

## ‘They blew up the best portion of our city and ... it is their duty to replace it’: compensation and reconstruction in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising<sup>1</sup>

In his vivid account of Easter Week 1916, *The insurrection in Dublin*, the writer James Stephens observed: ‘The finest part of our city has been blown to smithereens, and burned into ashes. Soldiers amongst us who have served abroad say that the ruin of this quarter is more complete than anything they have seen at Ypres, than anything they have seen anywhere in France or Flanders.’<sup>2</sup> In a letter to his sister, Henry Beater, company secretary of Arnotts, also likened the smouldering ruins of Sackville Street<sup>3</sup> and the adjoining thoroughfares to a scene from the war:

House after house destroyed utterly. Clery & Co., D.B.C., Eason, G.P.O., Metropole and Imperial Hotels, *Freeman’s Journal* and literally dozens of other establishments in ruins. Henry St. on both sides from the pillar to Arnott & Co. nearly every house down and absolutely ruined.<sup>4</sup>

Miraculously, Arnotts, virtually alone among the businesses of the street, suffered little damage and was able to reopen within days. As the sense of shock and bewilderment at the insurrection subsided, attention swung to the pressing issue of restitution. Denouncing the Rising as ‘criminal madness’, the *Irish Independent*, the most widely read national daily with a circulation of about 100,000, made clear in its first editorial after the outbreak the ‘duty of the government to indemnify the sufferers most, if not all, of whom had not the slightest tinge of sympathy with the “rising”’.<sup>5</sup> A consensus swiftly emerged among the business community, in the shape of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association; the press (irrespective of political hue); and Dublin’s public representatives that the state had failed to protect the community, despite numerous warnings of a possible outbreak, and therefore the Imperial Treasury should make good the loss to private citizens of ‘those rights in life and property that the Government exists to protect’.<sup>6</sup> The laxity of the Dublin Castle administration was underscored by the Royal Commission on the Rebellion. Its investigation of the

<sup>1</sup> Comment by James Gallagher, lord mayor of Dublin, regarding the government’s responsibility, *Freeman’s Journal*, 31 May 1916.

<sup>2</sup> James Stephens, *The insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1916), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> O’Connell Street became the official name of the street in May 1924.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Beater to his sister, Margaret, 5 May 1916, in Ronald Nesbitt, *At Arnotts of Dublin, 1843–1993* (Dublin, 1993), p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Independent*, 4 May 1916. No edition was produced between 25 April and 4 May.

<sup>6</sup> *Irish Times*, 6 May 1916.

causes of the Rising, extensively reported in the Irish press in late May, heaped discredit on the Irish administration and on Augustine Birrell, Irish chief secretary since 1907, in particular.<sup>7</sup> Feeling ‘smashed to pieces’ he accepted political responsibility and resigned.<sup>8</sup> So too did his energetic under-secretary, Matthew Nathan. The British government recognised that the exchequer would have to pay a considerable sum for the destruction, caused in large measure by artillery fire, and, accordingly, H. H. Asquith, the prime minister, offered assurances to this end in the House of Commons on 10 May.<sup>9</sup> Until he was dislodged as prime minister in December 1916, Asquith’s commitment to this pledge was unwavering.

The present article offers a new perspective on the aftermath of Easter 1916 by exploring the related issues of compensation and reconstruction. This aspect of the Rising has not received sufficient historical attention and has, understandably, been overshadowed by, among other issues, the renewed efforts to resolve the Irish question in the summer of 1916, the course of the First World War, the fate of Roger Casement and the treatment of Irish internees in Britain.<sup>10</sup> But the compensation question should not be divorced from the grander political context. The speed with which the British government admitted liability and undertook to provide funds for the reconstruction of buildings and the replacement of contents suggests ‘a supreme desire’, as Asquith put it to John Dillon, who passionately denounced the executions in Dublin and praised the bravery of the insurgents on 11 May, ‘not to embitter, but to allay, the feeling’.<sup>11</sup> The cabinet was acutely aware of the corrosive effect on Irish public opinion of secret courts martial, early morning executions, mass arrests and deportations, the imposition of martial law and lurid allegations of military ill-discipline. In this light a generous measure of compensation was a means of conciliating the Dublin business community, citizens, and municipality. It was a harbinger of the fresh but ultimately ill-fated attempt to bring about a home rule settlement when, after a cabinet meeting on 21 May, Lloyd George was tasked with mediating between the I.P.P. and Unionists. Given Britain’s increasing anxiety for the U.S.A. to join the war, a demonstration of statesmanship in Ireland offered the prospect of placating American public opinion. The commitment to provide compensation may have been an Asquithian strategy to regain the damaged trust of the I.P.P. prior to negotiations about home rule. Redmond and his beleaguered party had little to show for their efforts since the outbreak of the war beyond an inoperative home rule measure on the statute book. Having refused a place in Asquith’s wartime coalition in May 1915, Redmond was shorn of any political influence but nevertheless had to endure affronts from the War Office and mounting criticism at home for government policy not of his making. The twin issues of compensation and reconstruction presented an opportunity to recover waning prestige. They were a godsend to the Dublin M.P.s – John Joseph Clancy,

<sup>7</sup> *Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland: report of commission* (June 1916), Cd. 8279.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine Birrell, *Things past redress* (London, 1937), p. 221.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Chalmers to H. H. Asquith, 9 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186); *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 82, col. 630 (10 May 1916).

<sup>10</sup> The issue is referred to briefly in Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: the Irish rebellion* (London, 2006), pp 297–8 and Pdraig Yeates, *A city in wartime: Dublin 1914–18* (Dublin, 2011), pp 120–3.

<sup>11</sup> *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 82, col. 952 (11 May 1916).

William Field, Patrick J. Brady, William Cotton, John D. Nugent and Alfred Byrne – who could practise some old-fashioned clientelism by delivering tangible political demands for constituents and providing an interface between the government, the Dublin business community and Dublin Corporation. Little time was lost. In a letter to the prime minister on 9 May they stated that ‘the feeling in Dublin amongst all classes is that the compensation should come out of Imperial funds’.<sup>12</sup> The following day a deputation was received by Asquith on the issue of rebuilding.<sup>13</sup> Intriguingly, the details of the compensation scheme were being worked out in early June just as the home rule proposals were formulated and conveyed to Carson and Redmond. As in 1914, the sticking point remained partition.<sup>14</sup> The *Freeman’s Journal*, the organ of the I.P.P., appeared to conflate the local matter of restitution with the national question:

An immediate and generous settlement is certainly demanded, not merely in the interests of the immediate sufferers, and of the city, but for the sake of the larger interests dependent upon a general pacification. Delay here means not only the multiplication of losses but the fostering of discontent and bad feeling and there is [sic] enough of these commodities about without any further additions.<sup>15</sup>

Redmond mortgaged his political reputation by forcing through acceptance of the temporary exclusion of six counties only to learn humiliatingly on 22 July that the government favoured permanent exclusion. For Stephen Gwynn, Nationalist M.P. for Galway city, ‘that day really finished the constitutional party and overthrew Redmond’s power’.<sup>16</sup> But until the home rule negotiations foundered, the I.P.P. could exert its political leverage to support vigorously the demands of property owners, or sufferers as they were called, and Dublin Corporation. Their overriding priority was a prompt restoration of the devastated area. The thorny issues of the scale of compensation and admission criteria, as well as conditions pertaining to rebuilding, proved far from straightforward. They were the subject of intense, and at times contentious, discussions between property owners, Dublin Corporation, the I.P.P. and the government between May and December 1916.

## I

Contemporary observers and photographers captured the scale of the damage to the city centre caused by the Rising.<sup>17</sup> The actual physical damage, though extensive, was predominantly confined to the Sackville Street area, where many

<sup>12</sup> J.J. Clancy, William Field, P. J. Brady, W. F. Cotton, Alfred Byrne and J.D. Nugent to Asquith, 8 May 1916 (Bodl., Asquith papers, MS 44, ff 47-8); *Freeman’s Journal*, 15 May 1916.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 13 May 1916.

<sup>14</sup> On this see Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: an Irish history, 1800-2000* (London, 2004), pp 183-202; Patrick Maume, *The long gestation: Irish nationalist life, 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), pp 180-4; Alan O’Day, *Irish home rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester, 1998), 269-76.

