

## Chapter 14:

### Financial (B): State contracts for laundry services

#### **Summary of findings:**

*This Chapter examines State contracts for laundry services with the Magdalen Laundries.*

*It details all known State contracts for laundry services, as well as the process used to award these contracts and their value (where known).*

*Tendering processes were employed by the State in awarding contracts for laundry services. The Committee found that, in general, where a contract was awarded to a Magdalen Laundry, this occurred on the basis of it being the only or the most competitive tender submitted.*

*This Chapter also quantifies the value of State contracts placed with the Magdalen Laundry at Sean McDermott Street, Dublin from 1960 to 1966, which amounted to approximately 18% of the total business of the Laundry for this period.*

#### **Introduction**

1. This Chapter examines and sets out the findings of the Committee in relation to contracts by Government Departments or State agencies with the Magdalen Laundries for laundry services.
2. It was decided that such use by the State of the laundry services provided by the Magdalen Laundries should be explored as part of the overall landscape of State interaction with the Laundries. Moreover and in any case, it was decided that efforts should be made to identify and, where possible, quantify

what might be considered as the indirect financial support provided by the State to the Magdalen Laundries in this manner.

3. A variety of sources were utilised to build a picture of the extent of use by Government Departments or State agencies of the laundry services provided by the Magdalen Laundries. In some cases it was possible to quantify the exact volume of business which was involved. In other cases it was possible only to establish that contracts for laundry services were in place, but not to quantify the value of those contracts or the proportion of the work of the laundry which they represented. The Committee also identified other cases in which tenders had been submitted by Magdalen Laundries for laundry contracts, but those tenders were refused by the relevant State authorities.
4. A limiting factor in relation to this search was that it is general practice in many Departments for financial records (invoices, payment orders and so on) to be destroyed after set periods, sometimes after as little seven years.<sup>1</sup> Given that the remit of the Committee extends back to 1922, this meant that in many cases, financial records were not available for examination.
5. Nonetheless, searches were carried out to attempt to identify any information in relation to contracts for laundry services which might survive, either in the archives of the various Government Departments and State agencies, or in the archives of the Religious Congregations. These searches uncovered a significant amount of relevant information, which is set out in this Chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Department of Education and Skills has a practice of retention of financial records for 10 years, with certain types of financial records then destroyed. Report of the Department of Education and Skills to the Inter-Departmental Committee.

Similarly, the practice of the Department of Justice and Equality (on foot of certificates of consent from National Archives pursuant to section 7 of the National Archives Act 1986) is to retain financial records for a period of 7 years and to thereafter destroy them. Categories of records include e.g. invoices, payment system reports and so on. Report of the Department of Justice and Equality.

6. As set out in greater detail below, the Committee found that some Magdalen Laundries secured a number of State contracts with a variety of Government Departments and State Agencies or Offices. Where possible, the values of these contracts and the periods for which they were in place are identified below.
  
7. However and in general, no evidence was identified by the Committee which would have suggested a deliberate policy or preference by State agencies for use of Magdalen or other institutional laundries over non-religious-operated laundries. Rather, what emerges from the records identified is that:
  - Formal tender processes were utilised for large laundry contracts from at least 1927 onwards, with strict adherence to the procedures for such tenders;
  - Magdalen Laundries were not the only laundries invited to tender for such contracts;
  - Contracts awarded on the basis of these invitations to tender appear to have been chosen on a price basis alone;
  - Magdalen Laundries were not awarded contracts on all occasions on which they tendered for business;
  - Magdalen Laundries were not offered preferential treatment, for instance, where a Magdalen Laundry submitted a late tender for a contract, it was handled in the appropriate way, that is, excluded from consideration;
  - Officials, including officials at the highest level (the Government Contracts Committee) had the opportunity to intervene and secure work for a Magdalen Laundry at only marginal additional cost on at least one occasion in the 1920s, but did not do so;
  - Records were also identified which indicated that State authorities were not averse to putting pressure on Magdalen Laundries to reduce prices either in order to renew or retain contracts;

- Examples were found where contracts with Magdalen Laundries were terminated when a cheaper supplier was identified.
8. The Committee also found, however, that records identified demonstrated an awareness among officials that the Laundries in institutions such as the Magdalen Laundries provided financial support for the women living there. Records identified by the Committee establish that this factor played a part in a desire by officials to include Magdalen Laundries in invitations to tender - and to protect that place in invitations to tender, against arguments made by certain commercial laundries or trade unions that they should be excluded.
9. However, on the basis of the records identified, this awareness and desire to include the Magdalen Laundries in invitations to tender did not extend to making any special concessions to the Magdalen Laundries in the award of contracts, or to any policy or practice of placing large contracts with Magdalen Laundries.
10. The following analysis of the extent of State contracts with Magdalen Laundries has been carried out based on a number of key sources and categories of records, each of which are examined in this Chapter:
- records of the Religious Congregations regarding their customer base (Sean McDermott Street ledger);
  - records of the Defence Forces;
  - records of the Department of Education and Skills;
  - records of the Government Contracts Committee;
  - the recollections of the former Commercial Manager of a Magdalen Laundry; and
  - a notebook provided to the Committee by the representative group “Magdalene Survivors Together”.

**A. Sean McDermott Street ledger of laundry customer base**

11. The only available direct documentary record held by any of the Religious Congregations in relation to the organisations and entities which used the services of the Magdalen Laundries operated by them relates to the laundry at Sean McDermott Street, Dublin, operated by the Order of Our Lady of Charity. This record consists of a hardcover ledger recording, on a weekly basis, all business conducted and payments made for laundry services, for the period 1960 to 1966.
12. Through examination of this ledger, the Committee was in a position to review the entire customer base of the Magdalen Laundry at Sean McDermott Street for the 6-year period mentioned above.
13. Analysis of the ledger indicated that, over that 6-year period as a whole, State contracts amounted to an average 18% of the total business of the Magdalen Laundry at Sean McDermott Street.
14. The value of State contracts varied from year to year – from a high of 22% of total business in 1960, to a low of 15% of total business in 1966. The total turnover from State contracts over the 6-year period was £46,448.
15. The table below, compiled by the accountants for the Congregation,<sup>2</sup> sets out the value and volume of State contracts (including the percentage which those

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Kidney & Associates

contracts constituted of overall business) on a year by year basis for the total period.

**Sisters of Our Lady of Charity**  
**Sean McDermott Street Sales Analysis 1960-1966**  
**(Actual value)**

	<u>Total</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Total Laundry Sales	259,384	33,153	34,722	38,053	37,583	37,529	37,161	41,183
Sales to Defense Forces	8,126	1,652	1,372	1,339	1,319	1,142	679	623
Sales to Other State Bodies	10,379	1,307	1,356	1,559	1,557	1,531	1,452	1,617
Sales to Public Hospitals	27,944	4,224	4,568	3,744	3,791	3,812	3,774	4,031
Total Turnover from State	46,449	7,183	7,296	6,642	6,667	6,485	5,905	6,271
% Total State Turnover to Total Turnover	18%	22%	21%	17%	18%	17%	16%	15%

*Analysis of the value of State contracts with the Sean McDermott Street Laundry, 1960-1966*

16. The above table, restated in current-day values utilising the indexation rates established by the Central Statistics Office (the most recent of which are 2011 values), is set out below. The re-stated value (in current values) of total turnover derived from State contracts during the 6-year period is € 153,232.

**Sisters of Our Lady of Charity,  
Sean McDermott Street Sales Analysis 1960-1966  
(Expressed in 2011 Euro terms)**

	<u>Average</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1960</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1961</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1962</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1963</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1964</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1965</u> <u>2011€</u>	<u>1966</u> <u>2011€</u>
Total Laundry Sales	847,609	849,963	866,230	910,575	877,723	821,282	774,261	833,233
Sales to Defense Forces	27,308	42,341	34,240	32,038	30,797	25,002	14,137	12,600
Sales to Other State Bodies	33,929	33,506	33,837	37,307	36,373	33,501	30,258	32,722
Sales to Public Hospitals	91,996	108,284	113,957	89,598	88,531	83,413	78,626	81,561
Total Turnover from State	153,233	184,131	182,034	158,943	155,701	141,916	123,021	126,883
% Total State Turnover to Total Turnover	18%	22%	21%	17%	18%	17%	16%	15%

*Analysis of the value of State contracts with the Sean McDermott Street Laundry,  
1960-1966, converted to 2011 Euro values*

17. The following, also taken from the ledger in question, is a full list of Departments and State agencies which engaged the services of the Magdalen Laundry at Sean McDermott Street between 1960 and 1966:

*Government Departments*

- Department of Industry & Commerce, Kildare Street
- Department of Finance, Merrion Street
- Department of Local Government, Custom House
- Department of Health, Custom House
- Department of Social Welfare, Dining Club, Store Street
- Department of Social Welfare, Áras Mac Diarmada (Towel Account)
- Department of Education, Talbot House
- Department of Education, Marlboro Street.

*Defence Forces*

- Portobello, Cathal Brugha Barracks
- Baldonnell Camp, Air Corps.

*State offices, agencies and semi-state bodies*

- Chief State Solicitors Office
- District Court, Inns Quay
- Leinster House, Kildare Street
- Land Commission, 21 Upper Merrion Street
- Land Commission, Forestry Division
- General Valuations Office
- Ordnance Survey, Phoenix Park
- State Laboratory, Merrion Street
- Office of Public Works, Earlsfort Terrace
- Office of Public Works, 123 Lower Rathmines Road
- Board of Works, 51 St. Stephens Green
- Engineering Workshops, Jamestown Road
- Civil Service Commissioner, 45 Upper O'Connell Street



- Statistics Branch, Lower Castle Yard
- Bord na Mona, 28 Upper Pembroke Street
- Registry of Deeds, Henrietta Street
- Superintendant's office, Phoenix Park
- Employment Exchange, Lower Gardiner Street
- Employment Exchange, Wesbrough(?) Street
- Employment Exchange, Victoria Street
- Employment Exchange, Beresford Place
- CIE Inchicore (Stores Section)
- CIE Broadstone (Signals & Electrical; Engineers Department; Social Club)
- Dining Club, Custom House.

18. A number of state-funded hospitals and clinics also used the laundry services of the Magdalen Laundry at Sean McDermott Street between 1960 and 1966 and are also included in the volume of State business quantified above. The full list of these hospitals is as follows:

- Royal Hospital, Kilmainham
- Jervis Street Hospital<sup>3</sup>
- Hume Street Hospital, Hume Street
- St. Anne's, Northbrook Road
- St. Joseph Nursing Home, Edenmore Road
- St. John of God, Child Guidance Clinic, Rathgar
- Special Clinic, Out-Patient Department, Mater Hospital
- Corporation TB clinic, Charles Street
- Corporation TB clinic, Nicholas Street
- The Primary Clinic, Clarendon Row
- Crumlin Hospital.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nurses, Personal, Kitchens Account, Nurses Home Account, Operating Department, X-Ray Department, Hall Porter, Front Hall, Linen Rooms, St. Peter's Ward, St. Joseph's Ward, St. Brigid's Ward, St. Laurence's Ward, St. Luke's Ward, St. Anne's Ward, St. Patrick's Ward, St. Raphael's Ward, Guardian Angels Theatre

19. It is apparent from the ledger that, although the above Government Departments and State agencies were repeat customers of the Sean McDermott Street laundry over the 6 years for which records survive, payment for laundry services provided was slow and frequently outstanding for lengthy periods.

20. The remainder of the business of the Laundry, averaging 82% of total business over the period, was made up by hotels, schools, private companies and organisations as well as individuals. Hotels formed a sizable part of this total business and could be regarded as the mainstay of the business over the 6-year period in question.

21. Additional information on the financial viability of the laundry as a whole is included in Part IV (Chapter 20) of the Report.

### **B. Tenders and contracts by the Department of Education for laundry services at Preparatory Colleges**

22. A number of files were identified in the archives of the Department of Education and Skills and their deposits to National Archives in relation to laundry contracts. Given the time-period in relation to which these files relate, the Department is for the remainder of this section of the Report referred to by its former name, the Department of Education.

23. A series of files were identified, dating from 1927 to 1961, in relation to the Department of Education's provision for laundry services for a number of Preparatory Colleges (see below), including relevant material from the Government Contracts Committee.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> X-ray Department, Public Health Clinic BCG, Corporation TB clinic, Staff Account

<sup>5</sup> File references: CU67261, CU68027, ED/16172, CU 26182, ED12/26182, CU26550, ED12/26550, ED 12/19817, ED12/20688

24. The Government Contracts Committee consisted of representatives of the Department of Finance, Department of Industry and Commerce, Department of Defence, Department of Posts and Telegraphs, Department of Local Government, the Office of Public Works and the Stationary Office. Its role was to supervise the placing of contracts for supplies and work exceeding established financial thresholds, the level of which varied over time.

25. The contracts in question related to the Preparatory Colleges which were established and funded by the Department and from which students would receive priority admission to teacher training colleges. The preparation system of education was established in 1926 and operated for 35 years: Between four and seven such residential Preparatory Colleges existed for various periods between 1927 and 1961, in which prospective teachers were enabled to become proficient in Irish before progressing to Teacher Training Colleges.<sup>6</sup>

26. Files were identified relating to the laundry contracts awarded by the Department of Education for each of these Colleges, covering the full period of operation of the Preparatory College system.

*Establishment of tendering process and contracts awarded for 1927/1928 term*

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<sup>6</sup> The Colleges (not all of which were in existence for the full reference period) were:

- Coláiste Bríghde, Falcarragh, Co Donegal [for Catholic girls];
- Coláiste Caoimhín, Glasnevin, Dublin [for Catholic boys];
- Coláiste Éinne, Galway [later re-located to Dublin];
- Coláiste Íde, Ventry, Co. Kerry [for Catholic girls];
- Coláiste Mhuire, Tourmakeady, Co Mayo;
- Coláiste Moibhí, Malboro House, Glasnevin, Dublin [for Protestant boys and girls]; and
- Coláiste na Mumhan, Mallow, Co Cork [later known as Coláiste Íosagáin, Ballyvourney].

27. Arrangements for laundry services in relation to the four Colleges initially established were made in July 1927.<sup>7</sup> Files of the Department of Education indicate that the Contracts Officer of the National Education Office sought legal advice in July 1927 on a proposed tender system for award of contracts for laundry services for the Colleges.<sup>8</sup> A draft Tender Form and Agreement was submitted to the Department's legal adviser<sup>9</sup> for review, in light of the fact that "this Office proposes at an early date to invite tenders in connection with the Laundry Work of the Preparatory Colleges."<sup>10</sup> The proposed procedures for tender and contract were, after legal clearance, also submitted to the Government Contracts Committee in July 1927.<sup>11</sup>

28. Following finalisation of the drafts, a notice was in August 1927 placed in the national press advertising the upcoming tenders and inviting expressions of interest from any interested laundry contractors.

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<sup>7</sup> Coláiste Brighde, Falcarragh, Donegal; Coláiste Caoimhin, Marlborough Hall, Glasnevin; Coláiste Íde, Kerry; and Coláiste Moibhí, Marlboro House, Glasnevin.

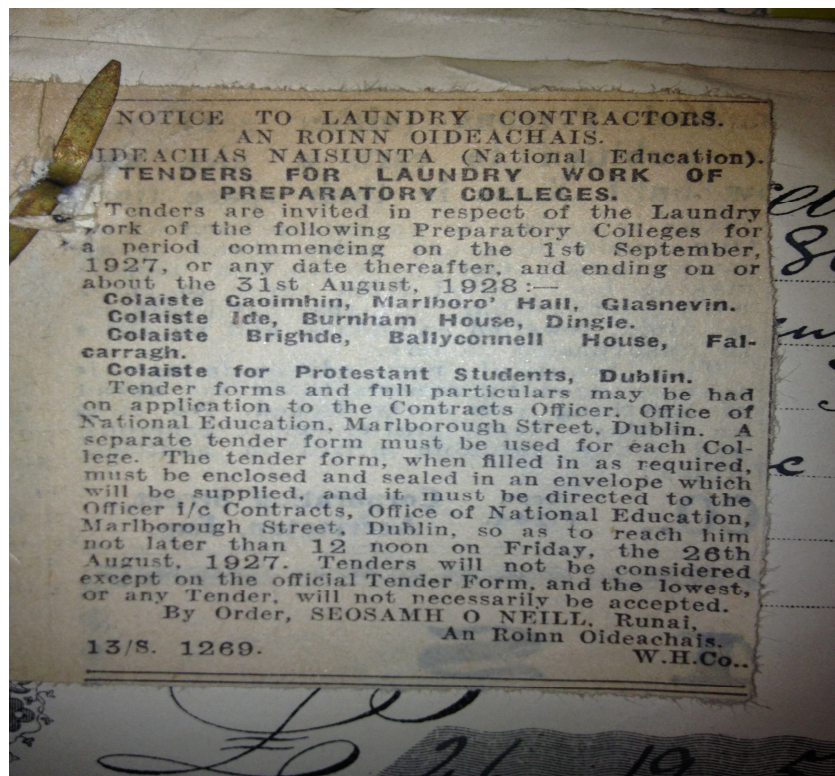
<sup>8</sup> Colaistí Ullmhucháin, Nitheacháin – Connaroirí &rl. File ref: ED/16172.

