Labour, gender and class in the struggle for Irish Independence 1917–1923
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# Table of Contents

Introduction 5  
Module aims 5  
Module learning objectives 6  
Setting the context 6  
Acknowledgements 6  
Key resources 7  
Repositories of public records and books 7  
Institutions of Public Record 8  
Recommended Reading 8  
Module outline 9  
Key personalities and influencers of the period 9  

## Part I Chronology 1917 – 1923 19

## Part II Key themes

1. Ireland, Socialist Pioneers and the emergence of the modern Labour movement 30
2. Early Socialist thinking 34
3. Living and working conditions in Ireland: Pre 1917 40
4. Living and working conditions in Ireland: 1917-1923 41
5. The Co-operative movement 45
6. Feminism, Capitalism, Socialism and Nationalism 48
7. An independent Irish Republic 59
8. Labour and the struggle for independence 64
9. Syndicalism and the Struggle for Irish Independence 65
10. Labour’s repeated failure to seize the revolutionary initiative 67
11. Were workers better off under British rule? Northern divisions 69
12. Peace or War? Labour and the Treaty (1922) 73
13. Case Study - The Lankfords: Two local republican activists and their impact on the Irish Revolution, Padraig Yeates 77
14. International Developments 80
15. Decent Work and the creation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 81
16. The Russian Revolution and its influence in Ireland 87
17. Was Civil Resistance a viable alternative strategy to Military Action? 88

## Part III Key events

1. The Rise of the Labour movement 1887-1922: 92
2. The Easter Rising (1916) 102
3. The Irish Convention: Labour involvement in a last chance to save Home Rule and avoid a split over Partition 104
5. Labour and the General Strike Weapon 1918-1922 112
6. The Engineering Strike, Belfast (January-February, 1919) 119
7. Limerick Soviet (April 1919) 124
8. The Motor Permits Dispute (November 1919 to January 1920) 126
9. The Munitions Strike (April to December 1920) 128

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**Congress - Labour, gender and class in the struggle for Irish Independence 1917 – 1923**
III.X - The Belfast Pogrom 131
III.XI - The British Labour Commission to Ireland (1920) 133
III.XII - Labour’s civil war: Larkin v the ITGWU, April 1923 to June 1924 139

Part IV
LESSON PLANS
Lesson 1: Ireland, Socialist Pioneers and the emergence of the modern Labour movement 144
Lesson 2: Early Socialist thinking 147
Lesson 3: Living and working conditions in Ireland: Pre 1917 149
Lesson 4: Living and working conditions in Ireland: 1917-1923 154
Lesson 5: The co-operative movement 168
Lesson 6: Feminism, Capitalism, Socialism & Nationalism 172
Lesson 7: An independent Irish Republic 175
Lesson 8: The Labour movement and the struggle for independence 178
Lesson 9: Labour’s repeated failure to seize the revolutionary initiative 183
Lesson 10: Were workers’ better off under British rule? Northern Divisions 186
Lesson 11: Peace or War? Labour and the Treaty (1922) 187
Lesson 12: International Developments 188
Lesson 14: Was Civil resistance a viable alternative strategy to military action? 191
Lesson 15: The Easter Rising (1916) 193
Lesson 16: The Irish Convention: Labour involvement to save Home Rule and avoid a split on partition 199
Lesson 17: The Democratic Programme for Government (1919) – A missed opportunity? 202
Lesson 18: The Belfast pogrom 206
Lesson 19: The British Labour Commission to Ireland (1920) 208
Lesson 20: Labour’s Civil War: Larkin -v- ITGWU, (April 1923 – June 1924) 210

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Introduction

The primary aim of this module is to introduce students to the world of the labour movement, feminism and class conflict during the Irish revolution. The role of activists engaged in promoting new visions of Irish identity and Ireland’s future during the struggle for Irish Independence has long been neglected, as has how their ideas and aspirations evolved and influenced the creation of the Irish Free State and the establishment of Northern Ireland.

This module looks at this largely forgotten history, providing insights into the beliefs of activists, the fortunes of the movements they espoused and why they chose a common vehicle in the Labour movement to advance peoples’ rights in the workplace and across society at large.

In setting out the themes, ideas and events of the Irish revolution, it also examines how much influence they had on the creation of new political institutions on this island which still largely govern our lives today. It also looks at the role of these movements internationally, and in particular the British labour movement in supporting Irish demands for self-determination.

Module aims

This resource aims to promote open discussion and debate among students about how people lived a hundred years ago, how the trade union movement sought to advance their interests, not just in the workplace but in areas such as health, social welfare, child care, women’s rights, and in local and national politics. It is structured to ensure that students are actively engaged in the topics through project work, debates and discussions allowing them to delve deeper into each subject area by using the additional resources provided. It offers a gateway into the history of Irish labour, feminism and class through their influence on the politics of the day by using a variety of online resources, publications and reports.

By doing so, this module provides a key support for teachers, bringing new information, contexts and perspectives to the discussion of history, its impact on future generations and its importance in understanding our current world.

This material is designed to provide students with study materials and records of the experiences of working people who lived through the events of the revolution, why and how they organised and their influence on the course of the revolution. It allows students to assess how far working people succeeded in achieving their objectives and the various forms of organisation they adopted to try and improve their quality of life in work and in society at large.

The module aims to:

• Explore what was meant by independence and the often very different and competing visions of those seeking it;
• Examine the background and context for the independence struggle and examine some major events of historical importance;
• Outline the crucial role of the labour movement in that struggle;
• Raise awareness amongst students of the role labour activists played in the struggle for an independent Irish State;
• Explain the role of class and gender in the independence struggle;
• Inform students of the different themes and approaches that evolved within the Independence movement;
• Identify the impact and outcome of workers’ struggles during this period, and how they in turn were affected by the new political dispensations, North and South;
- Encourage students to become more aware of how the actions of ordinary people involved in these campaigns continue to impact on our lives today;
- Ensure students recognise the importance of understanding the historical world in order to discern the modern world;
- Highlight the importance of the labour movement in promoting social and equality issues, both within and beyond the workplace;
- Provide the knowledge, information and space for students to identify the links between the campaigns fought by workers and other activists during the struggle for independence and similar issues today, helping them to understand better how these contributed to the creation of a modern Ireland.

Module learning objectives
At the end of this module, students will be able to;
- Specify and explain key events in the period leading up to Irish independence;
- Understand the role labour activists played in these events;
- Appreciate the economic, social and political context that existed in this period for ordinary citizens when they decided to take action;
- Outline and explain the history of the struggle for Irish independence and the fight for decent working conditions by using key events in the reference period;
- Compare and contrast the lives of citizens in this period with the lives of citizens and workers today, with particular focus on work, education, housing, health and other important social issues;
- Assess the impact of activists’ achievements in this period and their importance for our lives today;
- Analyse and compare the Irish State, as envisioned by those seeking independence, with the modern Irish State today.

Setting the context
To better understand the period (1917-1923) which this module spans, it is necessary to provide an overview of the themes and beliefs prevalent in previous decades, on which the activism of the revolution was built; as well as providing a guide to events.

This will ensure the reader and users of this resource can trace the genesis of theories and ideologies from this earlier period and how they continue to influence us today.

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank all those who made this module possible by providing all the content material for adaptation to a school resource including information on the context of the struggle, key events in the period and important personalities.

We also appreciate the financial and other support provided by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and to FORSA, INTO and SIPTU for their continued commitment to ensuring this programme was realised, especially SIPTU Communications Department for always being there for us.
**Key resources**

There are a number of important websites which should be used with this resource to enhance students’ understanding of the period and provide an opportunity for deeper investigations.

The Decade of Centenaries website www.decadeofcentenaries.com contains a listing of all events, lectures, official commemorations, archives and exhibitions around the country to commemorate events during this period of Irish History.

ITUC (Irish Trade Union Congress) Annual reports and Conference papers for the period http://centenaries-ituc.nationalarchives.ie/

A website to commemorate the First Dáil in 1919, which contains timelines as well as information on the people involved, debates of the Dáil and teaching resources. www.dail100.ie

The dictionary of Irish Biography on the Cambridge University Press website https://dib.cambridge.org/

Irish Education Portal with links to additional resources https://www.scoilnet.ie/uploads/resources/25712/25448.pdf

Century Ireland provides an easily accessible portal to illustrations, articles and documents https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland

The Inner City Folklore Project www.icornnetwork.ie, www.comheretome.com and Dublin Tenement Life on Facebook at www.facebook.com/dublintenements

Women from 1912-1922 in the University of Limerick resources https://www.ul.ie/wic/


https://womensmuseumofireland.ie/articles/margaret-skinnider

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1CWCQ43hqTRx2qkq8jj2tqm/margaret-skinnider

Constance Markievicz becomes first female MP | Century Ireland - rte.ie

BBC One - Voices 16 - Margaret Skinnider


**Repositories of public records and books**

Public records can often provide excellent sources of primary material and should be among the first places students visit to begin their research. The following is a non-exhaustive list of useful sites (physical and online);

**School and local library**

The local public library will have a number of relevant publications and also a copy of the Directory of Irish Archives from which researching students can identify archives in their own locality.

The local library also has online resources which can be accessed FREE OF CHARGE via the Netvibes based portal http://www.netvibes.com/dublincitypubliclibraries#Home which include;

- The Irish Times Digital Archive
- The Irish Newspaper Archive
- The Ireland J-STOR collection
Institutions of Public Record

The reading room, Dublin City Library and Archive, Pearse Street, Dublin 12
www.dublincitypubliclibraries.com

The Irish Labour History Society (ILHS), Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin 4.
www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com

Dublin City Council www.dublincity.ie/decadeofcommemorations

The National library www.nli.ie

The National Archives www.nationalarchives.ie

Glasnevin Museum www.glasnevintrust.ie

Museum of Ireland www.museum.ie


Further recommended sources

Findmypast.com - Trace your Family Tree Online, www.findmypast.com

EPIC CHQ, Custom House Quay, Dublin https://epicchq.com/

Recommended Reading

An Irish Commune: The Experiment at Ralahine, County Clare 1831-33, Craig, E T, Dublin 1983

The Origins of Modern Irish Socialism 1881-1896 (Chapter 1 & 2), Fintan Lane, Cork University Press, 1997

A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-2000, E. O’Connor, UCD, Dublin, 2011, Chapter 1, 2 & 3.

The Irish Labour Movement in the Nineteenth Century, JW Boyle, Catholic University of America Press, 1988 (Chapter 1, 2, 4 and 6)


Belfast: An Illustrated History, J Bardon, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1982. (Chapter 5)


Trade Union Century, (ed) D. Nevin

Foundation and Early Years of the Irish TUC, 1894-1912, D. Keogh;


A Workers’ Republic, James Connolly

Great Britain. Departmental Committee to Inquire into the Housing Conditions of the Working Classes in the City of Dublin. NLI Call Number Ir 33183 h 2
**Module outline**

The period in question was a turbulent one and in order to understand better the forces that created this revolutionary crisis it is necessary to trace their origins in the competing ideologies, interests and events of earlier times.

The first section of the module provides a chronological overview which introduces students to a variety of themes, events and personalities influencing the labour movement and Irish politics during the period in question.

Key events in Ireland between 1917 and 1923 were also influenced by a series of British policy decisions made in the context of the First World War and its aftermath that had a major impact on Ireland during a period which saw the increasing influence of competing nationalist and socialist ideologies across Europe and even further afield.

**Key personalities and influencers of the period**

There were many people who took part in, or influenced Irish life in other ways throughout this period in the political sphere, through the labour movement or by engagement in military activities. Some of these know, and not so well-known, personalities are listed below and students should be encouraged to explore their lives and contribution as players within Irish society.

**Piaras Beaslai (1881–1965):** He was a leading member of Sinn Fein and the IRA during the Struggle for Independence. He played an important role, with Michael Collins, in ensuring that the most radical elements of the Democratic Programme were removed before the document was presented to the First Dail.


**Louie Bennett (1870–1956):** From a comfortable middle class Unionist home and a committed pacifist she was an unlikely candidate for revolutionary but she probably did more to advance women’s interests through her work with the Irish Women Workers Union than anyone else in this era. She was the first woman to be elected president of the Irish Trade Union Congress.


**Eva Selina Gore Booth (1870–1926):** Often overshadowed by her older sister Constance (née Gore Booth) Markievicz, she played an important role in educating her on trade union issues when Constance accepted her invitation to join the highly successful campaign to protect the livelihoods of Britain’s barmaids in the 1908 Manchester by-election to block Winston Churchill’s appointment as President of the Board of Trade. Eva would become one of Britain’s leading female trade union leaders and also campaigned on Irish issues, besides being an important commentator in the left wing press and a distinguished poet.

**David R Campbell (1875–1934):** A leading Belfast trade unionist who was once invited to become General Secretary of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress. His career shows the high price some trade union leaders paid for refusing to bow to tribal loyalties and defending the principles of working class unity in an increasingly divided society.


**Winifred (‘Winnie’) Carney (1887–1943):** She is best remembered as James Connolly’s secretary in Belfast who accompanied him to the GPO armed with a typewriter and a gun in 1916, but she was a trade union activist, feminist and republican in her own right. She later married George McBride, a former member of the UVF and a Great War veteran who shared her socialist beliefs.


**Helen Sophia Chenevix (1886–1963):** Only child of a wealthy Dublin couple, she was one of the first generation of women university graduates and worked for over 40 years alongside her life-companion Louie Bennett in the Irish Women Workers Union. After retirement she campaigned for peace and nuclear disarmament in the Cold War.


**Michael Collins (1890-1922):** He brought a revolutionary approach to the military struggle for independence but was conservative on most social and economic issues, ensuring that the most radical elements were removed from the Draft Democratic Programme. While he made sure to cultivate good relations with Republican Labour leaders such as William O’Brien of the ITGWU, he also established a new union for engineering workers under IRB control to undermine existing British unions in key sectors of the economy such as ports and power stations.


**James Connolly (1868–1916):** Executed by the British for his role in the Easter Rising, it could be argued that he was more influential in death than in life. A brilliant polemicist, his writings were widely read as a result of his martyrdom. He was, along with Jim Larkin, the leading exponent of syndicalism and revolutionary socialism in Ireland. At the same time his writing proved divisive, leading to bitter disagreements with Belfast trade unionists such as William Walker who believed that workers interests were better served by membership of the British Trade Union Congress and remaining in the United Kingdom.

Charlotte (née French) Despard (1844–1939): She was one of life’s natural rebels. One of her childhood heroes was Milton’s Satan. Following her husband’s death, she threw herself into the female suffrage campaign, socialism and the Irish struggle for independence. She was a serious embarrassment to her brother Jack, better known as Field Marshal Sir John French, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Disillusioned by the Irish Free State she moved to Northern Ireland and supported the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War.


Joseph (Joe) Devlin (1871–1934): From an apprentice barman in Kelly’s Cellars to leader of northern nationalists, opponents never let him forget his origins as the ‘Belfast bottle washer’. Nevertheless, he held his West Belfast seat against all comers, including Eamon de Valera in the Sinn Fein landslide of 1918. He had good relations with the British Labour Party, making it difficult for the ILP&TUC to obtain a hearing. Nevertheless, his appeal was largely limited to northern Catholics, especially after Partition.


Adeline (Ada) English (1875–1944): She was one of the earliest women medical graduates from the school of medicine in Cecilia Street, Dublin. While there she became interested in the Gaelic League, and attended Irish classes given by her friend Patrick Pearse. A leading member of Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan, she was elected to the Second Dáil and opposed the Treaty. After the Civil War she devoted herself to developing mental health services at Ballinasloe District Lunatic Asylum.


Mary Galway (1864–1928): The daughter of linen weavers from Moira, Co Down, she found work in a Belfast linen mill at 11 years of age after her father died. She joined the Textile Operatives Society of Ireland (TOSI), Ireland’s first trade union for women. For many years she was the only full time Irish female union official. She was elected to the ITUC executive in 1907 and was elected vice-president in 1911. She preferred negotiation to confrontation and clashed with James Connolly when he set up a rival Irish Textile Workers Union in Belfast.
Maud (Edith) Gonne MacBride (1866–1953): Journalist, political activist, feminist, widow of 1916 leader Major John MacBride, and subject of most of the love poetry of W. B. Yeats, she was the daughter of a wealthy British army officer. She embraced militant nationalism in her twenties and was one of its icons in the revolution, campaigning for land reform, workers’ rights, slum clearance and other progressive causes.


Rosanna (Rosie) Hackett: Hackett, Rosanna (‘Rosie’) (1893–1976). A member of the Irish Women Workers Union who refused to pass pickets at Jacob’s Biscuits in the 1913 Lockout, she joined the Irish Citizen Army and left a vivid memoir with the Bureau of Military History on her activities in the struggle for independence. She later ran the ITGWU shop on Eden Quay and was a living link with the heroic days of the revolution until her death.


Anna Maria (née Fisher) Haslam (1829-1922) and Thomas Joseph Haslam (1829–1917): A Quaker couple who took gender equality for granted, they pioneered women’s rights in Ireland. Anna, born in Youghal, brought her considerable administrative skills to the cause and Thomas, born in Mountmellick, was a teacher and journalist. From 1858 the Haslams lived in Dublin, where Thomas worked as an accountant while Anna ran a stationery and toy shop. They were Liberal Unionists, in favour of social reform but believing that women and working people would be better off if they stayed in the United Kingdom. They laid the foundations for future campaigns on women’s rights.

Further reading: Patrick Maume DIB entry, https://dib.cambridge.org/, Mary Cullen, ‘Anna Maria Haslam (1829–1922)’, Women, power and consciousness in 19th-century Ireland, ed. Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (1995); Carmel Quinlan, Genteel revolutionaries: Anna and Thomas Haslam and the Irish women’s movement (2002); ODNB.
Thomas Ryder Johnson (1872–1963): Born in Liverpool a few streets away from Jim Larkin, he was also a socialist and trade union leader, but much more moderate in his political practices when he became leader of the Irish Labour Party than his fellow Liverpudlian. He left school to start work as a messenger boy and then a commercial traveller. He represented the National Union of Shop Assistants and Clerks on Belfast Trades Council, where he supported Larkin’s campaign to organise port workers. Sacked by his Unionist employers for organising protests against conscription in 1918 he moved to Dublin where he soon became leader of the Labour Party and wrote the initial draft of the Democratic Programme for the First Dail, with William O’Brien and Cathal O’Shannon.


James (Jim) Larkin (1874–1947): Born in Liverpool, the son of Irish immigrants, he was the founder of the modern Irish Labour movement, transforming it from a narrow clique of craft unions into the largest civil society movement in modern Ireland. He was not alone Ireland’s foremost advocate of syndicalism, but able to convince unskilled and semi-skilled workers long regarded as incapable of unionisation that they had the power not only to win better pay and conditions but overthrow capitalism. However, he could also be impulsive, confrontational and divisive. His career was marked by major victories and defeats. He founded the Irish Transport and General Workers and also led the Workers Union of Ireland. They amalgamated in 1990 to form SIPTU, Ireland’s largest trade union.


