Masculinity Studies on Two Continents and in Two Eras: Thomas A. Hickey in Victorian Dublin and Progressive Era America, 1868-1925

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Introduction

New Biography

We are historians, who tell stories through the medium of “the new biography,” that is, examining the lives of people who have been left out of most history texts, to discover what they can tell us about particular periods and places. We have the application of masculinity studies to our subject, Thomas A. Hickey, to be very helpful in examining his life and times.

What is Masculinity Studies?

Masculinity studies is an interdisciplinary field concerned with the social and gendered construction of what it means to “be a man.” “Masculinity” refers to the social roles, behaviors and relationships of men within a particular society and the meanings accredited to them.

Coming To America

In 1895, Hickey joined the New York City Federation of Labor as a full-time organizer to improve work conditions for his fellow Irish. In 1901 he married Clara Belle Novice, a schoolteacher and journalist, who had been organizing women in the New York garment district. They moved to Chicago in the early 1910s, and Hickey became the full-time organizer for the Socialists in Illinois and Wisconsin. In 1913, Hickey ran for mayor of Chicago on the Socialist ticket, losing by a mere 2,000 votes. His campaign platform was a program of political reform, economic justice, and labor rights.

Texas Socialism

Hickey entered into a new phase of his life in Texas in 1914. He became the first Socialist mayor of Dallas in 1914, and in 1917, he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. Hickey was a strong proponent of workers’ rights and a critic of the repressive measures of the Progressive Era. He was a vocal opponent of the Red Scare and the anti-immigrant policies of the period. In 1918, Hickey ran for governor on the Socialist ticket, but he lost to the incumbent, Republican Albert S. Carter.

Conclusion

Hickey’s masculinity had become even more pronounced as he grew older. His political career came to an end in the 1920s when he lost his seat in the Texas House of Representatives.

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