<sup>15</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 June 1916.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond’s last years* (London, 1919), p. 239.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the Keogh collection in the N.L.I.; *Dublin after the six days’ insurrection: thirty-one pictures from the camera of Mr. T. W. Murphy, (The O’Tatur)*, sub editor of the ‘Motor News’ (Dublin, 1916) and *The ‘Sinn Féin’ revolt, illustrated* (Dublin, 1917).

of the buildings were old and highly flammable. The Dublin Fire Brigade responded to ninety-three fires during Easter Week.<sup>18</sup> The first fire calls from Sackville Street were received on the night of Easter Monday. The Cable Shoe Company and the True Form Shoe shop had been looted and set alight. Both fires were extinguished. Blazes in North Earl Street on Tuesday and Henry Street on Wednesday, again ascribed to looters, were also successfully contained.<sup>19</sup> As the intensity of the fighting in Sackville Street increased with the commencement of military operations against insurgent positions on Wednesday, the fire brigade was unable to attend fires there on grounds of safety.<sup>20</sup> At about 12.30 p.m. on Thursday 27 April a serious fire at the *Irish Times* reserve printing works in Abbey Street, which spread across the street to Wynn's Hotel, led to a conflagration that consumed the block bound by Eden Quay, Sackville Street and Abbey Street as far as Marlborough Street.<sup>21</sup> By Friday, on the west side of Sackville Street, the G.P.O., Eason's, the newly opened Coliseum Theatre, Hotel Metropole and the *Freeman's Journal* offices were ablaze. To Louisa Norway, wife of the head of the Irish Post Office, 'it seemed as if the whole city was on fire, the glow extending right across the heavens, and the red glare hundreds of feet high'.<sup>22</sup> Sniper fire prevented fire crews from tackling the fires in Sackville Street on Saturday, despite the ceasefire order, but the entire brigade turned out that evening when Jervis Street Hospital was threatened by fire.<sup>23</sup> The loss of buildings of historical and architectural significance was quite small, given the proximity of Trinity College, the Bank of Ireland and the Custom House. After the G.P.O. the next most important was the Royal Hibernian Academy on Lower Abbey Street. Joseph Kavanagh, resident keeper, estimated the value of material destroyed at £40,000. This included the collection of casts and portraits along with the pictures assembled for the annual exhibition.<sup>24</sup> Captain Thomas Purcell, chief of the Dublin Fire Brigade, estimated very accurately that £2,500,000 worth of damage had been caused to over 200 buildings and stock.<sup>25</sup>

## II

Despite the pressures of the war campaign during 1916 and myriad domestic difficulties, Asquith played a principal role in meeting concerns about

<sup>18</sup> Tom Geraghty and Trevor Whitehead, *The Dublin Fire Brigade: a history of the brigade, the fires and the emergencies* (Dublin, 2004), p. 148.

<sup>19</sup> Widespread looting has been described by several commentators, see W. J. Brennan-Whitmore, *Dublin burning: the Easter Rising from behind the barricades*, ed. Pauric Travers (Dublin, 1996), pp 69–71; Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Stroud, 2004), pp 298–300; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), pp 144–8; Townshend, *Easter 1916*, pp 263–5.

<sup>20</sup> 'Story of the great fires told by Captain Purcell, chief of Dublin Fire Brigade', *1916 Rebellion handbook* (Belfast, 1998), p. 30. A lively portrayal of the bombardment and destruction, through the eyes of participants, is provided in McGarry, *The Rising*, pp 192–6.

<sup>21</sup> 'Sinn Féin' revolt, pp 17–19.

<sup>22</sup> Keith Jeffery, *The G.P.O. and the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2006), p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Geraghty and Whitehead, *Dublin Fire Brigade*, p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lviii, no. 10 (13 May 1916), p. 213.

<sup>25</sup> 'Story of the great fires', p. 29.

compensation and reconstruction in Dublin. He visited Ireland between 12 and 18 May to ascertain the state of affairs for himself and spent time in Dublin, Belfast and Cork. Notably, Asquith's first action on arrival was to drive through Sackville Street to witness the destruction. This elicited comment from all the Dublin daily newspapers.<sup>26</sup> The *Daily Express*, for example, maintained

the Government must help the victims. It is bound to do so in policy and in honour. Mr Asquith is on the spot. He has seen for himself the extent and magnitude of the devastation. He must surely realize that generosity and promptitude are the essence of the remedy that must be applied.<sup>27</sup>

While in Ireland, Asquith consulted frequently with Sir Robert Chalmers, who served as under-secretary from May until September 1916.<sup>28</sup> As joint permanent secretary to the Treasury with a reputation for 'tough efficiency', Chalmers was well qualified to tackle the problematic issue of compensation, despite the insinuation by Henry Robinson, vice-president of the local government board, that his one idea 'appeared to be to get back to London as soon as ever he could'.<sup>29</sup>

The acting under-secretary gave the compensation question his immediate attention on reaching Dublin on 8 May. Chalmers outlined his thinking in an astute letter to the prime minister. First, he was in little doubt that the government would have to pay for the damage to buildings occasioned by the military and, in particular, by the use of artillery. Second, investigations requiring some form of committee would be necessary to settle the complex issue of compensation for contents. Third, Chalmers insisted that any government action should be *ex gratia* and that no claims for consequential losses, such as loss of profits or customers, should be entertained.<sup>30</sup> This remained the general approach of the government. An important initial consideration was the prospect of claims for personal injury or loss of life sustained by civilians. However, Chalmers was adamant that such claims be excluded because of the difficulty of discriminating between the innocent and those who were complicit in the rebellion.<sup>31</sup> His contention that the government should only assume liability in the case of destroyed buildings and their contents was approved by the prime minister on 8 June.<sup>32</sup> In September, however, the government performed a *volte-face* by accepting in principle that compensation ought to be awarded for loss of life and injury; a Rebellion Victims' Committee was appointed the following month.<sup>33</sup> On 11 May Asquith told the House of Commons that the Castle government had

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 May 1916; *Freeman's Journal*, 13 May 1916; *Irish Independent*, 14 May 1916.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 May 1916.

<sup>28</sup> Chalmers's private secretary was Joseph Brennan, who had previously served Nathan.

<sup>29</sup> See G. C. Peden, 'Chalmers, Robert, Baron Chalmers (1858–1938)', in *Oxford D.N.B.*; Henry Robinson, *Memories: wise and otherwise* (London, 1923), p. 246.

<sup>30</sup> Chalmers to Asquith, 9 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>31</sup> Chalmers to Asquith, 11 May 1916 (*ibid.*); Chalmers to Samuel, 7 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>32</sup> Note of communication by Bonham Carter, 7 June 1916, (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187); Samuel to Chalmers, 15 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26008).

<sup>33</sup> Edward O'Farrell (assistant under-secretary) to secretary Treasury, 16 Sept. 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11985); *Irish Times*, 17 Oct. 1916.

broken down and that agreement on home rule should be sought. For this reason no chief secretary was appointed and his parliamentary duties devolved on Herbert Samuel, the home secretary. There was close collaboration between Chalmers, Asquith, Maurice Bonham Carter, the prime minister's private secretary, and Samuel until mid-June when the full details of the compensation scheme were unveiled. Only when it became clear on 22 July that the home rule negotiations had collapsed was the office of chief secretary filled with the appointment of Henry Duke, a Conservative M.P., on 31 July.<sup>34</sup> Like the prime minister, he too proved broadly sympathetic on the issue of compensation.

### III

On 8 May a well-attended meeting of traders and property owners who suffered loss by the destruction of their premises and effects was held in the Mansion House. William Martin Murphy, one of the most prominent businessmen of his day, whose interests in Clery's department store, the Imperial Hotel and Dublin United Tram Company were all significantly affected by the insurrection, was in the chair. As a practical measure he proposed that those present should form themselves into an association and appoint a committee to deal with insurance companies and the government.<sup>35</sup> Thus the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association (1916) came into being. Murphy proved a highly effective chairman of the committee which was composed of leading businessmen, both unionist and nationalist, who had suffered loss.<sup>36</sup> Robert J. Kidney, an incorporated accountant and auditor, was elected secretary and offered his offices in the Star Buildings, 12–14 College Green, to the association. Following the inaugural meeting, a telegram was sent to Asquith and copied to Lord Wimborne, the lord lieutenant, to Chalmers and to all Irish M.P.s requesting the prime minister to receive a deputation to lay its claims for compensation before the government.

The commercial imperatives of compensation and reconstruction transcended political divisions, whether intra-nationalist or nationalist–unionist, and the association displayed a remarkable unity and singularity of purpose. Indeed the

<sup>34</sup> D. G. Boyce and Cameron Hazlehurst, 'The unknown chief secretary: H. E. Duke and Ireland, 1916–18', *I.H.S.*, x, no. 79 (Mar. 1977), p. 287. No reference is made in this worthy article to the issue of compensation.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 May 1916; *Irish Independent*, 9 May 1916.