Kathleen Lynn (1874–1955): She was born in Mullafarry, near Cong, Co. Mayo, the daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman. Despite aristocratic relations and a comfortable upbringing, her professional career as one of Ireland’s first female doctors was concerned with Dublin’s poor, especially mothers and the city’s notoriously high infant mortality rate. Unable to advance within a male dominated profession she set up in private practice, at her home in Rathmines. She joined the Irish Citizen Army, taught first-aid to Cumann na mBan members and was chief medical officer of the ICA during the 1916 rising. On her release from prison she was a Sinn Fein director of health and founded St Ultan’s hospital for Mothers and Infants in 1919 with her life companion Madelaine ffrench Mullen.


James McCarron (1851 – 10 October 1918): A leading member of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, he was based in Derry, a leading textile centre. He supported Mary Galway, the first fulltime female trade unionist in Ireland (see above) but opposed women joining his own union. Elected as a Labour Alderman for Derry, he grew close to the Irish Party and regarded syndicalists such as Jim Larkin and
James Connolly as a threat. As president of the Irish Trade Union Congress, he tried to prevent Larkin’s ITGWU from affiliating, and withdrew from the ITUC executive when he failed. He attended the Irish Convention in 1917-1918 and supported the final report advocating a diluted version of Home Rule to avoid a north-south split in Labour ranks. He drowned on the RMS Leinster when it was sunk in 1918.


Constance Georgine (1868–1927), Countess Markievicz: The eldest daughter of Sir Henry Gore-Booth of Lissadell, Co. Sligo, philanthropist and explorer she was born into a life of privilege. It was not until her 40s, after returning to Ireland with her husband Casimir Markievicz, that she became immersed in militant nationalist and Labour politics. A leading figure in the 1916 Rising and the first woman elected to the House of Commons, she was appointed Minister for Labour by Dail Eireann. She took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.


Henry (‘Harry’) Midgley (1892–1957): Reared in the Protestant working class area of Tigers Bay, his family suffered severe poverty after his father’s premature death when Harry was seven. His mother supported the family by hand stitching handkerchiefs to ensure Harry could attend national school until age twelve. As an apprentice joiner in the Workman & Clark shipyard he attended the Socialist Sunday School of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and spoke at his first public meeting aged 14. He canvassed for the ILP candidate William Walker in the 1907 by-election for North Belfast, won by Midgley’s employer George Clark. Midgley later switched from Walker, who favoured closer ties with British Labour to James Connolly’s socialist republican alternative strategy. Partition determined his later politics, as did attacks on his socialist policies by Catholic activists. He gravitated towards Unionism, ending his career as a Northern Ireland Cabinet minister implementing the Beveridge report and introducing the British welfare state. His career personifies the challenges that partition and sectarian politics posed for socialists in the North.


Helena Molony (1883–1967): Abbey actress, socialist republican, trade unionist, feminist and journalist, she was the daughter of a Dublin shopkeeper from Coles Lane, Dublin, who described herself as ‘a young girl dreaming about Ireland’, when she joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann. James Connolly appointed her secretary of the Irish Women Workers Union. She remained his devoted disciple. In later
life she was on the executive of Saor Eire and she defied the Red Scare of the 1930s to visit the Soviet Union. She provided one of the best witness statements for the Bureau of Military History archive on the social life of revolutionary Dublin. She died at the home of her life companion Dr Evelyn O’Brien.


Madeline Ffrench Mullen (1880–1944): She was born in Malta, the daughter of a Royal Navy surgeon who retired home to Ireland and became a supporter of home rule. She was a contributor to Bean na hÉireann, journal of Inghinidhe na hÉireann, and met her life companion Kathleen Lynn while helping in the Liberty Hall soup kitchen during the 1913 lock-out. She joined the Irish Citizen Army and ran a first aid unit in Stephen’s Green during the Easter Rising. She worked with Lynn on establishing and developing St Ultan’s Mother and Infants hospital. She was its’ secretary until her death.


William O’Brien (1881–1968): The most powerful and influential labour and trade union leader of the revolutionary era. A devoted friend and disciple of James Connolly he nevertheless subordinated trade union policy to that of Dail Eireann, believing that the struggle for independence had to take precedence over class struggle. He worked closely with figures such as Michael Collins, Eamon de Valera and Sean Lemass. He was later involved in various splits in the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress.


Sean T O’Kelly (Ó Ceallaigh) (1882–1966): The son of a master boot and shoemaker, his post in the National Library, enabled him time to engage in wide ranging cultural and political activity. He joined the IRB in 1901 and was a Sinn Fein councillor on Dublin Corporation from 1906. A founder of the Irish Volunteers he fought in the Easter Rising. Elected to the First Dail, he was the key negotiator of amendments to the Labour draft of the Democratic Programme. He later represented the Dail Eireann government in Paris. He served in successive Fianna Fail cabinets and was elected President of Ireland from 1945 to 1959.

Margaret Skinnider, (Máighréad Ní Scineadóra) (1893–1971): A militant nationalist, teacher, and trade unionist, she was born in Glasgow, Scotland, daughter of Irish immigrants from Co. Monaghan. She taught mathematics and was active in the women’s suffrage movement before joining the Glasgow branches of the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. At the outbreak of the Great War she joined a women’s rifle club, becoming an expert shot. Invited to Dublin at Christmas 1915 by Countess Markievicz, she smuggled detonators and joined the Irish Citizen Army. She fought in the Easter Rising, arguing that, as women were equal with men under the Irish Republic, they had an equal right to risk their lives. She was seriously wounded but recovered and continued her military activity. She took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War and on her release from prison resumed her teaching career, but this time in Dublin. She was a leading campaigner for equal pay in the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation. She served on its’ executive, and as vice-president and president from 1955-70. She also served on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions executive from 1961–3. She is buried alongside her friend Countess Markievicz in Glasnevin cemetery, Dublin.


Francis Sheehy-Skeffington (1878–1916): A socialist and pacifist born in Bailieborough, Co. Cavan, he was the son of a schools’ inspector. He entered UCD as a non-smoking teetotaller, vegetarian, anti-vivisectionist, feminist and pacifist. He wore a distinctive rough tweed suit with knee-breeches and was fiercely argumentative, which did not prevent him being elected auditor of the Literary and Historical Society. A friend of James Joyce, James Connolly and Tom Kettle he married Hanna Sheehy, daughter of an influential Irish Party MP and they adopted each other’s surnames. They founded the Irish Citizen and he also worked as a Freelance journalist. Asked by Connolly to help establish a civilian government in 1916 he was arrested by the British while trying to prevent looting and was shot on the orders of Captain Bowen Colthurst. Later tried for murder, the Captain was acquitted on grounds of insanity.


(Johanna) Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877–1946): The daughter of David Sheehy, a leading Irish Party MP, she was a gifted student who was one of the first Irish women graduates to secure an MA in modern languages. Although older than her husband she attributed her feminist commitment to him. It was largely due to her campaign that Captain Bowen Colthurst was brought to trial. Afterwards she became involved in Sinn Fein and militant nationalism, while remaining committed to socialism and equality issues. She played a leading role in the Dail Éireann regime and in the Civil War she campaigned for the rights of prisoners and their families. She spent the latter part of her life with her son Owen fighting a long rear guard action for women’s rights in the Free State.

**William Thompson (1775–1833):** A Cork landowner who inherited a large fortune from his merchant father, he devoted his life to studying political economy and social reform. His most important work was an Inquiry into the principles of the distribution of wealth most conducive to human happiness, published in 1824, which anticipated the writings of Karl Marx, although not to the extent that some commentators, including James Connolly, claimed. The following year he published an Appeal of one half the human race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the other half, Men, to retain them in Political and thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery. Although only his name appears on the title page he subsequently acknowledged his fellow author, Anna Doyle Wheeler. It was the first exposition of socialist feminism ever published and remains a revolutionary classic of abiding relevance.


**Walker, William (1871–1918):** A socialist and trade unionist, Walker was the son of a shipyard boilermaker and latterly trade-union official, who was himself apprenticed as a joiner in Harland and Wolff shipyard at 14. Despite his craft status, he helped organise the National Amalgamated Union of Labour for unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the yards and served as temporary honorary secretary of Ireland’s first women’s union, the Textile Operatives Society of Ireland (TOSI) until it could raise funds to pay a fulltime female secretary. He would spend almost 20 years holding senior positions in his own union, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and 15 on the Belfast Trades Council (BTC) and representing it on the ITUC executive. Throughout his career he remained keenly interested in women’s rights and those of low paid workers and their families.

A founder member of the Belfast branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), he became the city’s leading advocate of socialist ideas, elected to Belfast Corporation and the Board of Guardians, he twice contested the North Belfast parliamentary constituency and owed his narrow defeats to the sectarian tactics of nationalist and Unionist opponents. He is best remembered now for his famous debate with James Connolly over whether Irish Labour should support independence or be part of the larger British movement. His decision to resign as secretary of the ASJC to become a government inspector of the new national insurance scheme in 1912 probably reflected disillusionment with the growing polarisation of politics between nationalist and Unionist camps. He died in 1918.


**Anna Doyle Wheeler (1785–1848/9):** She was a pioneer feminist born in Clonbeg, Tipperary, the daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman. She had no formal education but taught herself French, philosophy, geography, and politics. In 1800 she married Francis Massy-Wheeler, a wealthy Freemason and playboy. She subsequently left him and moved to France where she was accepted in radical circles
as 'the Goddess of Reason'. She was heavily influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792), but felt it did not address women's economic rights adequately. She met William Thompson through their mutual friends Jeremy Bentham and Robert Owen and she collaborated with him to produce an Appeal of one half the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men published in 1825.


Power, Jennie Wyse (1858–1941): Born Jane O'Toole in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, she was the daughter of a shopkeeper and small farmer. The O'Tooles were strongly nationalist and she joined the Ladies' Land League in 1881, becoming a league organiser in Wicklow and Carlow, as well as acting as librarian to land league prisoners. A member of the executive of the Ladies' Land League she became friendly with Anna Parnell (qv) and remained a strong supporter of Charles Stewart Parnell, even after he disbanded the Ladies' League in 1882. In July 1883 she married fellow Parnellite and journalist John Wyse Power and moved to Dublin in 1885. She opened a shop and restaurant at 21 Henry St. Dublin, called 'The Irish Farm and Produce Company'. It quickly became a popular meeting place for many radical cultural and political organisations, including the Gaelic League, Dublin Women's Suffrage Association and Sinn Fein. The 1916 Proclamation was signed in her shop on Henry Street, and she opened three more shops. Food from her restaurant was sent to rebels in the GPO. She was the only leading member of Cumann na mBan to support the Treaty. She served in the first Free State Senate but resigned in 1925, disillusioned by the new state's social and economic policies regarding women. In many ways she personified the aspirations of radical middle class women in the revolutionary decade.

Part I
Chronology
1917–1923
1916

The Easter Rising (1916): James Connolly aligns Labour’s revolutionary wing with its counterpart in militant nationalist ranks. He is executed with other signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, who formed the intellectual as well as the military leadership of the independence movement.


1917

February 5th: Count Plunkett’s election in North Roscommon by-election shows growing support for militant nationalism and the insurrectionists of 1916.

March 8th: Demonstrations by female factory workers and housewives in St Petersburg for bread on International Women’s Day mark the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

May 9th: Convicted rebel Joe McGuinness wins South Longford while still in prison, defeating Irish Party candidate.

May 21st, 1917-April 7th, 1918: Constitutional nationalists and Unionists decide to engage in the Irish Convention convened by the British Government to salvage the Home Rule project. It fails to reach agreement. Some Labour representatives attend but it is boycotted by a majority of ILP&TUC affiliates.

June 10th: Remaining rebel prisoners released, including Eamon de Valera and Countess Markievicz.

July 10th: Eamon de Valera wins East Clare by-election.

August 10th: W T Cosgrave wins Kilkenny city by-election.

September 25th: Commandant Thomas Ashe dies from forced feeding while on hunger strike. His funeral is largest since the death of Parnell.

November 7th: Bolsheviks seize power in Russia under the slogans of ‘Peace, Bread and Land’ and ‘All Power to the Soviets’

1918

January 8th: American President Woodrow Wilson outlines his 14 points as the basis for a just peace in Europe. They include the right of small nations to self-determination.

March 6th: Irish Party leader John Redmond dies.

March 21st: Germany begins last great offensive on Western Front.

March 24th: Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, CIGS and a Southern Unionist, tells the British Government he needs to include Ireland in a new conscription sweep to make up for losses on the Western Front.

April 9th: Lloyd George introduces the Military Service Bill in the House of Commons.

April 10th: An initial statement by the Episcopal Standing Committee of the Catholic Church warns the British Government of the dangers of introducing such a measure.

April 14th: Anti-Conscription Rally organised by Belfast Trades Council at the Custom House steps, 10,000 attends.

April 16th: Conscription Bill passed by the House of Commons by 301 votes to 103. Irish Party withdraws from Westminster.

April 17th: Rally at Belfast City Hall broken up by shipyard workers. Tom Johnson injured and sacked by his employer for promoting disloyalty amongst the King’s subjects.

April 18th: Military Service Act receives the Royal Assent and becomes law. Ireland is included for
the first time and the upper age limit on military service is raised from 42 to 48. Mansion House conference held at which the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Sinn Fein, Irish Volunteers and All-for-Ireland League are represented, but not Cumann na mBan or other women’s organisations. Having accepted de Valera’s wording (approved in advance by Dr Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin) a delegation goes to Maynooth to receive the blessing of the Catholic Hierarchy. The Hierarchy approves of the Anti-Conscription Pledge adopted by the Mansion House Committee.

April 20th: ILP&TUC special delegate conference approves general strike to oppose conscription

April 21st: Almost two million people sign the pledge ‘to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal’, usually after mass at church gate stalls. Dr Bernard, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, appeals for people to not alone support conscription but to volunteer ahead of being conscripted. George Barnes, a Labour member of British government and a strong supporter of locked out workers in 1913 appeals to rank and file Irish trade unionists over the heads of ILP&TUC leadership to support the British war effort

April 23rd: ILP&TUC holds first general strike in Irish history. Successful everywhere outside Belfast. Local defence committees are set up in many parts of the country in which trades councils and local formations of the Irish Volunteers form the most important components

May 3rd: National Novena in Honour of Our Lady of Lourdes ‘to secure a general and domestic peace’.

May 4th: Clan na Gael organises anti-conscription rally in New York. New hard-line administration appointed to Dublin Castle by the British government headed by Field Marshal French as Lord Lieutenant with Edward Shortt as Chief Secretary

May 8th: The ‘German Plot’ story published by The Times claims to have evidence of a secret alliance between Sinn Fein and the German Imperial government

May 17th-18th: Most of the Sinn Fein leadership arrested

April 7th, 1918: The Irish Convention ends in failure. Although a majority of delegates, including constitutional nationalists, Southern Unionists and Labour agree to a watered-down version of the 1912 Home Rule Bill, Ulster Unionists reject the proposals

June 9th: La na mBan 1918: Irish women have day of protest against conscription. In Dublin the largest contingent is from the Irish Women Workers Union, led by Louie Bennett, Helen Chenevix and Helena Molony. Approximately 2,400 women assemble outside the union headquarters in Great Denmark Street and march to City Hall to sign the women’s pledge not to take the jobs of men conscripted into the British army. Other contingents include 400 members of Cumann na mBan and many women’s sodalities. The IWWU is the only known contingent in Dublin that did not attend mass as a body beforehand.

June 20th 1918: The Viceroy, Field Marshal French, threatens to enforce the Military Service Act unless 50,000 Irishmen join the colours but no attempt is made to carry out the threat when the volunteers fail to materialise

July 3rd: Sinn Fein, Irish Volunteers and Gaelic League banned.

November 1st: The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress holds a special conference to discuss contesting the general election. Delegates decide not to run candidates because of fears of divisions among affiliates, many of whom support Sinn Fein

November 11th: Armistice on the Western Front and the end of the threat to conscript Irish.

December 14th to 28th: The ‘khaki’ general election sees women over 30 given the vote for the first time. It takes two weeks to facilitate votes by servicemen, many of whom are still abroad. In Ireland: Sinn Fein wins 73 seats (including Countess Markievicz, the first woman elected for Dublin to the House of Commons), Unionists win 26 seats, the Irish Party six seats. In Britain the Conservatives win 357 seats, Liberals 163, Labour 61, Irish Party one and others 20. Lloyd George continues as Prime Minister. None of the Sinn Fein candidates take their seats. Instead, they convene as Dáil Éireann on January 21st, 1919
Belfast Labour ignores the ILP&TUC decision and runs three candidates who secure just over 12,000 votes compared with over 30,000 for their Unionist Labour opponents.

**1919**

**January 21st:** Dáil Eireann is convened in Dublin’s Mansion House. It adopts a Democratic Programme drafted by Tom Johnson, Bill O’Brien and Cathal O’Shannon of the ILP&TUC but many of its most radical proposals such as public ownership of the country’s natural resources and the right to be represented in the workplace by a trade union are dropped. Michael Collins and the IRB oppose these more radical clauses.

Later that day the ambush and killing of two RIC constables by members of the Irish Volunteers at Soloheadbeg in Tipperary marks the beginning of the War of Independence.

**January 25th - February 20th:** 40,000 engineering workers strike for a 44-hour week and the strike committee takes control of the city in search of a 44-hour week, but have to settle for 47 hours.

**April 14th - 25th:** The Limerick Soviet (1919) sees the local trades council take over the city in protest at the British imposition of martial law, following clashes between the British army and IRA.

**May 1919 – November 1928:** Dublin Council of Trade Unions splits, creating two rival organisations and seriously weakening the Labour movement in the capital.

**November 15th, 1919 - February 8th, 1920:** Motor Permits Strike. British trade unions initially support the strike but, unhappy at the political aspects of the dispute, negotiate a settlement with Dublin Castle, alienating many Irish members.

**1920**

**January:** Labour performs strongly in Ireland’s Municipal Elections, winning an average of 18 per cent of first preference votes nationally and over 20 per cent in Belfast. Only in Dublin did it perform poorly with 12 per cent of the vote, reflecting divisions in its ranks. However, it benefitted from Sinn Fein transfers and the Republican Labour faction led by William O’Brien, forms a ruling coalition in the city with Sinn Fein. The rival United Trades Council faction is generally found to side with disparate opposition groups comprising independents, nationalists and Unionists.

**April 12th – 14th:** General Strike in support of Republican prisoners who had been on Hunger Strike in Mountjoy prison since April 5th. Prisoners are released on third day of strike.

**May-December:** Transport workers refuse to carry armed troops or munitions, emulating the decision of London dockers not to load weapons on a ship to Poland for use against the Soviet Union. The strike severely hampers British army operations in Ireland but also brings the economy to a standstill, causing the Labour movement to call if off.

**May-June:** IRB members in various craft unions come together under the direction of Michael Collins to establish the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry workers Trade Union (IES&FTU). It aims to replace British unions that might oppose a general strike against British rule if one is called.

**July 21st:** The Belfast Pogrom begins with mass expulsion of Catholic workers in shipyards, following the execution of RIC Divisional Commissioner Smyth by the IRA in Cork. An estimated 8,000 Catholic workers lose their jobs in Belfast shipyards and factories, along with up to 4,000 Protestant trade union activists.

