

Organizing Transit: The Irish and The TWU

BY EILEEN O'DONNELL SHEEHAN GINN



Photo:

The Interborough Rapid Transit Subway (IRT) was opened in 1909. The first operational subway in New York, it was well-appointed with several decorated stations and street kiosks like these on Twenty-third Street in Manhattan. Work conditions were less pleasant. Courtesy of Library of Congress of Project Gutenberg.

*I turned my back
On the vision I had shaped
And to this road before me
I turned my face
—Patrick Pearse¹*

In the 1920s, Michael J. Quill, Gerald O'Reilly, Matthew Guinan, John F. O'Donnell, and other Irishmen turned their faces towards the United States when the struggle for a united Ireland was irrevocably lost.² Gerald O'Reilly had spent two terms in prison in Ireland and had escaped shortly before he came to the United States in 1928. Michael Quill, who was born in County Kerry and fought as a volunteer in the Irish Republican Army, arrived in the United States in 1926. In the same year, John O'Donnell was charged with violating the Treason Act in Ireland.³ The

eighteen-year-old would have faced the death penalty if the twelve-man jury unanimously found him guilty of being a member of an illegal organization. After two trials, there was not a unanimous decision; a third trial was set for December, 1926. By that time, O'Donnell would have been nineteen and no longer a minor, so the chances for a third mistrial would become slim. Thanks to an influential relative, an agreement was reached whereby O'Donnell had to be out of the country by January 1, 1927.

Quill, O'Reilly, and Guinan found employment in the New York City transit industry; O'Donnell returned to school with the intention of studying law. The four men met in the new Clan NaGael and IRA clubs in New York, joining other fellow exiles from Ireland. In later years these transit workers would have a crucial influence on the law career of John F. O'Donnell, and he in turn would have an equally strong impact on each of them.

Eileen O'Donnell Sheehan Ginn is a retired mathematics teacher. In 1987, she began interviewing her father, John F. O'Donnell, who was general counsel for the Transport Workers Union and the American Postal Workers Union. Since he had been involved in labor law from 1933 until his death in 1993, John O'Donnell played an important role in national and New York City labor history. After interviewing her father, various union leaders, and family in Ireland, she has written a book about her father, A Man from Bruckless. ©2010. Published with permission of Eileen O'Donnell Sheehan Ginn.

WORKING & ORGANIZING

In the transit industry, the Irishmen soon learned that working twelve hours a day, seven days a week, with no vacation, no paid holidays, and no sick leave in a poor work environment, unable to attend Sunday Mass was their lot. Searching for improved conditions, the men gathered in a little coffee shop on Columbus Avenue to discuss various plans for correcting this situation. In 1991 at a ceremony honoring Gerald O'Reilly in the New York University Wagner Archives, John O'Donnell described O'Reilly as a pivotal figure in the formation of the Transport Workers Union (TWU). At the same time, O'Donnell recalled the beginnings of the TWU.

Prior to 1934, with the exception of the craft-oriented Amalgamated Transit Union,⁴ the entire transit industry in New York City was either non-union or was under company-union domination. In 1916, the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) set up a company union officially known as the Brotherhood of IRT Company Employees. O'Donnell recalled that this was the first union membership that O'Reilly (as well as all transit workers in the late 1920s) maintained:

Before the TWU was born, Gerald, in order to get a job and hold a job, had to join the Brotherhood—the old Paddy Connolly Brotherhood. To get a job in transit at that time, there were a few places, mainly liquor stores, gin mills, around that had contact with Connolly. You went there and you got a reference to Paddy Connolly. You got a card from Paddy Connolly and then you got the job. If you

lost that card, you lost the job. When the TWU was getting going, Paddy Connolly held a meeting up in a hall where the Polo Grounds used to be. In the course of the meeting Mike [Quill] made some remark and PJ [Paddy Connolly] pointed to him and said, "Look, that man is a red." Mike jumped up and said, "I'd rather be a red than a rat."⁵

Every Brotherhood member had to sign a "yellow-dog" contract—a contract stating that the individual could not join a bona fide union. In 1932, Congress passed the Norris-LaGuardia Act, which outlawed yellow-dog contracts. At

the time the average transit work week was twelve hours a day, seven days a week, with no vacation, no paid holidays, and no sick leave. A pension plan was also forced on the workers. Although it was presented as voluntary, most employees had

to contribute. The amount of contribution was not negotiable. Also, most workers preferred to stay with the present, with what they had, rather than take a chance that the promised benefits would be available in the future. Circumstances such as these forced a handful of workers in 1933 to meet in secret and lay the foundations for the Transport Workers Union among IRT employees.

