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MARK HOLAN | The US Press and the American Commission on Irish Independence, 1919

THREE IRISH AMERICAN ACTIVISTS traveled to Paris in April 1919 to lobby the victors of the First World War to hear Ireland's plea for self-government. The trio called themselves the American Commission on Irish Independence, but they were not affiliated with the US government, one of the principals of the postwar peace conference. The commission's goal was to secure permission for three Irish separatist leaders to address the Allies. In this effort the commission developed "cordial and useful relations" with members of the US press corps in Paris.¹ These interactions and their outcomes are the focus of this article.

Newspaper correspondents, the commission recorded in a diary of its activities, "assured us that they would be very glad to give all the publicity to our mission and its work that they could."² Some of the journalists worked behind the scenes to help the commission. They were joined by a few members of the US government delegation in Paris who also had worked as journalists before the war.

In 1985 historian Francis M. Carroll collected the commission's diary, correspondence, and report on conditions in Ireland from multiple sources.³ He annotated these principal documents and analyzed the commission's encounters

1. Francis M. Carroll, ed., *The American Commission on Irish Independence, 1919: The Diary, Correspondence, and Report* (Irish Manuscripts Commission, Mount Salus Press Ltd., 1985), 29, hereafter cited as *American Commission*.

2. *American Commission*, Diary, April 14, 1919, 37.

3. Carroll reviewed several versions and fragments of the diary, which was dictated contemporaneously to Patrick Lee, the commission's secretary. Carroll identified and integrated the material in chronological order for ease of reading. See "The Sources of the Texts and Editorial Guidelines," *American Commission*, 28.

104 | with the Allied governments. US President Woodrow Wilson and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, through their advisers, denied the opportunity for either the proposed Irish delegation or the American commission to formally address the peace conference, as Carroll and other historians have thoroughly documented.

But the commission's interactions with the journalists remains an under-explored aspect of the story. The diary names three writers from William Randolph Hearst's International News Service, plus representatives of United Press, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York World*, and the *New York Times*. Carroll acknowledged that many of the correspondents "defied tracing through any of the standard biographical or reference works."⁴ The commission also interacted with and gained coverage from other journalists not mentioned in the diary. A fuller picture of the commission's experience comes into focus when these US press figures and their published work are brought to the forefront.

This article expands Carroll's work by adding information about the journalists' backgrounds and coverage of the commission in Paris and its members' May 1919 side trip to Ireland. It explores how several correspondents reported about Ireland after the commission returned to America. It concludes that the commission's interactions with these journalists contributed to the foundation of subsequent efforts to promote Irish independence through the US press.

The American Commission and the Irish Race Convention, February 1919

In December 1918 Sinn Féin nationalists won three-quarters of the Irish constituencies in the United Kingdom's first postwar general election. The newly elected members established the separatist Dáil Éireann parliament the following month in Dublin. Irish America lauded these developments by holding "Self-Determination for Ireland" rallies in major US cities and supporting pro-Irish hearings and resolutions in the US Congress. The activist Friends of Irish Freedom in February 1919 staged an Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia to bring further attention to Ireland "into the press and before the public."⁵

US newspapers and magazines, which then enjoyed postwar and pre-radio audience domination, covered all these events. Press readership included one million Irish immigrants and up to twenty million Americans of Irish heritage.⁶ Non-Irish readers also followed the separatist struggle against Britain, the late

4. *American Commission*, 29.

5. Matthew Cummings to Daniel Cohalan, January 12, 1919, in Daniel Cohalan papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York, cited in Michael Doorley, *Irish-American Diaspora Nationalism: The Friends of Irish Freedom, 1916-1935* (Four Courts Press, 2005), 88.

6. Irish immigrants from 1920 US Census; Irish heritage from *American Commission*, vi.

war ally and same imperial foe American colonists had rebelled against 150 years earlier. Wire services and big-city dailies regularly provided more information about “the Irish question” than could be obtained in immigrants’ letters from home or Irish visitors and other speakers at mass meetings. A robust Irish American and Catholic press also reported on Irish developments and kept a watchful eye on what the larger papers wrote about the old country. They rightfully suspected the influence of British propaganda and control of the transatlantic wires.⁷

The American Commission on Irish Independence emerged from the ranks of twenty-five Philadelphia convention leaders who met with President Wilson on March 4, 1919, at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Wilson had briefly returned to America from Paris but was about to steam back to France. The meeting did not go well. Wilson viewed Ireland as a British domestic issue that was inappropriate for discussion at the peace conference. He was a known Anglophile linked to Irish unionists through his paternal grandfather. Wilson’s refusal to see delegate Daniel Cohalan, a New York judge who opposed Wilson’s 1916 reelection and postwar plans, dominated press coverage of the meeting. In the bitter aftermath, the American commission was tasked with making the case for the three Dáil representatives to address the conference.

The trio of Irish Americans who traveled to Paris were familiar to the US press. Frank P. Walsh (1864–1939), originally from St. Louis, “was something of a public figure and had a reputation as a successful labor lawyer.”⁸ In 1918 he was appointed to the National War Labor Board, and he served as joint chairman with former US President William Howard Taft on the War Labor Conference Board. The other two commissioners, Edward F. Dunne (1853–1937) and Michael J. Ryan (1862–1943), also were lawyers. Dunne, originally from Waterville, Connecticut, became a judge in Chicago, then was elected the city’s mayor from 1905 to 1907 and governor of Illinois from 1912 to 1917. Ryan, of Philadelphia, held positions as a city solicitor there and as a Pennsylvania public service commissioner. He had been president of the United Irish League of America, which supported constitutional home rule for Ireland within the United Kingdom, but later shifted to the separatist view.⁹

The American commission arrived in Paris on April 11, 1919. They were met by Irish envoys Seán T. O’Kelly and George Gavan Duffy, who worked as an advance team for the proposed official delegation and produced propaganda for the Irish cause. The commission “gave a statement” of their intentions to

7. See H. C. Peterson, “British Influence on the American Press, 1914–17,” *American Political Science Review* 31, no. 1 (February 1937): 79–88.

8. *American Commission*, 8.

9. *American Commission*, 9.



FIGURE 1. Frank P. Walsh led the three-member American Commission on Irish Independence. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, npcc 31779*

an unnamed representative of the Associated Press (AP) and to Floyd Gibbons of the *Chicago Tribune*, the diary says.¹⁰ An AP account was widely published the next day in American newspapers.¹¹ Representatives of “practically all the American and English press associations” soon called on the commission to receive similar statements.¹²

Gibbons (1887-1939) directed the *Tribune’s* foreign news service, which included a Paris edition circulated in other parts of Europe. He had covered the hunt for Pancho Villa in Mexico, then sailed for Europe aboard Cunard’s

10. *American Commission, Diary*, April 11, 1919, 34.

11. “Three Americans to Ask ‘Big Four’ to Aid Irish Cause,” *New York Tribune*, April 12, 1919.

12. *American Commission, Diary*, April 14, 1919, 35.



FIGURE 2. Floyd P. Gibbons was one of the first American journalists to report on the commission in Paris. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, hec 11352*

Laconia, which was torpedoed by a German U-boat in February 1917 off the coast of southern Ireland. Rescued and landed at Queenstown (Cobh), he filed “one of the most vivid, arresting, and detailed dispatches of the war.”¹³ In June 1918 Gibbons covered the US Marines landing at Belleau Wood, France, where he was wounded in the arm, shoulder, and head, including the loss of his left eye. He thereafter wore a trademark white eyepatch.¹⁴

The commission diary notes that Gibbons’s story about their arrival statement appeared on the front page of the next day’s Paris edition of the *Tribune*. It also appeared on the front of the paper’s Chicago edition in a package of three

13. Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 134.