<sup>36</sup> They included W. P. Robertson, a director of Alex, Thom & Co., a publishing and printing house; James C. Percy, proprietor of Mecredy, Percy and Co., a newspaper publisher; Sir Thomas Robinson, director of the Metropole Hotel; Charles Eason of Eason & Sons; George Stapleton, a solicitor and owner of several properties in Sackville Street; M. J. Minch, a former M.P. and director of the Grand Canal Company; Sir Joseph Downes, merchant and owner of a successful bakery business; William Bewley of Bewley Sons & Co.; Dr J. A. Mitchell, managing director of Hamilton, Long and Co., pharmaceutical chemists; J. F. Potter representing the Munster and Leinster Bank; Martin Fitzgerald, proprietor of Fitzgerald and Co, distillers; Gerald Curtis of W. Curtis & Sons; Marcus Goodbody representing Hugh Moore & Alexanders, tobacco manufacturers; Patrick Rooney, solicitor; Patrick White M.P. for North Meath; and Lorcan Sherlock, a prominent businessman and a former lord mayor of Dublin.

inaugural meeting was praised by the unionist *Daily Express* for its 'commendable disregard of everything except the business under immediate consideration'.<sup>37</sup> The association enjoyed substantial support from the press, irrespective of political stance. As might be expected, the *Irish Independent*, of which Murphy was proprietor, devoted several editorials to the rebuilding of Dublin and ardently re-echoed the demands of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association. Politically, Murphy, and by implication his newspaper, although nationalist, was an enemy of the I.P.P. He had bitterly opposed the financial clauses of the third home rule bill in 1914 and throughout June 1916 trenchantly disparaged Lloyd George's partition scheme as a 'hateful and pernicious policy'.<sup>38</sup> Yet within the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association he had no difficulty working with Patrick White, the Irish Party M.P. for North Meath who owned 22 and 23 Henry Street, and Lorcan Sherlock, the I.P.P. stalwart (though never an M.P.), former lord mayor and prominent businessman. Indeed Murphy was generous in his praise of the efforts of the Dublin M.P.s in pressing Asquith and Chalmers on the matter of rebuilding.<sup>39</sup> Although the *Irish Independent* and the *Freeman's Journal* waged war on one another throughout June over the home rule proposals, there was accord on the ending of martial law and on the compensation question. Given the complete destruction of its premises on Princes Street, this was a particularly urgent matter for the *Freeman's Journal*; it was ultimately awarded £38,997 compensation.<sup>40</sup>

The Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association set about its work promptly and the committee met on a daily basis. To fund its endeavours, a levy was imposed of one-eighth of a penny per pound in the amount of the compensation claim, with a minimum of 10s. and a maximum subscription of £50.<sup>41</sup> Three days after the inaugural meeting, a notice in all the daily papers requested those who had not already sent their claims to Kidney to do so under three headings: total amount of the claim, proportion insured under ordinary fire insurance policies, and the portion claimed for looting. Assistants and other employees were requested to supply details of their personal loss through their employers.<sup>42</sup> On 19 May Kidney reported that the claims received from the 1,500 or so members of the association amounted to £2,500,000.<sup>43</sup>

In the first of many consultations with Dublin Castle, a deputation from the association met Chalmers on 10 and 11 May. After a lengthy conference, agreement was reached on three significant procedural principles. First, all claims would be dealt with on the basis of the insurance policies in force for ordinary risk at the time of the destruction. Second, for settlement purposes looting, rampant during the Rising as the Dublin Metropolitan Police had been withdrawn from the streets, was deemed the same as burning. Thirdly, a tribunal would be established by the government to adjudicate on other claims made by

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 May 1916.

<sup>38</sup> *Irish Independent*, 7 June 1916.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 May 1916.

<sup>40</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, Register of Claims, vol. 3, claim 2082 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>41</sup> *Irish Times*, 11 May 1916.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1916.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 May 1916.

insured persons as well as by those who were uninsured.<sup>44</sup> The latter would be treated on the basis of analogy with insured claims.<sup>45</sup> Asquith approved the proposals and directed that they be announced quickly but explicitly requested that no committee personnel be named.<sup>46</sup>

For the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association this was but the first stage in the complex process of ensuring an equitable settlement of what it regarded as just claims. Hence its disappointment at a communication from Chalmers on 16 May, endorsed by Asquith, informing them that while the government would meet the claims it would 'assume, as the maximum of its *ex gratia* grant, the same liability as would have fallen on the insurance companies if the risk had been covered by the policies in force at the time of the recent disturbances'. Consequential loss would not be considered.<sup>47</sup> The letter was brought before a meeting of the association on 19 May. While welcoming the swift official response, two key criticisms of the proposed scheme were raised. The first was that claims for consequential losses of an immediate character should not be ruled out of consideration. The second concern stemmed from the undertaking that uninsured traders would be compensated fully. To members of the association this suggested that the uninsured would be placed in a better position than the partially insured because the amount of an underinsured person's policy would be the maximum of his compensation allowance. The association and the press maintained that the three classes – the insured, the partially insured and the uninsured – should be treated equally. Concerns over consequential losses and the position of the partially insured were the subject of a resolution forwarded to Chalmers on 20 May.<sup>48</sup>

The under-secretary was unmoved. In a letter to Bonham Carter he predicted that there would be agitation against the compensation committee. Chalmers hoped that Asquith would 'stand firm about consequential damages and will refuse to admit them. Our only firm ground is the insurance analogy; all else is quagmire.' He conceded that the case of the uninsured might pose a difficulty but was confident that the number involved was relatively insignificant, and that they could be levelled up 'so far as is prudent without inspiring the insured with jealousy and cupidity'.<sup>49</sup> The under-secretary also warned the prime minister of the likelihood of I.P.P. efforts at Westminster 'to squeeze a bit more out of a paternal government' and to be consistent with any pledges. Chalmers believed that J.J. Clancy M.P. was 'desperately anxious to pose as the saviour of sufferers and so to reintegrate his and his party's position in the public eye'.<sup>50</sup> Bonham Carter reassured the under-secretary that Asquith would not give way.<sup>51</sup> The Dublin parliamentarians were certainly active and raised concerns that ratepayers should not be mulcted in any compensation under the malicious injury code to

<sup>44</sup> Kidney to Chalmers, 12 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>45</sup> Chalmers to Asquith, 11 May 1916 (*ibid.*).

<sup>46</sup> Note by Asquith, 13 May 1916 (*ibid.*).

<sup>47</sup> Chalmers to Kidney, 16 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>48</sup> Kidney to Chalmers, 20 May 1916 (*ibid.*).

<sup>49</sup> Chalmers to Bonham Carter, 20 May 1916 (*ibid.*).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Bonham Carter to Chalmers, 27 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).



which the government agreed on 20 May 1916.<sup>52</sup> This was given legislative form in the Law and Procedure (Emergency Provisions) (Ireland) Act, which amended the law and procedure of civil courts in relation to the conditions arising out of the rebellion. Clause 1(6) protected the local authority from claims for compensation for criminal or malicious injuries in respect of injuries to persons or property.<sup>53</sup>

By the end of May there was widespread indignation at Chalmers's interpretation of the compensation scheme. The *Irish Independent* considered the exclusion of the partially insured as 'absurd'.<sup>54</sup> It urged that the government should not act in a 'niggardly manner but take a broad and generous view of their liability'.<sup>55</sup> The *Freeman's Journal* deemed it 'an extraordinary principle of differentiation and discrimination', and likewise demanded an equitable approach.<sup>56</sup> The situation was exacerbated by official silence regarding the composition or precise terms of reference of the proposed government committee. The sense of disquiet among members of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association was heightened by the under-secretary's rejection of its proposal to nominate a member of the committee, the suggestion that there would be no appeal mechanism and, in particular, by Chalmers's steadfast refusal to consider the inclusion of consequential loss.<sup>57</sup> Although the government 'had banged the door on claims under that head', the *Irish Times* argued, nonetheless, that 'the losses so incurred by innocent people ought not to be wholly shut out'. Similar sentiments were expressed by White and Sherlock in a letter to the press on 24 May.<sup>58</sup> This mounting anxiety prompted Kidney to appeal directly to the prime minister.<sup>59</sup> Asquith responded by dispatching Herbert Samuel to Dublin on 2 June.<sup>60</sup> He recalled in his memoirs that 'Dublin was a pitiful sight', the result of artillery action and conflagrations.<sup>61</sup> The visit of the home secretary occasioned great anticipation: 'Dublin expects that, before he leaves, the whole matter of compensation for losses will have been put on a proper footing, so that the sufferers will know precisely where they stand'.<sup>62</sup>

A pivotal meeting between the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association and the home secretary took place in Dublin Castle on 5 June. With the exception of William Martin Murphy, who was unavoidably absent in London, the committee was present *en masse* and was joined by the Dublin M.P.s. The group was introduced by John Redmond. The home secretary was flanked by a strong

<sup>52</sup> *Irish Times*, 23 May 1916.

<sup>53</sup> Law and Procedure (Emergency Provisions) (Ireland) 6 & 7 Geo. 5, c. 46 (23 Aug. 1916); Francis Greer (parliamentary draftsman, Irish Office) to R. S. Meiklejohn (Treasury), 3 Aug. 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11982).

<sup>54</sup> *Irish Independent*, 27 May 1916.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 May 1916.

<sup>56</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 1 June 1916.