At the time of the secret meetings, those few transit workers who had gathered decided to form the new union along industrial lines rather than follow the craft-union model. In so doing, they ensured that all workers in a specific transit company would be in one union. That was the initial step, but the essential element was secrecy.



Photo: Employment in New York's early transit system was particularly demanding of time and labor from workers. Even with its generally low wages during earlier years, the system attracted applicants. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Secrecy among Irish immigrants was by then an ingrained trait, and the majority of the IRT employees in 1933 were in fact Irish. The concept of secrecy was used by James Stephens, an Irishman who in the mid-1800s had become involved with radical and revolutionary secret societies in Paris. These contacts fostered his determination to master the technique of conspiracy and “gave him ideas for a new approach to the problems of Ireland.”⁶

Stephens was determined that informers should not break his organization, the United Irish Brotherhood, so he gradually set up an elaborate system of security that “consisted of closed ‘circles’ in which only one member of each circle was supposed to know only one member of any other circle.”⁷ This was the same device Michael J. Quill and Gerald O’Reilly used in 1934 when organizing in closed circles. All this was necessitated by the presence of Pinkerton agents.⁸ O’Donnell explained:

...forcing a strike was one of the techniques employed by the infiltrating Pinkertons. For instance, when a group of transit workers was struggling to get a union going, a Pinkerton agent planted by the employer would urge the group to strike. When the workers did strike, they were usually poorly prepared; in addition to that, management would then know who the union organizers were and fire them.⁹

FOUNDING THE TWU

O’Donnell described the background of the formation of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) in this 1991 speech in New York City:

Gerald [O’Reilly] and I met about fifty-seven years ago, in 1934. We were both members of The James Connolly

ClanNaGael and IRA Club of New York. I worked for the Irish Echo at that time and Gerald was a conductor in the subway, in the IRT. Gerald came over to the



Irish Echo every week with a story for me to run in the paper. The stories were meant to be helpful in the organizing.¹⁰

The young fellows of the IRA clubs had their headquarters in the Tara Ballrooms on West Sixty-sixth Street. After a meeting they would go

across the street to a little coffee shop. And it was there, in 1933 that the talk of a union was born. That’s where the union was formed because the Pinkertons couldn’t get in.¹¹

There were many who believed that the TWU was founded by the Communists who used the Irishmen as front men for the Party. However, O’Donnell told a different story:

The Communist Party played a very important role in the founding of the Transport Workers Union, but it was not the original group. It did not help start the union. The small group that decided to form a union needed money. They went to the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). Quill and O’Reilly stressed to organization members that they had to work seven days a week and didn’t get time off even to go to Mass. The group of workers wanted money and help to start a union. AOH’s response was, “Sorry we can’t get involved. We can’t get involved in politics.”

The group then went to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. The Friendly Sons pointed out to them that one of the top men in the IRT management was a member of the Friendly Sons organization. The

Photo:

The actions of “Pinks” agents in labor organizations became subject to examination by the U.S. Senate during the late 1930s. Here, the secretary-treasurer of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks testifies about Pinkerton recruitment of potential “labor spies and undercover men” inside his organization. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Friendly Sons couldn't help them.¹²

Discouraged by the explanations they received, the group still refused to be dissuaded from founding a labor organization. Giving up was not an option for them. As O'Donnell continued:



Photo:
The Manhattan headquarters building of the Communist Party at 80 East Thirteenth Street. Founders of the TWU found early support and advice there. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Now there was one member of that small group [of transit workers] who was also a member of the Communist Party, and his name was Tom O'Shea. Tom O'Shea suggested to the group that they go to the Communist Party and ask for help. Michael Quill, Gerald O'Reilly, Michael Cloone, and a couple of others were members of that small delegation. They went to Party headquarters at 80 East Thirteenth Street in Manhattan. They met with Earl Browder, Israel Amter, Rose Worters and other Communist Party leaders. Israel Amter gave them a dressing down as to the difficulty, the impossibility of organizing transit workers in New York. They were not reliable. You could not depend on them. They were not union kind of people. He cited the illustrations of what had happened before in the previous strikes that were broken by the infiltration of beakies.¹³ Mike and Gerald assured the Party leaders that, "There are no beakies going to get into

our group, because we don't have any beakies in the IRA."