14. Richard M. Brown, “Floyd Gibbons,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 25: American Newspaper Journalists, 1901–1995*, ed. Perry J. Ashley (Gale Research Company, Brucoli Clark, 1984), 85.

108 | dispatches about Ireland.¹⁵ A *Tribune* correspondent in London detailed conflicting reports about secret negotiations between British officials and Sinn Féin separatists, and the United Press reported the announcement of a \$5 million loan drive to fund the fledgling Irish republic. Gibbons assured the commission that his story was sent to “a large number” of American newspapers that subscribed to the *Tribune*’s foreign service.¹⁶

Gibbons quoted directly from the commission’s statement about its mission to obtain a hearing on Ireland’s “right to self-determination and international recognition of the republican form of government established by her people.” His story named Éamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith, and Count George Noble Plunkett as the proposed Dáil delegation.¹⁷

Initial Interactions with the US Press and the Wilson Administration

Walsh, the commission’s chair, already knew several of the American journalists and Wilson administration officials gathered in Paris. In addition to his war labor roles he had been editor and publisher of the *Kansas City Post* from 1915 to 1916, an experience that gave him some insights into the newspaper business and journalists. During his early career in Kansas City, Walsh collaborated with journalist George Creel (1876–1953) on several crusades to clean up local and state politics.¹⁸ When the United States entered the war in 1917, Creel became chief of the Committee on Public Information, Wilson’s propaganda agency.

After the armistice Wilson sent Creel to Ireland to assess the Sinn Féin separatists, about the time Walsh attended the Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia. Creel reported to the president, somewhat optimistically, that “conservative leaders of Sinn Féin” would probably accept some form of home rule for Ireland, if offered quickly.¹⁹ The commission’s diary obliquely mentions a conversation between Walsh and Creel, which probably occurred in New York City after the opera house meeting and before the trio steamed for France.²⁰ Creel,

15. “Secret British Mission Meets Irish Leaders,” “Mission Sees Wilson,” and “Irish to Float \$5,000,000 Loan,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 1919.

16. *American Commission*, Diary, April 12, 1919, 35, quoting the diary, not Floyd Gibbons.

17. “American Irish Mission Calls on President Wilson,” *Minneapolis Journal*, April 13, 1919. This is a longer version of the “Mission Sees Wilson” story above; both are under Gibbons’s byline.

18. George Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1947), 48, 129.

19. George Creel to Woodrow Wilson, March 1, 1919, in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson Digital Edition* (University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2017).

20. *American Commission*, Diary, April 19, 1919, 47.



FIGURE 3. Journalist turned Wilson administration propagandist George Creel later supported Ireland's cause. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, cph 3b11489*

110 | in a letter from New York to Wilson in Paris, said, “you have no truer friend or more loyal supporter” than Walsh; and that Walsh and Dunne were better representatives of Irish America than the “enemy voice,” presumably Cohalan and other hard-liners.²¹

Wilson welcomed Walsh in Paris on April 17. “Walsh was received courteously and given a lengthy hearing. He has been a personal friend of President Wilson for years,” reported John Edwin (Jack) Nevin of International News Service.²² The president made no promises about the three Irish delegates coming to Paris, but suggested he would address the Irish question with Lloyd George after the conference. The session soothed the hard feelings of the opera house meeting and created positive momentum for the commission.²³

Another boost came from American journalist Lincoln Steffens, who “kindly offered to show Mr. Walsh through the official channels in Paris,” the diary says. Steffens introduced Walsh to Ray Stannard Baker (1870–1946), another Wilson confidante with a journalism background. Baker managed press relations for the American peace delegation in Paris.²⁴ A year earlier, Wilson had assigned Baker to assess the hot spots of Europe as the war still raged. Colonel Edward House, Wilson’s top adviser, suggested Baker might “secure franker and more complete information” if he camouflaged his role as an agent of the US government. Baker obtained correspondent credentials from the *New Republic* and the *New York World*, though he “never found the time to send any dispatches to either of them.”²⁵

Baker traveled to Ireland in May 1918 as resistance to conscription roiled the country. He interviewed moderate Irish nationalists Sir Horace Plunkett (a cousin of Count Plunkett) and John Dillon; this was seven months before the December 1918 election, when Sinn Féin sidelined these moderates. Baker shared a 120-mile train ride from Dublin to Dillon’s home in Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon, where they listened to de Valera speak against conscription.²⁶ Baker also met with pro-British unionists in Belfast.

“I know the difficulty of any expression of American opinion which may imply a desire to interfere with local matters here, but the Irish crisis may seriously offset the cause of the Allies and even produce an unfavorable reaction in

21. George Creel to Woodrow Wilson, March 31, 1919, in *Papers of Woodrow Wilson Digital Edition*.

22. “Ireland’s Case Presented to the President,” *Buffalo (NY) Enquirer*, April 17, 1919.

23. *American Commission*, 11.

24. *American Commission*, Diary, April 14, 1919, 35–36.

25. Ray Stannard Baker, “My Mission to Europe,” in *American Chronicle: The Autobiography of Ray Stannard Baker (David Grayson)* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1945), 306.

26. Baker, “A Rebellious Ireland and My Report of What I Saw,” in *American Chronicle*, 335–42.

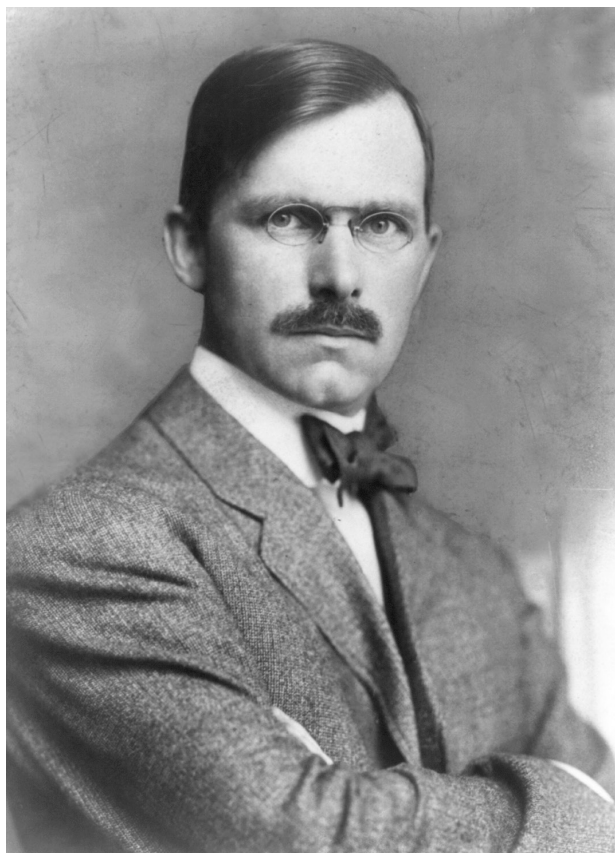


FIGURE 4. Ray Stannard Baker managed press relations for President Woodrow Wilson in Paris. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, cph 3a37130*

America,” Baker confided to Colonel House.²⁷ His comment hinted at Wilson’s future Irish dilemma at the peace conference.