**August 8th:** Dáil Eireann orders boycott of Belfast goods in retaliation for workplace expulsions, but this mainly affects Catholic owned enterprises as the shipyards and engineering plants are export oriented.
September 25th: The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the largest craft union in the Belfast shipyards calls a strike demanding the reinstatement of its 400 expelled members but only 600 members respect the picket. The union expels the other 2,000 members. It is the only union to defy Loyalist vigilantes. British TUC calls on workers not to ship coal or steel to Belfast.

October 25th – December 29th: A British Labour Commission investigates conditions in Ireland and issues a damning report on the behaviour of the Crown Forces, particularly the Black and Tans and the Auxiliary Division of the RIC.

November 21st: Bloody Sunday, when 14 British officers and spies are killed by the IRA and Crown forces retaliate by killing 12 civilians at Croke Park football match between Dublin and Tipperary, and shooting two IRA prisoners in Dublin Castle.

November 30th to December 15th: The British Labour Commission carries out a fact-finding mission to Ireland.

December 29th: The Labour Party holds a Special Conference to discuss the Irish situation. It subsequently declares that the British Cabinet has ‘plainly forfeited whatever rights it may have possessed to govern Ireland’ and campaigns to end the policy of repression, calls for the withdrawal of British armed forces and immediate elections under proportional representation to allow the Irish people to create ‘whatever constitution’ they desire.

1921

May 24th: The first general election is held in Northern Ireland for the new assembly. Belfast Labour decides not to contest in the face of mass intimidation, but four members stand as independents. The offices of the Independent Labour Party, to which three of them belong, are burnt down, their meeting in the Ulster Hall is taken over and all lose their deposits. James Baird, a former leader of the Belfast engineering strike is the most successful, polling 2.4 per cent of the vote.

July 9th: Truce agreed between the British Army and IRA to come into effect on July 11th to facilitate peace talks. Renewed sectarian violence in Belfast ahead of the Truce.

July 27th: The Engineering Employers Federation demands a 6s a week cut in wages, followed by railway, shipping and other companies, sparking widespread strikes.

October 1st: British Government abolishes the Agricultural Wages Board, setting the scene for widespread cuts in pay and, or redundancies in rural Ireland.

October 22nd: Engineering and other unions starved back to work, having to concede pay cuts. Dáil Eireann Government proves powerless to defend workers living standards.

1922

February 21st: Special Delegate Conference of the ILP&TUC held in Dublin on whether to contest the Treaty election and, if so, whether to support the Treaty. Delegates vote by 104 to 49 to run candidates and accept Treaty.

February 12th-15th: Outbreak of renewed fighting in Belfast with 27 killed and 68 wounded. By the following year 500 people killed and many more injured. Most of the casualties are Catholics but significant numbers of Protestants and members of the security forces also suffer.

March – June: Widespread industrial unrest among agricultural labourers in Meath and Waterford, as well as in Munster creameries where Sir Thomas Cleeves leads the employers’ offensive to cut wages by as much as a third. In Cappoquin cattle are seized by strikers and their milk sold to help fund the strike, while creamery workers declare ‘soviets’ and sell the produce in lieu of wages. The main centres include Aherlow, Athlacca, Ballingaddy, Bansha, Bruree, Carrick-on-Suir, Kilmallock and Knocklong.
March 26th- 27th: IRA Convention held by anti-Treaty elements of IRA who reject the authority of the IRA GHQ and the Provisional Government.

March 31st: Irish Free State (Agreement) Act, 1922, passed providing for the transfer of power from the British to the Free State government in 26 counties of Ireland.

April 14th: Anti-Treaty IRA forces occupy the Four Courts and begin to occupy other public and privately-owned buildings in towns and cities, including barracks evacuated by the British.

April 24th: A General Strike Against Militarism is called in protest at the behaviour of both the Treaty and anti-Treaty forces during the Truce. There is also a discussion about expanding the Irish Citizen Army into a national Workers Army but talks founder when a majority of ICA members make it clear they support the anti-Treaty forces. Many later fight alongside the anti-Treaty IRA in the Civil War.


June 28th: The Civil War formally begins when the Provisional Government Forces open fire on the anti-Treaty forces occupying the Four Courts. The new Government postpones summoning new Dáil.

August 7th: Delegates to the ILP&TUC annual conference call on the Government to convene Dáil Eireann by August 26th or its TDs will resign en masse. When the deaths of Arthur Griffith on August 12th and Michael Collins on August 22nd lead to further delays, W T Cosgrave promises Labour that Dáil Eireann will convene no later than September 9th.

September 9th: Dáil Eireann convened. Tom Johnson becomes leader of the Opposition and attacks the new government for betraying the promises made in the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil, as well as for Civil War atrocities committed by the National Army.

September 10th – 30th: Postal workers go on strike over pay cuts. Home Affairs Minister Kevin O’Higgins says public servants can resign but cannot go on strike. Pay cuts remain but Government concedes the right of public servants to strike.

1923

April 30th: IRA Chief of Staff Frank Aiken calls a ceasefire that effectively sees the end of the Civil War but another one erupts within the Labour movement after Jim Larkin returns from America on the same day and seeks to regain control of the ITGWU.

Comhdhaíl na gCeardchumann

COMÓRTAS FÍSEÁN YOUTH CONNECT AR
Ról an tSaothair, na hInsne agus na hAicme sa Streachaílit ar son Shaoirse na hÉireann

Tá Comórtas Físeán, ar nós na cinn a eagraíodh blianta roimhe seo, á reáchtáil ag Comhdhaíl na gCeardchumann, mar shampla – Comóradh Céad Bliain an Fhrithdhúnta in 2013. Tá sé mar aidhm leis bealach cruthaitheach a chur ar fáil do dhaltáid a chuideoidh leo foghlaim faoi stair na tíre agus tuiscint níos fearr a fháil uirthi agus mar a leanann sí de thionchar a bheith aici ar an saol in Éirinn sa lá atá ann.

Ról an tSaothair, na hInsne agus na hAicme sa Streachaílit ar son Shaoirse na hÉireann, téama chomórtas na bliana seo. Leis an téama seo aistriútear an fócas atá ar an mbéim thraidisiúnta a chuirtear ar ardpholaitíocht agus ar ghníomhaíocht mhíleata go dtí an taithí a bhí ag formhór de mhuintir na hÉireann le linn na tréimhse réabhlóideach agus an tionchar a bhí ag an tréimhse sin orthu ach go háirithe.

Cuspóir

Cuirtear uirlis oideachais ar fáil sa chomórtas a chuideoidh le daltaí a gcuid scileanna cumarsáide, dearaidh agus teicniúla a fhorbairt. Foghlaimíodh na daltaí, trí chleachtadh, faoi bhainistíu tionscadal, tosaíocht a thabhairt do ghniomhaoichtaí, spriocanna a bhaint amach, taighde agus iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar shainchealanna a bhionn conspóideach go minic chomh maith le tionchar na tréimhse réabhlóideach a fháil uirthi.

Braith daltaí a ghlac páirt sa chomórtas roimhe seo go raibh an-spraoi ag baint leis ach go raibh dúshláin ag baint leis freisin agus go bhfuil siad freisin agus go bhfuil siad ag déanamh staidéir air mar gheall ar struchtúr an chomórtais.

Curacoaimh Staire

Baineann ábhar an mhodúil seo leis an gcuid maidir le: Tóraíocht an fhlaithiúnais agus tionchar na criochnaithe 1912-1949: laistigh de stair na hÉireann 1815-1993. Déantar sin ar na bealaí atá molta sa curacoaimh staire, bainiste ar an taithi a bhi ag daoine agus ar aitheantas a thabhairt don tábhacht a bhain leis an athrú a tharla ina saol, ar eascair sé as tionchar imeachtaí polaitiochta, smaointe, gluaiseachtaí sóisialta, nualaithe teicneolaiochta nó forbairtí eacnamaiochta.

Cé atá i dteideal cur isteach air?

Tá GACH dalta meánscoile agus dalta Ógtheagmhála i dteideal cur isteach ar an gcomórtas i bhfoirme ina bhfuil idir beirt agus ceathrar daltaí lena múinteoir/meantóir/áisitheoir**. Is féidir le gach scol aon chuid Ógtheagmhála a chur isteach d'fhorróid foirme agus is mian leo a chur isteach. Ni AON TÁILLÍ IONTRA'LA i gceist. Tá cead ag scoileanna agus ionaid Ógtheagmhála teacht le chéile agus comhfhoirne a chur isteach más mian leann scoileacht amhaildhe. Beidh spéis ar leith ag daltaí
idirbhliana ann. Tri chur isteach ar an gcomórtas seo, beidh gach foireann faoi choinnioll agus faoi cheangal théarmaí agus coinniollacha an chomórtais. Má bhíonn aon cheisteananna eile agat nó má tá tú ag iarraidh soíléiríu a fháil mairid le haon ní, déan teagmháil le youth4decentwork@gmail.com.

Mar a chuirtear isteach ar an gcomórtas
Meán oíche Déardaoin an 19 Nollaig 2019 an dáta deiridh is féidir le foirne ar mian leo cur isteach ar an gcomórtas clárú. Déantar clárúchán iomlán ar líne ag www.youth-connect.ie áit a n-íarrfar an t-eolas seo a leanas ort:

- Ainm agus Seoladh na Scoile
- Ainm, Ríomhphost agus Uimhir Theileafóin an Mhúinteora/Áisitheora
- Ainm na Foirne
- Ainm gach ball den fhoireann
- Ainm, Ríomhphost agus Uimhir Ghutháin Theagmháil na Foirne

Ar clárúchán a fháil, cuífear riomhphost deimhnithe chuig foirne lena gclárúchán chomh maith leis na téarmá agus coinniollacha uile.

Na rialacha a bhaineann le fiseán a dhéanamh
Is féidir fiseáin ina bhfuil acmhainní teicniúla chomh maith le hiontrála chomórtais roimhe seo a fháil ag www.youth-connect.ie. Ba cheart duit féin agus do d’hoireann féachaint ar na fiseáin sin mar chuid den próiseas pleanála atá agaibh.

Ní mór don fhiseán fiorchomhoibriú foirne idir na daltaí a léiriú. Beifear ag süil go ndéanfaidh gach foireann comhfhiseán 3 nóiméad atá nua, cruthaitheach agus úr nua (bunábhar ar fad sa sothar) inar cheart na nithe seo a áireamh:

- 3 phríomhthortha foghlama atá bunaithe ar thaighde na foirne mairid leis an téama a tharrainneodh aird ar ról/tionchar na gCeardchumham na streachait aon Shaoirse na hÉireann agus an tábhacht a thabhacht do bhaineann le hobair fhiúntach;
- Ba cheart don fhiseán leis an ghrúpa mairid leis an téama seo a thaispeáint agus cad is bri leis do dhaoinn óg sa lá atá inniu ann;
- Éileofar bunteideal fiseáin ar gach iontráil agus í á iósódáil agat;
- Creidiúnti dúnta – ní mór ainnmeacha na mball foirne uile, ainnm an mhúinteora, ainnmeacha aisteoirí eile, ainnm na scoile agus aon duine eile a raibh baint acu leis an bhfiseán a dhéanamh a lua.
- NÍ MÓR don fhiseán a bheith níos faide ná TRÍ nóiméad. Tabhóidh fiseán atá níos faide ná 3 nóiméad ach níos lú ná 3.5 nóiméad pointí pionóis.

Cén cineál stile fiseáin ar cheart dúnna a úsáid?
Nil aon teorainn ann mairid le stil chruthaitheach an fhiseáin. Tá cead ag daltaí stil ar bith ar mian leo a úsáid lena n-áirítear, ach gan a bheithe teoranta dóibh, beochan, beochan iomhá ar iomhá, clár faisnéise, dráma, dráma grinn, aicsean, coirscéalta, bleachtaíreacht, uafás, clár teagaisc, fiorrasach agus go leor eile.
Ní mór don fhiseán a bheith in ardghléine (formáid HD) agus a bheith nach lú ná 500MB. Ní mór dó a bheith ar ardchaidheán lena chinntiú gur féidir an fiseán a thaispeáint ar scáileán móir pictiúirí ina chás go n-ainmneofai an fiseán i gcomhair léirithe.

Ní mór don fhiseán/bheochan obair agus léiriú na foirne féin a léiriú. Chun spreagadh a fháil, fíche cuid na hiontrálacha agus na buaiteoirí ó bhlianta roimh seo ag www.youth-connect.ie Sa chás gur duine faoi ais (faoi 18 mbliana d’aois) atá ann, ní mór don tuismitheoir/caomhnóir foirm toilithe a shintiú. Is féidir cóip de na foirméachta comhlánaithe a scanadh agus a chur ar aghaidh chuig youth4decentwork@gmail.com tri úsáid a bhaint as teideal an abhair – foirméachta toilithe fiseán. Is féidir foirméacha toilithe a íoslódáil ónár láthair gréasáin.

Mar a chuirtear fiseán isteach
Ní mór an leagan deiridh den fhiseán a chur ar aghaidh TRÁTH NACH DÉANAÍ NÁ 5pm Déardaoin an 20 Eanáir 2020. Ar fhiseán a fháil, cuirfear scéala chuig foirne.

Ní ghlacfar le hiontrálacha a bheidh déanach.

**NÍ MÓR do mhúinteoir/mheantóir/áisitheoir baint dhíreach a bheith acu leis an tionscadal ar mhaithe le ham, tacaíocht, comhairle agus acmhainní atá riachtanach a chur ar fáil. Is féidir le meantóir a bheith ina mhuinteoir/múinteoir, ina oibrí/hoibrí Ogtheamhála nó ina áisitheoir/áisitheoir fásta i gclub óige. Ní mór do mheantóir a bheith ina dhhuine fásta freagracht atá ar fáil chun bheith ag obair leis an bhfoireann atá ag tacú leis an tionscadal le linn na bliana, a bheith toilteanach agus in ann dul in éineacht leis an bhfoireann chuig searmanas bronnnta na ngradam agus páirt a ghacadh nua daiseanna sa chás go mbeadh an bua ag an bhfoireann.

Lorgófar cead tu ism ith eora/caomh n aí áfach, do bh aill den fh oirean n atá faoi 18 m blian a d’aois chun páirt a ghacadh in aon cheann de na daiseanna.

Mar a fhaightear tuilleadh eolais
Ná biodh drogall ort teagmháil dhíreach a dhéanamh linn ag youth4decentwork@gmail.com nó ag info@youth-connect.ie áit a gcinntoidh muid go bhfuighidh d’fhóireann cóip den acmhainn teagaisc/scoile a ghabhann leis an gcomórtas seo.
Part II
Key themes
II.I - Ireland, Socialist Pioneers and the emergence of the modern Labour movement

1822: Robert Owen, Britain’s first prominent utopian socialist, visits Ireland. A self-made wealthy industrialist in Lanarkshire, Scotland, he believed that the co-operative movement formed the basis for ending economic exploitation, social deprivation and other negative aspects of the industrial revolution. Owen visited Maynooth where the president, Dr Crotty, assured staff and students that Owen’s ideas posed no threat. Lord Cloncurry was Owen’s host for part of his visit and the Freeman’s Journal praised ‘his plans for the amelioration of the people of Ireland by means of an improved system of employment and instruction’.

The Duke of Leinster, the Viceroy and other members of the ruling class hoped his methods might address the agrarian unrest caused by the famine conditions of 1822-3. He saw co-operatives and communal production of goods and services as ameliorating the waste caused by competition. Far from advocating class conflict or the expropriation of the ruling class, he saw his approach as mutually beneficial to all and Daniel O’Connell declared after a public lecture in Dublin that he would ‘subscribe to Owen’s Hibernian Philanthropic Society’. He added that Owen ‘might do some good and cannot do any harm’.

Among those inspired by Owen’s philosophy was John Scott Vandaleur a substantial landowner in Co Clare. He set about improving his two large estates along Owenite lines and was spurred into more radical experiments when agrarian unrest increased, with landless labourers and subsistence smallholders openly defying the military and clergy, demanding a minimum wage of a shilling a day (five cent) instead of eight pence (four cent).

His own land agent was shot dead and his family fled to Limerick while he contacted E T Craig, editor of Lancashire Co-Operator and president of the Owenian Co-Operative Society to ask his help. Craig became secretary of the new co-operative and Vandaleur the President. The latter also appointed the treasurer but the other members were elected by the 52 other members, including women. The estate leased 618 acres to the co-op. It prospered but unfortunately Vandaleur contracted gambling debts and was declared a bankrupt. The family took possession of the estate and disbanded the co-op. It has been described as ‘incontrovertibly, the most progressive and innovative attempt to deal with the land and social crises of early nineteenth century Ireland’.

1824: William Thompson, a wealthy Cork landowner, published An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to Human Happiness, applied to the newly proposed System of Voluntary Equality of Wealth. Thompson dismissed Owen’s proposals to create a co-operative commonwealth under the prevailing political order as little more than ‘pauper management’. Unlike Owen he saw new, more democratic political structures as essential to introducing progressive social change. He believed that all wealth was created by labour and ownership of property should belong to these wealth producers.

Thompson’s labour theory of value anticipated in some ways the writings of Karl Marx, although not to the extent that some commentators, including James Connolly, claimed.

Thompson caused further controversy by collaborating with Anna Wheeler on a book entitled, An Appeal of one-half of the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men, to retain them in political and thence in civil and domestic slavery published in 1825. The daughter of a Protestant clergyman she had taken the then unusual step of leaving her abusive husband to live on her own with her daughters and travelled widely. This call for female emancipation outraged
public opinion and further marginalised Thompson. Although he never established a co-operative, he did bequeath most of his estate to that objective. The will was contested by his family and after 25 years of law suits it was overturned in favour of his relations.

The repeal of the Combination Acts, introduced to suppress sedition during the French Revolution, saw the decriminalisation of trade unions. This allowed craft workers to organise openly in pursuit of better wages and conditions. But they only comprised 240,000 workers out of 3.2 million wage earners in Ireland, half of whom were farm labourers relying on traditional secret societies such as the Whiteboys to protect their interests.

By contrast, craft unions sought to limit the numbers of apprentices that employers could recruit into their trades and objected to the employment of non-union workers. They saw controlling the supply of labour as putting them in a better position from which to bargain. Dublin was the main centre of trade union activity in these years and developed a reputation for militancy. As a liberal on economic issues, Daniel O’Connell was opposed to trade unions, which he saw as undermining Irish economic growth and imposing an anti-competitive burden on businesses. He was severely critical of their strong-arm tactics and they did moderate their tactics in response to his attacks, even invoking the memory of the Mediaeval guilds to add to their legitimacy.

Socialist ideas had little influence in their ranks and, despite O’Connell’s attacks, they were very strong supporters of his campaigns for Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Act of Union. Radical activists such as Fergus O’Connor found an outlet for their energy in the British Chartist movement, which demanded universal male adult suffrage and annual parliaments. It also supported Repeal of the Union for Ireland.