<sup>9</sup> Then a private solicitor, rather than the Attorney General.

<sup>10</sup> Letter dated 19 July 1927 from the Contracts Officer, National Education Office, to a named solicitor then serving as legal adviser to the Department:

"I am to inform you that this Office proposes at an early date to invite tenders in connection with the Laundry work of the Preparatory Colleges. A copy of the proposed Tender Form and Agreement is enclosed, and I am to request you to be so good as to state whether the proposed form is suitable from the legal point of view".

<sup>11</sup> Laundry Contract Forms, Fair Wages Clause. File ref ED12/20688



*Advertisement placed in the press to give notice to all laundry contractors of the Department of Education tenders for laundry services to four Preparatory Colleges*

29. On foot of the advertisement, any interested laundry contractor was in a position to request the tender forms and compete for the available contracts. The file does not contain a full list of all those who sought the tender forms, however tenders were received from a number of contractors, including Magdalen Laundries (St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork), other institutional laundries (Our Lady's Home, Henrietta Street, Dublin), and commercial laundries (Omagh Manufacturing and Laundry Co Ltd; Dublin Laundry Co Ltd, Milltown, Dublin; Court Laundry, Dublin).

30. The Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane, like other interested contractors, requested the tender forms and sought information on the nature of the work

for which the tender was issued<sup>12</sup> and submitted a tender in the appropriate format.

31. A comparison was made by the Department of the tenders received, after which the contracts were awarded. The Magdalen Laundry which had submitted a tender (Peacock Lane, Cork) was not awarded a contract. The contracts were instead awarded to the Steam and Electric Laundry, Tralee<sup>13</sup>; and Our Lady's Home, Henrietta Street. An internal note dated 5 September 1927 demonstrates that price was the basis on which the decision was made:

“The cheapest tender for Coláiste Íde is from Tralee and for the two Dublin colleges from Henrietta Street, Dublin. Letters herewith accordingly giving contracts to these two”.<sup>14</sup>

*Tender process and contracts awarded for the 1928/1929 term*

32. Invitations to tender were again issued in 1928.<sup>15</sup> As occurred the previous year, a mixture of Magdalen Laundries (High Park; Donnybrook; and Galway), institutional laundries (Our Lady's Home, Henrietta Street) and commercial

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<sup>12</sup> Letter dated 17 August 1927 from the Laundry Superintendent of St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork, to the Contracts Officer:

“Sir, I would be obliged if you will send 4 tender forms and full particulars for laundry work of preparatory colleges to the Superintendent of above laundry and oblige. Yours sincerely”.

Letter dated 20 August 1927 from the Laundry Superintendent of St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork, to the Contracts Officer:

“Sir, I would be much obliged for further information regarding above. Are the personal clothes to be quoted for by the hundred or per article? As there are only 60 students approximately I presume there will not be hundreds of any article per week. The same would refer to the sacristy, and we shall quote per article or per dozen according to your directions. An answer by return post would be much appreciated. Yours faithfully”.

<sup>13</sup> The Steam and Electric Laundry, St John's Convent, Tralee, was operated by the Sisters of Mercy, however it was operated by employees paid at Trade Union approved rates

<sup>14</sup> Internal note dated 5 September 1927. “Colaistí Ullmhucháin, Nitheacháin – Connaroirí &rl. File ref: ED/16172.

<sup>15</sup> “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”. File Ref ED12/19817.

laundries (Dublin Laundry Co. Ltd., Milltown, Dublin; Dartry Dye Works Ltd Dublin; Connacht Laundry; Court Laundry; Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee and Westminster Hygienic Laundry Cambrian Works, Wrexham, Wales) requested tender forms in order to tender for the available work or a portion thereof.

33. The file includes a letter from the Magdalen Laundry at High Park referring to the fact that it had carried out laundry work for Talbot House in the past and also referring to the “over 200 inmates dependent on the results from the laundry”.<sup>16</sup> The Magdalen Laundry at High Park subsequently tendered for the contract for laundry services for the Preparatory Colleges at “Marlboro Hall and Marlboro House, Glasnevin”.

34. The Magdalen Laundry operated by the Sisters of Mercy in Galway also sought the appropriate forms to apply for the tender for Coláiste Connachta, Galway by letter as follows:

“Please send Tender Forms for Laundry work. We would be very glad to get the Furbough College washing and hope we are not late in applying for it. Yours faithfully”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from High Park Laundry dated 7 August 1928 to the Department of Education:

“Re Laundry

Dear Sir,

Having heard that Talbot House, Marlborough Street, is about to be re-opened as a Training College for Girls, we beg to apply for the laundry work in connection with the Institution when it shall be established. I may mention that we did the laundry work for Talbot House for many years, and its closing a few years ago meant a considerable loss to us. We have over 200 inmates dependent on the results from the laundry.

We shall feel very grateful for your kind consideration of our application and can assure you if you decide the matter in our favour we shall endeavour to give you every satisfaction.

Hoping for a favourable reply and thanking you in anticipation.

Believe me dear Sir,

Yours faithfully. Superior”

<sup>17</sup> Id

35. The Magdalen Laundry operated by the Religious Sisters of Charity at Donnybrook also expressed an interest and requested the appropriate official forms to submit a tender.<sup>18</sup>
36. On the basis of the tenders submitted in September 1928 for two of the Colleges, an internal analysis was carried out by the Department of Education. This internal analysis of tenders recorded that as in the previous year, the contracts were awarded to the lowest tenders received, which this time included two contracts awarded to a Magdalen Laundry – namely Peacock Lane, Cork.
37. During this period, there were three Dublin-based Preparatory Colleges (Coláiste Caoimhín, Marlborough Hall, Glasnevin; Coláiste Bríghde, which had temporarily been relocated to Talbot House; and Coláiste Moibhí, Marlborough House). The internal Departmental analysis of tenders identified Our Lady's Home, Henrietta Street as "the lowest tender for each of these three colleges".<sup>19</sup>
38. The internal analysis noted the particular position of one commercial laundry as follows:
- "there is one other firm (Harold's Cross Laundry) which tendered lower than Henrietta Street in respect of Alter and Chapel Laundry, but they specified that the tender for the College must be taken as a whole (or

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<sup>18</sup> Letter dated 11 September 1928 from St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Donnybrook:

"Officer in charge, Contracts Sub-Department, Dublin:

Sir, Kindly forward us by return of post the Laundry Tender Forms to fill in for our application for part of the National Education Laundry & oblige. Faithfully yours".

<sup>19</sup> Internal note dated 27 September 1928. "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms". File Ref ED12/19817.



not at all). Hence it is not possible to offer them portion of the Contracts”.<sup>20</sup>

39. As a result, the contracts for laundry services for the 1928/1929 term all three Dublin-based Preparatory College were awarded to Henrietta Street (an institutional Laundry, but not a Magdalen Laundry within the terms of the Committee’s mandate).<sup>21</sup>

40. As set out above, tenders had also been sought for the Preparatory College in Connaught, namely Coláiste Connachta, Galway. Although interested in obtaining the contract, the Magdalen Laundry operated by the Sisters of Mercy at Galway did not submit a tender by the due date. No special consideration was given to the institution – the internal analysis records only consideration of the (commercial) Connacht Laundry which had submitted a tender on time. The Department’s records indicate the position taken was that:

“Attached is the only tender received. It compares favourably with the tenders received for the other colleges”.<sup>22</sup>

Connacht Laundry was accordingly recommended and awarded that contract for the 1928/1929 term.

41. A similar analysis took place in relation to the two Preparatory Colleges in Munster. Departmental records detail the manner in which the decision was taken to award two contracts (one partial) to the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane, Cork:

“After consultation with the accountant and with the principal of ... I recommend that the laundry contracts for above colleges for year 1.10.1928 to 30.9.1929 be given to the lowest tenderer generally as

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<sup>20</sup> Id

<sup>21</sup> Id

<sup>22</sup> Internal note re Laundry of Furbough College, 28 September 1928. “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”. File ref ED12/19817.

marked in green ink on the tenders – viz all Col[áiste] na Mumhan to Peacock Lane Laundry, Cork, portion of Col[áiste] Ide to same Laundry and the remainder of Col[áiste] Íde to contractors – St John’s Laundry, Tralee”.<sup>23</sup>

42. Notices of acceptance of tender were accordingly issued by letter from the Department of Education to the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane Cork, for the relevant portions of laundry work for both Colleges.

43. All notices of acceptance of tender issued were in a standard format. A sample, consisting of the notice of acceptance issued to Peacock Lane in relation to Coláiste na Mumhan, Mallow, is as follows:

“Notice of acceptance of tender for Coláiste na Mumhan

I am authorised by the Minister for Education to refer to the Tender dated \_\_\_ day of September 1928 submitted by you for the performance of the Laundry Work for Colaiste na Mumhan, Mallow, and to inform you that, subject to the specifications and conditions of contract which are embodied with the said Tender (and copies of which specifications and conditions are herewith enclosed), your Tender is accepted in respect of the Laundry Work of the said College”.<sup>24</sup>

44. A similar letter issued on the same day to Peacock Lane in relation to the relevant portion of the laundry work of Coláiste Íde which had been awarded to that Laundry.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Internal note dated 27 September 1928. “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”. File ref ED12/19817.

<sup>24</sup> Letter dated 26 September 1928, to the Magdalen laundry at Peacock Lane. “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”. File ref ED12/19817.

<sup>25</sup> Letter dated 26 September 1929, “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”. File ref ED12/19817.

“Notice of acceptance of tender for Coláiste Ide

45. Subsequent developments in relation to one of these contracts (relating to Coláiste Íde, Kerry) are interesting. The Superintendent at the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane wrote on a number of occasions to the Department of Education outlining difficulties experienced. Despite being awarded the contract, it appears from the file that no laundry was received by Peacock Lane from the relevant College for a number of weeks after the first consignment was expected.<sup>26</sup>

46. When the first consignment of laundry was received, the Laundry Superintendent again wrote to the Department, explaining that she had, upon submitting the tender, miscalculated the cost of carriage of the laundry from the College to the Laundry (which costs were, under the terms of the contract, borne by the Laundry). The net result of this was explained to the Department as meaning that performance of the contract would result in losses to the Magdalen Laundry. This point was made in her letter as follows:

“Of course this will mean a heavy loss to the institution as the Quotation only left a small margin of profit. I wonder would it be of any use to send a representation of mistake to the Educational Authorities and ask them if they would pay the Carriage for this year.

Of course we know that we must abide by our Contract, and pay the penalty of my big blunder, but perhaps they would taken into consideration that we have a large Institution to maintain and that it is no easy matter to support almost 100 women, many of whom are old

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I am authorised by the Minister for Education to refer to the Tender dated \_\_\_ day of September 1928 submitted by you for the performance of the Laundry Work for Colaiste Ide, Dingle, and to inform you that, subject to the specifications and conditions of contract which are embodied with the said Tender (and copies of which specifications and conditions are herewith enclosed), your Tender is accepted in respect of portion of the Laundry Work of the said College”.

<sup>26</sup> Letters of 2 October and 8 October 1928 from Laundry Superintendent, Peacock Lane, to Department of Education, requesting that enquiries be made about the expected date of receipt of laundry from the College. “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms” File ref ED12/19817.

and infirm, and unable for work. The Laundry proceeds are the only means we have for the upkeep of Institution".<sup>27</sup>

47. From the records available, it appears that the Department never contemplated agreeing to this request from the Magdalen Laundry to pay the carriage of the laundry in question. Instead, the response was to investigate

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<sup>27</sup> Letter dated 13 October 1928 from Laundry Superintendent, Peacock Lane, to Department of Education. "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms". File ref ED12/19817. Full letter as follows:

"Dear Mr Bradley

I trust you will not think me presumptuous if I ask you to consider this letter personal rather than official. I shall explain.

I fear we have got ourselves into a muddle with regard to washing of the Colleges, and perhaps you might be able to tell me if there is any way of remedying a grave blunder which I made.

I was away from the Laundry for 20 months, as I had been dangerously ill, and took a long time to convalesce. Unfortunately I returned to work just when Tenders for College Laundry arrived. Rev. Mother was in Retreat and some of the Laundry Sisters from home, so there was absolutely no one to consult.

I knew that Rev. Mother was anxious to get the Colleges so I made out an extremely low Quotation and said that we would pay carriage both ways, to and from Dingle and Mallow. I thought that if Goods came by Goods Train that they would equal about one-tenth of the value of the Washing.

The first consignment of Washing came last Week from Dingle, imagine my consternation when I found the value of Washing was £1.2/0 and the Carriage on this small Amount was 12"10. That means that we shall get on an average about 3/4d for each article.

Of course this will mean a heavy loss to the institution as the Quotation only left a small margin of profit. I wonder would it be of any use to send a representation of mistake to the Educational Authorities and ask them if they would pay the Carriage for this year.

Of course we know that we must abide by our Contract, and pay the penalty of my big blunder, but perhaps they would taken into consideration that we have a large Institution to maintain and that it is no easy matter to support almost 100 women, many of whom are old and infirm, and unable for work. The Laundry Proceeds are the only means we have for the upkeep of Institution.

Trusting that you will not find all this explanation troublesome and hoping that you will be able to advise me as to the best way of acting.

Yours v sincerely

Laundry Superintendent

the factual position (regarding costs) and the mechanism by which termination of the contract could occur.

48. Internal Departmental notes dated 15 October 1928 record the consideration given to the question, also recording the ultimate course of action agreed:

- confirmation that approval of the Government Contracts Committee would be required to release Peacock Lane from the relevant contract;
- a decision that the Department should explore with the relevant Preparatory College in Kerry the frequency and volume of business involved; and
- a decision that the Department should establish whether the Magdalen Laundry wished to retain its contract for the other Preparatory College at Mallow.<sup>28</sup>

49. Concerning the latter point, letters were exchanged between the Department of Education and the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane, Cork, regarding the laundry services contract awarded to it in relation to Coláiste na Mumhan, Mallow:

“With reference to the contract for the laundry of Coláiste na Mumhan, Mallow, it might be ascertained what would be the probable cost of

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<sup>28</sup> Internal Department of Education notes dated 15 October 1928. “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”. File ref ED12/19817. Full text of internal note:

“Superintendent, Mr Brennan

I find from inquiry that the Dept cannot release Sister Alexia from the Contract without the concurrence of the Govt Contracts Committee. The next meeting will be next Thursday week.

In the meantime, we can take what she says about Dingle as accurate viz that it would not pay her very well. We should however write and ask her to ascertain definitely whether she would be prepared to retain the Mallow contract. The rail from Mallow to Cork would be comparatively little”.

Note in response:

“Write to Principle Col[áiste] Ide ask 2 questions” (these questions relating to how often laundry would be sent; and what the approximate value of that laundry would be)

carriage to and from Mallow from your Laundry. As you will be getting all the Laundry of this College and as the inclusive prices quoted by you and accepted are at least as high as most other contract prices accepted, it is not clear why you should not wish to continue the contract".<sup>29</sup>

50. The Superintendent at the Peacock Lane Magdalen Laundry responded, confirming that the carriage costs to and from Mallow were "quite moderate and we are quite prepared to carry out contract".<sup>30</sup>

51. While the Department was still considering the matter, the Superintendent at Peacock Lane wrote to Coláiste Íde, noting in pertinent part that:

"We did not think when quoting for washing that the carriage would be anything like so heavy, or the washing so small. I have written to the Educational Department about it, as carriage each Week is almost equal to value of washing. Last week there was only a difference of 4d, so you see we are losing heavily on this contract, besides the endless journeys to railway to see if it has arrived".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Letter dated 15 October 1928 from the Department of Education to Peacock Lane Magdalen Laundry. "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms". File ref ED12/19817.