The American commission also was introduced to William C. Bullitt (1891–1967), a US foreign service officer in charge of preparing current intelligence summaries for the Wilson delegation in Paris. Bullitt had worked as a columnist and editor at the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* during the early years of the world war. He joined the correspondents who covered Henry Ford’s unsuccessful peace mission to Europe aboard a chartered ocean liner. The journalist Walter Lippmann recommended Bullitt to the Wilson administration in 1917.²⁸

As the Paris conference got underway, Wilson dispatched Bullitt to Russia to

27. Ray Stannard Baker to Edward House, May 25, 1918, in Edward House papers, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

28. Will Brownell and Richard Billings, *So Close to Greatness: A Biography of William C. Bullitt* (Macmillan, 1988), 63.

112 | assess the Bolshevik government. Bullitt's team included Neil Burkinshaw and Robert Emmet Lynch, both young lawyers who had worked as journalists before the war. They remained attached to Bullitt on his return to Paris. Burkinshaw and Lynch briefed Walsh on their daily task of digesting important world news for dissemination to the conference's American and British delegations. They told Walsh how they had summarized the Irish Race Convention and the Metropolitan Opera House meeting.²⁹

Lincoln Steffens (1866–1936) had also traveled to Russia with Bullitt, who esteemed and was influenced by the muckraking journalist nearly twice his age.³⁰ Steffens had worked at New York City newspapers before becoming editor of *McClure's* magazine. There, he collaborated with Baker and Ida Tarbell from 1902 to 1906. The same trio then created *The American Magazine*. It is hardly surprising that Steffens introduced Walsh to Baker.

Steffens “proved very valuable in making connections with people here, as well as giving us very wise and apparently well considered suggestions,” the diary says.³¹ He provided the commission with the invitations needed to attend some conference proceedings at the Versailles palace with O’Kelly and “a number of the American newspaper correspondents.” Steffens suggested the commission learn what other small nations had sent delegations to Paris, who represented them, and “the general nature of their claims,” especially “the economic angle.”³²

One night the commission met Steffens for dinner at a Paris restaurant. “Under the strictest pledges of secrecy” he whispered that Colonel House would

29. *American Commission*, Diary, April 14, 1919, 36. Neil Burkinshaw (1898–1955) began his career at the *Meriden (CT) Record*, then moved on to the *Washington (DC) Times*. He also covered Henry Ford's peace trip to Europe, which might be how he met William Bullitt. Burkinshaw returned to Washington and completed his degree at Georgetown University Law School while also working as a reporter for the Associated Press (“Neil Burkinshaw Given a Fine Peace Commission Appointment,” *Meriden Morning Record*, January 28, 1919; “Neil Burkinshaw at His Home Here,” *Meriden Morning Record*, July 23, 1919; and “Neil Burkinshaw Dies Today at Washington, D.C.,” *Meriden Journal*, September 20, 1955). Robert Emmet Lynch (1897–1992) was a native of Washington, DC, the son of Irish immigrant parents, which probably explains his being named after the Irish patriot (1910 US Census, Precinct 9, Washington, District of Columbia, Roll T624_154, Page 13b, Enumeration District 0180, FHL microfilm 1374167). The commission diary calls him “a Washington newspaper man,” but later biographical sketches do not mention journalism work. He graduated from the National University School of Law (later merged with George Washington University Law School, Washington, DC) and enlisted as a navy aviator in France during the First World War (“Robert E. Lynch Dies,” *Washington Post*, September 25, 1992). Burkinshaw and Lynch each had law careers with the federal government and in private practice.

30. *American Commission*, Diary, April 14, 1919, 36; Brownell and Billings, *So Close to Greatness*, 81.

31. *American Commission*, Diary, April 17, 1919, 39.

32. *American Commission*, Diary, April 17, 1919, 40.

soon make a statement about Ireland, suggesting that passports would be issued to the three Irish leaders.³³ Some of the correspondents had received the same information. William J. Butler of the Hearst press asked the three commissioners to write five-hundred-word statements to be used “if the tip proved correct.” James Mark Tuohy of the *New York World* arranged to discuss the passport story with Ryan and Walsh.³⁴ As it turned out, Colonel House did not issue a statement about passports for the Irish delegation, one of many delays and disappointments the commission would experience in Paris.

The American Press and the Paris Peace Conference

An accurate tally of the number and nationalities of the journalists who covered the Paris peace conference has not been determined.³⁵ Baker estimated “several score American newspaper correspondents,” including “quite a number of devoted friends,” were among the one hundred fifty journalists registered through his office.³⁶ US wire services and big-city dailies sent multiple reporters to the French capital, as can be identified by their bylines in newspaper archives.

The American commission “met a great number of newspaper correspondents,” the diary says, through Lowell Mellett of United Press, “a friend of Mr. Walsh’s from Washington.”³⁷ Steffens and Bullitt tried to help the commission employ Mellett as their press agent. “It looked as though we were going to get [him], but his present employer would not let him go,” the diary continues. Mellett offered to draft stories for the commission during the morning hours before his wire service shift began at noon, or later in the evening, if Steffens “would do the real press agent work.” Mellett insisted the arrangement should be kept private. Walsh “told him he was ‘on.’”³⁸

Mellett (1884–1960) was born in Elwood, Indiana, the son of the local newspaper editor and publisher. At age sixteen he covered the 1900 Democratic National Convention in Kansas City for the *Muncie Star*. Instead of returning to school, Mellett embarked on a career that included reporter and editor jobs in Parkersburg and Wheeling, West Virginia, and in Indianapolis, St. Louis, Cincinnati, New York, and Seattle, where he edited the *Sun* from 1913 to 1915. In 1916 he became manager of the Washington bureau of United Press, then a year

33. *American Commission*, Diary, April 19, 1919, 47–48.

34. *American Commission*, Diary, April 20, 1919, 48.

35. Dino DelGallo, “The Press and the Paris Peace Conference” (2023), <https://www.ctevans.net/Versailles/Papers/Delgallo/Press.html#toc>, citing Oswald G. Villard, *Fighting Years: Memoirs of a Liberal Editor* (New York, 1939), 390.

36. Baker, *American Chronicle*, 375–76.

37. *American Commission*, Diary, April 14, 1919, 37.

38. *American Commission*, Diary, April 20 and April 21, 1919, 48–50.

114 | later he was sent to London as its assistant European manager. He was relieved of managerial duties to work as a battlefield correspondent during the war.³⁹ Mellett broke an important story about new gas masks that mistakenly bypassed the US military censor.⁴⁰

One day in Baker's office, Mellett said that he had "gotten off a good story" about how French officials had welcomed the commission while no such courtesy was extended to the representatives of other small nations.⁴¹ The diary mentions the three members were escorted to the French Chamber of Deputies a few days earlier for a meeting with André Tardieu, a close adviser to Premier Georges Clemenceau. Mellett also said he wanted to produce a story about an upcoming anniversary mass for the Irish martyrs of the 1916 Rising. The three Irish American commissioners, the Sinn Féin envoys O'Kelly and Duffy, as well as Allied soldiers and sailors of Irish heritage were invited to attend.⁴²

US Press Coverage of the American Commission in Paris

US journalists chafed against military censorship during the First World War. They complained that much of the peace conference's work was conducted behind closed doors. The American commission's mission for Ireland—at least the trio's side of it—was an accessible story for the press in Paris.

As mentioned above, Ryan and Walsh had planned to meet with Tuohy of the *New York World* when it appeared that Colonel House would announce passports for the Irish delegation. When that did not happen, Tuohy wrote a different dispatch. Burkinshaw, one of Bullitt's assistants, told the commission the correspondent produced "a fine story and very sympathetic" to their views.⁴³

Tuohy (1857–1923) was born in Cork city, Ireland, where his father managed the *Cork Examiner*. The son began his reporting career in the early 1880s at the Dublin-based *Freeman's Journal* and soon became its London correspondent. He covered the December 1890 split of the Irish Parliamentary Party over the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. Tuohy became a correspondent for the *New York World* in 1889.⁴⁴ In 1919 he shuttled between Paris, London, and Ireland.