1856: Friedrich Engels travels to Ireland with his first common law wife Mary Burns, an Irish immigrant and millhand in Manchester who introduces him to the Little Ireland slums in the city. He also visited Ireland with her sister Lizzie Burns after Mary’s death and later marries Lizzie on her deathbed. His interest, and that of his great collaborator Karl Marx, in Ireland is believed to have originated with the Burns sisters. Ireland would become a major source of research for Marx’s main work Capital. From believing that Ireland’s problems of underdevelopment would only be resolved after Britain had become socialist Marx had come, by 1867, the year of the Fenian rising, to the conclusion that Irish freedom was a necessary precondition to a socialist revolution in Britain. Engels would tell one of their leading disciples, Karl Kautsky, in 1870, that Ireland and Poland ‘had not only the right but even the duty to become nationalist before they could become internationalist’.

1858: When the Fenian Brotherhood was founded in Dublin by James Stephens, craft union members were quick to identify with it. This link would continue into the next century and craftworkers provided much of the leadership and many of the rank and file of the IRB and, from 1913, the Irish Volunteers. Ireland’s economic and social woes were blamed on English rule and the corollary of that was that these could be cured by independence. Later white-collar workers were also recruited to Fenian ranks and some of the leading figures in the struggle for independence were drawn from their ranks, most notably Michael Collins. However, this group was much slower to unionise.

1862: Waterford Trades Council is formed. The occasion was marked by the playing of plaintif nationalist airs and the RIC Special Branch regarded it as ‘a nest of Fenianism’.

1863: The United Trades Association of Dublin is formed ‘to promote the interest of skilled labour and native manufacture’. It prohibits from its deliberations ‘all religious and political discussions’, or ‘speculative theories on the rights of labour’. The focus is on promoting the interests of its craft affiliates.

1864: The International Working Men’s Association (IWMA), or ‘First International’ is established and the treatment of Fenian prisoners becomes the basis of one of its initial campaigns. After the Fenian
Rising the issue of an amnesty became one of its main demands, prompting Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa to write expressing his thanks for the support that the IWMA was giving to the Fenian cause. John Devoy and James Stephens both joined the IWMA when they went to America and Eugene Dupont, the French representative on the IWMA said that 'Fenianism is the vindication of an oppressed people of its rights to social and political existence'.

1864: Belfast saw serious sectarian rioting as the influx of cheap Catholic labour, including navvies to build the new docks, labourers to build factories and houses and women workers for the linen mills coincided with a Protestant revivalist movement in Ulster. Historians differ over cause and effect but there is no doubt that large scale immigration, growing nationalist aspirations and fears for the predominantly Protestant identity of the city fed off each other. Ironically, the rise of the linen industry was due to a cotton shortage caused by a US navy blockade of Confederate ports. The number of power looms rose from 4,900 in 1861 to 12,000 by 1867. The navvies employed on the new docks and the creation of Queen’s Island on reclaimed land were paving the way for shipyards. These were needed to meet demand that Liverpool yards could no longer meet. Harland & Wolff was the biggest yard, employing 500 workers in 1861, 2,400 in 1870 and 9,000 by 1900. Unlike the linen mills and harbour development, the workers coming to build ships and work in the engineering plants were mainly skilled workers from England and Scotland who identified with the Protestant communities within which they settled. Differences in religion, earnings and living standards underpinned the growing divisions over religious affiliations and political identities in the city. The rapid increase in population also caused a housing crisis. While craft workers were mainly unionised, unskilled workers were not, creating further divisions in Belfast labour.

1868: Joseph Patrick McDonnell, a Dublin Fenian, becomes a member of the General Council of the International and later the corresponding secretary for Ireland. However, most of the Irish branches he set up were among Fenian exiles in London where exposure to urban life and socialist ideas further radicalised many of them.

1872: Branches of the IWMA are established in Belfast, Cork, Cootehill and Dublin but soon collapse because of intense clerical opposition. There was also some brief activity in Ennis, Limerick and Tipperary. One of the main problems faced by the IWMA was its support for ‘the infamous Paris Commune’, which united public opinion from the Catholic clergy to the Southern Unionist Irish Times. In Cork the International enjoyed the most success and recruited up to 300 members but the Cork Examiner denounced members as apologists for ‘the Communists of Paris’ and the IWMA's leading figure John de Morgan was dismissed from his teaching post. These red scare tactics would be used repeatedly against radical socialists in future decades. McDonnell would eventually emigrate to America, where he worked as a journalist and trade union organiser tackling issues such as child labour, health and safety in the workplace, and union recognition.

1880: The British Trades Union Congress holds its annual conference in Dublin. It emphasised it was not interested in attacking capital and the Irish delegate of the Carpenters’ union, William Abraham, a future Irish Party MP for Dublin condemned the co-operative movement as unsuitable for Ireland because it would destroy private investment. Many British delegates were shocked by the long working hours and low pay of Irish workers.

1881: Belfast Trades Council is formed on the initiative of Alexander Bowman, a flax dresser and the founding secretary. He is a Liberal Home Ruler.

1885: The Dublin Democratic Association is established with strong links to the Social Democratic Federation in Britain, founded by Henry M Hyndman, Britain’s first significant follower of Marx. When it split shortly afterwards a Dublin Branch of the breakaway Socialist League was formed. Meanwhile, the strong coercive policies adopted by the Conservative Government to combat the Land War had led many British trade unionists and socialists to identify with the Irish demand for Home Rule and land reform. British delegations began travelling to Ireland, but it was mainly to visit distressed rural areas. Many British based socialists, including James Connolly, who was born and spent his early
years in Scotland, were heavily influenced by the American writer Henry George, who argued in his book *Progress and Poverty* for land nationalisation on the basis that, ‘The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air’. However, attempts by Michael Davitt and other radical nationalists to have the Land League make land nationalisation one of its objectives were defeated by Parnell and the predominantly conservative attitudes of the Home Rule leadership. Subsequently the British labour movement tended to take its lead on Irish issues from the Irish Party. The latter generally supported social and political reforms advocated by trade unions, Liberal and later Labour MPs. In return they tended to respect its right to pursue more conservative policies in Ireland, such as excluding religious institutions from the Factory Acts, facilitating the creation of Magdalene laundries. Meanwhile, British trade unions such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, and Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants colonised the Irish Labour movement. Emmet O’Connor has described this process as ‘The anglicisation of Labour’, which was ‘just one component of a broader process after the Great Famine, reflected most obviously in the language shift from Irish to English; the adoption of English social culture, such as songs, music hall, theatre, and sports like soccer, cricket and rugby, and the increasing Anglo-centrism of the Irish media’.

**1886:** The first Home Rule Bill sees Alexander Bowman lose his position on Belfast Trades Council when he runs, unsuccessfully, as an Independent Labour Party candidate in the general election. It is an early indicator of how the Home Rule issue will become a major problem within the Irish labour movement, dividing workers along national and religious lines.

Meanwhile in Dublin, the Council of Trade Unions defeats an attempt to cut the wages of bottle makers by 25% and import Swedish strike breakers to force through the cuts. Victory sees the DCTU appreciate the importance of international class solidarity so that ‘it would no longer be possible for capitalists to put one class of workmen against another’. John Nannetti, a printer becomes President of the DCTU and John Simmons, a joiner, becomes Secretary.

*Padraig Yeates*
II.II - Early Socialist thinking

Robert Owen was a self-made industrialist. Originally from Wales, he made his fortune in Scotland. He based his utopian socialist ideas on his own experience of the industrial revolution, which provides a vivid picture of life in communities transformed by the industrial revolution. When he visited Ireland in the 1820’s he met figures as varied as the President of Maynooth College, the Viceroy and Daniel O’Connell. (See page 26 above). The following extracts are from his book, *A New View of Society* published in 1816, which not only describe the evils caused by the industrial revolution but how they might be addressed.

‘According to the last returns under the Population Act, the poor and working classes of Great Britain and Ireland have been found to exceed fifteen million of persons, or nearly three-fourths of the population of the British Islands.

‘The characters of these persons are now permitted to be very generally formed without proper guidance or direction, and, in many cases, under circumstances which directly impel them to a course of extreme vice and misery; thus, rendering them the worst and most dangerous subjects in the empire…

‘In this state the world has continued to the present time; its evils have been and are continually increasing; they cry aloud for efficient corrective measures, which if we longer delay, general disorder must ensue….

Owen argues that,

‘Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means,’ which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men.’

New Lanark

He goes on to give an account of New Lanark and how his approach can moderate the worst aspects of the Industrial Revolution, starting with the children because:

‘Children are, without exception, passive and wonderfully contrived compounds; which, by an accurate previous and subsequent attention, founded on a correct knowledge of the subject, may be formed collectively to have any human character. And although these compounds, like all the other works of nature, possess endless varieties, yet they partake of that plastic quality, which, by perseverance under judicious management, may be ultimately moulded into the very image of rational wishes and desires’.

[Unfortunately], ‘the present race of men has also instructed their children as they had been previously instructed, and are equally unblameable for any defects which their systems contain...’

‘How much longer shall we continue to allow generation after generation to be taught crime from their infancy, and, when so taught, hunt them like beasts of the forest, until they are entangled beyond escape in the toils and nets of the law? when, if the circumstances of those poor unpitied sufferers had been reversed with those who are even surrounded with the pomp and dignity of justice, these latter would have been at the bar of the culprit, and the former would have been in the judgement seat.

‘In the year 1784 the late Mr Dale, of Glasgow, founded a manufactory for spinning of cotton, near the falls of the Clyde, in the county of Lanark, in Scotland; and about that period cotton mills were first introduced into the northern part of the kingdom.

‘It was the power which could be obtained from the falls of water that induced Mr Dale to erect
his mills in this situation; for in other respects it was not well chosen. The country around was uncultivated; the inhabitants were poor and few in number; and the roads in the neighbourhood were so bad, that the Falls, now so celebrated, were then unknown to strangers.

'It was therefore necessary to collect a new population to supply the infant establishment with labourers. This, however, was no light task; for all the regularly trained Scotch peasantry disdained the idea of working early and late, day after day, within cotton mills. Two modes then only remained of obtaining these labourers; the one, to procure children from the various public charities of the country; and the other, to induce families to settle around the works.

Experiments in social housing

'To accommodate the first, a large house was erected, which ultimately contained about 500 children, who were procured chiefly from workhouses and charities in Edinburgh. These children were to be fed, clothed, and educated; and these duties Mr Dale performed with the unwearied benevolence which it is well known he possessed.'

'To obtain the second, a village was built; and the houses were let at a low rent to such families as could be induced to accept employment in the mills; but such was the general dislike to that occupation at the time, that, with a few exceptions, only persons destitute of friends, employment, and character, were found willing to try the experiment; and of these a sufficient number to supply a constant increase of the manufactory could not be obtained. It was therefore deemed a favour on the part even of such individuals to reside at the village, and, when taught the business, they grew so valuable to the establishment, that they became agents not to be governed contrary to their own inclinations.

'Mr Dale's principal avocations were at a distance from the works, which he seldom visited more than once for a few hours in three or four months; he was therefore under the necessity of committing the management of the establishment to various servants with more or less power.

'Those who have a practical knowledge of mankind will readily anticipate the character which a population so collected and constituted would acquire. It is therefore scarcely necessary to state, that the community by degrees was formed under these circumstances into a very wretched society, every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and vice and immorality prevailed to a monstrous extent. The population lived in idleness, in poverty, in almost every kind of crime; consequently, in debt, out of health, and in misery. Yet to make matters still worse although the cause proceeded from the best possible motive, a conscientious adherence to principle the whole was under a strong sectarian influence, which gave a marked and decided preference to one set of religious opinions over all others, and the professors of the favoured opinions were the privileged of the community.'

Child Labour

'The boarding-house containing the children presented a very different scene. The benevolent proprietor spared no expense to give comfort to the poor children. The rooms provided for them were spacious, always clean, and well ventilated; the food was abundant, and of the best quality; the clothes were neat and useful; a surgeon was kept in constant pay, to direct how to prevent or cure disease; and the best instructors which the country afforded were appointed to teach such branches of education as were deemed likely to be useful to children in their situation. Kind and well-disposed persons were appointed to superintend all their proceedings. Nothing, in short, at first sight seemed wanting to render it a most complete charity.
'But to defray the expense of these well-devised arrangements, and to support the establishment generally, it was absolutely necessary that the children should be employed within the mills from six o’clock in the morning till seven in the evening, summer and winter; and after these hours their education commenced. The directors of the public charities, from mistaken economy, would not consent to send the children under their care to cotton mills, unless the children were received by the proprietors at the ages of six, seven and eight. And Mr Dale was under the necessity of accepting them at those ages, or of stopping the manufactory which he had commenced.

'It is not to be supposed that children so young could remain, with the intervals of meals only, from six in the morning until seven in the evening, in constant employment, on their feet, within cotton mills, and afterwards acquire much proficiency in education. And so it proved; for many of them became dwarfs in body and mind, and some of them were deformed. Their labour through the day and their education at night became so irksome, that numbers of them continually ran away, and almost all looked forward with impatience and anxiety to the expiration of their apprenticeship of seven, eight, and nine years, which generally expired when they were from thirteen to fifteen years old. At this period of life, unaccustomed to provide for themselves, and unacquainted with the world, they usually went to Edinburgh or Glasgow, where boys and girls were soon assailed by the innumerable temptations which all large towns present, and to which many of them fell sacrifices.

‘Thus, Mr Dale’s arrangements, and his kind solicitude for the comfort and happiness of these children, were rendered in their ultimate effect almost nugatory. They were hired by him and sent to be employed, and without their labour he could not support them; but, while under his care, he did all that any individual, circumstanced as he was, could do for his fellow creatures. The error proceeded from the children being sent from the workhouses at an age much too young for employment. They ought to have been detained four years longer, and educated; and then some of the evils which followed would have been prevented.

‘If such be a true picture, not overcharged, of parish apprentices to our manufacturing system, under the best and most humane regulations, in what colours must it be exhibited under the worst?'

Under new management

‘Mr Dale was advancing in years: he had no son to succeed him; and, finding the consequences just described to be the result of all his strenuous exertions for the improvement and happiness of his fellow creatures, it is not surprising that he became disposed to retire from the cares of the establishment. He accordingly sold it to some English merchants and manufacturers; one of whom, under the circumstances just narrated, undertook the management of the concern, and fixed his residence in the midst of the population. This individual had been previously in the management of large establishments, employing a number of workpeople, in the neighbourhood of Manchester, and, in every case, by the steady application of certain general principles, he succeeded in reforming the habits of those under his care, and who always, among their associates in similar employment, appeared conspicuous for their good conduct. With this previous success in remodelling English character, but ignorant of the local ideas, manners, and customs, of those now committed to his management, the stranger commenced his task.

‘At that time the lower classes of Scotland, like those of other countries, had strong prejudices against strangers having any authority over them, and particularly against the English, few of whom had then settled in Scotland, and not one in the neighbourhood of the scenes under description. It is also well known that even the Scotch peasantry and working classes possess the habit of making observations and reasoning thereon with great acuteness; and in the
present case those employed naturally concluded that the new purchasers intended merely
to make the utmost profit by the establishment, from the abuses of which many of themselves
were then deriving support. The persons employed at these works were therefore strongly
prejudiced against the new director of the establishment, because he was a
stranger, and from England - because he succeeded Mr Dale, under whose proprietorship they
acted almost as they liked because his religious creed was not theirs - and because they
concluded that the works would be governed by new laws and regulations, calculated to
squeeze, as they often termed it, the greatest sum of gain out of their labour.

‘In consequence, from the day he arrived amongst them every means which ingenuity could
devise was set to work to counteract the plan which he attempted to introduce; and for two
years it was a regular attack and defence of prejudices and malpractices between the manager
and the population of the place, without the former being able to make much progress, or to
convince the latter of the sincerity of his good intentions for their welfare. He, however, did
not lose his patience, his temper, or his confidence in the certain success of the principles on
which he founded his conduct.

‘These principles ultimately prevailed: the population could not continue to resist a firm well-
directed kindness, administering justice to all. They therefore slowly and cautiously began to
give him some portion of their confidence; and as this increased, he was enabled more and
more to develop his plans for their amelioration. It may with truth be said, that at this period
they possessed almost all the vices and very few of the virtues of a social community. Theft
and the receipt of stolen goods was their trade, idleness and drunkenness their habit,
falsehood and deception their garb, dissensions, civil and religious, their daily practice; they
united only in a zealous systematic opposition to their employers.

‘Here then was a fair field on which to try the efficacy in practice of principles supposed
capable of altering any characters. The manager formed his plans accordingly. He spent some
time in finding out the full extent of the evil against which he had to contend, and in tracing
the true causes which had produced and were continuing those effects. He found that all was
distrust, disorder, and disunion; and he wished to introduce confidence, regularity, and
harmony. He therefore began to bring forward his various expedients to withdraw the
unfavourable circumstances by which they had hitherto been surrounded, and to replace
them by others calculated to produce a happier result. He soon discovered that theft was
extended through almost all the ramifications of the community, and the receipt of stolen
goods through all the country around. To remedy this evil, not one legal punishment was
inflicted, not one individual imprisoned, even for an hour; but checks and other regulations
of prevention were introduced; a short plain explanation of the immediate benefits they would
derive from a different conduct was inculcated by those instructed for the purpose, who had
the best powers of reasoning among themselves. They were at the same time instructed how
to direct their industry in legal and useful occupations, by which, without danger or disgrace,
they could really earn more than they had previously obtained by dishonest practices. Thus,
the difficulty of committing the crime was increased, the detection afterwards rendered easier,
the habit of honest industry formed, and the pleasure of good conduct experienced.

‘Drunkenness was attacked in the same manner; it was discountenanced on every occasion
by those who had charge of any department: its destructive and pernicious effects were
frequently stated by his own more prudent comrades, at the proper moment when the
individual was soberly suffering from the effects of his previous excess; pot- and public-houses
were gradually removed from the immediate vicinity of their dwellings; the health and comfort
of temperance were made familiar to them; by degrees drunkenness disappeared, and many
who were habitual bacchanalians are now conspicuous for undeviating sobriety.

‘Falsehood and deception met with a similar fate: they were held in disgrace; their practical
evils were shortly explained; and every countenance was given to truth and open conduct.
The pleasure and substantial advantages derived from the latter soon overcame the impolicy, error, and consequent misery, which the former mode of acting had created.

‘Dissensions and quarrels were undermined by analogous expedients. When they could not be readily adjusted between the parties themselves, they were stated to the manager; and as in such cases both disputants were usually more or less in the wrong, that wrong was in as few words as possible explained, forgiveness and friendship recommended, and one simple and easily remembered precept inculcated, as the most valuable rule for their whole conduct, and the advantages of which they would experience every moment of their lives; viz. - ‘That in future they should endeavour to use the same active exertions to make each other happy and comfortable, as they had hitherto done to make each other miserable; and by carrying this short memorandum in their mind, and applying it on all occasions, they would soon render that place a paradise, which, from the most mistaken principle of action, they now made the abode of misery.’ The experiment was tried: the parties enjoyed the gratification of this new mode of conduct; references rapidly subsided; and now serious differences are scarcely known.’

Sectarian conflict

‘Considerable jealousies also existed on account of one religious sect possessing a decided preference over the others. This was corrected by discontinuing that preference, and by giving a uniform encouragement to those who conducted themselves well among all the various religious persuasions; by recommending the same consideration to be shown to the conscientious opinions of each sect, on the ground that all must believe the particular doctrines which they had been taught, and consequently that all were in that respect upon an equal footing, nor was it possible yet to say which was right or wrong. It was likewise inculcated that all should attend to the essence of religion, and not act as the world was now taught and trained to do; that is, to overlook the substance and essence of religion, and devote their talents, time, and money, to that which is far worse than its shadow, sectarianism.’