Despite the difficult time they had with Amter at that meeting, the Communist Party did promise support of two kinds: one was financial support, and the other was to send them some experienced men to help them organize. They sent them John Santo, Maurice Forge, and Bubbles Lee [Leo Rosenthal].

The dues at that time in the union were ten cents a week. There weren't that many in the union, so it couldn't pay very much. The Communist Party subsidized the union in its earlier days. It paid the rent at 153 West Sixty-fourth Street. Without the Communist Party, the union as we know it would never have gotten started.¹⁴

The date of the founding of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) was fixed at April 12, 1934, when Santo and Hogan first met with the Clan group in Stewart's Cafeteria at Columbus Circle. Shortly after that initial meeting, a lawyer, Harry Sacher, was assigned to handle the new union's legal problems, and John Santo and Austin Hogan (also known as Austin DeLoughrey) were assigned as organizers. Each Clan member was assigned the task of organizing in his own shop, depot, or barn. In the early formative months, each new recruit met only with his particular organizer and only the organizers met together, usually with Santo, Hogan, and Forge in attendance.¹⁵

At an August 1935 meeting of the Delegates' Council, the organizers decided that Quill, then a subway change-maker on the IRT, and Douglas MacMahon, a BMT mechanic, should resign from their transit jobs to work full-time for the Union. Quill recalled this time at a convention seventeen years later:

At the meeting in the Odd Fellows Hall

on the 10th of August, 1935...a small group of us known as Delegates Council [made a decision]. Then and there it was decided that I should write a letter to the Interborough Company of New York saying, "Greetings, we have news for you; we are building an independent union and I have been chosen by the Delegates Council to take a leave of absence and work full time." And I did. I was never answered so fast by the Interborough Company. They said, "Go and don't come back."¹⁶

Douglas MacMahon was one of the few in the inner circle who had no Clan connections, even though he was of Irish descent. All others began their associations and built their trust in each other at Clan meetings. The officers were each paid \$18 a week, which again was made possible by a subsidy from the Communist Party. On January 26, 1936, in Room "C" at 153 West Sixty-fourth Street, Michael Quill was elected president of the Transport Workers Union, Douglas MacMahon became vice-president, and John Santo won the secretary-treasurer position.

FACING PROBLEMS

Since the TWU wanted to form along industrial lines, it had problems almost immediately in the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In the AFL, the industrial or craft organization issue arose in earnest at the 1935 AFL convention. A few weeks after the convention, a "Committee for Industrial Organization" was formed. John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers Union, was chairman of the committee. Its stated purpose was to promote the organizations of workers in mass-production and unorganized industries and to encourage their affiliation with the AFL.¹⁷ The "Committee for Industrial Organization" changed its name in 1938 to Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Late in 1937, it was reported by the *New York Times* that the AFL was considering an action of expulsion of all unions associated with the CIO:

At the meeting it was said that Michael Quill, president of the Transport Workers Union, told the AFL committee

that his union had grown from 1,000 to 90,000 in the last three years, that it had not received any assistance from the AFL, which had asked it to divide itself up among twenty craft unions. Mr. Quill ended by asking the AFL committee whether the federation would issue an industrial charter to his union.

According to Mr. Quill, he and several associates went to Detroit several years ago and called on W. D. Mahon, president of AFL Street Car Men's Union. Mahon refused to give them a charter because the Street Car Union had spent several million dollars in attempting to organize the transport workers of New York City and had failed.

Later, said Mr. Quill, the Machinist Union of the AFL, which was engaged in a jurisdictional dispute with the Street Car Union, welcomed the new organization, according to it the right of retaining all members of various crafts. Then, he said, the Street Car Union laid claim to some of the union's men, while other craft unions made similar demands.

The AFL, Mr. Quill added, sought to have the new union turn its craft members over to existing unions, but it refused to do so and obtained a charter in the CIO.¹⁸

Finally on June 2, 1937, William Green, president of the AFL, instructed the New York Central Trades and Labor Council to drop all locals affiliated with the CIO. The TWU was suspended from the AFL. At the same time, to add more strength to the transit industry, an attempt was made to unite the TWU and the Amalgamated Transit Union. Unfortunately, basic philosophical differences were difficult to overcome. As O'Donnell explained:

The Amalgamated Transit Union had a couple of million dollars in strike funds and the TWU had nothing in a strike fund. The Amalgamated owned a building in Washington and the TWU then owned a building nowhere. So it was very hard to merge the two organizations. This was especially true since the TWU was the

larger and the more aggressive. It was difficult because philosophically they were different.