Tuohy reported that the three Irish Americans, in consultation with O'Kelly and Duffy, had agreed they would not accept any compromise on Irish

39. "The News' First Editor Dies at 76," *Washington (DC) Daily Times*, April 7, 1960; "Services in Washington for Lowell Mellett, 76," *Muncie (IN) Star*, April 8, 1960.

40. Emmet Crozier, *American Reporters on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Oxford University Press, 1959), 228–29.

41. *American Commission*, Diary, April 22, 1919, 52–53.

42. The April 26, 1919, third anniversary mass of the Easter Rising was referenced in a next day story by James Mark Tuohy: see note 45.

43. *American Commission*, Diary, April 22, 1919, 52.

44. Felix Larkin, "Tuohy, James Mark," *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, www.dib.ie.

self-government from Lloyd George. “The policy to be followed is all or nothing,” Tuohy’s story said. It also suggested “there is some misgiving as to whether the Irish-American delegation is properly equipped with information respecting the Irish situation to cope with a renowned negotiator of the Premier’s particular gifts, methods and record, especially in relation to Ireland.”⁴⁵

Butler (1894–1944), who requested the five-hundred-word statements from the commission, joined Hearst’s International News Service in 1916. He covered the 1917 race riots in East St. Louis, Illinois, before being sent to Europe.⁴⁶ Butler told the American commission that he was “placed specially in charge of the news about Ireland.”⁴⁷ William Randolph Hearst was a notorious Anglophobe who well understood his papers had many Irish readers. Butler regularly informed the commission about what Colonel House said at his daily press briefings.⁴⁸

Butler reported in one of his cables to America, “there was no diminishing of the confidence” that the Irish delegation would be called before the peace conference “within a week or ten days.” This statement reflected the optimism of Walsh’s April 17 meeting with Wilson. The same story also noted the trio had not yet decided whether to travel to Ireland.⁴⁹

Charles Grasty of the *New York Times* was another important journalist the commission interacted with in Paris. “He is a good warm friend of Mr. Walsh’s, and always has been,” the diary says.⁵⁰ Grasty worked at the *Kansas City Times* early in his career, before becoming owner of the *Baltimore Sun*, then later a board member and emeritus correspondent for the *New York Times*. Grasty was close to Wilson, having supported the future president at his 1912 nominating convention in Baltimore. Grasty also was sourced to the British government through Sir William Wiseman, who functioned as a liaison between Lloyd George and Colonel House. Grasty assured the commission that they “might be the connecting link” in negotiations over the status of Ireland.⁵¹

US Press Coverage of the American Commission in Ireland

As efforts to secure passage for the Irish delegation bogged down, the commission asked to have their own passports updated to allow travel to Ireland. Permission was granted through US and British officials, and they set off for Dublin

45. “No Half-Way Measures for Irish Americans,” *Winston-Salem (NC) Journal*, April 27, 1919. The story is datelined April 26, 1919.

46. “W. J. Butler, Editor, Dies,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 13, 1944.

47. *American Commission*, Diary, April 20, 1919, 48.

48. *American Commission*, Diary, April 21, 1919, 51, and June 12, 1919, 79.

49. “Wilson Hears Walsh Plea for Ireland,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 18, 1919.

50. *American Commission*, Diary, April 21, 1919, 50.

51. *American Commission*, Diary, April 21, 1919, 50.

116 | on May 2, arriving the next day. Their pro-Irish pronouncements became the undoing of the mission to Paris, as Carroll and others have detailed. For all the controversy generated during their visit, however, this portion of the diary offers little more than the trio's itinerary: "Left for Belfast . . . Visited Maynooth . . . Motored from Cork to Limerick."⁵² But Walsh and Dunne documented their experience in the fifteen-page "Report on Conditions in Ireland," which is included in the papers collected by Carroll and discussed below.⁵³

British and American journalists also detailed the commission's words and actions during their ten days in Ireland. Here it is worth reminding contemporary readers, accustomed to "real-time" digital media, that in 1919 cabled dispatches could appear in big-city newspapers on the same day they were sent from overseas, but the same stories might not get published in smaller papers in other parts of the country until days later. Other stories were mailed back to America, which saved money but caused longer delays. US newspapers reported the America-loving Irish, especially Sinn Féin supporters, cheered Walsh, Dunne, and Ryan. The three guests emphasized the parallel between the Irish struggle and the American fight for freedom in the 1770s. "They pulled no punches," Carroll declared.⁵⁴

Ruth Russell (1889–1963) and William H. Brayden (1865–1933) of the *Chicago Daily News* were among the correspondents who observed the commission in Ireland. She was the daughter of a Chicago newspaper editor and one of the first reporters to travel to Ireland from America after the opening of the Dáil.⁵⁵ He was the son of an Armagh newspaper manager who, like Tuohy, had worked at the *Freeman's Journal* before becoming a correspondent for the Associated Press and the *Daily News*.⁵⁶ Russell watched Walsh confront bayonet-pointing troops outside the Mansion House and defuse the situation with his casual remarks to their commanding officer.⁵⁷ She also reported, incorrectly, that passports would be issued to the Dáil delegation to attend the peace conference.⁵⁸ Brayden described the commission's arrival in Ireland as "an event of first importance." He produced most of the Chicago paper's coverage during their visit.⁵⁹

52. *American Commission*, Diary, May 5, May 6, and May 8, 58–59.

53. The "Report on Conditions in Ireland with Demand for Investigation by the Peace Conference" is dated June 3, 1919. It was released to different officials and organizations over several days.

54. *American Commission*, 12–13.

55. Mark Holan, "Ruth Russell in Revolutionary Ireland," *The Irish Story*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.theirishstory.com/2020/01/08/ruth-russell-in-revolutionary-ireland/>.

56. Felix Larkin, "Brayden, William John Henry," *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, www.dib.ie. Armagh is today part of Northern Ireland.

57. Ruth Russell, *What's the Matter with Ireland?* (Devin-Adair Co., 1920), 77.

58. "Passports Assured to Irish Delegates," *Chicago Daily News*, May 5, 1919.

59. "Passports Assured to Irish Delegates," *Chicago Daily News*, May 5, 1919: two stories,

Carroll wrote, “Dunne, in fact, cabled the *Chicago Daily News* that seventy-five percent of the Irish people favored a republic.”⁶⁰ This characterization is misleading. The paper published an Associated Press cable that attributed this statement to Dunne in his speech at the Dáil. A week later, *Daily News* correspondent Gordon Stiles quoted Dunne on this same point during “a long talk” in London as the commission traveled back to Paris.⁶¹ Dunne probably gave Stiles a written statement or copy of his Dáil speech, a typical practice at the time.

Unsurprisingly, Irish unionists and the British press objected to the commission’s presence. Some suggested that Americans would be highly offended if a British delegation visited their country to support the proposed secession of any of the states.⁶² Truman H. Talley of the *New York World* filed several dispatches from London that cataloged the objections of British newspapers, which described the commission’s visit as “American impropriety” and “Wilson intrigue.”⁶³ The hostile press opinions, Carroll noted, “provoked a predicable debate in Parliament,” which soon “spelled the end of the Commission’s prospects for getting the Irish leaders over to Paris.”⁶⁴

Ryan disagreed with his colleagues on the best way to continue their efforts once the commission returned to the French capital.⁶⁵ He steamed back to America on May 24, but continued to support their mission. After a few more weeks of unsuccessful wrangling with British and American officials in Paris, Walsh and Dunne issued their conditions in Ireland report. It outlined seventeen specific charges of British misrule. These included the “willful murder” of ten Irish citizens by soldiers or police; the incarceration of “hundreds of men and women” without charges in the “vilest prisons,” which resulted in at least five additional deaths; while others with republican sympathies were kidnapped and deported. “The language of the report was quite inflammatory and obviously designed to appeal to public opinion rather than to diplomats or the heads of governments,” Carroll observed.⁶⁶

two bylines, one headline.