[Instead of] ‘sectarian animosity and ignorant intolerance... each [individual] retains full liberty of conscience, and in consequence each partakes of the sincere friendship of many sects instead of one. They act with cordiality together in the same departments and pursuits, and associate as though the whole community were not of different sectarian persuasions; and not one evil ensues.

‘The same principles were applied to correct the irregular intercourse of the sexes: such conduct was discountenanced and held in disgrace; fines were levied upon both parties for the use of the support fund of the community. (This fund arose from each individual contributing one sixtieth part of their wages, which, under their management, was applied to support the sick, and injured by accident, and the aged.) But because they had once unfortunately offended against the established laws and customs of society, they were not forced to become vicious, abandoned, and miserable; the door was left open for them to return to the comforts of kind friends and respected acquaintances; and, beyond any previous expectation, the evil became greatly diminished.

‘The system of receiving apprentices from public charities was abolished; permanent settlers with large families were encouraged, and comfortable houses were built for their accommodation.’
Ameliorating child labour

‘The practice of employing children in the mills, of six, seven and eight years of age, was discontinued, and their parents advised to allow them to acquire health and education until they were ten years old. (It may be remarked, that even this age is too early to keep them at constant employment in manufactories, from six in the morning to seven in the evening. Far better would it be for the children, their parents, and for society, that the first should not commence employment until they attain the age of twelve, when their education might be finished, and their bodies would be more competent to undergo the fatigue and exertions required of them. When parents can be trained to afford this additional time to their children without inconvenience, they will, of course, adopt the practice now recommended.)

‘The children were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, during five years, that is, from five to ten, in the village school, without expense to their parents. All the modern improvements in education have been adopted, or are in process of adoption. (To avoid the inconveniences which must ever arise from the introduction of a particular creed into a school, the children are taught to read in such books as inculcate those precepts of the Christian religion, which are common to all denominations.) They may therefore be taught and well-trained before they engage in any regular employment. Another important consideration is, that all their instruction is rendered a pleasure and delight to them; they are much more anxious for the hour of school-time to arrive than to end; they therefore make a rapid progress.’

Home Improvements

‘During the period that these changes were going forward, attention was given to the domestic arrangements of the community.

‘Their houses were rendered more comfortable, their streets were improved, the best provisions were purchased, and sold to them at low rates, yet covering the original expense, and under such regulations as taught them how to proportion their expenditure to their income. Fuel and clothes were obtained for them in the same manner; and no advantage was attempted to be taken of them, or means used to deceive them.

‘In consequence, their animosity and opposition to the stranger subsided, their full confidence was obtained, and they became satisfied that no evil was intended them; they were convinced that a real desire existed to increase their happiness upon those grounds alone on which it could be permanently increased. All difficulties in the way of future improvement vanished. They were taught to be rational, and they acted rationally. Thus, both parties experienced the incalculable advantages of the system which had been adopted. Those employed became industrious, temperate, healthy, faithful to their employers, and kind to each other. While the proprietors were deriving services from their attachment, almost without inspection, far beyond those which could be obtained by any other means than those of mutual confidence and kindness....’

‘Let it not, therefore, be longer said that evil or injurious actions cannot be prevented, or that the most rational habits in the rising generation cannot be universally formed.’

Universal application

‘The experiment narrated shows that this is not hypothesis and theory. The principles may be with confidence stated to be universal, and applicable to all times, persons, and circumstances.’

‘They were applied to the community at New Lanark, at first under many of the most discouraging circumstances, but persevered in for sixteen years, effected a complete change
in the general character of the village, containing upwards of 2,000 inhabitants, and into which, also, there was a constant influx of newcomers. But as the promulgation of new miracles is not for present times, it is not pretended that under such circumstances one and all are become wise and good; or, that they are free from error. But it may be truly stated, that they now constitute a very improved society; that their worst habits are gone, and that their minor ones will soon disappear under a continuance of the application of the same principles.

[Owen asks], ‘What then remains to prevent such a system from being immediately adopted into national practice? Nothing, surely, but a general destitution of the knowledge of the practice.’


II.III - Living and working conditions in Ireland: Pre 1917

Pre-1917: Agriculture was the largest source of paid employment for men, as was domestic service for women. However, there were important regional variations. For instance, Belfast was by far the largest source of industrial jobs in Ireland for men and women. While only ten per cent of the Irish workforce was engaged in industry the figure was 33 per cent in Belfast, where almost 40 per cent of all manufactured goods were produced, including over 80 per cent of ships.

Living standards were significantly higher in rural areas because food and shelter were relatively more plentiful and cheap. In towns skilled workers and the professional classes enjoyed much higher incomes and better accommodation than the unskilled. Casual workers might earn as little as 15s to 18s a week while a printer or bricklayer would earn £2 (40s). White collar workers’ rates varied considerably from about 20s to 50s or more before the outbreak of war in 1914.

Agricultural labourers in County Dublin only earned 14s a week, but usually had a cottage and small holding attached to grow their own food. In August 1913, Jim Larkin, the charismatic leader of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union secured an extra three shillings a week for them by threatening a strike before the harvest. This was the latest in a series of disputes that secured increases of 20 per cent to 25 per cent for ITGWU members in the first half of 1913.

But this did little more than compensate workers for price increases since 1906, when profits surged ahead during an economic boom. D A Chart, the leading Irish social scientist of the day, estimated that a married man with children needed to earn at least 18s a week in Dublin to pay: Rent, 2s 6d, Fuel and light 2s, bread 4s, tea 9d, sugar 8d, milk, 6d, butter, dripping or margarine 1s 6d, potatoes or other vegetables 1s, meat or fish 2s. This left a balance of 3s 1d to account for all other expenditure, including clothes, footwear and medical bills. Most families could only afford second hand clothes and in summer many children went barefoot and had part time jobs such as selling newspapers and matches on the street.

Unfortunately, the lack of industrial development in Ireland outside of Belfast meant there were few opportunities for well-paid employment. A quarter of adult males in Dublin were unskilled workers chasing far too few jobs. This kept wages low and Chart’s estimate of 2s 6d a week for rent was based on a one room tenement. In 1913, over 20,000 out of 25,822 families living in the tenements were living in one room and over 1,500 were living in cellars.

Infant mortality was high in such conditions and the child of a labourer living in the tenements was 22 times less likely to survive to his or her first birthday than a baby born into a professional family.
The main occupational outlet for women traditionally was domestic service, which had been by far the largest source of employment outside of the home or family farm. Although numbers were declining, at the time of the 1911 census there were still 150,000 domestic servants, compared with 34,000 in professional, clerical and commercial occupations and another 10,000 in food and drink production. But by far the largest block of female workers were the 134,000 employed in textiles and clothing.

Wages did not vary enormously across these groups. Women in domestic service earned between £11 and £16 a year for a six-and-a-half-day week, the equivalent of 4s to 6s a week with free lodging. However, they had little freedom. Wages could be as low as a few pence a day for outworkers producing items such as handkerchiefs at home. In Belfast, the starting rate for girls in the textile mills was as little as 4s for a 56-hour week, and 6s for women. In Jacob’s Biscuits, in Dublin, one of the best employers, the pay for school leavers could be as little as 1s 6d and the top rate for women in the most demanding and skilled locations, such as the bakehouse where Rosie Hackett worked, was 8s to 9s. These were rates struck after a bitter strike in 1911 led by Jim Larkin. Subsequently a section of the Irish Women Workers Union was established in the factory, but it was smashed by the employers in the 1913 Lockout when 400 women struck in support of male colleagues and were blacklisted for life.

But factories were largely concentrated in the North-East. Manufacturing accounted for 73 per cent of female occupations in Belfast, mainly in the linen mills, and 59 per cent in Derry. In Dublin and Cork, the figures were 32 per cent and 29 per cent respectively.

By contrast 39 per cent of women in paid employment in Dublin were domestic servants and 37 per cent in Cork, compared with 27 per cent in Derry and only 14 per cent in Belfast. Dealers were the other significant manual occupational group where women predominated. They accounted for 14 per cent of women workers in Dublin and 19 per cent in Cork, but only five per cent in Derry and Belfast. They could earn well over 20s a week selling fruit and vegetables from their stalls, but it meant working from 5 am to at least 6pm six days a week in all weathers.

Bad as conditions were, they were about to become even worse with the 1913 Lockout when thousands of workers were locked out by their employers for being members of the ITGWU or any union associated with it. After five months many workers were starved back to work, often on lower wages or forced to emigrate. By 1916 membership of the ITGWU had fallen from over 30,000 to less than 5,000 and many other unions were in difficulty until the demands of the war economy created labour shortages across Britain and Ireland.

Padraig Yeates

II.IV - Living and working conditions in Ireland: 1917-1923

1917-1923: One unexpected bonus of the Easter Rising in Dublin was that it ended a protracted building strike. With 3,000 workers involved it was by far the largest industrial dispute of the year. Unions were seeking pay rises of between 2d and 1d an hour and the employers had offered between a farthing and a ha’penny. After the devastation wrought by the Rising there was an urgent need to rebuild the city and the British government used the Munitions Act to impose a settlement. The arbitrator, Captain Fairbairn Downie, awarded an increase of a penny ha’penny an hour, much nearer the workers’ demands than the employers’ offer, but a penny of it was a ‘war bonus’ that would end with hostilities. It still represented an increase of almost 15 per cent, bringing average earnings of building workers to £115 17s 0d a year.
The move was partly an effort to address civil unrest in the city, but also to ensure the completion of the National Shell Factory at Park Gate. After the Rising some senior officials in Dublin Castle queried the wisdom of such a move but the Minister for Munitions, David Lloyd George, brushed their objections aside, telling them he needed shells for the front and workers earning war bonuses would be too busy making money to make revolution.

He was proven wrong on the last count, but it is true to say that, if Dublin was a late beneficiary of the British war economy it benefitted nevertheless and, paradoxically, because the city was not essential to the war effort it had the best of two worlds. The 1915 Munitions Act granted enormous powers to the British government and the labour movement had agreed to suspend the strike tactic in strategically sensitive industries for the duration of the war in return for union recognition; while employers had to abandon the lockout tactic and accept binding arbitration to resolve disputes. Dublin benefitted from the labour shortages, although there was never full employment as there was in Belfast and Britain. On the one hand, the government never felt it needed to use the draconian measures occasionally resorted to in Britain, such as imprisonment or conscription of militant shop stewards in crucial industrial sectors.

The case of the new National Shell Factory at Park Gate is a good example. It produced half a million shells by 1919, or 80 per cent, of Irish output, but British plants produced 16.5 million in the second half of 1915 alone, when they were far from reaching full capacity. Yet, munitions work did provide exceptional employment opportunities for well over 1,000 women at the Dublin plant, and another 300 in a smaller privately-owned plant run by the Dublin Dockyard Company. These women could earn up to £3 a week on piecework, over £1 a week more than the average building worker and more than many skilled men, let alone casual labourers on 15s or 20s.

Some of these ‘munitioneers’ were no doubt among the young working-class women ‘going astray’ and enjoying themselves in the ‘low saloon’ of O’Connell Street. They evoked a response from middle class lady patrollers alarmed at the war’s impact on public morality. These women usually comprised strong supporters of female suffrage but otherwise ranged from evangelical Protestants to republican militants; anxious to protect vulnerable working-class women but also keep them in their place.

Unlike Britain, where ‘munitioneers’ were drawn from all social classes except the very well off, middle class women in Dublin did not seek factory work, except in a voluntary capacity on welfare and canteen committees look after their less fortunate working-class sisters. These volunteers were later replaced by full-time, paid welfare superintendents such as Margaret Culhane, a sister of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington. When questions were asked in the House of Commons about her suitability, Lloyd George’s parliamentary secretary, Worthington Evans, assured MPs that all the proper procedures had been observed and added that she had made significant improvements on her voluntary predecessors.

Among these improvements was a switch from 12 hour to eight hour shifts to maintain 24-hour production. It had been found that the productivity of women working 12 hours was often poorer than those working eight, as well as leading to increased illness and absenteeism. Little was done to protect them from the toxic chemicals that bleached their hair and, more importantly, corroded their lungs. But then the same could be said about many other occupations of the period.

While union organisation and militancy grew rapidly in such a favourable climate radical political activism could act as a break. For instance, while female membership of unions rose from just under 5,000 in 1914 to 17,000 by 1917, the Irish Women Workers Union almost disappeared because its key activists were in the Citizen Army. Once Helena Molony was released from prison IWWU membership rose to over 2,000 in 1917 and over 5,000 when Louie Bennett took over and focussed on industrial organisation.

Other unions grew significantly after 1916, although the spectacular growth of the ITGWU was mainly outside Dublin thanks, once more, to a British government initiative aimed at maintaining industrial peace and safeguarding food supplies, in this case with the establishment of agricultural
wages boards. Dublin suffered the worst of both worlds where food supplies were concerned, failing to benefit from the agricultural boom of the war years but suffering from the consequences of higher prices.

British wholesalers could use economies of scale to pay Irish farmers higher prices and still charge consumers less, so that Irish eggs and meat were cheaper in London or Liverpool than in Dublin. Not that many Dubliners could afford such luxuries. By 1917 black, or ‘war bread’, had become part of the staple diet while potatoes were a luxury food. Although the government introduced price controls in late 1916 it did little to enforce them as it had no interest in antagonising Irish farmers and fuelling unrest in rural Ireland. Unfortunately for Dubliners, Ireland lacked the large urban constituencies that ensured consumer interests some protection in Britain. During the winter of 1917, for instance, the official price of potatoes was £9 a ton but they sold for £13 to £14 in the shops. Eventually the British army released some of its own stocks onto the Dublin market to force prices down.

Imports of items such as coal, tea and tobacco were affected by the U-Boat campaign and the consequent prohibitive costs of shipping. Restrictive practices in Dublin’s distributive trade added another 25 per cent to the total cost for carrying supplies the mile or so from the ships to the shops.

By 1917 the cost of compensation to property owners for the destruction wrought in the Rising was seriously undermining Dublin Corporation’s ability to provide relief to its worst-off citizens. In early 1917 school meals in tenement areas had to be suspended until a new rate was struck. This affected 10,000 children and caused increased malnutrition among families, dependent on dry black bread and even blacker tea. The ITGWU reopened its food kitchen in Liberty Hall and private charities, British as well as Irish, struggled to fill the gap.

Coal now cost as much as the weekly rent in many homes and the Corporation closed its public baths in Tara Street, denying locals not only the chance of a bath but somewhere to wash their clothes. Hospitals reduced ambient temperatures on the wards and even businesses dependent on electricity and gas were forced to close early.

But the most crucial battle of all was over milk. It was the cheapest form of protein available in the city and vitally important for children. While overall mortality rates in the city fell during the war, at least until the influenza pandemic struck in 1918, infant mortality rates rose. Nor was Dublin alone. As Lord Rhondda, the Minister for Food admitted in 1916, more babies were dying of disease, malnutrition and neglect than men at the front. There should have been no shortages in Dublin, with over 200 dairies and 7,500 head of cattle, plus ready access to surrounding farms but the Cow Keepers’ and Dairymen’s Association was the most hated organisation in the city with members regularly prosecuted for overcharging and adulterating milk. However, pressure on fodder supplies saw the official price of milk rise from 3d a quart to 4d in late 1916. A government Milk Prices Order only aggravated the situation as the dairymen started selling their milch cows in England.

It was only when P T Daly, head of the Transport Union insurance section and a Labour councillor, was released from internment at the end of 1916 that things improved. As chair of the City’s Food Committee, he instructed inspectors to prosecute dairy owners under the Food, Drugs and Margarine Act, rather than the city bylaws. Convictions under the Act incurred prison sentences rather than fines. The first prison sentences for dairy owners in ten years were handed down and, after three such convictions, the abuses ceased.

Nevertheless, prices continued to rise, peaking at 8d a quart in the winter of 1917, compared with 3d a year earlier. Even the Irish Party and Irish Times now called for controls. The government duly banned milk exports and imposed maximum prices of 4d and 5d a quart, depending on milk quality. A further increase of 1d was sanctioned in October 1918.

P T Daly was also involved in the battle against immorality, or at least its health-related consequences. As chair of the Corporation’s Public Health Committee he funded two new wards at
Dr Steevens’ hospital to treat sexually transmitted diseases. These supplemented existing facilities such as the Westmoreland Lock Hospital which catered mainly for prostitutes and their children. The new clinics did not open until 1919 but within a year, attendances by men had risen fivefold and for women tenfold. Nationalist propagandists blamed the licentious British soldiery but infection rates peaked in 1934, 12 years after the last British army units departed.

Housing was an even bigger problem. The financial cost of the war, and the Rising, meant that only 327 corporation dwellings were built, mainly after 1916. Most of them were modest one- and two-bedroom affairs while nearly 1,000 tenements, each housing dozens of residents, were closed as unsafe, leaving 3,563 families homeless.

What little enthusiasm had ever existed for the war had evaporated, by 1916 but the cumulative impact of reservists recalled to the colours, and recruitment in 1914 and 1915, meant that by 1917 payments to soldiers’ dependents, including an increasing number of widows, was the second largest source of income in Dublin’s tenements after labourer’s wages. War Office inspectors, often tipped off by hostile neighbours, would regularly raid homes to catch unfaithful wives and widows. Anyone caught lost their separation payments.

This reflected a broader cultural consensus across the political and social divide, with many Dubliners resentful of the corrosive effects of the war on public morality. By October 1916 Catholic and Protestant church bodies were united in demanding more rigorous censorship of theatres and cinemas, leading a badly cash strapped Corporation to appoint censors, supplemented by Dublin Vigilance Committee volunteers. Theoretically managers could lose their licences but, as many of these entertainments were funded by the War Office for the entertainment of the troops the shows went ahead, feeding growing resentment at what the 1916 martyr James Connolly had described as ‘the corruption of the oppressor’.

One final scourge that wrought more deaths in the city than the war or the Rising was the Spanish flu pandemic. While the mortality rates had fallen fairly steadily from the first winter of the war, when they stood at 31.4 per thousand, to 20.4 by the summer of 1918 they shot up again to 32.7 in July and peaked in the winter of 1918/1919 at 37.7, when more people died in the city than were born.

Thanks largely to the booming war economy Ireland had closed the gap in living standards between Ireland and Britain from approximately 55 per cent to 65 per cent, and to 60 per cent of that in what became Northern Ireland by 1921. Unfortunately, the crippling cost of the Civil War in the Free State, and the severe drop in output for Northern Ireland’s shipbuilding, engineering and textile industries severely affected living standards on both sides of the border.

Those most affected in both jurisdictions were the very poorest. However, an important mitigating factor was the decline in population due to emigration. Ireland experienced the highest rates of emigration of any European state in the twentieth century. While this caused a fall in the overall population until the 1960s, it also left more resources to be shared by those who remained; although as always, the better off benefitted most.