In the earlier days in the Amalgamated, the locals dia all the bargaining and they had a great deal of independence. With the TWU, the international union not only helped, but actually did most of the bargaining.... The TWU had international representatives assigned around the country where they had larger locals. The international representatives really did most of the bargaining, if not all of it. The contract would [then] have to be submitted for ratification to members of the locals. It is that very close relationship that had its roots in the communist influence in the early days of TWU. Because they were interested in the finances, that interest permeated the operation in the TWU.¹⁹

Crowning the activities of three and a half years, the first national convention of the Transport Workers Union of America (now calling itself an International union) took place on October 4, 1937. It started with a grand parade and a public opening in Madison Square Garden, where John L. Lewis; Sidney Hillman; Pennsylvania's lieutenant-governor Thomas Kennedy; Heywood Broun; and Michael J. Quill were the keynote speakers.²⁰ As the *New York Times* reported:

The Transport Workers Union, formerly an affiliate of the American Federation

of Labor, joined the CIO ranks last May. Since that time it has made rapid progress on the City's rapid transit, streetcar and bus lines and in the taxicab field.²¹

In its early days, the TWU continued to be assisted by the Communist Party. According to Gerald O'Reilly, "During TWU's first thirteen years [1933–1946], while Earl Browder was General Secretary of the [Communist] party, Mike [Quill] and his fellow TWU leaders maintained a close relationship with the Party."²² In a 1991 telephone interview, O'Donnell explained that "in 1947, Mike [Quill] was still going along with the [Communist] party as long as the party went along with him." Two things were to cause a split—the transit fare in New York and the presidential election of 1948. As O'Donnell explained, "Mike had always stuck to the five-cent fare. He had taken the strong populist line, 'the nickel fare or no fare at all.'" However, at this time, while Earl Browder urged Quill to accept the fare increase to save both the union and wages, trouble in the party ousted Browder. His successor, William Foster reversed the party's position. Quill, frustrated by the party and also by its demand that the TWU support the presidential candidacy of Henry A. Wallace in the 1948 election, broke with the Communist Party.²³

Along with supporting the fare increase, Quill continued to press for higher wages for his TWU members. As labor historian Joshua Freeman notes:

On April 6 [1948] the TWU struck the East Side and Comprehensive Omnibus Company. ... The real motive for striking this small Manhattan bus company was

LEWIS WILL SPEAK IN GARDEN TONIGHT

C. I. O. Head Due to Endorse
La Guardia and All Other
Labor Party Candidates

A VICTORY CELEBRATION

Transport Workers' Rally to Be
Held at Same Time That A.F.L.
Opens Denver Convention

John L. Lewis, chairman of the C. I. O., and principal speaker at a victory rally and public opening of the first annual convention of the Transport Workers Union of America in Madison Square Garden tonight, will endorse Mayor La Guardia and all other candidates of the American Labor Party, leaders of the union intimated yesterday.

Mr. Lewis will make his first public appearance here since the C. I. O. began its organization drive. The Transport Workers Union, formerly an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, joined the C. I. O. ranks last May. Since that time it has made rapid progress on the city's rapid transit, street car and bus lines and in the taxicab field.

Added significance is given to Mr. Lewis's appearance at the convention because of the fact that the convention of the American Federation of Labor opens its sessions in Denver the same day. Union leaders believe that the C. I. O. chieftain may give some indication of the policy he has in mind if that convention votes to expel from membership some of its affiliated unions now under suspension for joining the C. I. O.

Mr. Lewis is chairman of Labor's Non-Partisan League, of which the American Labor Party is an affiliate. He is expected to discuss, at least in passing, the role that C. I. O. unions should play in the municipal campaign.

James E. Gahagan, chairman of the arrangements committee for the Transport Workers gathering, announced that nearly 100 international and local unions, among them some A. F. of L. affiliates, are sending official delegations to hear Mr. Lewis and the other speakers on the program tonight. T. W. U. members have subscribed for 12,000 tickets to the convention. 2,000 have been sold to members of other labor organizations and 6,000 are on sale at the box offices at Madison Square Garden.