60. *American Commission*, 13.

61. “Guns Bar Out Dunne After Raid in Dublin,” *Chicago Daily News*, May 10, 1919, based on May 9, 1919, Associated Press report from Dublin; “Dunne Says Bulk of Irish Want Republic,” *Chicago Daily News*, May 16, 1919, based on Gordon Stiles’s cable of same date from London; reviewed on microfilm at Library of Congress.

62. “U.S. Delegates for Irish Freedom Are Welcomed in Dublin,” *New York Tribune*, May 7, 1919; Associated Press story dated May 6, 1919.

63. “Walsh Visit to Ireland Evokes London Protest,” *New York World*, May 5, 1919; “America’s Irish Activity Inflames Press of Britain,” *New York World*, May 8, 1919.

64. *American Commission*, 14–15.

65. *American Commission*, 16.

66. *American Commission*, 18.

The American Commission and Incarcerated Irish Journalists

In an apparent bid for press attention, the report by Walsh and Dunne cited journalists—ahead of lawyers, businessmen, skilled tradesmen, and laborers—as “men of the highest standing” held as political prisoners. One notable paragraph named seven newspaper owners, editors, or correspondents:

Some of the men whom we actually saw in jail, in a pitiable condition, were newspaper men who rank with Henry Watterson, or the late Col. William R. Nelson of Kansas City. This comparison is made because two of the prisoners in Mountjoy, Messrs. Pierce Beasley [*sic*, Piaras Béaslaí] and William Sears [*sic*, Sears], are the owners or principal stockholders of papers which they edit themselves. Many others we actually saw in prison are working newspaper men and correspondents of high-class publications, such as Charles H. Grasty, Frank H. Simmonds [*sic*, Simonds] and Herbert Bayard Swope.⁶⁷

Watterson had been associated with the *Louisville Courier-Journal* in Kentucky since the end of the US Civil War and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1918 for two editorials supporting US entry into the First World War. He retired as editor in April 1919, however, due to a dispute with the paper’s new owner over the proposed League of Nations, which Watterson opposed. Nelson was a cofounder of the *Kansas City Star*. He and Walsh probably knew each other before Nelson died in 1915.

Béaslaí was the son of a *Catholic Times* (Great Britain and Ireland) newspaper editor and novelist mother. He began his journalism career at Liverpool and London papers, then in 1906 moved to Dublin, where he wrote for the *Evening Telegraph* and *Freeman’s Journal*. He was an early activist in the Irish separatist movement and opposed Irish participation in the First World War. Elected to the first Dáil in December 1918, he became a publicity officer and editor of the republican newspaper *An tÓglách*.⁶⁸ Sears worked at the *Wexford Free Press* and *Kilkenny Journal* from the 1890s. In 1902 he cofounded the *Enniscorthy Echo*, which initially supported the Irish Parliamentary Party but later became the first local paper to support Sinn Féin. He was arrested in 1916, the first of several imprisonments related to anti-government charges.⁶⁹

Grasty, as noted above, had discussed Ireland with Walsh in Paris. Swope, a St. Louis native like Walsh, won the first Pulitzer in 1916 for coverage of Germany. He joined Tuohy in Paris as a correspondent for the *New York World*. Simonds, another widely syndicated war correspondent and historian, also attended the peace conference.

Walsh and Dunne sent the report to the major London papers. They gave

67. “Report on Conditions in Ireland,” 6, 10.

68. Patrick Maume, “Béaslaí, Piaras,” *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, www.dib.ie.

69. Patrick Maume, “Sears, William,” *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, www.dib.ie.

Butler a scoop about their demand for an investigation, which the correspondent transmitted through Hearst's wire service before the June 3 date on the report.⁷⁰ News of the report spread through mainstream dailies and the Irish American press over the next two weeks, usually with few details. A second Butler story published in the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator* included six paragraphs of direct quotes.⁷¹ Talley of the *Herald* again filed dispatches from London that documented British press reactions. "At first English newspapers could find but one word to use in answer to the charges," he wrote. "That word was 'lie.'"⁷²

But Talley also became the first American journalist to "spread before the American people the full report on Irish conditions."⁷³ He laid out all seventeen charges and quoted passages at length. His story began on the front page and filled an inside page of the *Herald's* Sunday edition, its 200,000-copy circulation double the weekday total.⁷⁴ Syndication increased the story's readership across the country. The *Irish World* and *Gaelic American*, both of New York, and the *Irish Press* of Philadelphia republished the story.⁷⁵ Dr. Patrick McCartan, Sinn Féin's envoy to America and editor of the *Irish Press*, recalled Talley's "vivid picture of the British press eyeing the report malignantly."⁷⁶ *Gaelic American* editor John Devoy praised the *Herald* for its "feat of alert and enterprising journalism" but added that British atrocities in Ireland were "nothing new."⁷⁷

Some pro-British readers criticized the *Herald* for publicizing the Walsh-Dunne report. In an editorial reply, the daily said it published Talley's account "because it is news of the first importance" with serious implication for Anglo-American relations. The editorial emphasized the paper was not passing judgment on the merits of the allegations and "in view of the conflict of the evidence at hand . . . [was] having its own investigation made."⁷⁸

70. "Investigation of Irish Atrocities Is Sought by Walsh," *Patriot-News* (Harrisburg, PA), June 3, 1919. The story under Butler's byline is dated June 2, 1919. It also appeared in other papers.

71. "British Atrocities in Ireland Exposed," *Irish World*, June 14, 1919. Butler's story is dated June 8, 1919.

72. "Peace Congress Warned It Will Share Guilt of Bloody Irish War Unless It Investigates Charges," *New York Herald*, June 15, 1919.

73. "England Must Act," from *Harvey's Weekly*, June 21, 1919, republished in the *Gaelic American*, July 5, 1919.

74. *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual & Directory* (N. W. Ayer and Son's, 1919), New York City papers, 648-84.

75. "World Stunned by Atrocities in Ireland," *Irish World*, June 21, 1919; "Horrors of English Prisons in Ireland," *Gaelic American*, June 21, 1919; "Savage British Atrocities Shown in Walsh-Dunne Report," *Irish Press*, June 21, 1919.

76. Patrick McCartan, *With De Valera in America* (Brentano, 1932), 118.

77. "English Atrocities in Ireland," *Gaelic American*, June 21, 1919.

78. "The Case of Ireland," *New York Herald*, June 26, 1919.

US Reporting on Wilson's Second Meeting with the American Commission

As details of the report's allegations circulated on both sides of the Atlantic, Walsh and Dunne secured another meeting with Wilson. Walsh challenged the president about his wartime declarations about self-determination for small nations. "You have touched on the great metaphysical tragedy of today," Wilson replied to his interlocutor, according to the diary.⁷⁹ Jack Nevin, the Hearst correspondent who reported the April 17 meeting between the two men, witnessed the second conversation. The president invited Nevin because of Walsh's "widespread reputation of perverting facts for his own benefit," wrote Dr. Cary T. Grayson, Wilson's physician and confidante, who also was in the room.⁸⁰ This characterization is in stark contrast to what Creel wrote to Wilson in March or what Nevin reported in April.