Padraig Yeates
Further reading:

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II.V - The Co-operative movement

The Co-operative movement ... is one in which groups of humble men combine their efforts, and to some extent their resources, in order to secure for themselves those advantages in industry which the masters of capital derive from the organization of labour, from the use of costly machinery, and from the economies of business... With this difference, however, that the gains from the better methods are shared equitably amongst all those who are engaged in the industry...

Fr Tom Finlay, 1913

Understanding co-operatives

Co-operatives are variously described as

“... an autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.”

Co-operative Housing Ireland

“... built on an ethos of mutuality, volunteerism, self-help and not-for-profit philosophy. The ILCU, as an advocate of this ethos, has a vision to influence, inspire, and support the credit union movement to achieve all its goals – social, economic and cultural – while always respecting the individual’s rights and dignity”.

Irish League of Credit Unions

“... businesses which are owned by their members who have an equal say in how the cooperative is run, and share the profit the business makes among each other. Cooperatives are active in every sector and come in all shapes and sizes – from bakeries and wind farms, to banks and football clubs. They are ethical businesses that work for the benefit of the community now and in the future. Cooperatives put people before profit”.

Co-operatives Europe

“... people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations”.
Cooperatives bring people together in a democratic and equal way. Whether the members are the customers, employees, users or residents, cooperatives are democratically managed by the ‘one member, one vote’ rule. Members share equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital they put into the enterprise.”

International Co-operative Alliance

The principles of co-operatives
Principles are a set of guidelines by which co-operatives conduct their business and include;

- **Voluntary and Open Membership**
  Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to anyone able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

- **Democratic Member Control**
  Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.

- **Member Economic Participation**
  Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative.

- **Autonomy and Independence**
  Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

- **Education, Training and Information**
  Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

- **Co-operation among Co-operatives**
  Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

- **Concern for Community**
  Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

The history and development of the co-operative movement
The modern co-operative movement is conventionally dated to the establishment in 1894 of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) as a coordinating body for the few dozen recently established agricultural co-operatives. A majority of these operated creameries. The guiding hand of the movement, and its first president, was Horace Plunkett (1854-1932), a landowner and Unionist MP (considered ‘an odd type of Unionist’ because of his commitment to economic reform, his support for the Gaelic revival, and his democratic outlook). The long-time secretary of the IAOS was Æ (George Russell, 1867-1935), a nationalist intellectual who would develop strong labour sympathies and connections. Another prominent figure was the Jesuit priest Tom Finlay, a professor of metaphysics.
Through Plunkett, the movement was connected with other reform initiatives of the same decade: the Congested Districts Board (1891) and the new Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction (1899), both established by Conservative governments with a view to ‘killing Home Rule with kindness’. Such connections raised suspicion about the co-operative movement among nationalists, suspicions which were exploited by elements of the Catholic merchant class, who feared losing business to co-operatives. This opposition is well captured in Liam O’Flaherty’s novel The House of Gold (1930). For their part, early Sinn Féin and the trade union movement were favourably disposed towards co-operatives.

The IAOS was forward-looking in that it saw co-operation as enabling small farmers to gain access to up-to-date machinery and to avail of modern marketing strategies to maximize sales and incomes. However, it also looked to Irish history and tradition – in particular, to the collective traditions of the ‘rundale’ village. There was also frequent reference to the precocious co-operatives of the early nineteenth century, influenced by the Welsh socialist pioneer Robert Owen (1771-1858) and the political economist William Thompson (1775-1833) of Cork. The story of the rise and fall of the most ambitious of these, at Ralahine, near Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare (1831-33) was well-known through the memoir (1893) of its secretary-manager, E.T. Craig, and was widely discussed. James Connolly considered it so significant he devoted a chapter of his Labour in Irish History (1910) to it.

The co-operative message was spread through a lively and innovative periodical, The Irish Homestead, whose editors included the previously mentioned Æ and Fr Tom Finlay, and which had the distinction of publishing James Joyce’s first short story in 1904. The impact of Horace Plunkett’s Ireland in the New Century (1904), intended as a manifesto for the movement, was more ambiguous because of its outspoken criticism of powerful institutions, including the Catholic church.

Notwithstanding the opposition to it, and its own occasional lapses, the co-operative movement expanded rapidly, partly because of the support it received from state agencies in its early years, but even more so because it answered some of the needs of Irish agriculture. Plunkett’s tactlessness notwithstanding, many of younger generation of Catholic priests championed co-operation, finding it consistent with the message of the papal encyclical Rerum Novarum (1891). Women became formally involved in the movement through the Society of United Irishwomen (1911), the precursor of the Irish Countrywomen’s Association.

Already, by 1900, there were 374 co-operative societies connected with the IAOS – six times the number at the foundation. By 1904 there were close on 900 co-operatives, and the success of the movement was attracting the attention of agriculturalists in other countries. As it developed, the co-operative movement in Ireland was composed predominantly of producer co-operatives in agriculture. Despite the sympathies of prominent individuals like Æ – who intervened powerfully on the side of the workers during the 1913 lockout – the mainstream co-operative movement had little connection with labour. This was unlike the situation in Britain where labour and the co-operatives were closely intertwined. A number of co-operatives were established however in the ITGWU milieu in the aftermath of the 1913 lockout so as provide work for those made unemployed as a result of the dispute. A few years later, the Irish Trades Union Congress advocated co-operatives as a response to wartime profiteering in food.

During the period of the 1914-18 war the agricultural cooperatives thrived because agricultural prosperity was at unprecedented levels due to military demand for food. The movement faced challenges in the following years – including from the British military which targeted creameries and other co-operatives in reprisals for IRA activity. The economic downturn of the early 1920s presented further difficulties, but the cooperative movement was by then sufficiently developed to overcome them and to confidently face the new era in Ireland.

John Cunningham
Further Reading


A summary of the Patrick Doyle book as printed in the Irish Times in January 2019 at the link below; https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/ireland-s-co-operative-revolution-building-a-rural-civilisation-1.3773382


I.VI - Feminism, Capitalism, Socialism and Nationalism

The roles of women changed as dramatically as Irish society itself, having to come to terms with the successive challenges of famine, emigration, economic change and political conflict.

Teachers’ Notes:

Capitalism is an economic and political system regulated primarily by the market, in which a country’s trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Feminism is the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes.

Nationalism is identification with one’s own nation and support for its interests, which can be to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.

Socialism is a political and economic theory of social organisation which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.

These definitions are taken from the Oxford Dictionary.

Early Feminist Pioneers

William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler were the unlikely authors of a book entitled An Appeal of one half the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men, which has been described as the first and finest exposition of the ‘feminist socialist position’ to appear anywhere in the world. It was published in 1825.

Both authors were far from typical of the wealthy landowning class from which they came. Thompson (1775–1833) was a self-taught political economist born in Cork City, the son of a wealthy merchant, landowner and former high sheriff of the county. As such Thompson had access to society at the highest levels and was in regular contact with Daniel O’Connell and senior British politicians such as Sir Robert Peel, the Chief Secretary for Ireland and future Prime Minister.
Thompson inherited considerable wealth, including 1,400 acres in West Cork. He was in regular contact with the leading philosophers and political economists of his day such as Jeremy Bentham, with whom he stayed as a guest in London. He rejected the theories of right-wing writers such as Thomas Malthus and Julien Offray de la Mettrie, who invented the phrase ‘L’homme machine’ (Human Machine). Thompson argued that man’s creative nature meant he could not be considered a mere machine ‘like a spinning jenny’ and that the most important problem of moral science was how to reconcile equality with security, and the efficient production of wealth with social justice.

He studied in detail the relationship between labour and capital, looking in turn at forced, or slave labour, labour by unrestricted individual competition, and labour by mutual cooperation. He concluded that mutual cooperation was the most sustainable model and the one best suited to achieve equality in the distribution of wealth, social security and political stability. His most important work was An Inquiry into the principles of the distribution of Wealth most conducive to Human Happiness as applied to the newly proposed System of Voluntary Equality of Wealth, published in 1824, the year before his joint Appeal was written with Doyle. His ideas were popularised by James Connolly.

By 1824 Thompson was a committed worker in the cooperative movement in Great Britain, and was in regular communication with the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837), who proposed the establishment of ‘phalansteries’, or self-sustaining co-operatives, to achieve human harmony in work. Thompson was widely acknowledged as both a theorist and a capable practitioner of co-operative ideas such as those of Fourier and Robert Owen (1771–1858). Karl Marx would later record his own intellectual debt to Thompson.

Anna Doyle Wheeler (1785–1848/9) was a pioneer feminist and reformer born in Clonbeg, Tipperary, the daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman. She had no formal education but taught herself French, philosophy, geography, and politics. In 1800 she married Francis Massy-Wheeler, a wealthy Freemason and playboy. She left him in 1812 and travelled to Guernsey, where her uncle was Governor, with her two daughters and subsequently moved to France where she was accepted in radical circles as ‘the Goddess of Reason’. She was heavily influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft’s Vindication of the rights of women (1792). Like Thompson she agreed with Wollstonecraft’s argument that women were entitled to the same rights as men but had failed to address their economic rights.

It was during a stay in London that she met Thompson through their mutual friends Bentham and Owen. By 1825 they were close friends and she collaborated with Thompson to produce Appeal of one half the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men (1825). Thompson is the only name cited as author but he acknowledged publicly the contribution of Wheeler to the topics and arguments laid out in the book. She also wrote extensively herself under the nom de plume of ‘Vlasta’, a sixteenth-century legendary female champion of women’s liberation from male domination.

The Appeal criticised society’s institutions for being ‘engines of oppression’ and advocated the principles of voluntary association and cooperation as vital to the elimination of social conflict and inequality. Thompson died in 1833 but Wheeler continued to advocate their ideas until her own death in 1848 or 1849.

Sources: Dooley, D William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler in the Dictionary of Irish Biography
See also NIB entries
https://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a89876&searchClicked=clicked&quickadvsearch=yes
Quotes from the Writings of Anna Doyle Wheeler

‘When I advocate the Rights of Women, then, I do it under the most perfect conviction, that I am also pleading the cause of men by showing the mighty influence Women hold over the happiness or misery of men themselves, according as they are instructed or ignorant, as they are fettered or free, as they act on principles, not learned by rote, but acquired through the full development of their own faculties, not put into movement like machines, or led like beasts of burden, at the capricious will of a master, or in stupid routine, by that many headed despot custom!’ [Mrs. Wheeler, ‘Rights of Women’, The British Co-operator, April 1830, p. 13]

‘The prejudice against giving to women political rights is, I know, deeply rooted, but without them, as men very well know, there is no guarantee for the other rights; for the great mass of ordinary men, jealous of their power, will ever be inclined to exercise it on those, whom oppression holds captive, and will wish to render those already weak, still weaker, by destroying the moral energy, which would resist temptation. It is time indeed that men should consent to sacrifice their love of a debasing power for one which, while it exalts their nature, secures to them advantages as solid as they are durable.’ [Mrs. Wheeler, ‘Rights of Women,’ The British Co-operator, no. 2, May 1830, p.36]

‘The human mind has never been trained to think, examine or compare, any two propositions, except on questions of money. Habits of reflection has not only not been cultivated, but never permitted in two large divisions of the community, - the labouring poor and women: every device has been resorted to, to keep down the intelligence of these two portions of the human race.’ [Vlasta to Lord Hampden in John Minter Morgan, 1834, p. 312. Vlasta was a pseudonym used by Anne Doyle Wheeler particularly in the 1830’s.]

Liberty becomes a tyrant unless possessed by all. It is the soul of a community; its body is universal knowledge. Without liberty, there can be no virtue; without knowledge there can be no liberty. But it should never be forgotten, that, if ‘knowledge is power’, power only ceases to be dangerous when held by the instructed many’. [Vlasta to Lord Hampden in Morgan, 1834, p. 317]

‘To women I would say…continue not to leave the bitter inheritance of ignorance and slavery to your daughters; plead for their rights, and that most precious of all, a sound and liberal education. Obtain this for your children and you will secure the liberties of mankind.’ [Mrs. Wheeler, ‘Rights of Women,’ British Co-operator, no.2, May 1830, p. 36]

Quotes from the Writings of William Thompson

‘To whom of the human race, capable of receiving knowledge, should not knowledge be communicated? Would you improve intellectually and socially the men of the industrious classes, improve the women also. Let your libraries, your models, and your lectures, and all your means of improvement be equally open to both sexes. Equal justice demands it.’ [Wm. Thompson, ‘To the Members and Managers’, The Co-operative Magazine and Monthly Herald, vol. 1, no. 2, February 1826, p. 46.]

‘I would make their competition what it pretends to be, really free, not only as between labourers against each other, but as between the labourers and all the rest of society. I would utterly abolish all privileges to rob, or to make laws to rob, that is, to take anything from anybody without the free consent of the giver.’ [Wm. Thompson, letter 4, ‘Lease of An Estate for Ever...’ Weekly Free Press and Co-operative Journal, vol. 5, no. 246, 27 March, 1830.

‘...no other provision than that strict liberty of conscience for all Christians, Jews or Mahometans, would be made, and that the society of course would afford every facility for each person to follow what religious ceremony he pleased and would afford suitable places for meeting.’ [Wm. Thompson, ‘Lecture on Co-operation,’ The Manchester Times and Gazette, 11 June, 1831. At this time, Thompson was giving two lectures at the mechanics’ institution in Manchester. Here the audience had the opportunity to discuss and question details of co-operation.]
'Men and Women of the Industrious Classes! Would you wish henceforth to labour not from the pressure or the fear of daily want, but from the assured hope of varied and unmingled enjoyments? Would you wish that your hours of daily labour should be reduced to such as are compatible with health and life?’ [Wm. Thompson, Labour Rewarded, 1827, p. 103.]

‘The application of physical and moral knowledge to social organization, so as to produce, by the development of all the faculties of every individual, the means of insuring permanent health for the longest life, with the means of physical, mental and social pleasures, in the highest degree, impartially to every human being – called SOCIAL SCIENCE. [Wm. Thompson, Practical Directions ...for the speedy establishment of Communities of Mutual Co-operation, 1830, p. 207.]

Agriculture’s invisible workforce

The number of women working in agriculture and food increased after the famine as family members undertook jobs formally done by labourers, but they were not usually counted as part of the workforce, as they were unpaid. In 1911 women working in the sector accounted for only 13.7 per cent of all female employees.

Female farmers, usually widows and spinsters, were counted as members of the workforce, so that the census figures suggested that they made up three quarters of all women working in agriculture. Many remained gainfully employed well into old age, at least until the old age pension came in during 1911, when there was a significant drop in numbers, suggesting that they either sold their farm or passed on ownership to a relation once they had another regular source of income.

The only time female dependents were counted as part of the workforce was in the census was 1871, when women employed in agriculture accounted for 30 per cent of the workforce. Two-thirds of them were farmers’ wives. Other relatives accounted for 18.5 per cent of the total, while female labourers and servants comprised 16 per cent. More than two-thirds of women listed as ‘assisting daughters’ were under 25 and only ten per cent were over 40, suggesting that most had married and, or moved into other occupations.

Most of the hired women worked on the larger farms. In the poorer counties such as Mayo and Donegal they often harvested turf, gathered seaweed and looked after the family plot while the men worked as migratory labourers for much of the year. Farm duties such as milking cows, feeding pigs and rearing calves fell to women, as well as rearing poultry, which provided many farm wives with their only discretionary income from the sale of eggs.

One traditional female task, making butter, largely disappeared with the advent of the creameries. This saw fulltime employment for dairy maids largely disappear. They had to find work elsewhere. On the other hand, rising food prices and mechanisation saw improved living standards, with larger and more comfortable farm houses being built. Even in the poorest districts, remittances from family members, often single women who emigrated, took the edge off deprivation.

Emigration

Many young single women took the decision to emigrate. In fact, more women than men went to the USA and, uniquely, Irish women were the only group of females who emigrated to the USA without necessarily being part of nuclear family.

Hasia Diner gives details of how this emigration network evolved, creating a discreet system of ‘single female chain migration’. This involved single women who emigrated and sent back fares to sisters, aunts and friends to follow. These in turn repeated the process. This was not done simply out of friendship but to create a support network in a strange environment. They supported each other by providing accommodation, helping each other find work and meeting other Irish emigrants.
Many readers may recall that Peig Sayers was intending to join her friend Cáit Boland in Springfield, Massachusetts, but Cáit broke her arm. You may also have seen ‘Brooklyn’, the 2015 film starring Saoirse Ronan and directed by John Crowley, which was based on the novel of the same name by Colm Tóibín. It was based on the ‘single female chain migration’ phenomenon.

**Domestic employment**

For women in rural areas, and many urban dwellers, sewing, lace making and embroidery provided a meagre income of 4s to 7s a week. Married and single women alike worked in the sector. The materials would be delivered, and finished products collected by the employer. It was a follow-on industry to spinning, but nothing like as rewarding. Where the supplier was a local merchant, women were often forced to buy tea and groceries from his store instead of receiving hard cash. The meagre income could still make a significant difference to low income families, or younger women saving enough to emigrate.

A woman could earn as much, or more, from domestic service. Wages could be as high as £16 a year for a cook but it was £11 to £13 for most domestic servants on the eve of the First World War, plus full board and lodging. It could also mean social isolation and abuse, both physical and sexual in some households. Most middleclass families could afford no more than one or two servants, who might have to double up as nursemaids to children.

While some domestic servants became virtual members of the family others would be thrown on the street when they became old and end up in the workhouse. The number of domestic servants had fallen significantly by 1914 due to increasing employment opportunities, either in Ireland or abroad. In Belfast, 73 per cent of women worked in manufacturing, according to the 1911 census, compared to only 14 per cent in domestic employment. In Derry 59 per cent of women workers were in manufacturing and 27 per cent in domestic employment, showing the importance of female labour to the northern textile and clothing industries, whereas in Cork and Dublin domestic workers still outnumbered factory workers. In fact, domestic servants in Dublin outnumbered male industrial workers.

**Factory work**

In the north-east clothing and textiles needed large numbers of women workers. New technology saw them displace men in many areas, and earn significantly less. The Textile Operatives Society of Ireland, established in 1893, was the first women workers union in Ireland. It had its first strike for better pay and conditions in 1893.

Girls as young as 11 and 12 went to these factories from school and worked a 56-hour week, based on 10 hours a day Monday to Friday and a half day on Saturday. Female participation rates were higher among Catholics at 56 per cent, compared with Protestants who comprised 43 per cent of the workforce. This probably reflected the higher poverty levels in Catholic areas.

Unionisation was much slower in the South. The Irish Women Workers Union was only established in 1911 by Jim Larkin, with his sister Delia as secretary. It would remain a de facto branch of the ITGWU until Louie Bennett took over as general secretary in 1918 and took it out of Liberty Hall.