<sup>57</sup> Note by Chalmers, 22 May 1916; Chalmers to Kidney, 25 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>58</sup> *Irish Times*, 24 May 1916.

<sup>59</sup> Kidney to Bonham Carter, 26 May 1916 (Bodl., Asquith papers, MS 44, ff 52-4).

<sup>60</sup> Bonham Carter to Chalmers, 30 May 1916; Bonham Carter to Kidney, 30 May 1916 (*ibid.*).

<sup>61</sup> Herbert Samuel, *Memoirs* (London, 1945), p. 116.

<sup>62</sup> *Irish Times*, 1 June 1916.

team comprising his parliamentary secretary, Sir John Barran; Chalmers; J. H. Campbell, the attorney general; Henry Robinson; and A. P. Magill, the former private secretary to Birrell.<sup>63</sup> Charles Eason read a lengthy memorandum on behalf of the association which argued for full state compensation for every type of loss to buildings and contents suffered by property owners and traders through, and in direct consequence of, the destruction of Easter Week. He maintained that 'it would be inequitable to limit the compensation to the amount of the insurance policies' because the policies were not intended to cover the extraordinary events and the consequent damage that had taken place.<sup>64</sup> In normal circumstances, fire detection and sprinkler systems would limit a fire and the fire service would be able to operate. The military operations prevented this. He also drew attention to the increase in the price of labour and building materials, something exacerbated by the war. This was a significant consideration, as between 1910 and 1920 the cost of bricks and Welsh slates per thousand jumped from £1 12s. to £7 and £9 10s. to £48 respectively. Similarly, the summer hourly rate for bricklayers increased from 8½d. to 2s. 2d. and for slaters from 8½d. to 2s. 1½d.<sup>65</sup> The memorandum then moved from the insurance value of destroyed buildings and stocks to other categories of loss such as standing charges, rents, book debts that were irrecoverable due to the burning of account books, and dwindling profits due to disruption to business. Damage due to fire was not the only category specified by the association. Eason highlighted the value of goods looted or damaged by water, as well as the damage to buildings and their contents due to gunfire, water and causes other than conflagration. He stressed the necessity, whatever the method of investigation of claims adopted, of advancing sums promptly to claimants who were unable to resume business without funds and 'to avert the misery and distress' of traders 'being deprived for some time of their means of livelihood'.<sup>66</sup> The association's statement was published in the press on 10 June. To it may be added one further point. Despite the callous reputation acquired during the 1913 lockout, Murphy suggested to Chalmers that 'it would be a great charity' if employees and assistants could be compensated speedily for the loss of clothing and other belongings.<sup>67</sup> The under-secretary, who in his younger days had worked to alleviate the poor and the sick in East London, promised to consider 'what is practicable for the humbler people' mentioned.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>64</sup> 'Notes of claim for compensation as drawn up by Mr W. M. Murphy, Chairman of the Committee' [June 1916] (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187). It appears that only Curtis & Sons of 98/99 Middle Abbey Street were insured against civil commotion. Lloyds, their insurers, repudiated the claim but when taken to court were ordered to pay c.£25,000 compensation, Minute 'ex gratia building grant 98/99 Middle Abbey Street, Curtis V Lloyds', 19 June 1920 (T.N.A., T 161/65).

<sup>65</sup> Civics Institute of Ireland, *The Dublin civic survey* (Liverpool and London, 1925), p. 72.

<sup>66</sup> 'Notes of claim for compensation as drawn up by Mr W. M. Murphy, Chairman of the Committee', [June 1916] (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>67</sup> Murphy to Chalmers, 3 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>68</sup> Peden, 'Chalmers, Robert, Baron Chalmers (1858–1938)'; handwritten note by Chalmers, 4 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

Samuel's response was politically astute but not particularly reassuring. He remarked that it was a distinct advantage for the government to have an organised body representing the sufferers and commended the cogent case put forward. But the home secretary was quick to emphasize that in contrast to the position of many people in the U.K., who suffered losses due to the war, the prime minister had exceptionally placed on the exchequer the charge for the sufferers in Dublin. He directly addressed the issue of those partially insured – a key demand of the association – by stating categorically that it would 'not be equitable' if they 'were to be treated worse than the uninsured'.<sup>69</sup> Samuel stressed both his and Chalmers's anxiety that the machinery for dealing with and assessing cases be set to work without further delay, and that the government was animated by a 'sympathetic spirit'.<sup>70</sup> However, that did not extend to consequential losses on which the home secretary, when pressed by Patrick White M.P., refused to 'open that very wide door'.<sup>71</sup> Increased building costs were likewise dismissed. Samuel's response to the association was greeted with disappointment when published in the press on 14 June. The *Daily Express* maintained that 'when the State, for its own safety and welfare, destroyed their [owners'] property, surely they were entitled, as a matter of common justice, to be compensated for the loss they had suffered ... at the hands of servants of the State'.<sup>72</sup>

#### IV

In mid-June 1916, Chalmers announced the appointment of a three-man committee composed of one Irish businessman and two men of wide insurance experience in connection with the destruction of buildings and their contents in Dublin and elsewhere.<sup>73</sup> Revealingly, the original name of this body – Destroyed Property Committee – was altered to the less contentious Property Losses (Ireland) Committee 1916. The chairman, Sir William Goulding, chairman of the fertilizer and phosphates firm, W. & H. M. Goulding and the Great Southern and Western Railway, wisely insisted on this. He was joined by two veteran fire assessors: William E. Osborn of Messrs Selfe & Co. London and Samuel Pipkin, general manager of the Atlas Assurance Company Ltd., London.<sup>74</sup> James J. Healy of the Office of Public Works acted as secretary of the committee which was based at 51 St Stephen's Green East. The committee was charged with three responsibilities. First, it was to ascertain the sums covered for ordinary fire risks by insurance policies in force at the time of the destruction. Secondly, it was to advise what part of such sums would have been paid by insurance companies if the destruction had been caused by accidental fire. Thirdly, it was to recommend how the various claims of uninsured persons could fairly be dealt with and, in a significant concession to the Dublin Fire and

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*; *Freeman's Journal*, 14 June 1916.

<sup>72</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 June 1916.

<sup>73</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 19 June 1916.

<sup>74</sup> Osborn to Bonham Carter, 23 May 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11999).

Property Losses Association, to what extent exceptional treatment should be allowed for insured persons in view of the unique circumstances of Easter Week.<sup>75</sup> The committee was impressively efficient. It met for less than ten months and its report, agreed on 7 April 1917, was submitted to the government the following month.

At the committee's first meeting on 21 June 1916 the form of procedure was laid down. To simplify matters looting was deemed to be burning but no consequential damage was to be taken into account. This effectively ruled out all claims for loss of profits, standing charges and book debts, none of which were provided for under ordinary fire policies.<sup>76</sup> A claim form was settled on, which included, as might be expected, a statutory declaration of its veracity, thereby enabling the government to prosecute if fraudulent claims were discovered. Larger and more substantial claims, such as those for rebuilding, were to be investigated by qualified fire assessors. The practice adopted by insurance companies in dealing with claims arising under their fire policies was to be followed and the assessment was to represent the value of the damage at the date of destruction. Three Irish firms of assessors were appointed to deal with claims in excess of £100: Walter Hume & Co., Dublin; William Montgomery & Son, Dublin; and, from July, R. N. Kennedy, Belfast. By the autumn ten assessors were employed.<sup>77</sup> Smaller claims were scrutinized by insurance inspectors. In July, A. M. Brown of the Royal Insurance Company was appointed on a whole-time basis, at a salary of five guineas per week, to examine such claims.<sup>78</sup> Thirteen others worked part time. The work was greatly speeded up by the agreement of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association to transfer all claims that had been lodged with it. Newspaper advertisements in the Dublin daily press requested outstanding claims to be submitted before the closing date of 12 August.<sup>79</sup>

In what amounted to a vindication of the position of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association, it quickly became clear to the committee that, despite government opposition, to limit the loss admissible in insured cases to the amount of the insurance would not meet the special circumstances. The committee's interpretation was highly sympathetic in that it recognised that buildings were allowed to burn out as the fire brigade could not intervene, the police were withdrawn, and owners were prevented by the military from approaching their burning premises. Consequently, nothing could be done in the circumstances to save property from fire or looting. Under the Emergency Provisions Ireland Act, property owners and traders were unable to recover compensation for the damage sustained from the ratepayers. In effect, the committee argued that this meant that all losses merited exceptional treatment. In each case, where loss could be proven, the Property Losses Committee

<sup>75</sup> Samuel to Chalmers, 13 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>76</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, paras 17 & 18 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>77</sup> Healy to Chalmers, 25 July 1916; memo by Maurice Headlam (Treasury Remembrancer Dublin Castle), 31 July 1916; John Taylor (assistant under-secretary) to Treasury, 7 Sept. 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11999).

<sup>78</sup> Healy to Chalmers, 22 June 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11999).