The revised list of speakers tonight includes besides Mr. Lewis Sidney Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America; Lieutenant Governor Thomas Kennedy of Pennsylvania; Heywood Broun, president of the Newspaper Guild of America; Allen Haywood, C. I. O. regional director; Harry Sacher, counsel for the T. W. U., and Austin Hogan, John Santo and Douglas L. MacMahon of the T. W. U. executive group. Michael J. Quill, president of the T. W. U., will preside.

A parade of T. W. U. members, with 5,000 marchers in line, will precede the meeting.

Business sessions of the convention will start tomorrow morning at union headquarters, 153 West Sixty-fourth Street, and are expected to continue four days.

The New York Times

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Illustration:
The first national convention of the Transport Workers Union took place in New York's Madison Square Garden on October 4, 1937. Several important labor and political leaders spoke at the meeting. Courtesy of New York Times.

*probably to lay the basis for a renewed push for a city-wide fare increase by creating a crisis atmosphere without paralyzing the city. Reportedly, Hogan [Austin Hogan, a known Communist] had opposed calling the strike, while Quill had been its main proponent.*²⁴

With this strike, the battle lines were drawn. For the first time in public, Quill and the Communist Party—in the person of Austin Hogan—were on opposite sides of the fence.

FINALIZING THE BREAK

Several other developments in the struggle between the right and the left for control of the TWU were drawing together to finalize the break between the TWU and the Communists. First, Quill resigned from the American Labor Party, which he had helped to found, denouncing “the screwballs and crackpots, who will continue to carry on as if the Communist Party and the American Labor Party were the same house with two doors.”²⁵

At the same time, the center of financial power had shifted from Local 100 (the New York City local) of the International Transit Workers Union which, from the beginning, had funded the International Transport Workers. But as Local 100 fell on “bad times,” the Local owed the International money.

As O’Donnell recalled:

*In theory we owed the International money, although the International really (although it wasn’t a matter of owing) owed us their shirt. The Commies were smart.... They were going to keep the International. They first of all planned the [1948] convention for Chicago. That meant that we would have to take the Local 100 delegation to Chicago. That would be very expensive. If we didn’t take our full quota of delegates, we wouldn’t have much of a voice in the convention. If we were going to have any chance at the convention, we would have to get them all out there, and to get them all out there meant money.*²⁶

The struggle reached its height as both sides prepared for the International TWU Convention of 1948. Three months before the convention, Harry Sacher, counsel for Local 100, was ousted by Quill sympathizers. Quill turned to John F. O’Donnell to be his legal advisor. O’Donnell’s post as General Counsel for Local 100 would become the stepping stone for his future position as General Counsel for the International TWU.

Quill controlled Local 100 in New York City, the largest local in the International TWU. The left wing, however, controlled the executive board of the International itself. Quill predicted total victory for his anti-Communist forces at the biennial convention starting in Chicago on December 6. And Quill knew well what he had to do: “We will have to make changes in the constitution...and elect board membership based on their membership strength, one for each 2000 or 3000 dues-paying members, and not as now on committee nominations.”²⁷ The committees were the source of the Communists’ voting strength. By moving the voting power to the dues-paying members, there was a better chance of out-voting the Communists for the future election of board members.

At the December 6, 1948 afternoon session of the convention, delegate Daniel Gilmartin (Local 100) asked the committee of the whole to consider resolutions which called for the election of all International officers and International executive board members and that those elected would take office immediately upon election. Also included in these resolutions was the abolishment of the offices of the International executive vice president [Austin Hogan] and of national director of organization [John Santo]. Despite many calls from the floor for a roll call vote on these resolutions, the convention chairman, International president Michael J. Quill, stated that “we will decide that [the resolutions] again with a show of hands.... And I declare the resolution[s] adopted.”²⁸

Later on at the Monday evening session, delegate Frank O’Connor (Local 100), chairman

of the committee on nomination reported the nomination of Michael J. Quill for International president. Austin Hogan was nominated for International president from the floor. Quill won the election: "The total vote for Michael J. Quill is 473 votes; for Austin Hogan 186."²⁹ The nomination for International secretary-treasurer by the nominating committee was Gustav Faber; nominated from the floor for International secretary-treasurer was Hugh O'Donnell (Local 234, Philadelphia, Pa.) Faber was victorious: "Faber is elected by 462 votes to 209^{1/2}."³⁰ As a result of