<sup>30</sup> Letter dated 17 October 1928 from Laundry Superintendent, Peacock Lane, to Department of Education. "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms". , File Ref ED12/19817. Full letter was as follows:

"No washing had been received from Coláiste na Mumhan, Mallow, at the time that representation about high carriage to and from Dingle was sent.

On Monday last, the 15<sup>th</sup> a Hamper arrived from Mallow, it included House Linen and Personal Laundry of three Brothers. Total value of same was 17.4.5 and the carriage on same was 2.2 which was ret 4.4.

This was quite moderate and we are quite prepared to carry out contract. We have ascertained that the charge per cwt on 1 cwt of washing will be 2/ to and from Mallow each way".

<sup>31</sup> Letter dated 25 October 1928 from Peacock Lane, Cork, to Coláiste Íde, copy on Department of Education file "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms". File ref ED12/19817.

52. The relevant College appears to have raised the matter with the Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee, which held the contract for the remainder of the College's laundry. A letter on the files of the Department of Education from that (non-Magdalen) Laundry to the College confirming that it could take on the laundry contract originally awarded to Peacock Lane at the original prices.<sup>32</sup>

53. An internal Departmental note establishes the position taken by the Department on the matter- instead of the proposal by the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane (i.e. that the Department would pay costs of carriage for the laundry and that it would retain the contract), the Department's contract with the Magdalen Laundry Peacock Lane was set aside and the relevant business was transferred to a different Laundry, namely the Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee:

“(1) As the Tralee Laundry now agrees to do the work for the same prices as the Cork people, the contract may be transferred to Tralee. Please advise Tralee Laundry accordingly and wait a few days (in case of any reply from Tralee) before advising the Cork Laundry.  
(2) Advise Principal Col. Íde of action taken simultaneously with advice to Tralee”.<sup>33</sup>

54. A standard form notice of acceptance of tender subsequently issued to the Steam & Electric Laundry, in place of the contract previously held by the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Letter dated 20 October 1928 From the Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee to Coláiste Ide, copy on Department of Education file ref ED12/19817, “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”.

“I received the form you enclosed and I shall accept the Household Laundry at the prices quoted. The extra I am getting for serviettes and towels will make up for reduction in price of sheets etc otherwise I fear I could not do it as I pay Trade Union wages to all my employees.  
Your affectionate sister”

<sup>33</sup> Internal Departmental note dated 23/10/1928, File ref ED12/19817, “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”.

<sup>34</sup> Id

55. There were two further relevant pieces of correspondence in relation to this contract between the Department of Education and the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane.

56. In December 1928, the Superintendent at Peacock Lane, in a letter to the Department confirming receipt of cheques in payment for the laundry services carried out, made further representations in relation to the matter. She stated that for the 4 weeks in which it performed laundry services for the relevant College, "the carriage was almost equal to or exceeded the amount charged for washing". She then said that she had:

"sent a letter asking the Office to pay the Carriage, and was told the matter would be looked into, and was under consideration. In all we paid £1.17.3 in Railway Carriage, on laundry valued at £2.12.0, so you see we were at a loss. We are a charitable institution and find it no easy matter to maintain a House with close on 100 women, many of them being old and infirm, so I trust that the matter will receive due consideration.

Of course, I am well aware, that the Educational Office are in no way bound to do this, and that we must keep to the letter of our Contract. At the same time, I think, that they would not wish us to be at a loss. In any case, no harm can be done by laying the facts before them".<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Letter dated 14 December 1928 from St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork to the Accountant at the Department of Education. File ref ED12/19817, "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms". Full letter as follows:

To JP Twohig Esq, Accountant, Office of National Education, Dublin

"Subject: Dingle Laundry Contract

Dear Sir

Your two Cheques in payment of Laundry Account to end of October 1928, received this Morning. Both are correct as far as the actual amount of Laundry is concerned.

With regard to Coláiste Íde, Dingle, I would like to make a few remarks. The Washing only came four Weeks in all, so that there is still the small sum of 6/5 (being amount for 1<sup>st</sup> week of November) due. In each of these weeks, the carriage was almost equal to or exceeded the



57. The Department did not accede to this request by the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane for the Department to pay the costs of carriage for the laundry services provided prior to termination of the contract. An internal instruction issued that the institution should be informed that the contract had included the cost of collection and delivery of laundry and that the Department could not “pay the cost (or any portion thereof) of the rail expenses to and from Dingle”.<sup>36</sup>

58. A letter to that effect (cleared by the Departmental Accountant) issued to the Superintendent of Peacock Lane Laundry, as follows:

“A Bhean Uasail

In reference to your letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> instant, I am directed to inform you that the quotations accepted by this Department as part of the contract for laundry from Coláiste Íde Dingle included the cost of collection and delivery from Cork railway and payment of railway fare to and from Dingle. In these circumstances it is regretted that this Department

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amount charged for washing. Of course, we could not have known beforehand that only a few articles (House and Table Linen) would be sent to our Laundry. Each time we got 6 Table-Cloths, which were unusually large and heavy, and no small articles, which would have helped to pay for the carriage.

I sent a letter asking the Office to pay the Carriage, and was told the matter would be looked into, and was under consideration. In all we paid £1.17.3 in Railway Carriage, on laundry valued at £2.12.0, so you see we were at a loss. We are a charitable institution and find it no easy matter to maintain a House with close on 100 women, many of them being old and infirm, so I trust that the matter will receive due consideration.

Of course, I am well aware, that the Educational Office are in no way bound to do this, and that we must keep to the letter of our Contract. At the same time, I think, that they would not wish us to be at a loss. In any case, no harm can be done by laying the facts before them.

Awaiting your reply and with every best wish for Xmas.

Yours sincerely, Laundry Superintendent”.

<sup>36</sup> Internal Department of Education note dated 12 December 1928. File ref ED12/19817, “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”.

cannot pay the cost (or any portion thereof) of the rail expenses to and from Dingle".<sup>37</sup>

*Tender process and contracts awarded for the 1929/1930 and 1930/1931 terms*

59. In 1929, all contracts in relation to Preparatory Colleges were terminated – this affected the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane, the institutional Laundry at Henrietta Street and the commercial Connacht Laundry. Fresh tenders were invited in all cases.<sup>38</sup>

60. Although records of tenders for the Dublin-based Colleges have not been found, the Committee has confirmed from other records that contracts for these Colleges were awarded in October 1929 to the Magdalen Laundry at Donnybrook and the institutional laundry at Henrietta Street.<sup>39</sup>

61. Records of the tender process conducted by the Department of Education for the Galway-based Preparatory College were also identified by the Committee.<sup>40</sup> Two tenders were submitted to the Department – one by the "Magdalen Asylum, Galway", and a commercial laundry called The Connacht

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<sup>37</sup> Letter dated 19 December 1928 from the Department of Education to St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork. File ref ED12/19817, "Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms".

<sup>38</sup> Letters of 27 September 1929 terminating contracts as and from 5 October 1929, to:

- Connacht Laundry re Coláiste Einne
- Peacock Lane re Coláiste Mumhan
- Henrietta Street re Colaiste Moibhi, Marlborough House, Glasnevin and Colaiste Brighde, Talbot House, Dublin.

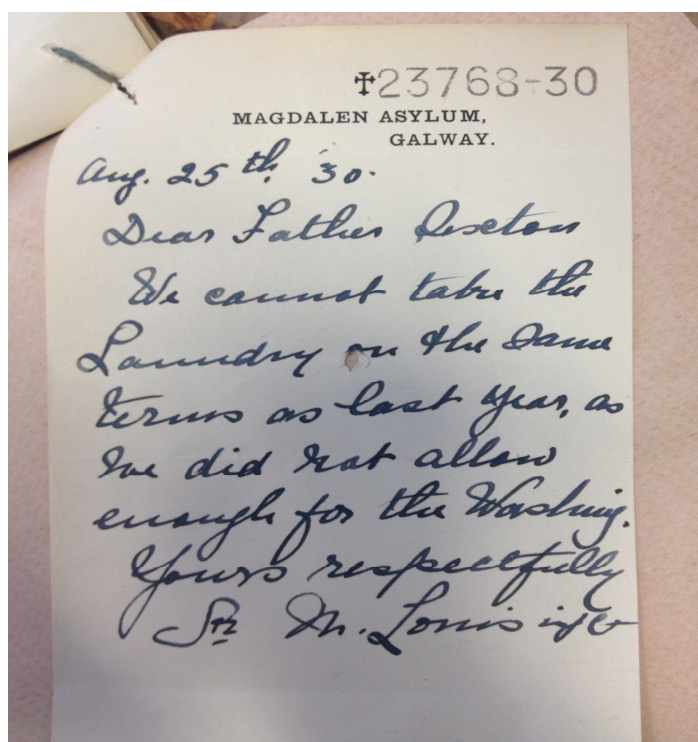
All letters referred to "paragraph IX of the Laundry Form of Agreement and to notify you in accordance therewith that the said contract is to terminate as from Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1929".

<sup>39</sup> Note to the Government Contracts Committee dated 6 October 1930. File ref ED12/26182 "Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930"

<sup>40</sup> File ref ED12/26182 "Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930"

Laundry<sup>41</sup>, with the contract awarded to the Magdalen Laundry, which was the lower of the two tenders received.

62. The Magdalen Laundry, Galway, operated the contract for laundry services to the College throughout the 1929/1930 school term, but in August 1930 contacted the College to inform that “We cannot take the laundry on the same terms as last year as we did not allow enough for the washing”.<sup>42</sup>



*Letter from “Magdalen Asylum, Galway” to Coláiste Éinne regarding laundry services contract it had been awarded by the Department of Education*

63. Although the contract concluded with the Magdalen Laundry, Galway, in October 1929 did not include a termination date, following consultations between the Department of Education and the Secretary to the Government

<sup>41</sup> Tender by the Magdalen Laundry dated 17 September 1929; tender by The Connacht Laundry dated 19 September 1929. Both tenders on file ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”

<sup>42</sup> Note dated 25 August 1930, file ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”

Contract Committee, tenders were by letters of 26 September 1930 invited from both the Magdalen Laundry Galway and the (commercial) Connacht Laundry for a new Contract to provide for laundry services to Coláiste Éinne in the coming year.<sup>43</sup>

64. Tenders were duly received from both laundries<sup>44</sup> and analysed on an item-by-item basis. On the basis of analysis of those tenders by the Department, it was estimated that the (commercial) Connacht Laundry would be approximately £ 9 cheaper per year than the Magdalen Laundry.

65. Accordingly – and following clearance up the line within the Department<sup>45</sup> and also submission, as required, to the Government Contracts Committee for

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<sup>43</sup> Letter dated 26 September 1930 to the Magdalen Asylum, Galway, from the Department of Education, file ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”. Letter as follows:

“Referring to your letter of the 25<sup>th</sup> ultimo to the principal, Coláiste Éinne regarding the question of the laundry contract for that college, you are invited to submit a tender (on the attached form) for the collection, laundering and redelivery to that college of the items specified in the accompanying schedule for the period commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1930 or approximate date thereafter. Approximate number in college 35 persons”.

Equivalent letter dated 26 September 1930 issued to the Connacht Laundry from the Department of Education.

<sup>44</sup> Id. Tenders dated 29 September 1930 in both cases.

<sup>45</sup> Internal Department of Education Note

“Laundry work for Coláiste Einne na Forbacha

In 1929 tenders for the performance of the laundry work of Colaiste Einne were received from the two Galway Laundries viz

- A. the Magdalen Asylum Laundry
- B. The Connacht Laundry

A contract was made with the former from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1930 but no definite date for its termination was specified. The agreement provided that the Contract might be terminated by the Minister without assigning any cause on a week’s notice.

In August last the Sister in Charge of the Magdalen Asylum intimated that they could not take on the laundry for this year on the same terms.

I discussed the matter with the Secretary of the Government Contract Committee who suggested that we should invite tenders from the Galway Laundries for a new Contract without going to the expense of advertising in the Press as the freight charges would not

clearance, the Department terminated the existing contract of the Magdalen Laundry, Galway, and concluded a new contract with the (commercial) Connacht Laundry.

66. The Note by which the matter was submitted to the Government Contracts Committee for approval sets the question out as follows:

“I am directed to refer to the question of the performance of the laundry work of Coláiste Éinne, the Preparatory College for boys at Furbough, Galway, for which a contract was made by this Department with the Magdalen Asylum, Galway, as from October 1929. A communication has recently been received from the Sister in charge of that Laundry intimating that they cannot take on the work for the current year on the same terms as last year. Fresh tenders were then invited from the two Galway laundries – the Magdalen Asylum Laundry and the Connacht Laundry – copies of which are submitted herewith.

No tenders were sought from laundries in Dublin or other distant centres as the heavy freight charges would not permit of their tendering at favourable prices. In the case of the heavier items the household

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permit of laundries in Dublin or other distant centres tendering at any more favourable terms.

Tenders have now been received from two Galway Laundries. The Connacht Laundry has considerably reduced its prices since 1929 while the Magdalen Asylum prices have been increased.

An analysis of the prices, having regard to the frequency with which the various items on the list are sent out, shows that the Connacht Laundry charge would be about £9.5.- per annum less than the Magdalen Asylum Laundry.

It is proposed accordingly

- (1) To give the Magdalen Asylum Laundry one week's notice of the termination of the existing Contract and
- (2) To enter into a new Contract with the Connacht Laundry.

The total annual cost of the service at the prices quoted would be about £55. The Connacht Laundry had the Contract during the 1928/1929 school year and according to the Principal of the College they did more satisfactory work than the Magdalen Asylum”.

linen (bed linen, table cloths etc), the cost of transit alone from the College to Dublin and back again (about 19s.4d per cwt.) would almost equal the laundry charges, and in the case of the lighter items, boys clothes etc the freight charges would represent more than one third of the laundry charges.

An analysis of the prices in the two tenders obtained (copies of the tender forms attached) having regard to the frequency with which the various items on the schedule are sent out, shows that the Connacht Laundry prices would be about £9.5.0 per annum less than the Magdalen Asylum Laundry. The total cost of the service at the prices quoted by the Connacht Laundry would be about £58 per annum.

It is, accordingly, proposed, subject to the approval of the Government Contract Committee, to enter into a new contract – with the Connacht Laundry – for the laundry work of Coláiste Éinne in respect of the period commencing on or about 20<sup>th</sup> instant”.<sup>46</sup>

67.A subsequent letter from the Secretary of the Government Contracts Committee confirmed that the Committee “saw no reason to comment on the procedure proposed in regard to Coláiste Éinne, Furbough, where it was proposed to accept the lower of the two tenders received”.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Note dated 6 October 1930, F16252 addressed to the Secretary, Government Contracts Committee from the Department of Education. File ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”.

The Note also addressed another issue, namely the form of tender in use (which question “had been deferred pending the outcome of discussions regarding one of the clauses of the “condition of contract”.”) This matter is considered in the context of the ‘fair wages’ clause, addressed in this Report at Chapter 8.

The Note also included a proposal on the continuance of the existing contracts in Dublin with the Magdalen Laundry operated at Donnybrook, and the institutional laundry at Henrietta Street, which question is addressed in this Report in the following paragraphs.

<sup>47</sup> Letter dated 20 October 1930 from the Secretary of the Government Contracts Committee to the Secretary General of the Department of Education, including extract from the Minutes of the Government Contracts Committee meeting of 16 October 1930. File ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”.

68. As such, the Department of Education proceeded to terminate the contract awarded to the Magdalen Laundry, Galway and concluded a new contract with the Connacht Laundry.<sup>48</sup>

69. The letter issued to the Magdalen Laundry in Galway said as follows:

“Colaiste Einne Furbough – re laundry contracts

A Bhean Uasal

With reference to the Agreement entered into with you in October 1929, for the performance of the Laundry Work of the above-named College and to your communication of 25<sup>th</sup> August last to the Principal of the College intimating your inability to continue the work at the existing prices, I am directed to give notice, in accordance with the terms of Article IX of the Agreement, of the termination of this Agreement as from 3rd instant. The Principal of the College is being notified accordingly”.<sup>49</sup>

70. The standard letter giving notice of acceptance of tender was issued to the (commercial) Connacht Laundry on the same date<sup>50</sup> and the College was notified of the alteration of arrangements for its laundry services on the same date.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Letters of 22 October 1930 in both cases, File ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigeachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”.

<sup>49</sup> Letter dated 22 October 1930 from Department of Education to Magdalen Laundry, Galway. Id.