<sup>79</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, para. 23 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

recommended payment of the sum which an insurance company would have allowed had the loss been fully covered by insurance.<sup>80</sup>

A total of 7,001 claims for £2,791,872 were received by the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee. Of this number, 6,236 applications, just over 89 per cent, were admitted amounting to a total claim of £2,632,522. The committee recommended for payment £1,844,390 or 70 per cent of this sum.<sup>81</sup> The Dublin business community represented by the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association were not, of course, the only claimants. The committee recognised the importance of promptly settling the claims of workmen and employees 'who, owing to the loss of tools or clothing, were in many cases unable to obtain work'.<sup>82</sup> Some 3,200 small claims for personal effects or minor damage to property had been received by the beginning of November 1916.<sup>83</sup> These were processed first before the more substantial claims which, by definition, were complex and time consuming. In October, in response to set piece parliamentary questions from Byrne and Clancy alleging delay, Henry Duke told the Commons that such allegations were unfounded because 1,195 of the 1,235 applications had been paid in full.<sup>84</sup> The amounts involved were generally modest as the following examples illustrate. Alex Harper was awarded £23 1s. 6d. for damage to the doors and looting at 14 Fownes Street, while Margaret Kiernan was awarded £1 7s. 5d. for the loss of an apron and shoes.<sup>85</sup> There were numerous claims for property destroyed in the jewellery stores of Sackville Street. John Farrell of 62 Upper Sackville Street, who sought £20 for his gold watch destroyed in Hopkins and Hopkins, was awarded £12.<sup>86</sup> Many visitors staying in hotels such as Wynn's claimed for the loss of personal effects. Several suppliers of foodstuffs seized for provisioning purposes by the military were compensated. Daniel Murphy Ltd. of Mary Street was allowed £2 2s. for butter and £2 16s. for pork seized at Kingsbridge Station.<sup>87</sup> The military authorities deemed that premises used to house troops should be paid for at billeting rates.<sup>88</sup> There were also claims from areas outside Dublin such as Enniscorthy and Oranmore. The administrator of the deceased owner of Oranmore R.I.C. barracks was awarded £24 12s. for gunfire damage.<sup>89</sup> As it was practically impossible to distinguish between gunfire damage caused by insurgents and that caused by the military, no distinction was made in the matter of compensation. Careful consideration was given to loss of rent as a separate category. As rent was conventionally treated as a building loss

<sup>80</sup> William Byrne to Treasury, 28 Dec. 1916 (T.N.A., T1/12023); Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, para. 14 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>81</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, para. 24 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 8.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 9.

<sup>84</sup> *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 86, col. 174 (12 Oct. 1916); *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Oct. 1916.

<sup>85</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, Register of Claims, vol. 1, claim 368 & claim 441 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, claim 3774 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, claims 6755–6 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>88</sup> Memo by Major-General L. B. Friend on claims arising out of disturbances, 5 June 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11985).

<sup>89</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, Register of Claims, vol. 7, claim 6415 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

covered by ordinary fire policy, it was admitted only if it was insured against and to a maximum of one year.<sup>90</sup>

For a variety of reasons, 765 applications totalling £159,350 were declined.<sup>91</sup> The rejections fell into eleven general categories. Predictably, no grant was made in respect of the property of anyone complicit in the outbreak and each list of claimants was subjected to police inspection. Yet twenty such claims amounting to £6,368 were received. Four were made by Count and Countess Plunkett for the alleged theft by the military of money, jewellery and personal effects as well as damage to property. None were entertained.<sup>92</sup> This was undoubtedly due to the participation of their three sons in the Rising, all of whom were sentenced to death. Only Joseph was executed; George and Jack were interned, and the Count and Countess were deported to Oxford for nine months. The committee followed the insurance practice of not making awards for the loss of money or securities. There were twenty such claims for a total of £242.<sup>93</sup> Eighty-two claims amounting to £114,853 were deemed consequential losses and rejected. A typical example was Windgap Co-op Dairy Society which sought £40 for the loss in sale of a consignment of butter sent by rail to Kingsbridge.<sup>94</sup> There was no proof of loss in 56 cases which amounted to £10,276; 28 applications totalling £577 were withdrawn, and 225 cases for a combined amount of £8,087 were not proceeded with. Acting on Lord Wimborne's instructions, claims in respect of government property destroyed or damaged were not considered. In this way, the G.P.O., the Linen Hall Barracks and four other buildings were excluded. Insurance companies were found to be liable in 104 cases, particularly for damage to plate glass, to the tune of £7,598. Other parties were liable in 57 cases totalling £1,830. There were 52 claims for firearms and field glasses seized by the military but these fell outside the terms of reference and were referred to the chief secretary's office. Lastly, 115 claims were excluded on the grounds that they were received too late for consideration.<sup>95</sup>

The assessors categorized larger claims. The more urgent were those where destroyed stock or plant resulted in the claimants being unable to resume business in the absence of a settlement. To minimize hardship once a preliminary assessor's report was received, the committee recommended a substantial payment on account, pending a full valuation of the loss sustained.<sup>96</sup> The largest awards were for the 210 cases in which property had to be rebuilt. These included 16 properties on Lower Abbey Street, 25 on Middle Abbey Street, 1 on Beresford Place, 4 on Bolton Street, 4 on Lower Bridge Street, 1 on Great Brunswick Street, 1 on Cathedral Street, 2 in Clanwilliam Place, 6 in Cole's Lane, 1 in Crane Lane, 2 on Dame Street, 1 on Dean Street, 3 on Earl Place, 11 on North Earl Street, 13 on Eden Quay, 3 at Harbour Court, 3 on Harcourt Street, 4 on Henry Place, 36 on Henry Street, 1 on North King's Street, 1 on Linen Hall, 2 on

<sup>90</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, para. 16 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 24.

<sup>92</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, Register of Claims, vol. 5, claims 4395–8 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>93</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, para. 15 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>94</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, Register of Claims, vol. 8, claim 6936 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>95</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, 1916. Report, para. 24 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 11.

Marlborough Street, 10 on Moore Street, 1 on Parliament Street, 8 on Prince's Street, 5 on Sackville Place, 35 on Lower Sackville Street, 6 on Upper Sackville Street, 3 on Usher's Quay and 1 on Yarnhall Street.<sup>97</sup> The largest of these awards was Clery's which was granted £77,292 for the destruction of 21–27 Sackville Street.<sup>98</sup>

The law firms in Dublin did exceptionally well from the compensation process as many claimants applied through their solicitors. But a group of nine, known as the 'burnt-out solicitors', were less fortunate and suffered the complete destruction of their offices along with all legal documentation deposited in their strong rooms. Their position was pursued with vigour by J. J. Clancy, himself a barrister and journalist, and the other Dublin M.P.s.<sup>99</sup> Patrick Rooney, chairman of the burnt-out solicitors and a committee member of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association, made representations in person to Samuel in June and the solicitors' group also appeared before the Property Losses Committee.<sup>100</sup> They were particularly concerned about the expense of replacing destroyed deeds and documents as well as the costs of perpetuating testimony where essential deeds were destroyed. The intensive lobbying paid dividends. Under the Law & Procedure (Emergency Provisions) (Ireland) Act, the solicitors were relieved of liability in respect of deeds or other documents lost while in their custody. The act also extended the power of the high court as regards perpetuation of testimony to cases in which the title deeds had been lost or destroyed. A scale of fees was suggested by the Treasury for the several classes of work required with a time limit of one year.<sup>101</sup>

The Property Losses Committee did not actually disburse awards. Its purpose was to investigate claims and recommend a sum for the Treasury to approve and pay out. A total of forty-one compensation schedules were presented to the government between July 1916 and April 1917. This mechanism gave the impression of delay and disgruntled the Dublin business community. In October, William Martin Murphy claimed that no compensation had yet been paid on account for rebuilding, giving rise to fears that the government might have revised the terms of reference.<sup>102</sup> Owners were understandably anxious to ascertain the amount of compensation they would receive. Consequential losses were increased by what the association deemed unjust and unreasonable delay. A unanimous resolution on 6 November castigated the 'dilatatory conduct of the government' and the matter was raised in parliament by the Dublin M.P.s and in the press.<sup>103</sup> The familiar bogey of the uninsured faring better than the partially insured also remained a nagging grievance. A difference of opinion regarding this

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, Register of Claims, vol. 5, claim 4071 (N.A.I., 3/083/37).

<sup>99</sup> J. J. Clancy, W. Field, Patrick J. Brady, W. F. Cotton, J. D. Nugent and Alfred Byrne to Chalmers, 19 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>100</sup> *Dublin Express*, 11 May 1916; Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187); Healy to Chalmers, 4 Apr. 1917 (T.N.A., T 1/12090).

<sup>101</sup> Law and Procedure (Emergency Provisions) (Ireland); Healy to Headlam, 26 Oct. 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/11982).