*Communist Party] wanted to form an International Union. You know what that meant—it meant International with Germany and Russia. It stopped being called the International after the 1948 convention.*³²

The Transport Workers Union of America, founded by Irish immigrants and counting thousands of all races and ethnicities in its membership, became a major force in labor in New York and throughout the United States. The TWU

had purged its leadership of Communist influence even though smaller pockets of resistance remained. On Thursday morning, the fourth day of the convention, Theodore W. Kheel, head of Division of Labor Relations in New York City,³³ read a message to the convention from New York City Mayor William O'Dwyer:

This is a great day for the Transport Workers Union. It is, moreover, a turning point in transit history for the people of New York City. And it

*is also a triumph of national scope and importance for all of the people of this country. The reason is that the answer to Communism is contained in the historic and dramatic fight of the rank and file of the Transport Workers Union—your fight—led by Mike Quill to restore control of this great union to the rank and file.*³⁴

The men who were purged at that convention were men who had worked to form the union. Joseph Donohue recalled of Austin Hogan that he was "a gifted man, a gifted speaker and an intelligent man—a hell of a decent man to know. Individual problems in your group, he'd

Photo:
This shows (left to right) Michael J. Quill, John F. O'Donnell, Mathew Guinan, Ellis Van Riper, and (back to camera) Gus Faber in 1949, the year after a crucial vote at the International TWU convention in Chicago. Courtesy of TWU Express.



voting in the 1948 convention, four of the men most closely associated with Quill in building the TWU—Austin Hogan, executive vice president, John Santo, international director of organization, Douglas L. MacMahon, secretary-treasurer, and Gerald O'Reilly, union organizer—lost their jobs with the International TWU.

Over fifty years later, in March of 1999, Joseph Donohue, a retired vice president of the TWU, recalled that as a result of this particularly bitter convention:

It's no longer called the International Transport Workers—now it's called the Transport Workers Union of America.³¹ Originally their idea was they [the

break his back to help you out.”³⁵ O’Donnell termed MacMahon “a very able guy,” and O’Reilly “was a devoted man. The causes that he had at heart he really stuck solidly by. He never forgot where he came from; never forgot his union. He was as fine a man as I ever knew.”³⁶

The bond among these men who came together to form a struggling group, a union, to support the workers of New York, the mostly Irish immigrant workers, stayed strong even after the bitter split with their early Communist supporters. As John O’Donnell was later to recall, Quill found a non-elected position for MacMahon in the TWU and later MacMahon “ran for international secretary-treasurer and was elected” because “the membership really had a great deal of respect for MacMahon.”³⁷ O’Reilly likewise was returned to the TWU and became a Local 100 delegate.

As the Puritan writer Richard Baxter (1615–91) appealed: “In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.”³⁸ Michael Quill and the Irish immigrants who worked with him clearly believed in unity, in liberty, and in charity.

Notes

1. Patrick Pearse, *Renunciation*, This was written first in Irish and translated into more effective English by himself. Sean McMahon, *Rich and Rare: A Book of Ireland* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1987), p.109.
2. This article contains material from the forthcoming book on John F. O’Donnell, *A Man from Bruckless*.
3. The Treason Act provided the death penalty for being a member of an illegal organization conspiring against the safety of the state.
4. The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) was founded as the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees in 1892. The craft union advocated sorting workers into exclusive groups of skilled workers, or workers sharing a particular trade.
5. John F. O’Donnell, Mimeographed copy of speech, “Pillar of Labor for Gerald O’Reilly,” given at Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, January 16, 1991. Copy in the Tamiment Library, New York University. Courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.
6. Robert Kee, *Ireland: A History* (London: Abacus, 1995), p.106.
7. Robert Kee, p.107.
8. Allan Pinkerton began a detective agency in 1850 and achieved both fame and notoriety as he and his men pursued bank robbers and later served as strike-breakers and union infiltrators. See Stephen H. Norwood, *Strikebreaking & Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) (NetLibrary) and Robert P. Weiss, “Private Detective Agencies and Labour Discipline in the United States, 1855–1946,” *The Historical Journal* 29.1. (March 1986): 87–107 (JSTOR).
9. John F. O’Donnell, Telephone interview, March 10, 1991.
10. These newspaper articles have not been found, to date.
11. John F. O’Donnell, Mimeographed copy of speech, “Pillar of Labor for Gerald O’Reilly.”
12. John F. O’Donnell, Mimeographed copy of speech, “Pillar of Labor for Gerald O’Reilly.”
13. The “Beakies” were a plain-clothes security force that patrolled the transit properties as company spies. They got their name from their boss, H. L. Beakie.
14. John F. O’Donnell, Mimeographed copy of speech, “Pillar of Labor for Gerald O’Reilly.”
15. Gerald O’Reilly, *The Birth and Growth of the Transport Workers Union*. N.p.: n.p., 1988, p. 3. Copy in the Tamiment Library, New York University. Courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.
16. Michael J. Quill, Transcript of Thursday Evening Session, December 11, 1952. *Report of Proceedings, Eighth Biennial Convention, Philadelphia, PA, December 9–13, 1952* [New York: Transport Worker’s Union, 1953], p. 170.
17. *Brief History of the American Labor Movement*, 5th ed., Bulletin 1000, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1976), p. 24.
18. Louis Stark, “Labor Groups Firm on Terms of Peace,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 1937, p. 6.
19. John F. O’Donnell, Personal interview, July 17, 1991.
20. Sidney Hillman founded the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and served as its president until 1946. A strong proponent of industrial unionism, he