<sup>50</sup> Letter dated 22 October 1930 from Department of Education to the Connacht Laundry, Galway. Id.

“AB Goodbody Esq, The Connacht Laundry, Galway

A chara

I am authorised by the Minister for Education to refer to the Tender dated the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1930 submitted by you for the performance of the Laundry Work for Colaiste Einne, Furbough, Galway, and to inform you that, subject to the specifications and conditions of contract which are embodied with the said Tender (and copies of which specifications and conditions are herewith enclosed) your Tender is accepted for the performance of the Laundry Work of the said College as from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1930. Mise le meas”

<sup>51</sup> Letter dated 22 October 1930 from Department of Education to the Principal, Coláiste Éinne. Id.

71. The Connacht Laundry continued to perform the contract for laundry services to Coláiste Éinne until the College was transferred to Dublin.<sup>52</sup>

72. The possible continuance for a further year of the contracts awarded in 1929 in respect of the laundry work of two Dublin-based Colleges was also put before the Government Contracts Committee in October 1930.

73. In that regard, a note of the Department of Education to that Committee detailed as follows:

“In regard to the contract made in October 1929, in respect of the laundry work of the two permanent Preparatory Colleges in Dublin, Coláiste Caoimhín and Coláiste Moibhí, I am to say that from discreet inquiry made by this Department it would not appear that any more favourable terms could be obtained and it is accordingly proposed to continue for the present the existing contract which is divided between the St Mary Magdalen Laundry, Donnybrook, and Our Lady’s Home Laundry, Henrietta Street”.<sup>53</sup>

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“Táim ag cur chugat mar eolas duit –

(1) Cóib de litir a seholadh chuig Magdalen Asylum Laundry ag cur deire leis an gconradh atá ann fé láthair le haghaidh nigheachain an Choláiste agus

(2) Cóib de litir a seoladh chuig an Connacht Laundry ag deanamh connartha nua le haghaidh na hoibre sin ó 1.11.1930”.

<sup>52</sup> Letter dated 12 January 1931 from Department of Education to the Connacht Laundry

“A chara, With reference to the Agreement entered into with you in October 1930 for the performance of the Laundry work of Colaiste Einne, Furbough, I am directed to inform you that arrangements are being made for the temporary transfer of the College to Talbot House, Dublin and I am accordingly to give notice in accordance with Article IX OF THE Agreement of the termination of this Agreement as from the 31<sup>st</sup> instant”.

<sup>53</sup> Note dated 6 October 1930, F16252 addressed to the Secretary, Government Contracts Committee from the Department of Education. File ref ED12/26182 “Colaiste Einne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheachain, Deire Fomhair 1930”.



74. Following their next meeting, the Secretary of the Government Contracts Committee confirmed in writing to the Department of Education that a different view had been taken by the Committee in relation to continuance of these contracts. The minutes of the Committee meeting provided, in pertinent part:

“In regard to the laundry work for the two permanent Colleges in Dublin – Coláiste Caoimhín and Coláiste Moibhí – where it was proposed to continue the existing contract, Mr Moran mentioned that the Army Laundry, Parkgate, could undertake more work than it was getting at present and, after discussion, the Committee agreed that it should be given an opportunity of quoting for the work”.<sup>54</sup>

75. Invitations to tender were accordingly issued in December 1930 for contracts for laundry services to the Dublin-based Preparatory Colleges to:

- the Department of Defence Laundry GHQ, Parkgate Street;
- St Mary Magdalen’s Laundry, Donnybrook ;
- Our Lady’s Home, Henrietta Street (institutional laundry).<sup>55</sup>

76. In each case the invitation was as follows:

“You are invited to submit tenders (on attached forms) for the collection, laundering and re-delivery to the above-named Preparatory Colleges, of the laundry items specified in the accompanying schedules in respect of the period commencing on 1 January 1931 or approximate date thereafter. The tender forms should be sealed in the enclosed envelope addressed to the officer in charge of contracts, Office of

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<sup>54</sup> Letter dated 20 October 1930 from the Secretary of the Government Contracts Committee to the Secretary General of the Department of Education, including extract from the Minutes of the Government Contracts Committee meeting of 16 October 1930. File ref ED12/26182 “Coláiste Éinne, Conradh le haghaidh nigheacháin, Deire Fomhair 1930”.

<sup>55</sup> File ref ED12/26550, “Na Coláistí Ullmhucháin i mBaile Átha Cliath, Connraidh nua le haghaidh nigheacháin 1930-31-32”.

National Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin, so as to reach him not later than twelve o'clock noon on Friday 12 December 1930".<sup>56</sup>

77. Tenders for either all available work or a portion thereof were received from all three invited contractors.<sup>57</sup>

78. In a manner similar to tender assessments in earlier years, the Department of Education carried out an item-by-item analysis of the respective costs of the tenders received. A spreadsheet was created to detail all tendered amounts to determine the best overall complete price (having regard also to the volume of work estimate for the College). On the basis of that analysis, the laundry services contracts for both Coláiste Caoimhín and Coláiste Moibhí were awarded to the Henrietta Street institutional Laundry, rather than to either the Magdalen Laundry at Donnybrook or the Department of Defence Parkgate Street Laundry.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Id. Letter of 1 December 1930

<sup>57</sup> Tenders under cover of letter dated 12 December 1930 from Department of Defence Laundry, Parkgate Street to Department of Education in connection with all three Dublin-based Preparatory Colleges then in existence- Coláiste Moibhí, Coláiste Éinne and Coláiste Caoimhín. File ref ED12/26182.

Tenders dated 10 December 1930 received from St Mary Magdalen's Laundry Donnybrook, File ref ED12/26550.

Tenders dated 11 December 1930 received from Henrietta Street Laundry, File ref ED12/26550.

<sup>58</sup> Contracts awarded by letters dated 17 January 1931 from the Department of Education to Henrietta Street Laundry. File ref ED12/26550.

The image shows an open ledger book with handwritten entries. The pages are filled with columns of numbers and text, organized into sections. The top section is titled 'Normal Laundry' and contains several columns of data. Below this, there are more sections with similar tabular structures. The handwriting is in dark ink on aged paper. The ledger appears to be a detailed record of costs and tenders.

*Analysis by the Department of Education of relative costs of tenders received, 1931*

*Tender process and contracts awarded for 1931/1932 term*

79. The by-then established tender process was again carried out for the 1931/1932 school term. An invitation to tender was issued by the Department of Education, in respect of the three Dublin-based Preparatory Colleges, to three contractors – Donnybrook (Magdalen Laundry), Henrietta Street (institutional laundry) and the Department of Defence Parkgate Street Laundry.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Letter dated 22 December 1931, File ref ED12/26550. Letter provided:

- “Colaiste Caoimhin, Glasnaoidhean
- Colaiste Moibhi, Glasnaoidhean
- Colaiste Einne, Teach Talboid, Ath Cliath

80. Tenders were received from all three invited contractors for at least a portion of the available laundry services contracts.<sup>60</sup>

81. An item-by-item analysis on the tenders was carried out by the Department, with the contracts awarded to the lowest tenders – which included one contract to the Magdalen Laundry (Donnybrook) as well as one to the institutional laundry at Henrietta Street – to the exclusion of the Defence Forces Laundry.<sup>61</sup>

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You are invited to submit tenders on attached forms for the collection, laundering and re-delivery to the above named Preparatory Colleges of the laundry items specified in the accompanying schedules in respect of the period commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1932 or approximate date thereafter.

The tender forms should be sealed in the enclosed envelope addressed to the Officer in Charge of the Contracts, Office of National Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin, so as to reach him not later than twelve o'clock noon on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1932.

Our Lady's Home,  
10 Henrietta Street Dublin

St Mary Magdalen's Laundry  
Donnybrook, Dublin

Officer in Charge  
Laundry  
GHQ Parkgate, Dublin".

<sup>60</sup> Tenders dated 1 January 1932 from the Department of Defence Laundry, Parkgate Street; tenders dated 2 January 1932 from Henrietta Street Laundry; and a tender dated 1 January 1932 from the Magdalen Laundry operated at Donnybrook. File ref ED12/26550

<sup>61</sup> File ref ED12/26550



Total – 67 persons (55 girls and maids and 12 boys)

Our lady's home      Boy's personal laundry      £12.6.-

Army Laundry      [Boy's personal laundry]      £19.-.-

Note: St Mary Magdalen's Laundry did not tender for this portion of the work

St Mary Magdalen's Laundry      Household and girls      £155.14.-  
Donnybrook      personal laundry

Army laundry      [Household and girls      £229.7.-  
personal laundry]

Note: Our Lady's Home Laundry did not tender for this portion of the work

It is proposed to accept the lower tender in each case as set out in the accompanying Schedule GCC No.3".<sup>62</sup>

83. The proposed approach was approved by the Government Contracts Committee:

"Minute 4513 – The Committee approved of the placing of the following contracts by the Department of Education

Our Lady's Home      All laundry work for Colaiste Caoimhin      £317.16.0  
Henrietta St      and Colaiste Einne and boys' laundry      estimated  
Dublin      work for Colaiste Moibhi

St Mary Magdalen's      Household and girls' laundry work      £155.14.0  
Asylum Donnybrook      work for Colaiste Moibhi      estimate<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Note dated 5 January 1932 from Department of Education to the Secretary, Government Contracts Committee. File ref ED12/26550

<sup>63</sup> Letter dated 15 January 1932 from the Secretary to the Government Contracts Committee to the Department of Education, attaching extract from the "Proceedings of the Government Contracts Committee meeting 7 January 1932". File ref ED12/26550

84. Contracts were subsequently concluded along those lines, with the result that the Department of Education awarded a tender to the Magdalen Laundry at Donnybrook for a portion (household and girls personal laundry) of one of the Dublin Preparatory Colleges.<sup>64</sup> Although payment orders have not been found by the Committee, the estimated value of the contract for the year was £155.14.0.

*Tender process and contracts awarded, 1944-1961*

85. A number of other records were also identified in relation to laundry contracts awarded by the Department from the 1940s onwards. The records identified cover the period from 1944 to 1961 and include invitations to tender, tender documents and contracts awarded for one of the Preparatory Colleges.<sup>65</sup>

86. From 1944 to 1949, two Magdalen Laundries – the Good Shepherd Laundries at Cork and Limerick – were among the total number of five laundries (including commercial laundries) invited to tender by the Department of Education for the available laundry services contract.<sup>66</sup>

87. From 1949 to 1959, the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry at Cork was no longer invited to tender, although the Limerick Magdalen Laundry remained among those invited to tender. With one exception (which is detailed below),

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<sup>64</sup> Letter dated 15 November 1932 from Department of Education to the Superioress, St Mary Magdalen's Laundry, Donnybrook. File ref ED12/26550. (Notice of acceptance of tender for Colaiste Moibhi)

“I am authorised by the Minister for Education to refer to the Tender dated the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January 1932 submitted by you for the performance of the Laundry work for Coláiste Moibhí, Glasnevin and to inform you that, subject to the specifications and conditions of contract which are embodied with the said Tender (and copies of which specifications and conditions are herewith enclosed), your tender is accepted for the performance of portion of the Laundry work of the said college as specified in the accompanying list, as from the present to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1932”.

<sup>65</sup> File Reference CU 68027

<sup>66</sup> E.g. invitation to tender, 29 November 1944 issued to 5 laundry contractors: 2 Magdalen Laundries (Good Shepherd Sunday's Well; Good Shepherd Limerick), the Mercy Convent Laundry, Killarney, the Steam & Electric Laundry Tralee, and the Shannon Laundry, Limerick. File Reference CU 68027

neither of the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundries was successful in having a tender accepted in any of these years. The contracts were awarded instead to the Steam & Electric Laundry Tralee.<sup>67</sup>

88. For instance, following its tender in 1944, which was not the lowest tender received, a standard letter rejecting its tender was issued to the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry, Sunday's Well:

"A chara, I beg to inform you that your Tender dated 9 December 1944 for the performance of the Laundry Work of Colaiste Ide, Dingle, in the twelve months period commencing 1 January 1945 has been considered and that it is declined with thanks".<sup>68</sup>

89. The Magdalen Laundry at Sunday's Well again tendered in 1945 for the 1946 contract.<sup>69</sup> The cost of its tender was analysed on an item-by-item basis against the only other tender received and, as in the previous year, was rejected.<sup>70</sup>

90. Precisely the same process occurred in 1946, in relation to the 1947 contract. Although a cover note to its tender made an indirect reference to the nature of the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry<sup>71</sup>, the decision of the Department of

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<sup>67</sup> As above - laundry operated by the Sisters of Mercy, utilising employees who were paid Trade Union wages

<sup>68</sup> Letter dated 21 December 1944 from Department of Education to Good Shepherd Sunday's Well Cork. File Ref CU 68027.

<sup>69</sup> Tender dated 10 December 1945. File Ref CU 68027.

<sup>70</sup> Letter dated 21 December 1945 from Department of Education to Good Shepherd Sunday's Well Cork. File Ref CU 68027.

"A Chara

I beg to inform you that your Tender dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1945 for the performance of the Laundry work of Colaiste Ide, Dingle, in the twelve months period commencing 1 January 1946 has been considered and that it is declined with thanks".

<sup>71</sup> Cover note dated 30 November 1946 from the Good Shepherd Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork, to the Department of Education. File Ref CU 68027.



Education on which contractor to award the contract again occurred solely on the basis of price: as in previous years, an internal spreadsheet was created to analyse each individual laundry item and to come to a view on which tender was cheapest. On that basis, the contract was again awarded to the Steam & Electric Laundry Tralee and not to the Magdalen Laundry. A rejection letter again issued to the Sunday's Well Magdalen Laundry from the Department of Education.<sup>72</sup>

91. The tender process of 1947 (for the year 1948) evolved differently. An invitation to tender issued to the same five laundry contractors as in previous years, with a return date of 3 December 1947.<sup>73</sup> The Magdalen Laundry at Sunday's Well, Cork, submitted a tender for the laundry services prior to the closing date.<sup>74</sup> The Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee (holder of the contracts awarded until that point) submitted a tender dated 6 December 1947, i.e. 3 days after the closing date.<sup>75</sup>

92. An internal Departmental memorandum detailed that only one tender (Magdalen Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork) had been received by the due date. The Memorandum noted that the tender submitted after the closing date by

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"Dear Sir, We enclose Tender for Laundry Contract. We trust you will be kind enough to let us have it for 1947, as we appreciate your kind assistance to help on our good work. Thanking you, yours sincerely"

<sup>72</sup> Letter dated 10 December 1946 from Department of Education to the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork. File ref: CU 68027.

"Good Shepherd Convent, Sunday's Well, Cork

A Chara, I beg to inform you that your tender dated 25<sup>th</sup> November for the performance of the Laundry work of Colaiste Ide, Dingle, in the twelve month period commencing 1 January 1947 has been considered and that it has been declined with thanks. Mise, M O'Flathartaigh".

<sup>73</sup> Letter dated 25 November 1947 from the Department of Education to the 5 laundry contractors named above

<sup>74</sup> Tender dated 1 December 1947. File ref CU 68027.

<sup>75</sup> Tender dated 6 December 1947. File Ref Id.

the Steam & Electric Laundry was “i bhfad níos saoire” (“much more cheap”) than the tender made by Sunday’s Well Laundry.<sup>76</sup>

93. The matter went, as required, to the Government Contracts Committee, which decided that in accordance with the terms of the tender, it would be necessary to award the contract to the Good Shepherd Laundry at Sunday’s Well, as the only tender submitted on time.<sup>77</sup>

94. However just as had occurred in the 1920s when the Magdalen Laundry at Peacock Lane, Cork, had secured the contract, the practicalities and cost of carriage from the Preparatory College to the Laundry became a difficulty. After award of the contract, the Magdalen Laundry at Sunday’s Well sent a letter to the Department suggesting that laundry could be carried out on a fortnightly basis only; and requesting the Department pay the cost of carriage of the laundry on one side of the journey from the College to the Magdalen Laundry.<sup>78</sup>

95. Following consideration (and consultation with the College in question regarding the desired frequency of laundry collection and delivery), a response issued from the Department to the Magdalen Laundry at Sunday’s Well, confirming that weekly collection and delivery of laundry was required; and refusing to cover any portion of the costs of carriage of the laundry:

“... I am directed to state that the college authorities require that the laundry be collected and delivered once a week. In your letter under reply you state that owing to the distance of Cork city from Dingle delivery could only be made once a fortnight.