Nevin (1882-1933) hailed from Fayette County, Kentucky, and served in the Spanish-American War. As a United Press correspondent in 1913, he covered Harry Thaw's escape from a New York hospital for the criminally insane. Two years later Nevin reported on William Jennings Bryan's resignation as US secretary of state in a dispute with Wilson. Nevin left the United Press for International News Service and followed Wilson to Paris.⁸¹

"I want to hand it to you, you threw oil on the troubled waters at two or three critical junctures and saved the meeting," Nevin told Dunne a day after the conference with Wilson, the diary says. The journalist also suggested the former governor meet on his own with Lloyd George. "More can be accomplished just now with sugar than vinegar," Nevin said. "Walsh is a fine fellow, but very aggressive, and I think you would be the better man."⁸² Dunne dismissed the suggestion, saying his own assessment was that Lloyd George never intended to allow de Valera, Griffith, and Plunkett to come to Paris.

On the way out of the press room, Dunne had a separate discussion with Butler, the other Hearst correspondent, whom he asked to "get as much as he could" from Nevin regarding Wilson's impressions of the meeting. Butler assured Dunne that he would perform the request and added that Nevin was "very near to the president."⁸³

Grayson's version of the June 11 meeting describes Wilson's "very frank and open declaration" that Ireland was not alone in her aspirations for freedom. The

79. *American Commission*, Diary, June 11, 1919, 76.

80. Diary of Dr. Grayson, June 11, 1919, in *Papers of Woodrow Wilson Digital Edition*.

81. "John E. Nevin Dies; Veteran Reporter," *Times Union* (Brooklyn, NY), September 13, 1933.

82. *American Commission*, Diary, June 12, 1919, 78.

83. *American Commission*, Diary, June 12, 1919, 79.

president's candor "took both Walsh and Dunne off their feet," Grayson wrote. Grayson complained the pair were "very bitter in their criticisms of the president before the American newspaper correspondents." Grayson did not record Wilson as saying anything about a "metaphysical tragedy." He added, "Actually to quote from memory what the president said would be an impossibility."⁸⁴

| 121

Walsh and Dunne released a statement to the press that said Wilson told them that he and other members of the American peace delegation could not take up the case of Ireland "officially," but that he would continue to do whatever he could "unofficially."⁸⁵ Nevin complained to Walsh of his fate to have witnessed the extraordinary exchange with the president without being able to report it. "He had locked up in his breast the best story in the history of the peace conference, but . . . he could not write it," the diary says.⁸⁶ Nevin assigned John T. Parkinson, another Hearst colleague in Paris, to tell as much of the story as possible without breaking Nevin's confidence to Wilson.

The peace conference ended two weeks later without any action on Ireland, including the commission's request for an independent investigation of conditions. Asked about Ireland at a press conference before steaming back to America, Wilson replied: "The Irish question takes new shape every day. I am a good deal at sea about it."⁸⁷ The president was focused on winning US Senate passage of the League of Nations.

The US Press and the American Commission after Paris

The Walsh-Dunne report "should have been reprinted as a pamphlet and sent broadcast over America," McCartan wrote in his 1932 memoir. Such "special publicity . . . if properly used, [would] have changed the whole course of our fight" by moving "the great-hearted American people" to help Ireland. Instead, "for all its importance [the Walsh-Dunne report] received scant notice in the American press."⁸⁸

This is overstated. More accurately, the report was overshadowed by American press coverage of de Valera's June 1919 arrival in the United States. Walsh and Dunne, during their final days in Paris and after their return to America, decried the British government's response to their report, delivered by Chief Secretary of Ireland Ian MacPherson. Walsh and MacPherson volleyed accusations and countercharges in the press throughout the summer. Hearst's Butler

84. Grayson diary, June 11, 1919, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson Digital Edition*.

85. "Wilson to Aid Ireland, Acting Unofficially," *New York Tribune*, June 12, 1919.

86. *American Commission*, Diary, June 13, 80.

87. "Notes of a Press Conference by Walter Edward Wey," June 27, 1919, in *Papers of Woodrow Wilson Digital Edition*.

88. McCartan, *With De Valera in America*, 120.

122 | filed multiple stories from Paris about the dispute. Walsh urged American newspapers and magazines to give “equal publicity” to his replies to MacPherson’s comments, “in justice.”⁸⁹

Tuohy of the *New York World* returned home to Ireland and produced several stories about the commission’s report and MacPherson’s reply. “The obvious conclusion drawn in Ireland from the attitude of the chief secretary is that he is afraid of an inquiry,” the correspondent suggested to American readers.⁹⁰ Tuohy interviewed MacPherson and quoted him at length. That story ended with the correspondent’s assessment that coercion was “the most brutal and indiscriminating ever inflicted in Ireland.”⁹¹ Devoy at the *Gaelic American*, ever the vigilant watchdog of press coverage about Ireland, praised Tuohy’s dispatches as “very good . . . a scathing arraignment of English rule in Ireland.”⁹²

The Walsh–Dunne report also received considerable attention in the *New York Herald*. As promised, the paper dispatched Talley to make his own investigation of conditions in Ireland. There, he “retraced the path followed by the Irish American delegation.”⁹³ His book-length series, headlined “The Truth About Ireland,” stretched over more than three dozen installments between September and November 1919. Talley sought to undermine the commission’s findings as false or exaggerated; he challenged Sinn Féin’s legitimacy to establish an Irish republic. Only a few months after being praised by the Irish American press, Talley and the *Herald* now were harshly criticized as British propagandists.⁹⁴

Dunne, Ryan, and Walsh continued to speak out on behalf of Ireland. Their public pronouncements were reported or republished as op-eds in mainstream and Irish American papers. Dunne published a forty-six-page booklet,

89. Frank P. Walsh to editors of *Chicago Examiner*, *Chicago News*, *Chicago American*, and *Chicago Tribune*, August 2, 1919, and Walsh to editor of *Harvey’s Weekly*, August 4, 1919, in Frank Walsh papers, New York Public Library. Walsh’s letters also contain references to William Butler.

90. “Atrocities Charge Suppressed in Dublin,” *Oregonian* (Portland, OR), June 19, 1919; “Fears Irish Inquiry,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 19, 1919, story dated June 18, 1919.

91. “M’Pherson Has Flimsy Excuses—Tuohy,” *Birmingham (AL) News* from *New York World*, June 27, 1919. James Tuohy died in 1923. “Although he never set foot in the United States, he was dean of the corps of American newspaper correspondents in London,” the *New York Times* declared in its September 8, 1923, news obituary.

92. “Pulitzer Sets Trap for De Valera Which Fails,” *Gaelic American*, July 26, 1919.

93. “Full and Free Inquiry Shows Cruelty to Irish Political Prisoners False,” *New York Herald*, September 7, 1919.

94. See “The Herald’s English Propaganda,” *Gaelic American*, September 13, 1919; “New York Herald’s War on the Irish Cause,” *Gaelic American*, September 20, 1919; “Talley Continues His Attacks on Ireland,” *Gaelic American*, September 27, 1919; “Talley Exposed by Arthur Griffith,” *Gaelic American*, October 11, 1919; *Irish National Bureau News Letter*, September 19, 1919.

