43. T. Hamilton, 'The Catholic Workers' College in Dublin', 197.
44. Ibid.,194.
45. Ibid.,198.
46. Ibid.,194.
47. 'News and Views', *Solidarity: Associate Members Bulletin of the Catholic Workers' College* 8 (1964), 1.
48. 'Present Work and Future Policy of the College', in *College of Industrial Relations: Silver Jubilee,* (Dublin: Catholic Workers' College, 1976), 11–13, 12. The only part of this pamphlet to be by an identifiable author is Kent's (see note 9).
49. Generally speaking, primary sources are wanting but a detailed account of the curriculum is given in: M. Moloney, 'Marriage Preparation Course', *The Furrow* 7, no. 2 (1956), 86–96.
50. Ibid., 89.
51. Ibid., 89.
52. Ibid., 90.
53. Ibid., 91.
54. Ibid., 94.
55. Ibid., 90.
56. Ibid., 91.
57. Ibid., 92.
58. Ibid., 94.
59. Ibid., 95. See also: J. Edwards, 'In This Unique College, They Learn How to be Happily Married', *Irish Pictorial*, September 28, 1957.
60. L. W. Tentler, 'On the Margins: The State of American Catholic History', *Catholic Historian* 16, no. 4 (1998), 71–87, 90.
61. J. Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (London: Viking, 1999), 345.
62. C. Matthews, 'Sophia: Goddess of Wisdom', in *The Inner West: An Introduction to the Hidden Wisdom of the West,* ed. Jay Kinney, (New York, 2004), 140–55, 150.
63. J. Donnelly, 'Opposing the 'Modern World': The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Ireland, 1965–1985', *Eire-Ireland* 40 nos 1 & 2 (2005), 183–245.
64. E. Delaney, 'Political Catholicism in Post-War Ireland: The Revd. Denis Fahey and Maria Duce, 1945–1954', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52, no. 3 (2001), 487–511.
65. An Rioghacht (League of the Kingship of Christ) was founded in 1926 and Christus Rex in 1941.
66. On Duff and his organisation in his own terms, see his: *True Devotion to the Nation* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press/Legion of Mary, 1966), especially the political manifesto, 'The Legion's Programme of True Devotion to the Nation', 37–48.

67. G. Ffrench, 'The Sodality of Our Lady', *The Furrow* 5, no. 9 (1954), 539–48.
68. J. Donnelly, 'Opposing the 'Modern World', p. 195.
69. For examples, see: 'Greater Interest in Unions Urged', *Irish Times*, May 2, 1958, News section; 'Lecturer Urges Need for Adult Education', *Irish Independent*, May 2, 1959, News section; 'Luxury Never a Problem for Ordinary Worker', *Irish Times*, May 2, 1960, News section and 'Role of Trade Unionist Defined', *Irish Times*, May 2, 1961, News section.
70. J. McShane, 'The Church is not for the cells and the caves', 296.
71. Quoted in: *Sixtieth Annual Report: Report of the National Executive, 1953–1954* (Dublin: Irish Trade Union Congress, 1954), 143.
72. For further details of its work, see: www.peoplescollege.ie.
73. I have discussed the former at greater length in: 'Prospects for a Private, Indigenous and For-Profit University in Dublin' in *Higher Education in Ireland: Practices, Policies and Possibilities*, ed. A. Loxley, A. Seery, A and J. Walsh (London, 2014) and notwithstanding the legal claim of the NCI to be the CWC's heir, by 2014 its spiritual (if socialist and secular) successor might actually have been the small college operated by the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union. For a description of its work, see: M. de Courcey, 'Trade Union Studies Course—Interested?', *Liberty*, June 2013, 26.
74. I discuss this theme at length in: "The gods of the market tumble': Against Neo-Liberalism, for Intellectualism and Towards New Universities in Ireland', in *Degrees of Nonsense: The Demise of the University in Ireland*, B. Walsh [Ed.], (Dublin, 2012).
75. Though not easily summarised or encapsulated, the Occupy Movement involved an alliance of anarchists, socialists and the generally disgruntled reacting to the seemingly unrestrained excesses of neo-liberal capitalism in the early twenty-first century. For details and descriptions of some of the informal universities it spawned, see, for example: C. T. Reed, 'Step 1: Occupy Universities, Step 2: Transform Them', *Tidal*, December 2011: 4–5; J. Grove, 'Unplugged', *THE*, January 26, 2012 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/unplugged/418786.article (accessed November 11, 2014); P. Stanistreet, 'Anyone can teach, everyone can learn', *Adults Learning*, Spring 2012: 21–26 and A. Bonnett, 'Something New in Freedom', *THE*, 23 May, 2014 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/something-new-in freedom/2003930.article (accessed November 11, 2014).