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<sup>76</sup> Internal Departmental Memorandum, notes dated 17 December 1947 and 18 December 1947. File Ref Id.

<sup>77</sup> Id.

<sup>78</sup> Letter 23 December 1947 from Good Shepherds Laundry, Sunday’s Well, Cork, to the Department of Education. File ref: CU 68027.

In regard to your query as to whether it would be possible to pay freight one way, I am to say that under the terms of the agreement for the performance of the laundry work of Preparatory Colleges the contractor agrees to collect, launder and re-deliver the articles described in the schedule attached at the prices stated in that schedule. In the circumstances the Department could not pay the cost of freight either way.

I am accordingly to request you to state whether you are prepared to have the laundry work of Coláiste Ide performed in accordance with these conditions viz. to delivery the laundry once a week and to pay freight of same to and from the college. An early reply in the matter will oblige".<sup>79</sup>

96. By return letter, the Reverend Mother at the Magdalen Laundry at Sunday's Well, Cork, indicated only that:

"we have made full enquiries at the Railway and owing to the distance it would be impossible to have Laundry delivered within the week. Thanking you. Yours sincerely".<sup>80</sup>

97. The response of the Department was to withdraw the contract by indicating that:

"it is regretted that the Department cannot accept your tender for the performance of the laundry work of Coláiste Ide during the current calendar year".<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Letter dated 7 January 1948 from Department of Education to Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork. File ref: CU 68027

<sup>80</sup> Letter dated 8 January 1948 from Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork, to Department of Education. Id

<sup>81</sup> Letter dated 12 January 1948 from Department of Education to Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork. Id.

"A Chara

By letter of the same date, a contract was concluded by the Department with the Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee.<sup>82</sup>

98. From that point onwards, the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry at Sunday's Well, Cork, was not invited to tender by the Department for laundry services contracts for the relevant Preparatory College.<sup>83</sup> The remaining contractors continued to be invited to tender on an annual basis until 1957, at which point the Mercy Convent Laundry, Killarney (not a Magdalen Laundry) was dropped from the invitation to tender. Subsequently, in 1959, the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry Limerick (which had never submitted a tender for this contract) was also dropped from the list of contractors invited to tender.<sup>84</sup> Contracts continued to be awarded on an annual basis until 1961, when it was decided that the relevant College would cease to be a Preparatory College and Departmental responsibility for its laundry services ceased.<sup>85</sup>

*Additional laundry contracts awarded by the Department of Education*

99. The Committee also identified two Department of Education files relating to contracts for laundry services for the detention centre at Summerhill, Dublin and at Marlborough House, Glasnevin.<sup>86</sup>

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With reference to previous correspondence in regard to the tender submitted by you for the performance of the laundry work of Colaiste Ide, Dingle, I am directed to state that it is noted from your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> instant that owing to the distance of Cork City from Dingle, it would be impossible to have the laundry delivered within the week at the College. In the circumstances it is regretted that the Department cannot accept your tender for the performance of the laundry work of Colaiste Ide during the current calendar year. Mise le meas, R Freamain"

<sup>82</sup> Letter dated 12 January 1948 from Department of Education to the Steam & Electric Laundry, Tralee. Id.

<sup>83</sup> E.g. invitation to tender transmitted by letter dated 7 December 1948 to only 4 laundry contractors, excluding Sunday's Well. File ref: CU 68027

<sup>84</sup> File ref: CU 68027

<sup>85</sup> File ref: CU 68027

<sup>86</sup> Files PD/01 and PD/02. The Summerhill facility was closed in 1944 at which point Marlborough House, Glasnevin was opened.

100. These files demonstrate that two Magdalen Laundries – High Park and Sean McDermott Street (formerly Gloucester Street), both operated by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, were awarded contracts for laundry services for the offices for periods from the 1920s until the 1940s. The file demonstrates, in a similar way to those laid out above in relation to the Preparatory Colleges, that the Department sought quotations for all contracts awarded; secured price-lists and analysed the comparative cost of these and other laundries, before awarding the contracts in question.

### **C. Defence Forces use of the laundry services provided by Magdalen Laundries**

101. Records were also identified by the Committee in relation to the use by the Defence Forces of the laundry services provided by the Magdalen Laundries. The following information was identified in the archives of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces military archives.

102. It can first be noted that a series of four Parliamentary Questions were asked of the Minister for Defence over the space of 4 months in 2010 relating to use by the Defence Forces of laundry services provided by institutional laundries, including Magdalen Laundries.<sup>87</sup> The questions in all

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<sup>87</sup> **PQ 28567/10, 30 June 2010:**

Deputy Michael Kennedy asked the Minister for Defence if he will make public the names of all institutional laundries in receipt of State contracts for Army laundry after 1941; the length of time the policy of affording such contracts to institutional as distinct from commercial laundries continued after 1941; if fair wage clauses were inserted in such contracts awarded to institutional laundries; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response of Minister for Defence Killeen:

“The information sought by the Deputy refers to contracts that were in place up to almost 70 years ago. In the short space of time available for answer, it has not been possible to establish the extent to which the records still exist and, if so, to locate them. However, the Department will seek to locate relevant records and will correspond directly with the Deputy in this regard in the near future”.

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**PQ 29887/10, 6 July 2010:**

Deputy Kathleen Lynch asked the Minister for Defence the length of time the Defence Forces were using the services of institutional laundries such as Magdalene Laundries, as distinct from commercial laundries, post-1941; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response of the Minister for Defence Killeen:

“I would refer the Deputy to Parliamentary Question number 28567/10 of Wednesday, 30 June 2010 in which I said that the information sought by the Deputy refers to contracts that were in place up to almost 70 years ago. In the short space of time available for answer, it has not been possible to establish the extent to which the records still exist and, if so, to locate them. However, the Department will seek to locate relevant records and will correspond directly with the Deputy in this regard in the near future”.

**PQ 36540/10, 13 October 2010:**

Deputy Kathleen Lynch asked the Minister for Defence when this Deputy can expect to receive the information promised in Parliamentary Question No. 475 of 6 July 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response of the Minister for Defence Killeen:

“The Department has now completed a review of the contents of available files that were located following a review of file listings. Given that the initial question related to contracts that may have been placed up to seventy years ago, there was very little material found that referred to institutional laundries and much of what is available is incomplete. It is clear however from a review of the files that such laundries had tendered for the award of contracts from the Department. However, it has not proven possible to confirm whether any institutional laundry was actually awarded a contract”.

**PQ 39261/10, 27 October 2010:**

Deputy Michael Kennedy asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide the dates on which tenders were received from Magdalene Laundries; the way in which the Department was cognisant of the fair wages clause in such tender contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response of the Minister for Defence Killeen:

“The Department recently examined the contents of relevant files that were located following a review of file listings. Given that the initial question related to contracts that may have been placed up to seventy years ago, there was very little material found that referred to institutional laundries and much of what is available is incomplete. It is clear however from the review of files that some institutional laundries had tendered for the award of contracts from the Department. It is apparent from the files that a St Mary’s Laundry (location and status unknown) had tendered for a laundry contract in 1975 but was

cases sought information relating to any possible contracts after 1941, which was the year in which a former Minister for Defence had confirmed that Defence Forces contracts for that year for Dublin and Cork District barracks and posts had been awarded to unspecified 'institutional laundries'.<sup>88</sup>

103. The replies to the first two relevant 2010 Parliamentary Questions noted that the information sought related to contracts that had been in place up to 70 years previously and that identifying the extent to which records might

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unsuccessful. There are also references on file to the fact that the Magdalene Laundry in Galway had been unsuccessful in a tender competition held in 1981. It is also apparent from the files that High Park Laundry, Drumcondra and Gloucester Street Laundry, Sean McDermott Street had approached the Department in 1978 asking that they be included on the list of laundries invited to tender for future contracts.

In relation to fair wages, there is a reference on file to a meeting that took place in July 1982 regarding laundry contracts and it is clear that the fair wages clause, as it applied to "Convent Laundries", was discussed.

The files that are the basis for the information contained in this response are not readily available owing to the Departments imminent relocation to Newbridge. When the files in question become available, I could, if requested, arrange for officials from the Department to meet with the Deputy to show him the relevant records that have been located and which form the basis of this response"

<sup>88</sup> **PQ 34/41 of 7 May 1941**

Mr. Hickey: asked the Minister for Defence if he will state whether any and, if so, which Army laundry contracts hitherto held by commercial laundries have been placed with institutional laundries during each of the last three years and the number of such contracts now subsisting; whether a fair labour or a fair wages clause has been inserted in all contracts made with institutional laundries and whether he will state what steps are taken to ensure that the work contracted for is performed under trade union conditions and that trade union rates of wages are paid to the workers employed on such contracts.

Minister for Defence (Mr. Traynor): No Army laundry contracts previously held by commercial laundries were placed with institutional laundries during any of the last three years. For the current year, that is for the 12 months which commenced on the 1st ultimo, contracts for Dublin district barracks and posts, including Baldonnel Aerodrome, and for Collins Barracks, Cork, which were previously held by commercial firms, have been placed with institutional laundries. As, however, these contracts contain a fair wages clause, I am having the matter reconsidered and will communicate further with the Deputy as soon as practicable.

still exist, and their location, would take some time.<sup>89</sup> Following searches, some relevant files relating to Departmental contracts were identified and information placed on the record of Dáil Éireann regarding unsuccessful tenders by a small number of institutional laundries for award of contracts by the Department in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>90</sup>

104. After establishment of the Committee and as set out more fully in Part I of the Report, all relevant Departments were engaged in the process of searching for all records which might be available in relation to the Magdalen Laundries.

105. It is inevitable that full records have not survived on all laundry service contracts for the Defence Forces since the foundation of the State. Nonetheless and although not complete, as a result of the extensive searches conducted for the Committee, a fuller body of material than previously found was identified and is reported on here.

106. Some of the material identified in Defence Forces archives includes discussion of the implications of the 'fair wages' clause in laundry contracts – these elements are considered separately.

107. The information presented in this Section was taken from individual contract files. One additional file was searched for but not found by the Committee – this was a policy file on contracts for the Defence Forces, referred to in one of the individual contract files.<sup>91</sup>

108. At the request of the Committee, the Department of Defence confirmed that extensive searches were carried out, both in its own storage areas, in

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<sup>89</sup> See response of the Minister for Defence to PQ 29887/10 on 6 July 2010, above.

<sup>90</sup> See responses of the Minister for Defence to PQ 36540/10 on 13 October 2010 and PQ 39261/10 on 27 October 2010, above.

<sup>91</sup> File ref 2/70672



Military Archives and in National Archives. However the file in question could not be found.

109. Nonetheless, even in the absence of that policy file, the Committee was in a position to identify a range of contracts entered into between the Department of Defence and various Magdalen Laundries in relation to laundry services for the Defence Forces.

110. Official documentation has been identified by the Committee which establishes that over at least parts of the period under examination by the Committee, that is, from 1922 onwards, various barracks of the Defence Forces utilised the laundry services offered by six of the Magdalen Laundries which are the subject of this Report, as follows:

- Cork (Good Shepherd);
- Galway (Sisters of Mercy);
- Limerick (Good Shepherd);
- New Ross (Good Shepherd);
- Sean McDermott Street, Dublin (Order of Our Lady of Charity); and
- Waterford (Good Shepherd).

111. It may be that some of the remaining Magdalen Laundries also secured contracts for laundry for the Defence Forces, but that the relevant records are no longer in existence. For example, there is a suggestion in a publication dating to 1941 that the Magdalen Laundry operated at Donnybrook by the Religious Sisters of Charity secured at least one contract from the Defence Forces at that time.<sup>92</sup> However, official records have not been found to conclusively determine whether or not that was the case.

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<sup>92</sup> History of the Irish Women Worker's Union "These Obstreperous Lassies", Mary Jones, cited in the Irish Times 20 June 2011

112. In summary, it was found by the Committee that, as in the cases of the Department of Education contracts detailed above, contracts were awarded by the Department of Defence on the basis of strictly administered tender processes.

113. On the basis of information available, it appears to the Committee that on foot of those tender processes, contracts were awarded to Magdalen Laundries by the Department of Defence only in two circumstances – either following a tender process in which the Magdalen Laundry was the only laundry to submit a tender on time, or alternatively following a tender process where other non-religious operated Laundries had also submitted tenders but the Magdalen Laundry was awarded the contract on the basis of it submitting the lowest quoted price.

114. In other cases, although a Magdalen Laundry submitted a tender, the Department of Defence instead awarded the contract to commercial Laundries, on the basis of them having quoted the lowest price. It is also apparent from the materials identified that, on at least one occasion in the 1950s, the Department sought to secure reduction of prices from a Magdalen Laundry even though it was the only laundry to submit a tender for a particular laundry contract.

115. As set out in the table below, the earliest instance identified by the Committee of the Department of Defence awarding contracts to a Magdalen Laundry for laundry services in relation to the Defence Forces dates to 1925; and the latest identified dates to 1961.

<b>Dates of contract</b>	<b>Laundry awarded contract</b>	<b>Value of contract</b>	<b>Relevant Defence Forces barracks</b>
1/9/1925 to 31/8/1926	Good Shepherd Convent, New Ross	£15. 6. 0d Sept. 1925  £13. 5. 0d	Military Hospital, Kilkenny

		October 1925 £9. 6. 0d Nov. 1925	
1926-1927  Note: no overall contract period available, but invoices for a 4 month period identified	Good Shepherd Laundry, Sunday's Well, Cork	£36. 15. 8d Nov. 1926;  £44. 8. 1d Dec. 1926;  £32. 2. 11d January 1927;  £32. 2. 11d August 1927.	16 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, Collins Barracks, Cork
1947-1948	Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick	Value not identified	Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick
1949	No. 47 Forster Street, Galway	Value not identified	Renmore Barracks, Galway
1950 to 1951	Good Shepherd Laundry, Waterford	Estimated value £433.10.0	Kickham Barracks, Clonmel
01/04/1952 to 31/03/1953	No.47 Forster Street, Galway	£1,382. 17. 0d	Custume Barracks, Athlone
		£733. 18. 8d	Military Hospital, Athlone
		£476. 17. 4d	Renmore Barracks, Galway
01/04/1953 to 31/03/1954	No.47 Forster Street, Galway	£1,582. 8. 0d	Custume Barracks, Athlone
		£737. 18. 9d	Military Hospital, Athlone
		£762. 15. 0d	Renmore Barracks, Galway
01/04/1954 to 31/03/1955	No.47 Forster Street, Galway	£1786. 17. 6d	Custume Barracks, Athlone
		£739. 3. 9d	Military Hospital, Athlone
		£976. 11. 3d	Renmore Barracks, Galway
01/04/1954 to 31/03/1955	Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick	£1,397. 0. 6d	Limerick Barracks
01/04/1954 to 31/03/1955	Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick	£217.18.0	Templemore
01/04/1960 to 31/03/1961	No.47 Forster Street, Galway	£609	Renmore Barracks, Galway
		£880	Military Hospital,

			Athlone
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*Defence Forces contracts for laundry services with the Magdalen Laundries, as compiled from various records of the Department of Defence*

*Defence Forces contracts for laundry services, 1926-1927*

116. The records which survive in relation to the earliest Defence Forces contracts are limited. As clear from the table above, there was a contract for laundry services between the Magdalen Laundry at New Ross and the Defence Forces (in relation to the Military Hospital at Kilkenny) for the period 1 September 1925 to 31 August 1926. The Committee identified this contract and its period of validity from two notes between the Contracts and Disposals S/Department (Defence Forces General Headquarters) and the Army Finance Office. The first of these Notes to the Army Finance Officer was to transmit a “copy of acceptance schedule in respect of laundry contract placed with Good Shepherd Convent, New Ross” in relation to the Military Hospital at Kilkenny.<sup>93</sup> The Army Finance Officer, having checked the accounts identified three items of hospital laundry not covered by the acceptance schedules, and requested the “prices &c., checked and return the accounts together with a copy of the acceptance schedule at your earliest convenience”.<sup>94</sup> These are however the only records which were identified in relation to this contract.