Wages were significantly lower for women workers than men. In Jacob's Biscuits, one of Dublin's largest and best employers of women, wages ranged from 4s to 13s a week, depending on the age, job and hours worked. A Dublin labourer could expect to earn 18s to 20s and a skilled worker £2 a week in 1913. Unionisation meant better wages, but not equality. Most women were still expected to marry at a relatively early age and were not expected, or encouraged, to return to work subsequently.
The North’s textile industry was one of the few sectors where significant numbers of married women returned to work, accounting for a quarter of the workforce in cotton and linen manufacturing. But it appears to have been very much an economic imperative. If the husband was a well-paid skilled worker the wife stayed at home. In Belfast one in ten Protestant wives returned to work, compared with one in five Catholics, reflecting wage differentials in the two communities. On the other hand, death was a great leveller and over 40 per cent of widows returned to work, regardless of religious affiliation. Sectarian conflict also had an impact in what became Northern Ireland. During the Belfast pogroms of 1920 between 1,000 and 2,000 women were among the Catholic employees expelled from the workplace, mostly in the textile industry, but also including clerical and cleaning staff in the shipyards and engineering plants.

Street traders were probably the oldest, and very traditional occupation for women in towns and cities during this period. It employed 19 per cent of women in Cork and 14 per cent in Dublin, compared with only five per cent in Belfast and Derry. While the work was hard and the hours long, a dealer, or trader, could expect to earn as much as a skilled male worker and they were not dependent on a husband for their income. Even during the First World War, when job opportunities for women multiplied and the British based National Federation of Women Workers secured large pay increases for groups such as munitions workers, dealers remained the most prosperous group. Nevertheless, they represented the past, not the future.

The most radical new development was the growing number of women working in white collar jobs as clerks and professionals. Cork and Dublin had the highest numbers in the professions at ten per cent each, compared with only five and four per cent in Derry and Belfast respectively. This would have implications for the levels of female involvement in public life during the revolutionary decade.

**Professional work**

Ireland was one of the most progressive countries in Europe when it came to creating educational and career opportunities for women from middle class families. These families were often willing and able to finance the continuing education of their daughters, as did higher income farming families, so that they would not be long term dependents and escape the genteel poverty trap of previous generations of spinsters should they fail to marry.

The opening of intermediate certificate examinations to women in 1879 gave schools catering for wealthier clientele an incentive to modernise their curricula. On the eve of the First World War a quarter of all professional jobs in Ireland were held by women. Only England, Wales and Norway had higher levels of women with second level education. Only Finland and The Netherlands had a higher proportion of female primary school teachers and only Finland had a higher proportion of female university graduates.

Women still tended to be pigeon holed into occupations such as teaching, nursing and childcare activities. Many of these women found themselves in jobs where promotional opportunities were limited, for instance a hospital where nuns were matrons and ward sisters, or a school where a priest or brother was the principal. Their pay would also be lower than that of male colleagues who were regarded as current or future bread winners when they married, so that frustrated ambition and grievance at discrimination could be powerful engines of discontent which found outlets through other channels.

**Politicisation**

Even women in the ‘higher’ professions found their career paths limited. Dr Kathleen Lynn was denied a position as resident doctor at the Adelaide Hospital and although she was subsequently awarded a fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons the only hospital post she could obtain was
as a clinical assistant at the Eye and Ear Hospital. She was subsequently dismissed for taking part in the 1916 Rising. One motive for her decision to establish St Ultan’s hospital for mothers and babies, besides her commitment to combating the horrific levels of infant mortality in Dublin, was to create a professional outlet for women in her profession to hold permanent senior posts. She still had to keep her general practice open to make ends meet. It proved to be the most significant health initiative by republican activists during the struggle for independence.

While people such as Lynn were remarkable it is true to say that a great many women, mostly from middle class backgrounds, had achieved an education that gave them the knowledge and confidence to take positions of leadership denied to previous generations. They also aspired to basic rights of citizenship, above all the right to vote and stand for public office. Female suffrage was an objective that united feminists, male as well as female, and led Unionists to campaign alongside nationalists. The 1898 Local Government Act gave women who were property owners the franchise in local elections, which allowed women such as the artist Sarah Cecilia Harrison to win a seat as an Independent Nationalist councillor in Dublin. As such she played a leading role in the campaign to house the Hugh Lane art collection in Dublin, condemned police brutality against workers in the 1913 Lockout and established the Vacant Land Cultivation Society which would ensure derelict sites were used to grow food and help save the city from starvation in the First World War.

But, generally speaking, collective action proved more effective than individual endeavour. Without the work of the Women’s Social and Political Union created in Britain in 1903, and the Irish Women’s Franchise League founded in 1908 by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Margaret Cousins, the long running campaign for women’s votes would never have become a central issue in political life. Nor would women’s social and economic rights have made much progress without the creation of bodies such as the Irish Women Workers Union and the United Irishwomen (the fore runner of the Irish Countrywomen’s Association).

Constitutional nationalism had little time for women’s rights and many of its leading figures, including John Redmond, were opposed to giving women the vote in a Home Rule parliament. The Ulster crisis and rise in militant nationalism however provided an opportunity for bodies such as Innighidhe na hEireann to spread their influence and the establishment of Cumann na mBan as a female alternative to the Irish Volunteers drew in thousands of members. By contrast, the Irish Citizen Army admitted women to its ranks.
Newspapers such as Bean na hEireann, the Irish Worker and above the Irish Citizen became important vehicles of radicalisation and permitted to development of networks that brought like-minded activists together.

**Networking**

Radicalisation took place through many channels. Often personal contacts were important. Dr Kathleen Lynn was radicalised in part by her cousin Countess Markievicz, the latter having been strongly influenced by her sister Eva Gore Booth, who had moved to Manchester to join her partner, Esther Roper. It was there that Markievicz first encountered highly organised campaigns by female trade unionists to fight for their rights. On her return to Dublin, Countess Markievicz mixed in radical nationalist and socialist circles, introducing Lynn to figures such as Helena Molony and James Connolly. Connolly was an important influence on many women, not least Winifred Carney, who was politicised when he employed her in the ITGWU’s Belfast office. She later joined him in the GPO during the 1916 Rising, when she again carried out secretarial duties but was also armed and an expert shot. Of course, Connolly, like ITGWU General Secretary Jim Larkin, were themselves deeply influenced by the women with whom they worked and were among the leading male supporters of female suffrage in Ireland.

Carney and Molony’s social backgrounds were more typical of many male revolutionary contemporaries than that of figures such as Lynn and Markievicz. Carney’s father was a commercial traveller. Helena Molony’s father was a shopkeeper in Dublin’s North Inner City. Orphaned when young, Molony had a small annuity which, while not enough to live on comfortably was enough to allow her to explore career options not available to many of her contemporaries. She was recruited by Maud Gonne to write for and then edit Bean na hEireann. Her column of ‘labour notes’ led to her involvement in trade unionism, while acting classes sponsored by Inghinidhe na hEireann led to a career at the Abbey. For several hectic years she juggled acting with her job as secretary of the Irish Women Workers Union and an officer in the Irish Citizen Army.

Eventually, Molony would relinquish her acting career and become deputy general secretary of the IWWU to make way for Louie Bennett. Bennett came from a comfortable upper middle-class Southern Unionist family background. Slightly older than most of her contemporary activists she became a nationalist but had little time for militarism of any hue. She had founded the Irish Women’s Suffrage Federation with her life companion Helen Chenevix in 1913 and was further radicalised by her experiences helping strikers’ families in the Dublin Lockout. Her involvement in the trade union movement was based on a belief that trade unions provided the most effective vehicle for educating,

**Sourced at the Irish Labour History Society.**

Louie Bennett, the longest serving general secretary of the Irish Women Workers Union. From a comfortable middle-class Unionist background, she became a convinced feminist and socialist. She believed that trade unions provided the best means of organising and educating women to fight for their rights. But she preferred negotiation to conflict whenever possible.
organising and mobilising working class women to demand not just better pay and conditions, but wider political and social rights. Most famously it was under her leadership that IWWU members would win the right to two weeks paid holidays a year in 1945, from which all workers, male and female, subsequently benefitted.

Mary MacSwiney came from a very different background. Born in Bermondsey, London, the eldest of seven children of an English mother and Irish émigré father. She moved to Cork when her father returned there to start a snuff and tobacco business. Her brother Terence was born in the same year. Mary would return to England to qualify as a teacher and completed her education with a BA from UCC in 1912. It was the influence of her younger brother and the Home Rule crisis that saw her radicalism focus on militant nationalism and she founded a branch of Cumann na mBan in the city in 1914.

Another teacher and leading Cork-born activist, Margaret Goulding, came to militant nationalism through the Gaelic League, the local branch of Inghinidhe na hEireann and the Cork Celtic Literary Society of which Terence MacSwiney was the leading light. She helped organise protests against Edward VII’s visit to the city. On her marriage to Patrick Buckley, a civil servant with the Revenue Commissioners, she moved to Dublin. The outbreak of the First World War saw the British based National Women Workers Union expand its operations to Ireland where it was particularly effective in organising women in war-related industries such as clothing and munitions. Buckley was its Irish Secretary and, as such, addressed meetings on a wide range of issues, including the mass rally for May Day in Cork, in 1919. She initiated talks between the NWWF and the IWWU to campaign jointly on issues affecting women workers. When these were unsuccessful, and the NWWF decided to withdraw from Ireland, she worked for the IWWU became an official with responsibility for the semi-autonomous Domestic Workers’ Union. In 1920 she opened its offices in North Great George’s St., and began a campaign for ‘good wages, fair conditions, to secure good service’. She also served as a judge in the Dail Courts in Dublin.

All of the female republican activists mentioned above took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War and all served prison sentences at some stage in the Struggle for Independence. Margaret Buckley wrote a particularly vivid memoir entitled the Jangle of the Keys. Others, such as Jennie Wyse Power, joined Cumann na Saoirse, a pro-Treaty alternative. But the majority of Cumann na mBan members dropped out of political life, many of them deeply disillusioned.

The new Free State establishment, particularly political leaders such as W T Cosgrave, often blamed the country’s woes on its opponents. On New Year’s Day the Irish Times quoted him as saying, ‘Unhappily in Ireland the “Die-hards” are women, whose ecstasies at their extremist [sic] can find no outlet so satisfying as destruction – sheer destruction’. And newspapers frequently published condemnations such as this report in the Cork Examiner from 1925, reporting Bishop Doorley’s sermon at a confirmation service in Castlerea, in which he warned his congregation of children and their parents that:

*If I had a friend who showed a tendency to take up politics, I would pray for him and ask God to change his heart. If I had a little girl friend who took up politics, I would give up praying for her…. Women who go around taking despatches and arms from one place to another are furies. Who would respect them or who would marry them? Never join a Cumann na mBan or a Cumann na Saoirse or anything else. Do your work as your grandmothers did before you.*

Republican activists were blamed for causing political instability, fear and unease. Government minister Kevin O’Higgins claimed that Republicans included ‘men and women, particularly women, whose driving force was hate’.

Students can easily access these women, and many others through the Dictionary of Irish Biography, as well as the Witness Statements of the Bureau of Military History.

*Katherine O’Donnell and Padraig Yeates*
(Our thanks to Dolores Dooley for supplying quotes from William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler’s writings)

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II.VII - An independent Irish Republic

An Irish Republic became the declared objective of the United Irishmen when their hopes of reform were dashed in the 1790s. Inspired by the successful revolt of the American colonists against the English Crown and the ideals of the French Revolution, ‘The Republic’ became the declared objective of militant nationalists to distinguish themselves from Home Rulers and other constitutional movements prepared to settle for more limited forms of autonomy within the United Kingdom.

It was therefore the declared objective of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a secret, oath bound organisation founded in 1858 that had varied fortunes and was dogged by splits, as was its sister organisation Clan na Gael in America. While committed to freeing Ireland by force, its’ constitution stated that a war against England could only be declared when a majority of the Irish people expressed themselves in favour. In the meantime, the organisation concentrated on promoting awareness of Irish culture and nationality and allying itself with popular movements such as the Land League. It was fairly moribund in the first decade of the twentieth century when a committed revolutionary, Tom Clarke, who had emigrated to America but subsequently spent 15 years in prison for his part in a dynamiting campaign in England returned to Ireland in 1907 with the mission of reforming ‘The Organisation’ and reviving its revolutionary spirit.

With the aid of a younger generation of militant nationalists such as Bulmer Hobson, Sean MacDermott and Dr Pat MacCartan he rebuilt the IRB, but it is unlikely it would have grown into a significant force if it had not been for the Home Rule crisis and the outbreak of war. The IRB’s lack of detailed policies, other than a commitment to an armed uprising if the opportunity arose, served as a unifying factor in the years leading up to the Easter Rising, which was organised by its military committee.

Because the IRB was almost apolitical it was susceptible to new political ideas such as socialism. When the Labour leader James Connolly joined in January 1916, he had a significant input to the drafting of the 1916 Proclamation, which affirmed ‘the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland’. When more politically conservative figures such as Michael Collins, Piaras Beaslai and Richard Mulcahy gained control of the IRB they insisted on deleting or diluting sections of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil that dealt with the ownership and control of the nation’s resources.

This conservative outlook served the separatist movement well in terms of ensuring it did not alienate much of the business community and the Catholic Church during the War of Independence. It also set out to undermine British based trade unions and what it considered to be other anglicising influences in Ireland. Inevitably this also ensured that the militant nationalist movement had no appeal to the vast majority of northern Unionists and workers.

Its main appeal was to young nationalist militants attracted by the idea of freeing Ireland from its ancient enemy, Britain. The problem was that once the Treaty was negotiated and the focus switched from how to achieve freedom to what that freedom actually meant the IRB was unable to maintain its unity or organisational discipline. It was wound up in 1924 and the residue funds were split. Half were allocated to financing a history of the organisation, that was never completed. The other half went to Tom Clarke’s widow Kathleen, a trustee of the Wolfe Tone Committee, as a contribution to the cost of erecting a statue to the man regarded by members of ‘The Organisation’ as the founding father of Irish republicanism. Tone’s statue now stands opposite the Shelbourne Hotel on Stephen’s Green, Dublin, as much a monument to ‘The Organisation’ as the man.

The IRB and Trade Unions

Dublin was a traditional stronghold of the IRB and nowhere more so than among the craft unions, which in those days included barmen and shop assistants, who served an apprenticeship. One of
the longest but most successful strikes of 1919-20 was that of the Barmen and Grocers’ Union in pursuit of better pay and conditions against the Licensed Grocers’ and Vintners’ Association, some of whom were also IRB members. It lasted ten weeks and seriously disrupted life in a city where alcoholism was rampant and the public house was the social fulcrum of working-class communities. Nevertheless, by its’ end the vintners had conceded a 40 per cent pay rise to senior barmen and 33 per cent to junior barmen. Any barman who could not be provided with accommodation on the premises would receive a further 30s a week towards the cost of board and lodging, plus an afternoon a week off, something secured by the Drapers’ Assistants Association before war. They would also be entitled to St Stephen’s Day off and every fourth Sunday.

The union had the support of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions and only the most robust and determined of public house patrons, many of them women, were prepared to cross the picket line, if DMP records are to be believed. For instance, Catherine Clooney of Brabazon Street in the Liberties told the Magistrate that a grocer’s assistant called Duffy knocked her down when she tried to enter Redmond’s public house in Ardee Street but she ‘got him in Cork Street’ and had him charged. She was also looking for the price of her shawl torn in the incident, which she valued at £3. Duffy and another barman denied assaulting Clooney and said that she had assaulted both of them. Even the prosecuting DMP Sergeant described Clooney as ‘excited and might have drink taken’ at the time of the incident, but the magistrate looked likely to sentence both men to imprisonment until the union solicitor said his clients did not wish any member of the public to suffer from the vindication of their rights and were willing to buy Clooney a new shawl. The magistrate still made an order for bail on two sureties of £10 for the picketers and warned them to keep the peace.

Paddy Moran was one of two strikers who were less fortunate and sentenced to 14 days in Mountjoy for intimidation on police evidence while on a mass picket outside Thomas Brady’s pub on Upper George’s Street, Dun Laoghaire. Moran was a 1916 veteran and captain in the 2nd battalion of the IRA’s Dublin Brigade. He was elected president of the union in September and hung for shooting dead two suspected British agents on Bloody Sunday. Moran denied he had murdered either man and his defence counsel had 17 witnesses to prove he was addressing a union meeting on the other side of the city when the shootings occurred. The court martial preferred to believe the testimony of a British army officer. In fact, Moran could not have killed either man because he was part of an IRA team who shot dead two other British officers in The Gresham Hotel on O’Connell Street, only two minutes’ walk from the Banba Hall in Parnell Square, where Moran presided at a union meeting immediately afterwards. It is one of many instances of trade union activists being active in the IRA in Dublin during this period.

Recruiting craft workers to the war effort in 1920

When another IRB member, Richard Mulcahy, a former post office technician, became Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers in 1918 he was succeeded as commander of the Dublin Brigade by Dick McKee, a printer. On McKee’s capture and execution in Dublin Castle as a reprisal for Bloody Sunday in November 1920 he was succeeded by another printer and IRB man Oscar Traynor.

The initial headquarters of the Brigade were in the offices of the Dublin Typographical Society at 35 Lower Gardiner Street. This was only around the corner from Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, where Joe McGrath, an accountant by profession and another IRB and IRA member was finance officer and able to use Liberty Hall to collect and redistribute funds as required. The Stationary Engine Drivers Union was located not far away, at 10 Middle Abbey Street, which provided accommodation for Michael Collins’ Squad. Most members of the Squad were also craft workers. Union premises were very popular because they were generally sympathetic to the IRA and the frequent meetings, or comings and goings would pass unremarked.

When Oscar Traynor took over the Dublin Brigade at the end of 1920, he was concerned that the British might discover the Brigade headquarters in the Printer’s Union offices on Lower Gardiner Street, an area where they were concentrating many of their searches. He moved it to 6 Gardiner Row, the headquarters of the new Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers Trade Union
(IESFTU), along with the headquarters of the city’s Active Service Units. The Dublin Brigade rented rooms from the new union as No 1 Branch of the Clerical Workers Union.

It would be wrong to think that this meant IRB members were particularly left wing in their thinking or orientation, although a minority were. The establishment of the new union had a very different purpose. As Joseph Toomey, a fitter and the Dublin District Delegate of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) put it, the intention was to replace various British based craft unions, including his own, with a more politically reliable Irish organisation committed to the cause of the Republic. He was one of a number of IRB and IRA members who attached identical typed submissions to their military pension applications. It stated that:

‘I was a member of an Intelligence, or Secret Service Unit under the control of the Chief Intelligence Officer, the late Michael Collins. This Dublin Unit was under the direction of Martin Conlon. What was called the Labour Board was formed under this Unit; and about the Autumn of 1919, I was detailed for special duty on this Labour Board by orders of the Army Council.

‘Our duty was to use our influence in our various Trade Unions, and in the Labour Movement generally on behalf of the Republic; to get hold of men in important key positions, such as Power Stations, Railways, and Transport Dockworkers, etc; and most important of all, to undermine the Amalgamated and Cross Channel Unions, and where possible to organise a breakaway from these Unions, and establish purely Irish Unions instead; manned, and controlled by men with Republican and National tendencies, in other words we were Republican Agents within the Trade Union movement. This was regarded as very important work both by the Army Council and the Dáil at the time.

‘We were in direct communication with Michael Collins, both as Minister of Finance, and Chief Intelligence Officer of the Army, and on different occasions were supplied with financial assistance to carry on the work. As members of the IRA our work was directed on those lines, and under orders the same as ordinary members though more rigidly controlled. We worked under active service conditions, and our Company Officers were instructed to excuse us from ordinary parades, while still retaining us on the Roll of the Company, and were thus liable for mobilisation at any time.’