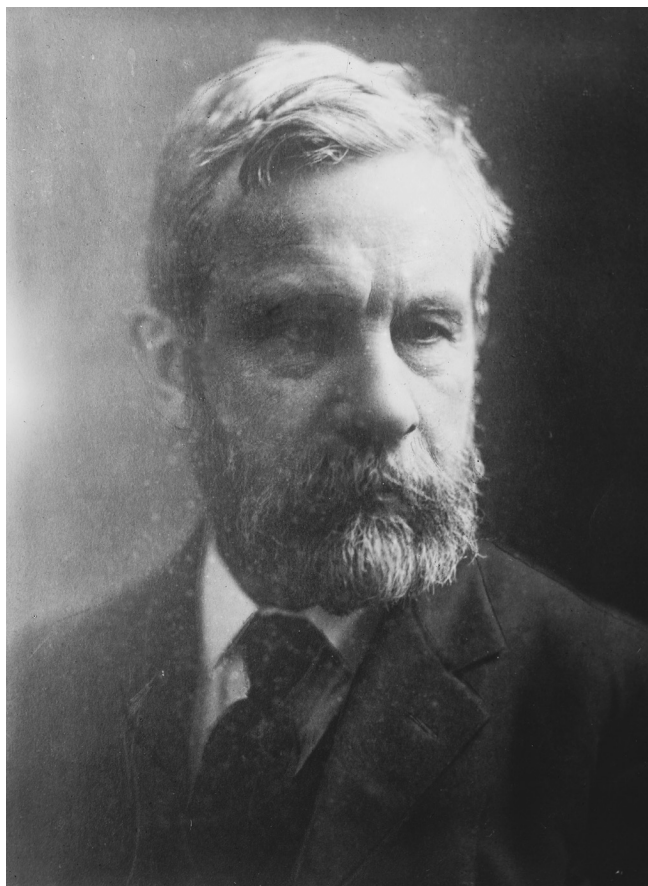


FIGURE 5. The exiled Fenian John Devoy kept a watchful eye on US press coverage of Ireland. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, ggbain 21513*

appropriately titled “What Dunne Saw in Ireland,” which restated the report’s allegations. The commission’s correspondence and the conditions report were printed and “widely distributed.”⁹⁵

All three commissioners also addressed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as it deliberated the League of Nations. They released the diary transcript of the Walsh-Wilson exchange—including the president’s “metaphysical tragedy” quote—to the committee and had it distributed through the Washington-based Irish National Bureau. This narrative became sensational news.⁹⁶ Walsh in particular helped Senate Republicans defeat the league and embarrass Wilson.

95. Francis M. Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland* (New York University Press, 2021), 55, 59.

96. Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland*, 57. See “Irish Envoys Tell of Wilson Rebuke,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1919, and other press.

124 | He told the press that Bullitt had “acted a real man’s part” for his resignation in protest of the Versailles treaty. Walsh praised Steffens as “an immense aid in all that has been done to mitigate or expose the imperialist game of the Big Four.”⁹⁷ Walsh also helped de Valera launch the American bond subscription to fund the Irish republic.

Importance of US Press Coverage for Sinn Féin

From Paris, Irish envoy George Gavan Duffy advised one of his Dáil colleagues in Dublin that “the only publicity you can count on here is what you can get through personally friendly writers and journalists.”⁹⁸ A few weeks later the colleague in reply suggested “a small number of select American journalists” and other foreign press “should be invited to visit Ireland and see for themselves the conditions obtaining here.”⁹⁹ Duffy’s and O’Kelly’s work in Paris “was the embryo of an international publicity campaign that would flourish as the war developed,” the historian Maurice Walsh has written.¹⁰⁰ But this conclusion overlooks the simultaneous and synergistic efforts of the American Commission on Irish Independence and how its activities spurred US press coverage of Ireland.

Creel, now out of government, authored pro-Irish articles for the *New York American*, a Hearst paper, and *Leslie’s* weekly, about the history of British oppression. He repurposed the material as the 1919 book *Ireland’s Fight for Freedom*. Walsh praised his old Kansas City friend, saying the book was “worth an army to Ireland.”¹⁰¹ But Creel’s criticism of Irish American activists drew fire from Devoy as “an absurd and fantastic misrepresentation.”¹⁰²

Gibbons of the *Chicago Tribune* returned briefly to America, then made a fall 1919 stop in Ireland on his way back to Paris. He detailed how the British government and English business groups applied “newer and more stringent measures” that negatively impacted American commercial interests in Ireland.¹⁰³

97. “Civil Strife Sure to Break in Ireland,” *Capital Times* (Madison, WI), July 25, 1919. Quotes are paraphrases of Frank Walsh’s comments in the story, not directly from him.

98. George Gavan Duffy to Diarmuid O’Hegarty, June 22, 1919, in *Document on Irish Foreign Policy*, No. 16, George Gavan Duffy papers 1125/1, National Archives of Ireland.

99. Diarmuid O’Hegarty to George Gavan Duffy, July 14, 1919, in *Document on Irish Foreign Policy*, No. 20, Duffy papers 1125/21, National Archives of Ireland.

100. Maurice Walsh, *The News from Ireland: Foreign Correspondents and the Irish Revolution* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 108.

101. “What George Creel Found in Ireland,” advertisement, *New York Times*, August 10, 1919.

102. “George Creel Attacks Irish American Leaders,” *Gaelic American*, August 16, 1919.

103. “English Try to Crush U.S. Trade with Erin,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 1919.

He reported on the government's October suppression of Sinn Féin.¹⁰⁴ The *Irish World* republished Gibbons's dispatches, just as the paper also had done with Tuohy's reporting from Ireland.

Hearst's Butler replaced Mellett as the pro-Ireland press agent in Paris. At Walsh's urging he was put on the Sinn Féin payroll. Duffy complained of Bulter's "inordinate salary" and inability to speak French, but acknowledged that other American correspondents "take freely the various articles he [Butler] brings them."¹⁰⁵ By November 1919 the provisional republic established the *Irish Bulletin* as its official organ, which US and other foreign journalists used as a tip sheet and counterweight to better-established British propaganda. In January 1920 the British government seized US newspapers in Dublin because of their coverage of the Irish bond drive in America.

US press coverage of Ireland increased on both sides of the Atlantic as de Valera continued his American tour and violence escalated at home. Grasty visited Ireland in spring 1920, sparking a public debate as to whether Wilson was using the correspondent in the same way he had deployed Baker two years earlier.¹⁰⁶ Grasty wrote a four-part series about Ireland for the *New York Times* and a separate story for the *Atlantic Monthly*, though neither mentioned his friend Walsh or the American commission.

Grasty insisted that Sinn Féin had operated "without a single setback" from its December 1918 election triumph until de Valera "failed in his task" to secure support for Irish independence from the two major US political parties at their summer 1920 presidential nominating conventions: the Republicans in Chicago, the Democrats in San Francisco. This setback had resulted from the bitter power struggle between de Valera and his supporters and Irish American activists such as Devoy and Cohalan. "With American sympathy and help, the achievement of a republic in Ireland was a possibility," Grasty wrote. "Without them, the extreme of the Irish demand can never be attained."¹⁰⁷

Irish immigrant turned naturalized US citizen and American literary figure Francis Hackett returned to his homeland in 1920. He published a book and wrote a syndicated newspaper series and articles for the *New Republic* based on

104. "Sinn Fein Meets at 1 a.m.; Balk British Order," *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 1919.

105. George Gavan Duffy to Dublin, January 30, 1920, in *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, Vol. 1, 1919–1921, No. 29, DFA ES Paris 1920, National Archives of Ireland, <https://www.difp.ie/>.