<sup>102</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lviii, no. 22 (28 Oct. 1916), p. 532.

<sup>103</sup> *Irish Times*, 7, 10 and 11 Nov. 1916.

class of claim had emerged between the Irish administration and the Treasury, which proposed limiting *ex gratia* payments to £1,000 irrespective of the recommendations of the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee. On 22 November a deputation from the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association, introduced by Redmond, was received by Asquith and Duke. Following the failure of the Lloyd George scheme in July the British government had been consumed by the war and exhibited little interest in Irish self-government. But on the issue of restitution for the destruction of Easter 1916 Asquith once again proved both pragmatic and conciliatory. He recognised the urgency of the situation and undertook to communicate with the Treasury and to expedite a settlement by every means in his power.<sup>104</sup> Two weeks later Asquith was deposed as prime minister. As his biographer has noted, he tended to disguise his personal interventions but the subsequent stance taken by Duke indicates that Asquith was true to his word.<sup>105</sup> The chief secretary estimated that equitable treatment of the partially insured would require only an additional £300,000. He recognised the political importance of the gesture: ‘any defect in fulfilment of a ministerial promise ... would defeat the whole object of appeasement for which the promise was made, and is easily made the text of vehement popular attacks on the methods of British rule in Ireland.’<sup>106</sup> The concerns of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association were eased considerably in January 1917 when it became possible for owners to inspect the note of awards at the under-secretary’s office.<sup>107</sup> Funds for actual expenditure were released on a phased basis on the production of a certificate from the architect or builder employed in the rebuilding. For example, William McDowell was paid £2,070 in six instalments between 23 May and 13 December 1917 for the restoration of 3 Upper Sackville Street.<sup>108</sup> Each case had to be supported by a recommendation from the commissioner of public works.<sup>109</sup> The flinty lords of the Treasury were not the only source of delay, however. The framing of workable town planning regulations and additional financial provisions, embodied in the Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) Act, proved arduous, contentious and protracted. No reconstruction could begin until the act became law in December 1916.

## V

Early twentieth-century Dublin was beset by a chronic shortage of housing, overcrowded tenements, widespread dereliction and traffic congestion. These problems, new approaches to urban development in England and Germany, and the likelihood of home rule combined to generate increasing interest in town

<sup>104</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 Nov. 1916.

<sup>105</sup> J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith* (2 vols, London, 1932), ii, 281.

<sup>106</sup> Memorandum by H. E. Duke ‘Dublin Reconstruction – the *ex gratia* grant’, 15 Dec. 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/12023).

<sup>107</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lix, no. 2 (20 Jan. 1917), p. 29.

<sup>108</sup> Rebuilding claim of William McDowell (N.A.I., C.S.O.R.P. 3/690/11 (1917), 30142).

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Heath (Treasury) to William Byrne, 7 Dec. 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/12023).



planning. There was, for example, a competition in 1914 for a development scheme for Dublin promoted by the Civics Institute of Ireland and sponsored by the lord lieutenant.<sup>110</sup> For Dublin Corporation, therefore, the destruction of Easter Week and the promised government compensation presented both hidden dangers and welcome opportunities. James M. Gallagher,<sup>111</sup> the lord mayor, and his fellow counsellors were anxious that Sackville Street and adjoining areas would be rebuilt, at a minimum, in a manner not worse than before and ideally with greater dignity and ‘in consonance with a well devised town planning and street widening scheme’.<sup>112</sup> This echoed the sentiments of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, which was eager to achieve ‘the enhancement of the architectural dignity of the city’.<sup>113</sup> While deploring the loss of life, R. M. Butler, editor of the influential *Irish Builder and Engineer* and designer of the neo-classical U.C.D. building on Earlsfort Terrace, suggested that ‘the clearance by fire in Lower Sackville Street affords a unique and unexpected opportunity for putting into practice the true principles of town planning ... to give Dublin a piece of architecture worthy of this still beautiful and historic street’.<sup>114</sup> But he warned in one of several commentaries on the subject that ‘no worse fatality could befall O’Connell Street than the giving of unfettered powers to every owner to produce a design to suit himself’.<sup>115</sup> Significantly, the Housing and Town Planning Act (1909) did not apply to Ireland. Therefore, the lord mayor sought new legislation to empower the Corporation to have some measure of control over the character of the buildings to be erected and to improve streets.

The other major worry for the Corporation was financial. The loss in rates owing to the destruction was an estimated £16,000 in the 1916 financial year, a ruinous amount for a body struggling with a chronic housing problem.<sup>116</sup> This loss would continue to accrue until the destroyed areas were rebuilt and reoccupied; the government was petitioned on the matter in September 1916.<sup>117</sup> The Corporation sought financial assistance from the state to enable it to purchase ground areas for street widening and vacant sites on which owners were not in a position to rebuild. It also wished to provide financial aid to private owners over and above the *ex gratia* grant where the magnitude of compensation was insufficient to allow rebuilding in an improving architectural style or to meet elevated building costs.<sup>118</sup> Ultimately, the Corporation fared better on the

<sup>110</sup> See Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910–1940: shaping the city & suburbs* (Dublin, 2002), pp 54–68.

<sup>111</sup> Originally from Leitrim, Gallagher established a successful wholesale and retail tobacco business. First elected to the Corporation for the Fitzwilliam Ward in 1908–9, he became lord mayor in 1915 as a nationalist and served three consecutive terms.

<sup>112</sup> Gallagher to Samuel, 3 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>113</sup> Frederick Hayes (honorary secretary R.I.A.I.) to Samuel, 1 June 1916, (*ibid.*). On this debate see Seán Rothery, *Ireland and the new architecture, 1900–1940* (Dublin, 1991), p. 83.

<sup>114</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lviii, no. 10 (13 May 1916), p. 202.

<sup>115</sup> R. M. Butler, ‘The reconstruction of O’Connell Street, Dublin’, *Studies*, v, no. 20 (Dec. 1916), pp 572–3.

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Corporation, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>117</sup> *Irish Times*, 19 Sept. 1916.

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Corporation, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

financial side, with relatively generous provisions for the reinstatement of the destroyed area, than on the planning regulation aspect. From the outset both Samuel, who had been president of the local government board in England and possessed an interest in planning, and Chalmers appreciated the need for building regulation. The Dublin business community was less inclined to this view.

The Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association fiercely resisted any town planning regulations that might impinge on rebuilding or add to its cost. In an open letter to the press, at the end of May, it proposed four conditions for its acceptance of any such restrictions. First, traders who wanted to return to business as quickly as possible should not be penalised by undue delay. Second, every trader in the ruined area should have the right to veto any architectural features unsuited to the requirements of his particular trade. Third, the cost of 'mere beautification' should be borne by the state or municipality. Fourth, compensation should be awarded if any improvement scheme reduced the frontage line of a trader's property.<sup>119</sup> This was buttressed by an editorial in the *Irish Independent* the following day protesting against any requirement to 'replace ordinary business premises by palatial structures'.<sup>120</sup> By contrast an *Irish Times* editorial cautioned against a crude conflict between town planning and business interests, and counselled that traders should remember 'that they owe something to the civic pride and national taste of the people among whom they earn their bread'.<sup>121</sup> This initial intervention was an augury of the association's prolonged dispute with the Corporation over the content of the Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) bill.

In the immediate aftermath of the Rising, the energies of Lord Mayor Gallagher were focused on alleviating distress. He organised a fund for this purpose, opened a section of the Mansion House for those who had been made homeless and distributed food and clothing. In an obituary comment in 1926, the *Irish Times* claimed that 'by his tact and courage during that trying period' the lord mayor 'won the good opinion of every section of the citizens.'<sup>122</sup> On 17 May Gallagher had a meeting with Asquith and Chalmers in Dublin Castle, at which the prime minister expressed his desire to provide every necessary facility to the Corporation without delay. Chalmers invited the lord mayor to submit legislative proposals and the Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) measure was furnished one week later.<sup>123</sup> The first clause concerned street improvements and necessary alterations of previously enacted public health and housing acts. The second addressed various bye-laws with respect to the structure, design and alignment of new buildings. The third proposed that 'all expenses incurred or payable by the Corporation in the execution of this Act shall be defrayed out of moneys provided by Parliament'. This proved the most contentious in the initial negotiations between the Corporation and the government. Chalmers and the solicitor-general met the lord mayor, town clerk and law agent on 25 May when a difference of opinion arose as to whether the measure should be a private one

<sup>119</sup> *Freeman's Journal, Irish Times*, 31 May 1916.

<sup>120</sup> *Irish Independent*, 1 June 1916.

<sup>121</sup> *Irish Times*, 31 May 1916.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 Jan. 1926.