117. Similarly scant records were identified in relation to the contract for 1926-1927 between the Magdalen Laundry at Sunday’s Well, Cork and the Defence Forces at Collins Barracks, Cork. The only records identified in relation to this contract were three letters between Collins Barracks, Cork and the Army Finance Office regarding laundry services performed and payments for November and December 1926 and January 1927; and a note from Collins Barracks to the Army Finance Officer in October 1927

<sup>93</sup> File ref 51 / Barrack Services / 240

<sup>94</sup> File ref 51 / Barrack Services / 240

detailing the laundry services performed during July and August 1927 (amounts recorded in the table above).<sup>95</sup>

*Defence Forces contracts for laundry services, 1949-1950*

118. A summary of 16 proposed laundry contracts for 1949 was also identified in Military Archives.<sup>96</sup> This summary provides standard information in respect of each proposed contract, as follows:

- the relevant Defence Forces Post;
- the estimated value of the contract;
- the number of tenders invited;
- the number of tenders received;
- the contractor selected; and
- the date the contract issued.

119. Of these 16 contracts for laundry services awarded in relation to the Defence Forces in 1949, only one was placed with a Magdalen Laundry (Galway). None of the other 15 contracts awarded by the Defence Forces in 1949 were placed with Magdalen Laundries – rather, they appear to have been placed with commercial laundry contractors.<sup>97</sup>

120. In relation to the single contract awarded in 1949 to the Magdalen Laundry in Galway, the summary table records that 2 contractors were invited to submit tenders for laundry services to Renmore Barracks, Galway. The contract was awarded to the “Magdalen Home Laundry”, which was the only tender received. The estimated value of the contract is not recorded. The contract was issued on 29 March 1949.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> File ref 3/32678

<sup>96</sup> File ref 3/6984

<sup>97</sup> Metropole Laundry (8 contracts- 2 other additional contracts cancelled), St Gabriel’s Laundry (3 contracts), Munster Laundry (second contract cancelled), St Michael’s Laundry, Inishowen Steam Laundry. Id

<sup>98</sup> Id

*Defence Forces contracts for laundry services, 1950-1951*

121. A similar summary of proposed laundry contracts for the Defence Forces for the following year, 1950-1951 was also identified.<sup>99</sup> For that year, 15 Defence Forces laundry contracts are listed, 2 of which were placed with Magdalen Laundries (one each to the Good Shepherd Magdalen Laundry Waterford; and the “Magdalen Home Laundry”, Galway). The other 13 contracts were placed with different (commercial) laundries.<sup>100</sup>
122. In relation to the two contracts which were placed with Magdalen Laundries by the Defence Forces in 1950/1951, the following details are recorded.
123. Three laundry contractors were invited to tender for the contract for laundry services for Kickham Barracks, Clonmel. Two tenders were received, with the contract (estimated value £433.10.0) awarded to the Good Shepherd Laundry, Waterford. The contract was issued on 19 April 1950.
124. Two laundry contractors were invited to tender for the contract for laundry services for Renmore Barracks, Galway. Two tenders were received, with the contract (estimated value £639.10.2) awarded to the “Magdalen Home Laundry”, Galway. The contract was issued on 8 March 1950.

*Contracts for laundry services to Sarsfield Barrack, Limerick, 1947-1954*

125. Another summary document was identified by the Committee relating to one particular barracks, namely, Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick. An internal Memorandum records all the laundry services contracts awarded for that Barracks for the years 1947 to 1954. Seven contracts of one year each were awarded by the Defence Forces over that period, one of which was

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<sup>99</sup> File ref 3/9684

<sup>100</sup> Munster Laundry (2 contracts), Metropole Laundry (6 contracts), St Gabriel’s Laundry (3 contracts), and Inishowen Steam Laundry. One additional contract was “not required”.

placed with a Magdalen Laundry (Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick). The six contracts for the following six years were placed with commercial laundries (Metropole Laundry, Cork – 4 contracts; Thomond Laundry, Limerick – 2 contracts).<sup>101</sup>

126. The only recorded occasion on which the contract for laundry services for Sarsfield Barracks was placed with a Magdalen Laundry was for the year 1947/1948. The summary records that three contractors were invited to tender- one commercial laundry, one convent laundry, one Magdalen Laundry, as follows:

- Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick
- Presentation Convent, Fethard
- Shannon Laundry, Limerick.<sup>102</sup>

The Memorandum records that the contract was placed with the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick as “only tender received”.<sup>103</sup>

127. The following year 1948/1949, tenders were again invited from those three contractors, but “the tender form which issued to Shannon Laundry was returned signed by Metropole Laundry, Cork, and endorsed ‘for Shannon Laundry’”.<sup>104</sup> The contract was awarded to that commercial laundry – Metropole Laundry, Cork. Again, this was “only tender received”.<sup>105</sup>

128. For 1949/1950, three contractors were again invited to tender for the contract for laundry services to Sarsfield Barracks, including the Magdalen Laundry operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Limerick, but again the

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<sup>101</sup> File ref 3/85434

<sup>102</sup> Id

<sup>103</sup> Id

<sup>104</sup> Id

<sup>105</sup> Id

contract was awarded by the Defence Forces to a commercial laundry (Metropole Laundry, Cork).

129. For 1950/1951, in addition to the three contractors mentioned above (including the Magdalen Laundry in Limerick), a fourth contractor was also invited to tender. This was another commercial laundry (White Star Laundry, Mallow). The contract was again awarded to the same commercial laundry which had held it the previous year (Metropole Laundry, Cork).

130. The contractors invited to tender remained precisely the same in 1951/1952, i.e.:

- Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick;
- Presentation Convent, Fethard;
- Metropole Laundry, Cork; and
- White Star Laundry, Mallow.

On the basis of tenders received, the Defence Forces again awarded the contract to the Metropole Laundry, Cork.

131. The contractors invited to tender in 1952/1953 were again the same. The Metropole Laundry, Cork by letter indicated:

“that they had forwarded their tender form for Sarsfield Barracks to ‘our associated company, Thomond Laundry’. Thomond Laundry by letters of 21/2/1952, which accompanied their tender, stated that we have actually been carrying out this work for the past year on behalf of the Metropole Laundry, Cork”.

The contract was awarded by the Defence Forces to Thomond Laundry, Limerick (the Memorandum records that this was the “only tender received”).



132. For the final year recorded, 1953/1954, the same contractors were invited to tender (i.e. still including the Magdalen Laundry, Limerick), with the addition of Thomond Laundry. The Defence Forces again awarded the contract for Sarsfield Barracks to Thomond Laundry, Limerick (“only tender received”).<sup>106</sup>
133. In addition to this summary of laundry contracts for Sarsfield Barracks from 1947 to 1954, correspondence was identified by the Committee between the Department of Defence and a commercial laundry. This was in relation to laundry services for Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick for the year 1954-1955.
134. From that correspondence, it appears that an invitation to tender was issued for the laundry services for Sarsfield Barracks 1954-1955, after which the contract was awarded to the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick. A commercial laundry, Thomond Laundry (which as set out above had been awarded the contract on the basis of its tenders for the previous 2 years), wrote to the Department of Defence indicating that it had unsuccessfully tendered for the contract and making an inquiry relating to the so-called “fair wages clause”.<sup>107</sup>
135. The internal Memoranda of the Department in consideration of this letter provide some wider indications of policy and practice in tendering processes for army contracts.
136. These internal notes first record that the relevant contract was given to the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick “who submitted the only tender received in time”. Nonetheless, the question was submitted by the Contracts Officer to a more senior officer for consideration within the Department, prior to

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<sup>106</sup> Id

<sup>107</sup> File Reference 3/19752, Letter dated 6 April 1954 from Thomond Laundry Ltd to the Department of Defence

issuing a response to Thomond Laundry. In posing the question, the following description of practice is provided:

“The present practice is to invite convent laundries to tender for all posts except 1. Cork City and 2. Dublin District, Curragh and Gormanston. This stems from policy decided by the Minister on 2/70672 attached. The late tender referred to above is filed opposite.

As regards enquiry from Thomond Laundry Ltd., I suggest we say that the contract was placed with the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick, who were the only institution to submit a tender by the appointed time”.<sup>108</sup>

137. The responding Memorandum from that officer was in the following terms:

“Contracts Officer,

The Thomond Laundry had the contract for the past two years and apparently did the work for some time previously. My first reaction [illegible] is to ignore their letter, but in the opening sentence they refer to a tender submitted by them and their understanding that they were unsuccessful.

I think that in the circumstances we might inform them that a tender was not received from them among the tenders received at the due time on the due date and no more”.

138. An internal Departmental note records that the decision to “prepare [a] reply accordingly”.<sup>109</sup> No copy of the letter issued to Thomond Laundry Ltd was retained on file, but the response of that company is filed. A subsequent internal memorandum to the Contracts Officer explained further as follows:

“I am afraid that this may ultimately resolve itself into a question of whether, under pressure, we are prepared to cease business with

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<sup>108</sup> File Reference 3/19752, Memorandum dated 14 April 1954 from the Department of Defence Contracts Officer

<sup>109</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal note dated 29 April 1954

Convent Laundries in Limerick, as in Dublin and Cork. If we are pressed, our precedents leave us little choice in the matter.

I feel that the responsibility for applying the pressure should be made to rest fairly and squarely on Thomond Laundry Ltd. I suggest accordingly that we inform this firm that the Good Shepherd Laundry has the contract that they were the only party who submitted a tender by the due date and time ...".<sup>110</sup>

139. There are two final relevant notes on the file. An officer noted as follows:

"In my opinion, the attached letter dated 19 July 1954 from the Thomond Laundry Ltd does not apply pressure of the nature envisaged in the final relevant note on the file records an opinion of the [Contract Officer's] minute of 18 June 1954. I would suggest a reply noting the Thomond Laundry remarks and saying that on present information it is not proposed to interfere with the existing contract".<sup>111</sup>

140. The final note in response and directed to the Contracts Officer stated simply: "I would suggest no further correspondence".<sup>112</sup> No further correspondence with the commercial laundry in question appears on the file and the contract for that year (1954-1955) appears to have continued undisturbed.

*Contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for 1952-1953*

141. As is clear from the table above setting out the Defence Forces contracts awarded to Magdalen Laundries identified by the Committee, some of the later contracts were of considerable value and accordingly required the approval of the Government Contracts Committee.

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<sup>110</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal note dated 18 June 1954

<sup>111</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal Memorandum dated 21 July 1954

<sup>112</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal Memorandum dated 21 July 1954

142. Details of those contracts were identified in the submissions of the Department of Defence to the Government Contracts Committee in 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1960.

SUMMARY		Tenders Received			
Firms specifically invited to tender and other firms who tendered.	Quantity Various	Price per. Various	Total Value		
			£	s.d.	
Sister Bradley, Magdalen Home Laundry, Galway.	Military Post.		£.	s.d.	
	Custume Barracks, Athlone.		1,786.17.6.	1,786.17.6.	
Connacht Laundry, Galway.			2,605.15.0.	(for 19 out of 32 items only).	
Sister Bradley, Magdalen Home Laundry, Galway.	Military Hospital, Athlone.		739.3.9.	739.3.9.	
Connacht Laundry, Galway.			811.15.0.	(for 26 out of 43 items only).	
Sister Bradley, Magdalen Home Laundry, Galway.	Dún Uí Ríocháilosa, (Removal Barracks, Galway).	X	976.11.3.	976.11.3.	
Connacht Laundry, Galway.			1,459.13.0.	(for 20 out of 33 items only).	
Mrs. Annie Ward, The Mall Steam Laundry, Ballyshannon.	Finner Camp.	X	934.12.0.	934.12.0.	
Sister M.D. Hanna, St. Gabriel's Laundry, Athlone.	Columb Barracks, Mullingar.	X	597.18.0.	597.18.0.	
				(Collection and delivery by military transport).	
Firms who were invited but did not quote.	- See attached sheet.				

REMARKS. - See attached.

*Sample summary submission to the Government Contracts Committee seeking approval of contracts proposed to be awarded, following tenders, for army laundry services*

143. The submission to the Government Contracts Committee for approval of laundry services contracts for the Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for the period 1952-1953 related to Custume Barracks Athlone,

Military Hospital Athlone, and Renmore Barracks, Galway.<sup>113</sup> Three laundries were invited to tender for each of these contracts, as follows:

- Magdalen Laundry, Galway;
- Connacht Steam Laundry, Galway; and
- St Gabriel's Laundry, Athlone.<sup>114</sup>

A fourth laundry (St Mary's Steam & Electric Laundry, Roscommon) was also invited to tender for the contract for Custume Barracks, Athlone.

144. The Magdalen Laundry Galway and the Roscommon Steam and Electric Laundry both tendered for the contract for laundry services to Custume Barracks, Athlone. The Magdalen Laundry in Galway was awarded the tender on the basis of the lowest tender price (£1382.17.0 as compared to £1567.17.0).<sup>115</sup>

145. For the remaining two contracts (Military Hospital, Athlone and Renmore Barracks, Galway), the Magdalen Laundry Galway was the only tender received – although they had been invited to tender, neither the Connacht Steam Laundry nor St Gabriel's Laundry submitted a tender in response. Contracts were as a result awarded to the Magdalen Laundry, Galway, with the approval of the Government Contracts Committee. The value of the quotations for these two contracts were £733.18.8 and £476.17.4 respectively.

146. Although the tender price submitted by the Magdalen Laundry Galway for Custume Barracks, Athlone was the lowest and although no other tender was submitted for the other two contracts, the records identified by the Committee show that the Department of Defence, nonetheless, sought price reductions from the Magdalen Laundry. A note on the submission to

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<sup>113</sup> File ref 3/15118

<sup>114</sup> File ref 3/15118

<sup>115</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 13 March 1952. File ref Id.

the Government Contracts Committee noted that “an effort is being made to secure reductions in the prices tendered”.<sup>116</sup> A letter from the Contracts Officer to the Magdalen Laundry seeks such a reduction of:

“quotations in question to the current rates for the laundering of the items concerned and also to reduce the quotation for Gowns, HO (Hospital item)”.<sup>117</sup>

147. The response of the Magdalen Laundry Galway was that it:

“could not possibly reduce the prices of any of the articles tendered in my contract. I could not possibly do it for the same rate as last year as it did not pay me”.<sup>118</sup>

The letter did indicate that the Magdalen Laundry was:

“prepared however to reduce the surcharge [on the shilling] from 4d to 3d”.<sup>119</sup>

148. Although no further records were held on that file in relation to the possible reduction of prices, a note on a later submission to the Government Contracts Committee records that “reductions of prices referred to in that minute were obtained”.<sup>120</sup>

*Contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for 1953-1954*

149. The submission to the Government Contracts Committee for the contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for

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<sup>116</sup> Id.

<sup>117</sup> Letter dated 11 March 1952, from Contracts Officer, Department of Defence, to the Magdalen Laundry Galway. File ref 3/15118

<sup>118</sup> Letter dated 12 March 1952 from Magdalen Home Laundry, Galway to Department of Defence. File ref 3/15118.

<sup>119</sup> Id

<sup>120</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 19 March 1953. File Ref 3/17572

1953-1954 was also identified in the Military Archives.<sup>121</sup> It relates to laundry services contracts for 5 military posts:

- Custume Barracks, Athlone;
- Military Hospital, Athlone;
- Renmore Barracks, Galway;
- Finner Camp, Donegal; and
- Columb Barracks, Mullingar.

150. In summary, three of these contracts were placed with a Magdalen Laundry (Galway) and the remaining two were placed with other Laundries (The Mall Steam Laundry, Ballyshannon; and St Gabriel's Laundry, Athlone).

151. Two of the contracts awarded to the Magdalen Laundry in Galway (described as the "Magdalen Home Laundry, Galway" in the documents) related to the Military Hospital Athlone and Renmore Barracks, Galway. In both of these cases, the submission to the Government Contracts Committee records that it was the only tender received (values of contracts £737.18.9 and £762.15.0 respectively).

152. In the case of the Custume Barracks, Athlone, two tenders were received and the Magdalen Laundry in Galway was awarded the contract as the lowest of these two tenders (£1,582.8.0 as compared to a tender price of £2,052.3.0 from St. Marys Steam and Electric Laundry, Roscommon.)

*Contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for 1954-1955*

153. The submission to the Government Contracts Committee for the contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for 1954-1955 was also identified in the Military Archives.<sup>122</sup> It relates to

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<sup>121</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 19 March 1953. File ref 3/17572

<sup>122</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 11 March 1954. File ref 3/115118

laundry services contracts for the same five military posts as in the prior year, i.e.

- Custume Barracks, Athlone;
- Military Hospital, Athlone;
- Renmore Barracks, Galway;
- Finner Camp, Donegal; and
- Columb Barracks, Mullingar.