106. Mark Holan, "Reporter vs. Reporter: Ackerman and Grasty in Ireland," *Mark Holan's Irish American Blog*, October 2023, Part 1: President's Envoy?, <https://www.markholan.org/archives/13947>; Part 2: London Confrontations, <https://www.markholan.org/archives/14004>; Part 3: Irish-American Reaction, <https://www.markholan.org/archives/14006>; Part 4: Behind the Scenes, <https://www.markholan.org/archives/14008>.

107. Charles Grasty, "Irish Realities," *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1920).

126 | his observations. Hackett also testified at the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland hearings in Washington, DC.

These made-for-publicity events were organized by Irish activists such as William Maloney with help from Oswald Garrison Villard, progressive editor of *The Nation*. The hearings can be seen as a partisan response to the peace conference's refusal to act on the Walsh-Dunne report. In autumn 1920 the British government denied passports for the commission's investigative team to visit Ireland, but it did allow more than a dozen Irish citizens to travel to Washington to testify before the conditions commission.¹⁰⁸ Walsh served as consul at the hearings, which included testimony by *Chicago Daily News* correspondent Russell. Walsh praised her 1920 book, compiled from her 1919 reporting trip, as "a most valuable contribution to the literature of Ireland."¹⁰⁹ De Valera also provided a supportive letter as front matter.

Duffy, still in Paris, complained to Michael Collins in Dublin that payments to Butler were being drawn from Irish rather than American funds. Duffy insisted, "for what Yankee correspondents are worth we can get the most useful of them to take our stuff without his [Butler's] intervention."¹¹⁰ Collins replied that Butler's contract should be terminated.¹¹¹ Butler began working from Paris for the upstart Cross-Atlantic Newspaper Service, then later continued his career at papers in Detroit and Washington.¹¹²

It seems impossible to determine how many stories about Ireland were produced from Paris through the efforts of Steffens, Mellett, and Butler, or, to a lesser degree, Baker and Bullitt.¹¹³ It is reasonable to assume that whatever their input or influence, more pro-Irish copy emerged from Paris with their help than would have without it. "They get everybody they come into contact with into hot water," Baker complained when the American commission returned from Ireland.¹¹⁴ Perhaps helping the commission pursue press coverage among

108. A team of American investigators from the American Committee for Relief in Ireland were allowed to visit Ireland in February 1921.

109. *Tablet* (Brooklyn, NY), August 28, 1920; *The Nation*, March 23, 1921, 441.

110. George Gavan Duffy to Michael Collins, March 26, 1920, in George Gavan Duffy papers, P152/147, University College Dublin.

111. Michael Collins to George Gavan Duffy, April 12, 1920, Duffy papers, P152/150, University College Dublin.

112. The Anglo-American Cross-Atlantic Newspaper Service opened in February 1920, according to *Editor & Publisher*, December 18, 1919, 33, 39. "William J. Butler Dies; Detroit Newspaperman," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), November 13, 1944.

113. Lowell Mellett left the United Press to become managing editor of *Collier's* magazine before the end of 1919. He later became editor of the *Washington Daily News* and worked in the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

114. Diary of Ray Stannard Baker, May 21, 1919, in *Papers of Woodrow Wilson Digital Edition*, Vol. 59, May 10-31, 1919.

“devoted friends” in the correspondents corps was Baker’s attempt to steer the trio from Wilson and other US officials, the lesser of two headaches. | 127

The commission certainly was helped in Paris by the Irish envoys Duffy and O’Kelly. Walsh continued to communicate with them after he returned to America. “All of the press associations come to me for news these days, and, believe me, we are keeping the name of Ireland on the map,” he wrote to O’Kelly.¹¹⁵ The decision to employ Butler demonstrates Irish interest in reaching American readers in the immediate aftermath of the Paris conference; the decision to release him in spring 1920 shows their growing confidence in generating press attention without paying for it.

“Sinn Féin courts the press representatives, particularly those from the United States,” US Consul in Ireland Frederick T. F. Dumont in Dublin informed his State Department superiors in October 1920.¹¹⁶ Three months later Sinn Féin Minister of Propaganda Desmond FitzGerald noted the influx of American reporters to Ireland, “more or less permanently.” He told his Dáil colleagues, “This is valuable as the point of view of these press men usually improves the longer they stay here.”¹¹⁷ Brayden, the Irish-born *Chicago Daily News* correspondent, later called FitzGerald “the best propagandist ever in Ireland.”¹¹⁸

Hardly all the coverage was favorable to the Irish cause, as can be seen in regular criticism of mainstream journalists or their newspapers in the Irish American and Catholic press. But Walsh set the tone during the commission’s May 1919 trip to Ireland: “The more publicity we get the better we are pleased,” he said. “We don’t desire personal publicity; but anything that makes the Britons think concerning Ireland is all to the good.”¹¹⁹

115. Frank Walsh to Seán O’Kelly, August 22, 1919, in Frank Walsh papers, MssCol 3211, box 28 Independence, 1919–1920, New York Public Library.

116. “Press Correspondents and the Irish Situation,” Frederick Dumont to US State Department, October 18, 1920, in film S1040, microcopy no. M-580, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Great Britain, 1910–1929, Ireland (Irish Free State, Eire) Political Affairs, general 841d.000, roll 217.

117. “Dáil Eireann Report on Propaganda,” January 18, 1921, no. 57, DE 4/8/8, National Archives of Ireland, in *Documents of Irish Foreign Policy*, vol. 1, ed. Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh, and Eunan O’Halpin (Royal Irish Academy, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1998), 106–7.

118. William H. Brayden, *The Irish Free State; A Survey of the Newly Constructed Institutions of the Self-Governing Irish People, Together with a Report on Ulster* (Chicago Daily News Reprints, No. 23, 1925), 24.

119. “London Press in Rage,” *Gaelic American*, May 17, 1919, republished from *New York World*, May 9, 1919.

128 | **Conclusion**

Interviewed by the *Herald's* Truman Talley not long after the American commission left Ireland, Sinn Féin Acting President Arthur Griffith said the country was “becoming the Mecca of American newspapermen.”¹²⁰ The flow of journalists gathered pace after the peace conference and continued through the truce of July 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, and the 1922–23 civil war between Irish republicans and the newly established Irish Free State.

To be sure, reporting about Ireland would have occurred without the American commission, given the massive Irish diaspora in large US cities with the country’s biggest newspapers. But the commission’s failure to obtain a hearing for Ireland ensured that what happened in Paris did not stay in Paris. The commission secured important early attention for Ireland, as agreed in both contemporary and historical accounts. They “gave Ireland the limelight, with two continents looking on,” Canadian-born journalist Joseph Cyrillus Walsh (1870–1955) wrote in his 1919 Irish book.¹²¹ Carroll, in 2021, concluded, “With the publicity they generated, they made the Irish cause a major public issue.”¹²²

That meant sustained, significant press attention.

The three members of the commission welcomed attention from US journalists. These relationships and the resulting publicity exceeded the details and period described in the commission’s diary and other papers collected by Carroll. This aspect of their mission and other US press attention to the Irish revolution is worthy of further exploration.

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120. “Acting President’ of Ireland on ‘The Cause,’” *New York Herald*, November 23, 1919. Quotation is Truman Talley’s description of Arthur Griffith’s remarks, not a direct quote. Talley did quote Griffith at length elsewhere in this story.

121. J. C. Walsh, *The Invincible Irish* (Devin-Adair Co., 1919), 22, 23. Joseph Cyrillus Walsh edited a pro-Irish weekly in New York City during the world war, attended the Paris peace conference, and visited Ireland soon after the American commission: Joseph Cyrillus Walsh papers, MssCol 3212, New York Public Library.

122. Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland*, 62.