Photo:
John F. O'Donnell explaining arbitration stipulations to TWU members at the St. Nicholas Arena in Queens during January, 1953. Forced to leave Ireland by charges under the Treason Act, he became an attorney in the United States and spent some sixty years in labor law. Courtesy of TWU Express.

broke from the AFL to join John L. Lewis in organizing the CIO. AFL-CIO 7 April 2007 <<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/history/history/hillman.cfm>>. Heywood Broun was the president of the Newspaper Guild of America.

21. "Lewis Will Speak in Garden Tonight," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1937, p. 6.
22. Gerald O'Reilly, *The Birth and Growth of the Transport Workers Union*, p. 8.
23. John F. O'Donnell, Telephone interview, April 14, 1991.
24. Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933–1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 302.
25. "Quill Quits ALP; One of Founders," *The New York Times*, April 21, 1948, p. 22.
26. John F. O'Donnell, Telephone interview, April 21, 1991.
27. Alexander Feinberg, "TWU Executive Board Urges Removal of 2 Leftist Chiefs," *The New York Times*, September 5, 1948, p. 1.
28. Transcript of Monday Afternoon Session, December 6, 1948, *Report of Proceedings, Sixth Biennial Convention*, Chicago, IL, p. 31.
29. Transcript of Monday Evening Session, December 6, 1948, *Report of Proceedings, Sixth Biennial Convention*, Chicago, IL, p. 49.
30. Transcript of Monday Evening Session, December 6, 1948, *Report of Proceedings, Sixth Biennial Convention*, Chicago, IL, p. 57.
31. While the title of the TWU no longer includes the word "International," that word is used to this day to refer to the parent union.
32. Joseph Donoghue, Telephone interview, March 1, 1999.
33. Ted Kheel was known as a voice of reason in both labor and management circles. In 1949, he also became an impartial mediator for public transit in New York City, a position in which he was involved in over 30,000 decisions by 1982. He sought to "protect management rights and at the same time demand fairness to workers in these disputes." For more information, see the website of the Kheel Center for Labor Management Documentation and Archives at Cornell University <<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/kheel/about/history/theodorekheel.html>>, 7 April 2007.
34. Transcript of Thursday Morning Session, December 9, 1948, *Report of Proceedings, Sixth Biennial Convention*, Chicago, IL, p. 131.
35. Joseph Donoghue, Telephone interview, March 1, 1999.
36. John F. O'Donnell, Mimeographed copy of speech, "Pillar of Labor for Gerald O'Reilly." The Connolly Club, now the Connolly Association, was founded in London in 1938 "to work for the complete freedom of the Irish people" and to promote Irish culture. <<http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/about/ca-history/>> 7 April 2007. *The Irish Democrat* is its newspaper.
37. John F. O'Donnell, Telephone interview, August 11, 1991.
38. Richard Baxter (1615–1691) was a prominent English churchman of the 1600s. He was a peacemaker who sought unity among Protestants, and yet he was a highly independent thinker and at the center of every major controversy in England during his lifetime. "Biography of Richard Baxter," *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* <www.ccel.org/b/Baxter>, 5 March 2010