On foot of a tender process, the contracts for these posts were again divided between three different laundries, including one Magdalen Laundry (Galway).<sup>123</sup>

154. A commercial laundry (Connacht Laundry) also tendered for the three contracts subsequently awarded to the Magdalen Laundry, Galway. The tender price of the Magdalen Laundry in Galway was lower than that of the Connacht Laundry for each of the three posts, namely Custume Barracks Athlone (tender of £1,796.17.6 as compared to £2,605.15.0 “for 19 out of 32 items only”), Military Hospital Athlone (tender of £739.3.9 compared to £811.15.0 “for 26 out of 43 items only”), and Renmore Barracks, Galway (tender of £976.11.3 as compared to £1,459.13.0 “for 20 out of 33 items only”). The Magdalen Laundry, Galway, was accordingly awarded the contract for all three posts for the year 1954-1955.

155. The contracts for that year for the remaining two posts (Finner Camp and Columb Barracks) were awarded to The Mall Steam Laundry, Ballyshannon and St Gabriel’s Laundry, Athlone respectively, as the only tender received in each case.

*Contracts for laundry services for other Posts of the Defence Forces for 1954-1955*

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<sup>123</sup> Id



156. A separate submission was made to the Government Contracts Committee in relation to contracts for certain other military posts, as follows:

- Kilworth and Fermoy;
- Templemore;
- Military Hospital, Kilkenny; and
- Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick.<sup>124</sup>

The relevant contracts were awarded to three laundry contractors – Youghal Steam Laundry, St Joseph’s Laundry, Kilkenny and one Magdalen Laundry – Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick.<sup>125</sup>

157. Five laundry contractors were invited to tender for the laundry contracts relating to Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick; six were invited to tender for the Military Hospital Kilkenny, and 7 were invited to tender for Templemore. Commercial laundries were included among those invited to tender in all cases.<sup>126</sup>

158. The Magdalen Laundry operated in Limerick was awarded the contract for Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick, as the only tender submitted (the other 4 contractors invited either not having done so or, in one case, having done so after the closing date<sup>127</sup>). The estimated value of the contract was

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<sup>124</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 11 March 1954. File ref 3/15118

<sup>125</sup> Id

<sup>126</sup> Limerick: Thomond Laundry, Limerick, White Star Laundry Mallow, M Laundries Ltd Cork, Presentation Convent Fethard as well as one Magdalen Laundry- the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick.

Kilkenny: M Laundries Ltd Cork, Presentation Convent Fethard, St Michael’s Laundry CLonmel, White Star Laundry Carlow Ltd, St Josephs Laundry Kilkenny and one Magdalen Laundry – the Good Shepherd Convent Waterford

Templemore: Presentation Convent Fethard, White Star Laundry Ltd Mallow, White Star Laundry Carlow Ltd, M Laundries Ltd Cork, Presentation Convent Thurles and one Magdalen Laundry – the Good Shepherd Convent Waterford.

<sup>127</sup> The case noted above regarding Thomond Laundry.

£1,397.0.6.<sup>128</sup> A note on the submission records that for the upcoming year:

“the prices tendered by the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick, are the same as the prices in the current contract held by the Thomond Laundry Ltd, Limerick, except for 8 items which show a reduction on the current contract rates”.<sup>129</sup>

159. The Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick was also awarded a portion of the contract for Templemore (to a value of £217.18.0), along with St Joseph’s Laundry Kilkenny (to a value of £202.12.0). The other 5 laundry contractors invited to tender did not do so. The basis on which the contract was divided between these two contractors was not specified in the materials identified by the Committee.

*Contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for 1960-1961*

160. The submission to the Government Contracts Committee for the contracts for laundry services for Western Command Posts of the Defence Forces for 1960-1961 was also identified in the Military Archives.<sup>130</sup> It relates to laundry services contracts for the same five military posts as in the prior year, i.e.

- Custume Barracks, Athlone;
- Military Hospital, Athlone;
- Renmore Barracks, Galway;
- Columb Barracks, Mullingar; and
- Finner Camp, Donegal.

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<sup>128</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 11 March 1954. File ref 3/15118

<sup>129</sup> Id

<sup>130</sup> Submission to the Government Contracts Committee dated 10 March 1960. File ref 3/32678

On foot of the tender process, the contracts for these posts were awarded to three different laundries, including one Magdalen Laundry (Galway).<sup>131</sup>

161. The Magdalen Laundry Galway submitted the only tender for Renmore Barracks, Galway and was awarded the contract for £609.<sup>132</sup>

162. Two tenders were received for the contract for laundry services to the Military Hospital, Athlone. The Magdalen Laundry in Galway was awarded the contract as the lowest tender received (£880 as compared to £1,268, quoted by St Gabriel's Laundry Athlone).<sup>133</sup>

163. The Magdalen Laundry in Galway also tendered for the contracts for laundry services to Custume Barracks, Athlone and Columb Barracks, Mullingar, but in both cases the contract was awarded to St. Gabriels Laundry, Athlone on the basis of a lower tender price.

- The contract for Custume Barracks, Athlone was awarded to St Gabriel's Laundry, Athlone who tendered at a price of £1,268, as compared to the tender of £1,323 by the Magdalen Laundry, Galway;
- The contract for Columb Barracks, Mullingar was awarded to St. Gabriel's Laundry, Athlone who tendered at a price of £508 rather than the tender of £510 by the Magdalen Laundry.

*Fair wages clauses in State contracts*

164. A small amount of information was identified by the Committee, during searches in relation to contracts for laundry services, in relation to the so-

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<sup>131</sup> Id

<sup>132</sup> Id. The submission notes that "firms invited to tender but who did not quote" were detailed on an attached sheet, but that sheet has not been identified.

<sup>133</sup> Id

called “fair wages” clause intended for use in State contracts. The material identified in this respect is far from comprehensive. Nonetheless, this information is detailed in this Chapter, in the interests of reporting on all possible issues and in the hope although not comprehensive it may assist in shedding some light on the State’s historic position on this matter.

165. This Chapter demonstrates that Magdalen Laundries were among the laundries tendering for and, in some cases, awarded state contracts for laundry services. State contracts for such services were standardised and included a number of conditions. For example, beginning in the 1920s and for many decades thereafter, all State laundry contracts included a clause requiring that all detergent, soaps and bleaches used by the laundry were manufactured in Ireland.
166. Another common condition in State contracts for services, originally included at the request of trade unions, was a clause requiring payment of fair wages by the contractor to the people who would perform the services in question.
167. The application of this clause to charitable institutions, including Magdalen Laundries, was controversial. The Committee found that the question of the scope of application of the ‘fair wages clause’ was considered at the Government Contracts Committee as early as 1927.
168. This first consideration of the matter by the Government Contracts Committee appears to have arisen due to contact by an official of the Department of Education with the Government Contracts Committee in advance of preparation of tender forms by that Department for laundry services. An internal Departmental Memorandum records this as having been due to the specific question of religious-operated institutional laundries. This category would include, but not be confined to, Magdalen Laundries. The internal Memorandum indicates as follows:

“Before preparing tender form I asked GCC secretary on phone to raise on behalf of this Dept the question as to Fair Wages clause in contracts with convent (institution) laundries”.<sup>134</sup>

169. The question of inclusion of the fair wages clause in laundry contract forms was put to the Government Contracts Committee shortly thereafter in July 1927. The Department of Education received, under cover of a letter from the Secretary of the Committee, an extract from the minutes of Committee as follows:

“2064. Laundry contracts – application of fair wages clause

The Secretary stated that he had been asked by the Department of Education as to whether, in view of the fact that their prices were considerably lower than those quoted by ordinary commercial firms, the Fair Wages Clause affected Contracts for laundry work placed with convents. He was instructed to inform the Department of Education that there was no objection to the placing of these contracts with convents provided the lowest tender was accepted in each case”.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> National Archives ED12/20688

<sup>135</sup> Government Contracts Committee Meeting 14 July 1927, Minute 2064, attached to letter dated 21 July 1927. File ref Id. Letter provided in full:

Chief Executive officer  
Primary education branch  
Marlborough St  
Dublin

A chara

I have to subjoin, for your information, an extract from the minutes of the proceedings of the Government contracts Committee at a Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> instant.

Mise do chara

Runaidhe do’n choisde

170. However, the matter did not rest on that basis. In October 1928, the question of the fair wages clause in laundry contracts was again before the Government Contracts Committee. On that occasion and although the original document has not been seen by the Committee, it is understood from other records that the Government Contracts Committee decided that it should consult with the Department of Industry and Commerce on the subject.<sup>136</sup>

171. The Department of Education in the circumstances notified the Secretary of the Government Contracts Committee that:

“consideration [of a fair wages clause in connection with laundry contracts placed with charitable institutions] by this Department was postponed pending the result of correspondence on the question between the Contracts Committee and the Department of Industry and Commerce”.<sup>137</sup>

172. Almost two years later, in the context of sanction being sought for placement of the laundry work of Preparatory Colleges with institutional laundries, the Government Contracts Committee referred to the matter again. That Committee:

“noted that the question of submitting a revised form of tender for laundry contracts in accordance with the Department of Finance

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<sup>136</sup> GCC 3500 of 11 October 1928

<sup>137</sup> Letter Department of Education to the Secretary of the Government Contracts Committee, December 1928, which provided as follows in full:

“Secretary, Government Contracts Committee

Referring to your minute of the 13<sup>th</sup> instant relative to the question of a fair wages clause in connection with laundry contracts placed with charitable institutions. I am to say that, having regard to the terms of GCC minute 206 of 14<sup>th</sup> July 1927 on that issue and of your further minute, 3500 of 11 October 1928, consideration of the matter by this Department was postponed pending the result of correspondence on the question between the Contracts Committee and the Department of Industry and Commerce”. File Ref: ED12/19817, “Laundry Contract August 1928 Applications for Tender Forms”.

Circular No.11/28 of the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1928, is under consideration by the Department of Education".<sup>138</sup>

173. The application of the fair wages clause to institutional laundries (including but not limited to Magdalen Laundries) was periodically raised in the years thereafter, either by trade unions or by commercial laundry firms.

174. Correspondence dating to 1954 regarding laundry services for Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick (detailed in the Section relating to Defence Forces contracts above), sheds some further light on the topic. A tender had been

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<sup>138</sup> File ref Id. Note provided in full as follows:

Letter 20 October 1930 from Government Contracts Committee to D/Education:

"Runai, Roinn Oideachais

With reference to Mr O'Brolchain's minute of the 6<sup>th</sup> instant (No.F.16252), relative to the question of the performance of the laundry work for certain Preparatory Colleges, I am directed by the Government Contracts Committee to enclose, for the information of the Minister for Education, an extract from the report of their proceedings on the 16<sup>th</sup> instant.

Acting Secretary

Government Contracts Committee

Extract from Minutes of Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1930

4151. Laundry contracts for the Department of Education:

A letter was read from the Department of Education in regard to the laundry work for certain Preparatory Colleges.

The Committee saw no reason to comment on the procedure proposed in regard to Coláiste Einne, Furbough, where it was proposed to accept the lower of the two tenders received.

In regard to the laundry work for the two permanent Colleges in Dublin – Coláiste Caoimhin and Coláiste Moibhi – where it was proposed to continue the existing contract, Mr Moran mentioned that the Army Laundry, Parkgate, could undertake more work than it was getting at present and, after discussion, the Committee agreed that it should be given an opportunity of quoting for the work.

It was noted that the question of submitting a revised form of tender for laundry contracts in accordance with the Department of Finance Circular No.11/28 of the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1928, is under consideration by the Department of Education".

issued for the laundry services in question, after which the contract was awarded to the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick. A private commercial laundry, Thomond Laundry, wrote to the Department of Defence indicating that it had unsuccessfully tendered for the contract and inquiring whether the successful tender (Good Shepherds Laundry, Limerick) “are observing clause 15 of the Conditions of Contract viz. the fair wages clause”.<sup>139</sup>

175. Internal memoranda record the consideration by the Department of the appropriate response to this letter. The first internal note records that the contract was given to the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick “who submitted the only tender received in time”. Nonetheless, the question was submitted to a more senior officer for consideration prior to issuing of a response. As set out previously, the note suggests a policy of inviting convent laundries to tender for all posts except Cork City and Dublin District; and suggested as a response that the Department would indicate only that the contract was placed with the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick, “who were the only institution to submit a tender by the appointed time”.<sup>140</sup>

176. The responding Memorandum, as set out more fully previously, indicated that the commercial laundry should be informed that a tender was not received from them at the due time. No copy of the letter issued to Thomond Laundry Ltd was retained on file, but the response of that company is. It said:

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<sup>139</sup> File Reference 3/19752, Letter dated 6 April 1954 from Thomond Laundry Ltd to the Department of Defence

<sup>140</sup> File Reference 3/19752, Memorandum dated 14 April 1954 from the Department of Defence Contracts Officer to the Office of the Attorney General



“We are in receipt of your letter of 12<sup>th</sup> inst. and were surprised to know that no Tender was received from us on the due date. In the meantime we would appreciate a reply to our letter, copy of which we enclose”.<sup>141</sup>

177. Again, internal memoranda clarify the considerations of the Department on how to respond to this direct question on whether or not the Magdalen Laundry was carrying out the ‘fair wages’ clause. In a note to the Contracts Officer, the same senior officer advised as follows:

“I would suggest that we reply to the effect that the Minister has no information that the Contractors are not observing Clause 15.

We could reply that it was not the practice to enter into correspondence with third parties regarding compliance with conditions by a contractor, but this might only draw further correspondence.

I feel that we are safe enough in the reply suggested in 1<sup>st</sup> para above on the grounds that allowing even no payment at all to the inmates of the institution doing the laundry the cost of keep, clothing, medical attention and all the other factors in the running of the institution would more than amount to the equivalent of a fair wage. The only other course is to ignore the letter and this would only be shirking any issue”.<sup>142</sup>

178. A subsequent internal memorandum to the Contracts Officer said further as follows:

“I am afraid that this may ultimately resolve itself into a question of whether, under pressure, we are prepared to cease business with Convent Laundries in Limerick, as in Dublin and Cork. If we are pressed, our precedents leave us little choice in the matter.

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<sup>141</sup> File reference 3/19752, Letter dated 13 May 1954 from Thomond Laundry Ltd to the Department of Defence

<sup>142</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal note dated 10 June 1954

I feel that the responsibility for applying the pressure should be made to rest fairly and squarely on Thomond Laundry Ltd. I suggest accordingly that we inform this firm that the Good Shepherd Laundry has the contract that they were the only party who submitted a tender by the due date and time; that the Minister has no information that they are not observing the fair wages clause in the contract, and ask them whether it is to be understood that they (Thomond Laundry Ltd) are making a formal complaint that the clause is not being observed".<sup>143</sup>

179. A response along these lines was subsequently issued:

"With reference to your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> ultimo and previous correspondence, I am directed by the Minister for Defence to state that the contract for the laundering of articles from Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick, during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 1954 to 31 March 1955 has been placed with the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick, who were the only party who submitted a tender by the due date and time. The Minister has no information that the Good Shepherd Laundry is not observing Clause 15 of the Conditions of Contract, viz., the fair wages clause.