<sup>123</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 May 1916; Campbell to Chalmers, 24 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

in the name of the Corporation or a government-sponsored bill.<sup>124</sup> The Corporation insisted that the bill be considered by the prime minister and introduced by the government. Unsurprisingly, Chalmers was unable to recommend that expenses be defrayed by moneys provided by Westminster.<sup>125</sup> As he put it to Bonham Carter, 'My dread in this rebuilding has been lest the Exchequer should be let in to pay the piper. My aim has been to saddle the Corporation with the cost of the tune which they may call.'<sup>126</sup>

The concerns of the Corporation were ventilated at two meetings with Samuel in Dublin Castle on 3 and 5 June.<sup>127</sup> John Redmond and the Dublin M.P.s were present at the second consultation. The home secretary reassuringly acknowledged the deputation's anxieties:

Let me say at the outset that I entirely share your views that it would be a calamity if this devastation to a part of the City of Dublin were to result in unworthy buildings being erected spoiling your fine street ... it would be greatly to be regretted if this opportunity were not seized to make Dublin even a finer city than it was before.<sup>128</sup>

But he refused the request to make available a free Treasury grant. For its part the Corporation was unwilling to accept the suggestion that money be borrowed on the open market. Undeterred, Gallagher audaciously submitted that if the government was unwilling to provide a grant then it ought instead to provide a loan repayable over sixty years and free of interest for the first decade. The lord mayor informed Samuel that he had 'not the least doubt that this suggestion represents the very minimum which public opinion in Dublin can be induced to accept as at all fair or equitable'.<sup>129</sup> While the home secretary was keen that town planning should be put on a better footing, he shared his significant scruples about the terms of the loan with the chancellor of the exchequer.<sup>130</sup> Given the exigencies of wartime retrenchment and the compensation of actual sufferers, the financial authorities flatly rebuffed the lord mayor's proposition. In a stiff reply, the Corporation was informed that it could apply for a loan on ordinary terms at the end of the war.<sup>131</sup> Repeated protests by Gallagher that Dublin Corporation would be granted legal powers without the financial resources to make them effective were not entertained.

With the committed support of the I.P.P., and, in particular, J. J. Clancy, the party's financial and local government expert, the doughty lord mayor appealed directly to the prime minister and home secretary in the House of Commons on 6 July.<sup>132</sup> The deputation was introduced by Redmond, who was

<sup>124</sup> Chalmers to Bonham Carter, 25 May 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26186).

<sup>125</sup> Chalmers to Campbell, 31 May 1916 (ibid.).

<sup>126</sup> Chalmers to Bonham Carter, 24 May 1916 (ibid.).

<sup>127</sup> Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Corporation, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187); *Irish Times*, 6 June 1916.

<sup>128</sup> Memorandum of meeting with deputation from Dublin Corporation, 5 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>129</sup> Gallagher to Samuel, 6 June 1916 (ibid.).

<sup>130</sup> Samuel to Reginald McKenna (chancellor of the exchequer), 14 June 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/12038).

<sup>131</sup> Samuel to Gallagher, 20 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>132</sup> Gallagher to Samuel, 22 and 30 June 1916; Samuel to Gallagher, 27 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187); *Freeman's Journal*, 7 July 1916; 'Report of

flanked by Joe Devlin and the Dublin M.P.s. In his reply, Asquith expressed his complete sympathy with the citizens of Dublin, considered that Dublin Corporation should have wider powers and promised to recommend a loan to the chancellor of the exchequer. He instructed the Corporation to frame a financial scheme in conjunction with the local government board, which proved modest in both scope and budget when presented on 17 July.<sup>133</sup> There was no place for grandiose suggestions of a new thoroughfare from the quays to Broadstone Terminus or the creation of a circus at Nelson's Pillar. Instead, other than building controls, the Corporation proposed the widening of parts of Earl Street and Henry Street. At the insistence of Henry Robinson, the loan sought was capped at £750,000 instead of £1,000,000.<sup>134</sup> The Treasury sought a number of safeguards. These were embodied in clause 3 of the Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) bill, which was introduced in the House of Commons on 1 August. First, advances could not exceed the difference between the amount of compensation and the total cost of rebuilding. Second, they had to be made to property owners and secured by mortgage.<sup>135</sup>

As the bill was being placed in the hands of the parliamentary draftsman, Samuel presciently warned Gallagher of the necessity of the measure being framed so as to prevent its active opposition by property owners.<sup>136</sup> Should a conflict of view arise, delay in restoring the devastated areas would be inevitable. So it proved. Clause two of the bill, which conferred on the Corporation powers to make bye-laws in respect of structure, materials, design, alignment and general symmetry of new buildings in the damaged area, was opposed by the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association as an unnecessary burden.<sup>137</sup> Fearing that property owners would have to fund the difference between the *ex gratia* grant and the cost of the Corporation's scheme, a special meeting on 4 August 1916 sought to petition parliament. The second reading on 17 August was carried overwhelmingly by 156 votes to 5, despite the forceful criticism of T. M. Healy, who sought to have the bill submitted to a select committee.<sup>138</sup> This motion was withdrawn when Henry Duke suggested that the legislation be reconsidered during the parliamentary recess.<sup>139</sup> Fourteen weeks of negotiations between the Association and the Corporation followed. The municipality sought the advice of a team of Dublin architects and of Raymond Unwin, the pioneering

the Special Committee, *in re* Dublin (Destroyed Areas) Reconstruction' (Dublin City Library and Archive, Reports and Printed Documents of the Corporation of Dublin, i (1917), pp 57–64).

<sup>133</sup> 'Transcript of deputation from the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Dublin to the Prime Minister regarding relief for rebuilding in Dublin', 6 July 1916 (Bodl., Asquith papers, MS 91, ff 73–7); *Dublin Express*, 7 July 1916; *Freeman's Journal*, 7 July 1916; Robinson to Chalmers, 16 July 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/12038); *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lviii, no. 15 (22 July 1916), p. 338.

<sup>134</sup> Robinson to Chalmers, 17 July 1916 (T.N.A., T 1/12038).

<sup>135</sup> Francis Greer to Thomas Heath, 21 July 1916, enclosing memorandum: 'Draft clause as to loans in aid of expenses in reconstruction' (T.N.A., T 1/12038).

<sup>136</sup> Samuel to Gallagher, 20 June 1916 (N.L.I., Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26187).

<sup>137</sup> *Irish Times*, 6 Aug. 1916.

<sup>138</sup> *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 85, cols 2166–7 (17 Aug. 1916).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2168.

English architect, town planner and adviser to the Local Government Board of England.<sup>140</sup>

That the revised bill was an agreed measure owed much to the ‘indefatigable exertions’ of Gallagher.<sup>141</sup> A memorandum setting out agreed amendments between the Corporation and the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association was presented to Duke in late November. A warning by him on 1 December that the bill would not reach the statute book if there were further delays focused minds.<sup>142</sup> Crucially by the time of the third reading on 18 December the Treasury had relaxed its opposition to some of the local taxation clauses.<sup>143</sup> The original clause two was struck out. It was replaced by far less robust provisions, whereby the city architect, to whom plans for new or restored buildings had to be submitted, could require, in the public interest, ‘reasonable alterations’ in respect of external design, frontage lines and materials.<sup>144</sup> These were open to contestation and an arbitration procedure was laid down in sub-clause four with owners appointing their own expert and the city architect acting for the Corporation. Compensation would be paid to owners for alteration to frontage lines.<sup>145</sup> Property owners sought and won three protections. The first was that the valuation of buildings before the destruction should not be increased for a set period. During the third reading Clancy proposed a thirty-year term. Recognising that the circumstances were exceptional and that there had been a valuation in 1915, Duke amended the exemption to twelve years. The second demand was that rates be remitted in the first year after buildings were reconstructed. This was championed by all the Dublin M.P.s. The chief secretary agreed but limited the concession to rebuilt property alone. Lastly, it was agreed that excise licences attached to some of the destroyed premises be preserved.<sup>146</sup> The Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) Act received the royal assent on 20 December, two days before parliament was prorogued. Throughout December coverage of this important measure for the city of Dublin and the steady lobbying of the Dublin M.P.s was completely overshadowed by the fall of Asquith’s government, Lloyd George’s accession as prime minister, the new coalition and, in particular, the fateful announcement by Duke on 21 December of the release of Irish internees.

<sup>140</sup> Report of the work and conclusions of the expert committee on the reconstruction of the damages area, 1916, (Dublin City Library and Archive, Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, iii (1916), pp 619–38). Unwin apparently played a pivotal role in brokering a compromise, see Mervyn Miller, ‘Raymond Unwin and the planning of Dublin’ in Michael J. Bannon (ed.), *The emergence of Irish planning, 1880–1920* (Dublin, 1985), pp 286–7.

<sup>141</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lviii, no. 25 (9 Dec. 1916), p. 619.

<sup>142</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 1 Dec. 1916.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 Dec. 1916.

<sup>144</sup> Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions), 6 & 7 Geo. 5, c. 66 (20 Dec. 1916), clause 2(2).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, clauses 2(4) & 2(7).