I am to enquire whether it is to be understood that your firm is making a formal complaint that the clause mentioned is not being observed".<sup>144</sup>

180. The private company in question again responded, confirming that they:

"do make a formal complaint regarding the non-observance of Clause 15 of Conditions of Contract, viz: the fair wages clause".<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal note dated 18 June 1954

<sup>144</sup> File reference 3/19752, Letter dated 24 June 1954 from the Department of Defence to Thomond Laundry Ltd

<sup>145</sup> File reference 3/19752, Letter dated 29 June 1954 from Thomond Laundry Ltd to the Department of Defence

The Department's internal consideration of this correspondence was again recorded. Three officials recorded their views on the matter. It was first proposed to reply "asking for particulars or evidence of the non-observance of Clause 15".<sup>146</sup> A draft was prepared on that basis. An internal note in response noted that:

"The alternative to action as proposed in attached draft letter would appear to be a letter to the Good Shepherd Laundry saying that a complaint has been made and asking for their observations. The Good Shepherd Laundry might well reply by asking us for particulars of the complaint".<sup>147</sup>

181. The final internal note on the matter confirms a view that the "draft letter is appropriate to the circumstances".<sup>148</sup> The Department's response issued to Thomond Laundry issued accordingly, stating that:

"With reference to your letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> ultimo and previous correspondence regarding the contract for the laundering of articles from Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick, during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 1954 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1955, I am directed by the Minister for Defence to request you to furnish particulars or evidence of the non-observance of Clause 15 (viz., the fair wages clause) of the Conditions of Contract by the Good Shepherd Laundry, Limerick".<sup>149</sup>

182. A final response was received from Thomond Laundry Ltd a number of days later. It stated as follows:

"We are in receipt of your letter of 16<sup>th</sup> inst. We cannot offer any evidence of the non-observance of Clause 15 of Conditions of Contract

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<sup>146</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal memorandum dated 5 July 1954

<sup>147</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal memorandum dated 15 July 1954

<sup>148</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal memorandum dated 15 July 1954

<sup>149</sup> File reference 3/19752, Letter dated 16 July 1954 from the Department of Defence to Thomond Laundry Ltd

beyond the well known fact that the Good Shepherd Convents particularly the Good Shepherd Convent of Limerick are Institutions for the reception of delinquent women who work in the laundry during their period of incarceration, without payment of wages. We are further aware that the Good Shepherd Convent of Cork which is a kindred Institution is forbidden to tender for this Contract, owing to above facts. If however the Superior of the Good Shepherd Convent Limerick has signed the Conditions of Contract including Clause 15, stating that she pays Trade Union rates of wages to workers of the Convent laundry, we have nothing more to say”.<sup>150</sup>

183. There are two final relevant notes on the file. An officer noted as follows:

“In my opinion, the attached letter dated 19 July 1954 from the Thomond Laundry Ltd does not apply pressure of the nature envisaged in the [... Contract Officer’s] minute of 18 June 1954. I would suggest a reply noting the Thomond Laundry remarks and saying that on present information it is not proposed to interfere with the existing contract”.<sup>151</sup>

184. The final note in response from a more senior official directed to the Contracts Officer stated simply: “I would suggest no further correspondence”.<sup>152</sup> No further correspondence with the commercial Laundry in question appears on the file and the contract appears to have continued undisturbed.

185. These records accordingly suggest that the Department of Defence, in 1954, considered that:

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<sup>150</sup> File reference 3/19752, Letter dated 19 July 1954 from Thomond Laundry Ltd to the Department of Defence

<sup>151</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal Memorandum dated 21 July 1954

<sup>152</sup> File reference 3/19752, Internal Memorandum dated 21 July 1954

“allowing even no payment at all to the inmates of the institution doing the laundry, the cost of keep, clothing, medical attention and all the other factors in the running of the institution would more than amount to the equivalent of a fair wage”.<sup>153</sup>

186. The Department was, further, prepared to defend its ability to include institutional laundries (including Magdalen Laundries) in invitations to tender for laundry services. On the basis of the records set out above, this did not extend, however, to favouring such laundries with award of contracts, which occurred only on the basis of lowest tender received.

187. The only other internal records identified by the Committee in relation to the fair wages clause also relate to Defence Forces laundry contracts. A note was identified of a meeting held in the Department of Defence Contracts Branch in July 1982, aimed at consideration of new laundry contracts for the Defence Forces from October 1982 onwards. A brief mention is made in the note of the meeting to the fair wages clause. The Note records discussion as follows:

“The Fair Wages Clause of the contract was discussed as it applies to the Convent Laundries. It was agreed that as part of their wages / upkeep was supplied from Public Funds the essence of the clause was complied with in these circumstances”.<sup>154</sup>

188. No further information is included in the Note or the file in question; and there is no attempt to reconcile this with the previous position of the Department (i.e. that the cost of keep and so on of the women working in the Magdalen Laundry would amount to the equivalent of a fair wage).

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<sup>153</sup> As above.

<sup>154</sup> File reference 3/85434, Note of meeting held on 8 July 1982 entitled “Laundry Contracts”

**D. Use by the health authorities of the laundry services provided by Magdalen Laundries**

189. The Committee also considered the potential use by the health services of the laundry services provided by the 10 Magdalen Laundries. This was considered important given the consistent need of hospitals for laundry services and the patterns of contracts identified in other fields.

190. This practice of use of external laundry services, including Magdalen Laundries, by Irish hospitals appears to have continued until very modern times. A Report was produced in 1984 on “the Policy of Hospital Linen Services”, on behalf of the Hospital Joint Services Board.<sup>155</sup> The Report, produced by an independent consultancy firm, confirms that three Magdalen Laundries were then commonly used by health authorities and Dublin hospitals for laundry services.

191. The Report was prepared at a time when deteriorating industrial relations were regarded as a threat to the reliable supply of emergency and surgical linen for hospitals. The Consultant’s Report recommended that the hospitals, which previously relied in great part on the Joint Services Board, make greater use of private laundries in order to ensure cost-effective laundry services on a reliable and continual linen supply.<sup>156</sup>

192. Of the 14 laundries considered by the Report, 4 were Magdalen Laundries which fall within the scope of this Report, namely:

- Sean McDermott Street
- High Park
- Donnybrook

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<sup>155</sup> Report on the Policy of Hospital Linen Services, produced by Craig Gardner on behalf of the Hospital Joint Services Board, 1984

<sup>156</sup> Craig Gardner Consulting. *Hospitals Joint Services Board; Policy Study of Hospital Linen Services*; Dublin, September 1984

- Galway

Another laundry, identified only as “St Mary’s” in documents seen by the Committee may also refer to a Magdalen Laundry but it was not possible to confirm this on the basis of information supplied.

193. At the time of preparation of the 1984 Report, these institutions were, with the exception of Galway, providing laundry services to hospitals and expressed an interest in taking on Dublin-area related hospital work in the future.

194. A set of criteria for future laundry services were suggested by the Consultant’s Report. It was suggested that private companies could be considered for such contracts based on the following considerations:

- Expressed interest in taking on Dublin area related hospital work;
- Existing hospital work which was deemed satisfactorily;
- Excess range of capacity without substantial additional resources;
- Documented financial stability;
- Existing management expertise; and
- Good record of industrial relations.

195. All 14 laundries, including both religious-operated and non-religious operated (commercial) laundries were assessed and compared against that set of criteria. A table assessing and comparing these 14 Laundries, extracted from the Report, is reproduced below. The names of all commercial laundries have been redacted, as some of them continue to operate at the present time. An asterisk \* has also been added prior to the laundries referred to in the Table which fall (or in the case of the laundry identified as “St Mary’s”, which could fall) within the scope of this Report.

	INTEREST	EXISTING WORK	EXCESS CAPACITY	FINANCIAL STABILITY	MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE	INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
*Gloucester St.	Y	Y	?	?	Y	Y
*High Park	Y	Y	?	?	Y	Y
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
*Magdalene – Dublin	Y	Y	?	?	Y	Y
*Magdalene- Galway	N	-	-	-	-	-
[Named Commercial laundry]	N	-	-	-	-	-
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	N	-	-	-	-
*St. Mary's	Y	Y	Y	?	Y	Y
[Named Commercial laundry]	N	-	-	-	-	-
[Named Commercial laundry]	Y	Y	?	?	?	?

*Comparative table, extracted from Craig Gardner Consultancy Report for the Hospitals Joint Services Board, entitled "Policy Study of Hospital Linen Services". Dublin, September 1984.*

196. The Magdalen Laundry, Galway did not express an interest in being considered for the future hospital laundry contracts and was therefore not further assessed.

197. The assessment of the three Dublin-based Magdalen Laundries, namely Donnybrook, High Park and Sean McDermott Street (Gloucester Street),



were similar. In each case, these Laundries were already providing laundry services to relevant hospitals or health authorities. The Report also assessed positively the management expertise and industrial relations of each of these Magdalen Laundries. On the foot of assessment, however, there was uncertainty over whether these laundries had excess capacity for additional work and also uncertainty over their financial stability.

198. On the basis of materials provided to it and as noted above, the Committee was not in a position to determine whether the laundry identified as “St Mary’s” referred to one of the Laundries within the scope of the Report. The assessment of this laundry similarly demonstrated a lack of certainty on the financial stability of the institution, but confirmed the existing services provided by the institution to the health service and positively assessed the management expertise and industrial relations of the laundry. The Report further confirmed that it had the necessary excess capacity for additional work.

199. The uncertainty about financial stability, common to all the Magdalen Laundries assessed by the Report, was considered in more detail in the body of the Consultant’s Report. The conclusion reached on this point was that the Magdalen Laundries were unlikely to be successful in any future tendering process for linen services as the prices they charged, while competitive, were too low to be realistic or sustainable.<sup>157</sup>

200. Therefore, and although the Report did not foresee extensive future use of the Magdalen Laundries for laundry services by the health services, it does confirm a number of points:

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<sup>157</sup> Craig Gardner Consulting. *Hospitals Joint Services Board; Policy Study of Hospital Linen Services*, supra.

- At least three of the Magdalen Laundries were, in 1984, performing laundry services for the health authorities, namely Donnybrook, High Park and Sean McDermott Street.
- All were assessed and considered to be unaffected by the industrial action which, in other cases, could threaten the smooth running of linen services to vital areas such as hospital emergency departments and operating theatres.

201. On the basis of this information, the HSE view, as expressed to the Committee is that:

“The Craig Gardner report confirms that there was a very strong business relationship between the Magdalen laundries and the State health authorities, in Dublin, at any rate”.<sup>158</sup>

202. In the absence of documentary evidence of laundry contracts with the health authorities for periods prior to 1984, efforts were made to explore the question further through the memories of retired officers who, in earlier years, served in the health boards and earlier health authorities.

203. The HSE reported to the Committee that two retired officers had provided information to it as follows:

- A retired Area Administrator recalled that payments were made to Sean McDermott Street Laundry for laundry services for one of the local Eastern Health Board clinics in a commercial arrangement until the mid-1990s.
- An officer also recalled that small payments were made from January 1993 to June 1996 for laundry services to the Laundry at Donnybrook Laundry – however as noted elsewhere in this Report, the Religious

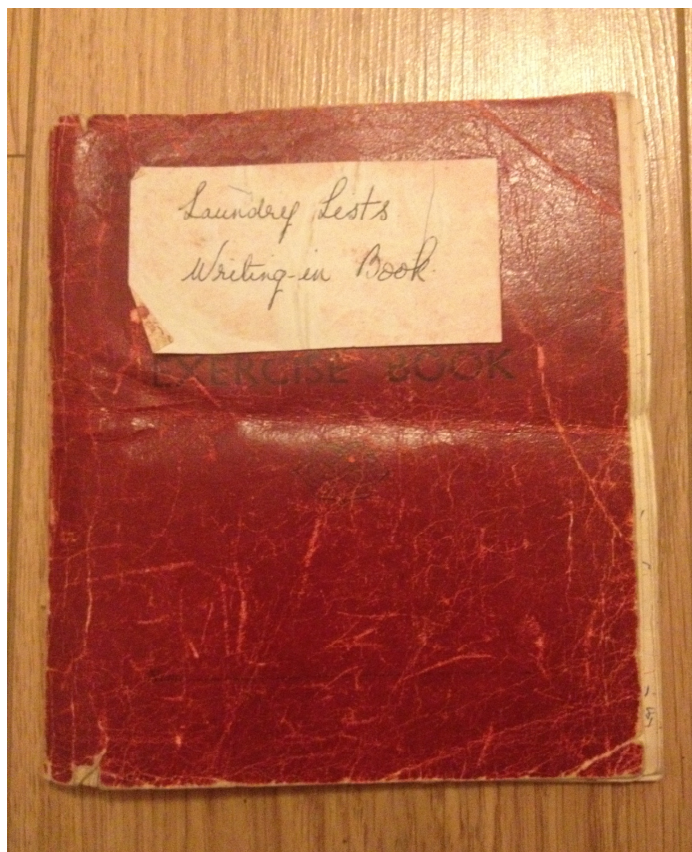
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<sup>158</sup> HSE Report to the Inter Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement in the Magdalen Laundries

Sisters of Charity ceased to operate this laundry in 1992 and sold it at that time as a going concern to a commercial operator. As a result, these contracts or payments would not have been with the Magdalen Laundry.

### E. Notebook submitted by Magdalen Survivors Together, relating to High Park

204. The Committee was also provided, by the representative group “Magdalen Survivors Together”, with access to a small soft-back notebook described as a “Laundry Lists Writing-in book”.<sup>159</sup> The notebook was given to Steven O’Riordan of Magdalen Survivors Together by a third party (whose identity is known to the Committee) who said that he had found the notebook at High Park following closure of the Laundry in 1993. The notebook appears to list the customer base of the Laundry and contains information for the period from 20 October 1980 to 18 June 1981.



*“Laundry Lists writing-in Book”, High Park.*

*Access provided courtesy of Magdalen Survivors Together.*

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<sup>159</sup> Now held at the “Little Museum of Dublin”, 15 St Stephen’s Green, Dublin 2

205. Although the notebook passed out of the control of archives for a period, the Committee had no reason to suspect that it was not genuine. Further, the information contained in the notebook is not inconsistent with what was found by the Committee in relation to other Magdalen Laundries.

206. Analysis of the notebook suggests regular (weekly or near-weekly) use of the Laundry by a number of Government Departments or State agencies, as follows:

- the Department of Fisheries
- the City Laboratory
- the Department of Education (referred to as 'Marlboro Street' throughout the notebook)
- the Department of Health (referred to as "DOH")
- the Department of Agriculture (and "Beef Classification")
- Dr Steven's Hospital
- Central Remedial Clinic (referred to as "CRC")
- Coras Iompair Éireann (CIE) at a number of its locations or departments:
  - North Wall
  - Punchestown
  - Heuston Station
  - Dining rooms, Inchicore
  - General stations
  - Purchasing Department

207. Also recorded as having utilised the laundry less frequently over the period covered by the notebook are:

- The National Library (twice)
- The Department of Justice (once)
- Áras an Uachtaráin (once).

208. Other than the above Government Departments and State agencies, the customer base listed in the notebook includes commercial hotels, private individuals and a small number of schools.

**F. Other miscellaneous information regarding laundry services**

209. Information on State contracts with one Magdalen Laundry was also provided to the Committee by a person who acted as commercial manager for that institution for a period of 6 years.

210. John Kennedy was employed from 1976 to 1982 as commercial manager of the Laundry operated by the Good Shepherds at Limerick. In 1982 he purchased the business from the Order as a going concern. In June 1991 he also purchased the business of the Laundry operated by the Religious Sisters of Charity at Peacock Lane, Cork. He provided information directly to the Committee throughout the process and was of considerable assistance in its work.

211. Mr Kennedy shared with the Committee his recollection of tenders by the Limerick Magdalen Laundry for state contracts. He detailed that, “even in the old days”, there were clear procedures for tenders and that he had no reason to believe that the institution was being accorded preferential treatment:

“All tender forms had very exact conditions and were printed on official, headed paper or in mini booklet form. When completed they had to be sealed in a special envelope and be delivered by a very specific deadline, the time of which was registered”.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Note from John Kennedy to the Inter-Departmental Committee dated 8 October 2012

212. He confirmed that the same tender forms were utilised by the Laundry operated by the Congregation as non-religious commercial laundries.

213. His view on how the Magdalen Laundry secured State contracts in the Limerick region was “very simple, their prices were the lowest and they had excellent quality”, and his view that the main reason for contracts not being secured would be “when competing commercial laundries had spare capacity, because their costs for the extra work to fill this gap would only be marginal”.<sup>161</sup>

214. Mr Kennedy also indicated that, during his time as manager of the Laundry at Limerick, he secured many new contracts (including State and semi-state) which had not previously been held by the Magdalen Laundry when operated directly by the Religious Congregation. His view is that all such contracts secured during his tenure as manager:

“were secured only on a price, quality and delivery at a specified time, basis. I am absolutely sure there was no other consideration taken into account when awarding them to the Good Shepherd Laundry in Limerick”.<sup>162</sup>

215. He also informed the Committee that, in order to secure and carry out these new contracts, he:

“had to increase the throughput of the Laundry to handle this extra work. I achieved this by, for example, installing bigger and better washing machines, taking on male staff for the heavy physical work, buying bigger delivery vans and sinking a borehole well for our own reliable, cheaper, high pressure water supply”.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Id

<sup>162</sup> Id

<sup>163</sup> Id

216. In that context, Mr Kennedy's recollection is of contracts during his tenure as manager with a number of State bodies including:

- Aer Rianta;
- Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE);
- Department of Agriculture;
- Electricity Supply Board (ESB);
- Limerick prison; and
- a number of hospitals.

As part of the above, the Laundry had what was referred to colloquially as the "Shannon Office" to administer the business from Shannon Airport.