<sup>146</sup> *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 88, cols 1224–38 (18 Dec 1916); *Freeman’s Journal*, 19 Dec. 1916; Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions), clauses 6 & 7.

## VI

The British government was appeasing and pragmatic in respect of the reconstruction of Dublin. The demand for a generous measure of compensation was granted with little resistance. Not to have done so would surely have inflamed public opinion. The scale of compensation – £1,844,390 in *ex gratia* grants and a £700,000 loan to Dublin Corporation – was substantial, particularly given wartime austerity. One could argue that such a figure was trifling for a government which daily spent millions prosecuting the war. But in an Irish context the amount of compensation for a relatively small portion of Dublin and her citizens was significant. By way of comparison, Irish income tax yielded £1,480,000 in 1913–14 and £3,999,000 in the wartime conditions of 1915–16.<sup>147</sup> The approach adopted by the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee in 1916 had three advantages over the compensation schemes for damage to property during the War of Independence and Civil War. Although *ex gratia* and not in recognition of any right to compensation, the Imperial Treasury bore the full cost of the grants with the government effectively acting like an insurer in each case. This benefit was recognised by the *Irish Investors' Guardian*, a monthly trade journal. In its account of the annual meeting of Kapp & Peterson, the pipe manufacturer and tobacco merchant, it commented: 'it was well the shareholders had the Government to fall back upon, as but for that fact their interests would have suffered very heavily indeed from the untoward events in Dublin last year'.<sup>148</sup> By contrast, property damaged during the period 1919–23 was subject to the malicious injury code and the cost substantially borne by Irish ratepayers and a fledgling state crippled by debt. As in 1916 no consequential loss was permitted. Secondly, each of the interested parties – Dublin Corporation, the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association and the government – recognised the necessity of promptitude. The vast bulk of small claims had been settled by October 1916 and all but a handful of larger claims by the end of 1917. Such speedy resolution was enabled by the assessment of cases on the same basis as insurance claims. The mechanism adopted under the malicious injury code and the Damage to Property (Compensation) Acts, 1923–6 was more cumbersome and protracted as it involved a legal hearing where claimants had to prove that a wrongful act had been committed.<sup>149</sup> Lastly, the approach of the Property Losses Committee – to recommend payment of the sum which an insurance company would have allowed had the loss been fully covered by insurance – was an equitable one. This helps explain the relatively small number of complaints regarding the magnitude of grants awarded. Inevitably, there were some objections that the insurance value fell short of the replacement cost. For example, Hugh Moore & Alexander Ltd. was aggrieved at an award of £20,500 for the destruction of the Linenhall building, having

<sup>147</sup> *Irish Independent*, 19 Sept. 1916.

<sup>148</sup> *Irish Investors' Guardian: banking & insurance review*, xxiv, no. 11 (2 June 1917), p. 137.

<sup>149</sup> See Gemma M. Clark, 'The fiery campaign: new agenda and ancient enmities in the Irish Civil War – a study of arson in three Munster counties' in Brian Griffin and Ellen McWilliams (eds), *Irish studies in Britain: new perspectives on history and literature* (Newcastle, 2010), p. 73.

claimed £32,752.<sup>150</sup> That there was no right of appeal may have discouraged disgruntled claimants. Others may simply have been thankful, given the grim wartime financial climate, to get the full insurance value of their loss, whether substantial or minor. Research on compensation awarded after the Irish Civil War indicates that the amounts were meagre and only permitted reinstatement on a modest scale.<sup>151</sup>

The reconstruction of Sackville Street took time. One of the first buildings to be rebuilt was that of Corrigan and Wilson, printers of Sackville Place; they resumed business in February 1917.<sup>152</sup> But this was exceptional. Although a considerable number of designs for rebuilding were lodged with the city architect by spring 1917, the restoration of Sackville Street was greatly impeded by wartime shortages, of steel in particular, and high building prices. Many businesses erected temporary structures until the way was clear to begin rebuilding. In February 1918 the *Irish Times* reported that 'recent fine weather seems to have given quite a powerful impetus to rebuilding work, and the central area of the city presents an air of activity such as it has hardly worn at any time since restoration was taken in hand.'<sup>153</sup> The end of the First World War greatly accelerated the pace of reinstatement and unemployment in the building trade virtually disappeared.<sup>154</sup> By mid-1920 the restoration of Sackville Street, so important for the commercial life of Dublin, was almost complete. Only a few *ex gratia* payments were outstanding due to legal difficulties, labour disputes or shortages of materials.<sup>155</sup> This is confirmed in *Thom's directory 1921* which lists only a few businesses as 'rebuilding'.<sup>156</sup> One of those was the iconic Clery's department store. Closely modelled on Selfridge's of Oxford Street, London, it opened on 9 August 1922, days after the Civil War hostilities saw parts of Sackville Street bombarded for the second time in the space of six years.<sup>157</sup>

Unquestionably, the Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) Act was an underwhelming measure. Critics pointed to its limited nature and lack of bold vision. The *Irish Builder* lamented as 'a great opportunity missed' the absence of a coordinated and unified architectural scheme for Sackville Street.<sup>158</sup> Only part of the upper east side was built to any coordinated design as architects were allowed to take an individual approach, subject only to some provisions surrounding building materials and frontage lines.<sup>159</sup> The legislation did, however, prevent absolute flouting of accepted town planning principles and permitted modest improvements in terms of alignment and street widening. The Corporation's decision to prescribe the use of machine-made red brick with stone dressing on Sackville Street occasioned considerable criticism from property

<sup>150</sup> Hugh Moore & Alexander Ltd. to Healy, 29 Mar. 1917 (N.A.I., C.S.O.R.P. 3/690/2 (1917), 24665).

<sup>151</sup> Clark, 'The fiery campaign', p. 76.

<sup>152</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lix, no. 3 (3 Feb. 1917), p. 58.

<sup>153</sup> *Irish Times*, 1 Feb. 1918.

<sup>154</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lxii, no. 1 (3 Jan. 1920), p. 14.

<sup>155</sup> Andrew Cope to assistant secretary, Treasury, 18 Nov. 1920 (T.N.A., T 192/35).

<sup>156</sup> *Thom's directory 1921*, pp 1696–7.

<sup>157</sup> Peter Costello & Tony Farmar, *The very heart of the city: the story of Denis Guiney & Clerys* (Dublin, 1992), pp 55–8.

<sup>158</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lxii, no. 1 (3 Jan. 1920), p. 14.

<sup>159</sup> Rothery, *Ireland and the new architecture*, p. 84.

owners, architects and stone suppliers. The *Irish Builder* scorned it as a ‘vandalistic policy ... sadly insensible of the real interests, the dignity and appearance of this ancient city in a unique and epoch-making opportunity’.<sup>160</sup> Businesses, particularly banks, which desired stone-fronted façades were subsequently assured that they would be met half way.<sup>161</sup> Architectural aesthetics aside, the quality of the building stock was improved, though some of the quirkiest pre-Rising buildings such as the Dublin Bread Company were lost. Ultimately, commercial priorities and financial realities took precedence.

The financial skirmishes between the government, property owners and Dublin Corporation may not have produced a perfect answer to the associated issues of compensation and reconstruction but it did prove workable. The fundamental demand of the Dublin Fire and Property Losses Association and the Corporation that the state should shoulder its liability to the full was largely satisfied. The government played a crucial enabling role but received little gratitude for its investment. It seems that for mollified property owners avoiding financial disaster was not really cause for celebration. The government’s intervention did not restore public confidence or purchase any meaningful political goodwill. Like the Christmas 1916 amnesty for internees, the compensation gesture could not arrest the steady transformation of Irish public opinion occasioned by the government’s ill-conceived responses to the Rising and the failure of Lloyd George’s attempt to arrive at an agreed solution of the Irish question. For Redmond and his party the public verdict was equally unforgiving. Neither the repudiation of the Lloyd George scheme and partition nor diligent work for the reconstruction of Dublin could prevent the I.P.P.’s political dénouement.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Irish Builder and Engineer*, lix, no. 12 (9 June 1917), p. 284.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 5 (3 Mar. 1917), p. 101. The Hibernian Bank was rebuilt on the site of its destroyed premises at 12–13 Sackville Street Lower at the junction with Lower Abbey Street. The Munster and Leinster Bank, which had been at 30 Sackville Street Lower, acquired the site of Reis & Co. at 10–11 on the corner facing the Hibernian Bank. The Bank of Ireland built a new branch at 28 Sackville Street between 1919 and 1921. The Provincial Bank built a new branch at 37 Sackville Street Upper in 1921–22 and the Ulster Bank premises at 2–4 Sackville Street Lower reopened in 1923. See Michael O’Neill, *Bank architecture in Dublin: a history to c. 1940* (Dublin, 2011), p. 54.

<sup>162</sup> I am grateful to Professor James Kelly and Clare F. Murphy for comments on earlier drafts of this article.