They were also charged with collecting intelligence and the task of co-ordinating all of this activity was given to Martin Conlon, a Dublin Corporation Sanitary Officer, who was also one of the most important figures in the IRB. An indicator of his significance is that he was Michael Collins’ substitute on the executive of the Irish Volunteers in the event of the latter’s arrest and Conlon reported directly to Collins on this new initiative.

Countess Markiewicz, who was appointed Minister for Labour in the First Dáil, had been calling since her release from prison in 1917 for an Irish craft workers union embracing all the crafts, along the lines of the ITGWU, which catered for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. However, little came of her efforts until the IRB took a hand, probably because of her lack of contacts in the craft unions.

Although Conlon himself was a member of the Municipal Employees Trade Union, (a forerunner of FORSA), his deputy Luke Kennedy was an electrician. Both men served on the IRB’s Supreme Council.

As Toomey’s statement says, the new IRA unit was given the cover name of the ‘Labour Board’ and established at an IRB meeting chaired by Collins’ financial confidante Joe McGrath. Besides Kennedy and Conlon, who was appointed as Chairman of the Board, another IRB man and senior Dublin Volunteer officer, Patrick McGurk, was appointed Secretary. The Board quickly recruited a provisional committee from craft union activists in the Irish Volunteers, Sinn Fein and Irish Citizen Army to establish the new union.

The first meeting was held in The Abbey Theatre on May 9th, 1920. As we have seen, it was called the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers Trade Union (IESFTU). The union received support from Countess Markievicz when it applied for funds and, after her arrest, by her deputy Joe
McDonagh, a brother of the executed 1916 leader Thomas McDonagh. The secretary of the Dáil Eireann Department of Labour, Diarmaid O’Hegarty and the Minister for Finance, Michael Collins organised this initial funding. In fact, all of the key figures involved in the foundation of the IESFTU were members of the IRB, except for Countess Markievicz, debarred from membership by her sex.

Despite strong opposition from the ASE and other British unions, the IESFTU had 4,500 members by 1921, including the bulk of craft workers in cities and large towns in what became the Irish Free State. However, it never succeeded in recruiting any members in Northern Ireland, where it was widely regarded as a ‘Fenian’ organisation.

Craft unions and the Treaty

Predictably, at the Special delegate conference of the ILP&TUC in February 1922, the IES&FTU delegates voted against contesting the Treaty election, arguing that the pro and anti-Treaty wings of Sinn Fein should be given ‘a clear run’.

Meanwhile, the establishment of the Dáil’s Labour Arbitration Tribunal in September 1920 was another product of this policy, even echoing the name of the IRB’s original Labour Board. The Dáil’s Tribunal operated in situations where both sides agreed to be bound by the outcome. The collapse of the British civil administration by 1920 made it an appealing option to trade unionists and employers alike, as it provided some sort of rudimentary state machinery to resolve disputes in an otherwise chaotic world.

The IES&FTU can be seen as both a throwback to the old exclusivist craft unions of the past and anticipating developments in the late 20th century by bringing together different trades in a model designed to better protect workers within specific industries and different geographic and political situations. It proved a premature experiment because after the Treaty it quickly split, not over political divisions but the reassertion of craft exclusiveness between various engineering trades, plumbers and electricians. It took most of the next century to reunite them in the TEEU and then Connect.

Both the emergence of the union and the Dáil’s Labour Arbitration Tribunal can be seen as precursors of the Irish ‘statist’ model that led ultimately to the creation of the Labour Court in 1945, and the present-day Workplace Relations Commission. The aim of the IRB was not socialist revolution but building an independent Irish state in which it saw the trade union movement playing an important but subordinate role.

The Connect union is a direct descendant of the IESFTU and its successor unions. It still occupies the same premises at 6 Gardiner Row, Dublin it first acquired in 1920 where its first tenant was the No 1 Branch of the Clerical Workers Union, aka the Active Service Unit (ASU) of the Dublin Brigade. Today it is the largest craft union in the Republic with a plaque on the wall in remembrance of the ASU.

Padraig Yeates
was a member of an Intelligence, or Secret Service Unit in Dublin under the control of the Chief Intelligence Officer, the late Michael Collins. This Dublin Unit was under the direction of Martin Conlon. What was called a Labour Board was formed under this Unit; and about the Autumn of 1919, I was detailed for special duty on this Labour Board by orders of the Army Council.

Our duty was to use our influence in our various Trade Unions, and in the Labour Movement generally on behalf the Republic; to get hold of men in important key positions, such as Power Stations, Railways, and Transport Dockworkers, etc; and most important of all, to undermine the Amalgamated or Cross Channel Unions, and where possible to organise a breakaway from these Unions, and establish purely Irish Unions instead; manned, and controlled by men with Republican and National tendencies, in other words we were Republican Agents within the Trade Union Movement.

This was regarded as very important work both by the Army Council and the Dail at the time.

We were in direct communication with the late Michael Collins, both as Minister of Finance, and Chief Intelligence Officer of the Army, and on different occasions were supplied with financial assistance to carry on the work. As members of the I.R.A., our work was directed on those lines, and under orders the same as ordinary members though more rigidly controlled. We worked under active service conditions, and our Company Officers were instructed to excuse us from ordinary parades, while still retaining us on the Roll of the Company, and were thus liable for mobilisation at any time.

(Signed) 

Joseph Toomey

38, Parnell Park

Kilmainham, Dublin.
II.VIII - Labour and the struggle for independence

The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (ILP&TUC) was the largest social organisation in Ireland during this era. Between 1913 and 1919 its membership grew from 100,000 to 270,000. The Irish Transport and General Workers Union, which had been severely weakened by the Dublin Lockout in 1913 and again by its close association with the Irish Citizen Army and the Easter Rising underwent a transformation in the following years. Instead of being compromised by James Connolly’s involvement in the Rising, his execution transformed him into a national martyr and the union was firmly established as national institution. The ITGWU membership grew from less than 5,000 in 1916 to over 120,000 by 1920.

Connolly’s writings were widely read and debated, and his ideas popularised in pamphlets and publications such as the ITGWU newspaper, the Voice of Labour edited by Cathal O’Shannon. But Labour shortages in the First World War and the desire of the British government to avoid major industrial disputes during the conflict were also important. The legislation created a system of industrial relations that made it easier for unions to gain recognition in vital war industries in return for them agreeing not to go on strike. Both unions and employers agreed to accept binding arbitration if they could not resolve disputes themselves.

Union recognition soon spread across the wider economy and, as union numbers grew, so did workers’ self-confidence and militancy. This militancy was also fuelled by wartime shortages and price inflation that far outstripped wages. The influence of the new revolutionary ideas sparked by the Easter Rising and Russian Revolution spread. One of Connolly’s core beliefs that a workers’ republic was needed and could only be achieved by ending British rule became widespread.

However, there was no consensus among ILP&TUC leaders, or its rank and file, on how this could be achieved and the idea met with outright hostility among many workers in the North-East, most of whom belonged to ‘amalgamated’ unions based in Britain. They were increasingly fearful of the future. Based in the engineering works and shipyards of Belfast they saw the main markets for their wares in Britain and the empire. Already opposed to Home Rule, they were even more hostile to the prospect of an Irish Republic, let alone a Workers’ Republic which they believed would be dominated by militant nationalists, farmers, small businessmen in the south and the Catholic Church. ‘Rome Rule’ was not a prospect they relished.

The one issue that the ILP&TUC remained united on, initially, was opposition to Partition, but eventually the polarisation of politics between militant nationalism and militant Unionism saw the ILP&TUC split. The majority of workers and their unions in what would become the Irish Free State supported the struggle for independence, while the majority in what would become Northern Ireland supported the Union with Great Britain.

Padraig Yeates
II.IX - Syndicalism and the Struggle for Irish Independence

Between 1917 and 1923, Irish Labour was heavily affected by syndicalism, and syndicalism would colour Labour’s complex and contradictory contribution to the independence campaign in different ways at leadership and rank and file level.

Syndicalism originated in France in the late 1880s in response to the failure of socialists to get rid of capitalism. Syndicalists argued that the socialist parties had become dominated by theorists and careerists. What was needed was struggle based on and controlled by workers’ organisations. (Syndicat is the French for trade union). Two main versions evolved. The French envisaged the seizure of economic power through a general strike. In the United States, revolutionary industrial unionists argued for unifying all workers in One Big Union (OBU), which would become the embryo of a new social order. Variations on these themes would be the leading form of revolutionism in France, Spain, and the United States between the 1890s and 1914. Syndicalism would also exert a significant influence on the left in Italy, Australia, Britain, and Canada. It is not surprising that both James Connolly and Big Jim Larkin were syndicalists.

The great advantage of syndicalism was that it was not so much a theory as a toolkit, from which one could pick and choose à la carte. (This also gave it an amorphous quality and made its presence hard to gauge). As industrial unrest intensified in the 1900s, ideas like industrial unionism, the OBU, sabotage, sympathetic action, the general strike, and forging a working class counter-culture as a weapon of struggle, became increasingly attractive. Connolly wrote about them in his pamphlet Socialism Made Easy (1908), while Larkin would apply them after he founded the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union (ITGWU) in 1909. Thanks chiefly to Larkin, who was much more important than Connolly before his flight to America in 1914, syndicalism also made an impact on the Irish Trades Union Congress (ITUC). When the ITUC discussed the creation of a Labour Party in 1912-14, it was agreed to make the party coterminous with Congress to keep it under workers’ control. For the employers, the 1913 lockout was essentially about getting rid of syndicalism in Ireland.

After 1913, Labour was further weakened by the outbreak of the First World War. But on the home front it was a war of two halves. The first half brought shortages, inflation, and resentment against the employers, shopkeepers, and farmers who were believed to be profiteering at the expense of workers on fixed incomes. In Britain, there were hunger marches, and threats of strike action by munitions workers. To keep the war effort going, the government liquidated national assets to release more money into the economy. From 1917 to 1920, wages rose faster than prices. But to get the money, one needed to join a union. In Ireland, ITGWU membership rocketed from 5,000 in 1916 to 120,000 in 1920, when the ITUC represented 220,000 out of 900,000 waged workers. A further 30,000 trade unionists in the Belfast region were not affiliated to Congress as they regarded it as too nationalist. The rift between the Belfast region and the rest of Ireland was sealed when Labour backed the anti-conscription campaign. With the upsurge in industrial militancy went a radicalization, driven by revolution at home and abroad. There were great expectations of a new age of the people after the world war. In many countries, 1919-20 were known as ‘the two red years’. As revolutionaries elsewhere were embracing communism in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, Irish workers returned to syndicalism, with which they were more familiar. In what ways was Labour syndicalist? There were no card carrying syndicalists in Ireland, and the term was rarely used, though ‘industrial unionism’, ‘OBU’, ‘co-operative commonwealth’, and ‘Workers’ Republic’ were coming into common currency. One could also argue that union leaders were fair-weather syndicalists. Equally, it was a measure of the impact of syndicalism that they were swept along in its path. Sympathetic action again became central to strike tactics. In some cases, the principle was extended to generalized action. Between 1917 and 1920 there were eighteen local general strikes, mainly in small towns where almost all workers had joined the ITGWU and put forward common wage demands.
During these strikes the town was usually taken over by the strike committee, which controlled business and transport through a system of permits. The permits were a means of getting everyone – including employers – to accept the authority of the union as well as enforcing solidarity. Strikes, especially in rural areas, were also more likely to be accompanied by sabotage or violence during these years. Workplace seizures – or soviets as they were called – almost all involving the ITGWU, emerged from November 1918 onwards, substantially as strike tactics but indicating too, a political ambition.

For strategy, Labour turned to industrial unionism. The ITGWU was facing a novel problem for an Irish union: how to make best advantage of the tens of thousands joining up. On 1 July 1918 it issued The Lines of Progress, a pamphlet inspired by Socialism Made Easy, and intended to ‘advance Connolly’s OBU idea’ as ‘a scientific solution to the Labour question’. ‘With this machine [the OBU] in their possession’, it promised, ‘the workers of Ireland can break all their chains with ease and from the mere rallying cry of political parties turn Freedom into a glorious reality’. In 1921 the ITGWU published the first Irish edition of Socialism Made Easy together with other Connolly writings on industrial unionism in the pamphlet The Axe to the Root. Industrial unionism was also promoted in the National Union of Railwaymen’s journal New Way. In 1919 the ITUC voted to turn itself into an OBU.

Syndicalism was evident too in efforts to develop a working class counter-culture, through co-operatives, May Day parades, aeríochtaí, and labour newspapers. The ITGWU’s annual report for 1919 directed members to conceive of the union ‘as a social centre, round which they can build every activity of their existence, and which, wisely used, can be made to remedy all their grievances’. In 1919 trade unions funded the James Connolly Labour College, which enrolled over 200 students in classes in history, economics, and public administration. The College flourished up to November 1920, when it was ransacked by the Auxiliaries. One measure of the greater importance of Labour at this time is the Catholic Church’s heightened interest in the social question. The Irish Messenger published twenty-eight pamphlets on the Church and labour in 1918, compared with five in 1913.

Because syndicalism was applied ad hoc to Irish trade unionism, and not developed as a political theory, it was not fundamental in shaping Labour’s response to the independence campaign. That was determined by two countervailing forces, the first weighing more heavily with union officials, and the second being more attractive to the rank and file. The first was a feeling that Labour and nationalism were dichotomous. This assumption had taken root with the anglicization of trade unionism in the late 19th century, and persisted despite the republicanism of Connolly and Larkin. It was underpinned by the unions’ concern to keep within the law, having funds tied up with the state insurance scheme, and witnessing what had happened to the ITGWU in Easter Week. The second force, popular nationalism, gradually drew Labour into the revolution, notably after the conscription crisis and the 1918 general election. Out of the mix came the worst of all outcomes: a muddled consensus that Labour should follow, but not lead, on the national question.

If not formative, syndicalism did influence the Labour response. In the debate on the ITUC’s famous decision to stand down from the 1918 general election, for example, the concept of politics as merely ‘the echo of the battle’ was advanced in support of this stance. Arguably, syndicalism encouraged complacency about the deferment of the quest for political power until after the revolution. Conversely, syndicalism pushed Labour to identify with revolutionism. The ITUC was anxious to see the Socialist International re-established after the war, and felt it could make a unique contribution by pressing for recognition of the Irish republic on the European left. At the first post-war international socialist conference in Berne, Switzerland in February 1919, Labour agreed with the British Labour Party delegation that both parties would call for self-determination for Ireland. Sinn Féin’s payback for Labour was the Democratic Programme. Another of Labour’s unique contributions was the four general strikes. The first had been called against conscription on 23 April 1918. The second, for international proletarian solidarity and self-determination, was held on May Day 1919. Most remarkably, Labour declared an immediate, indefinite general strike for the release of political
prisoners on 12 April 1920. The last of this vintage took place on 24 April 1922, and was a vain attempt to stop the drift towards civil war. The strike weapon was also initiated by the rank and file in the case of the Limerick Soviet (14-26 April 1919), the motor permits strike (December 1920-March 1921), and the railway munitions strike (May-December 1920).

Labour got little in return for its help to republicans, but it asked for less, and it was up to Labour to fight its corner. The primary concern of union leaders was that republicans would not interfere with the wage’s movement. They assumed, and again it was an assumption grounded in syndicalism, that as long as unions were consolidating on the industrial front, they could turn their strength into political currency whenever it suited them. And despite the boom-stump cycle having dominated economics since 1874, no one foresaw the recession.

In August 1920 prices began to fall as the world entered a crisis of overproduction. By the end of 1921 some 25% of insured workers in Ireland were idle. Labour tried to ‘hold the harvest’ of wage gains in a series of major strikes from August 1921. By December 1923 it was all over. Trade unions were exhausted and their radicalism was gutted. Labour had known defeat before, but the depth of the 1921-3 catastrophe was unique. Never before had Labour leaders promised so much and delivered so little. Syndicalism was discredited. Too late, Labour realised that it had squandered an opportunity to mould elements of the new Ireland in its formative years. Cumann na nGaedheal had no use for trade unions and they faced a grim decade under the first Irish government.

**II.X - Labour’s repeated failure to seize the revolutionary initiative**

As is now well known, Eamon de Valera never said, ‘Labour must wait’ in 1918. Relations between Sinn Fein and Labour were very amiable in the South, where a number of important Dublin trade unionists had participated in the Easter Rising. Some of them had been interned and they subsequently canvassed for Sinn Fein candidates in the byelections of 1917 and 1918.

When the general election loomed, Sinn Fein offered a pact to the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (ILP&TUC) that would have allowed it a clear run in all four Dublin constituencies, provided its candidates pledged to abstain from Westminster and work for the establishment of an Irish Republic.

The executive of the ILP&TUC had already declared that it would ‘yield to none in determination to win for Ireland freedom’ and planned to contest 15 seats. Its’ candidates would abstain from Westminster in protest at ‘daily deportations, imprisonment without trial, suppression of public opinion and the right of meeting’. However, it did not rule out Labour MPs taking their seats ‘if special circumstances warranted it’, subject to approval by a specially convened delegate conference.

This was as far as the ILP&TUC executive felt it could go without provoking a rebellion among Unionists in its British based affiliates. Unfortunately, it not only failed to reassure Unionist workers, but it also failed to appeal to nationalist minded workers, who would flock to Sinn Fein in the South and cleave to the Irish Party in the North when the polls opened in December.

Meanwhile, the talks between Sinn Fein and Labour proved inconclusive. Later Sean T O’Kelly would claim that William O’Brien, the most influential figure in Ireland’s largest trade union, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU), had assured him that not only had he no problem signing the Sinn Fein pledge but he would resign his seat rather than go to Westminster if instructed to do so subsequently by Labour.
Nevertheless, on November 1st, 1918, when the ILP&TUC held a special delegate conference, just two days after the Sinn Fein Árd Fheis, the executive recommended that delegates vote against contesting the election. Tom Johnson, the President of Congress in 1916 and now its Treasurer, told delegates that ‘the whole Executive were prepared to stand or fall’ by their recommendation. He explained that calls had come ‘from all parts of Ireland for a demonstration of unity’ over self-determination, as had happened earlier in the year over opposition to conscription. The executive believed that:

‘the workers of Ireland … would willingly sacrifice for a brief period their aspirations towards political power if thereby the fortunes of the nation can be enhanced… The main purpose of the Irish Labour Party was not the election of one or two dozen members of Parliament but the building up of an organised political Labour consciousness in this country’

and ‘their policy would be decided from the point of view of the working classes.’

Seconding the motion, Tom McPartlin, a veteran of the 1913 Lockout and a delegate of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (ASCJ), a British based union with a large Northern membership, used the opportunity to point out that,

‘the representatives of all political parties were out for graft, to grab as much as they could. Carson up in the North would pat the workers on the back for the next couple of months; but he would be only doing the same as the United Irish Leaguers would be doing in the South; and it would be the same with the Sinn Fein Party. If they had Sinn Fein becoming the dominant power, they would have to fight them as they had to fight the rotten and corrupt [Irish] party in 1914. They would be another political mouthpiece of the capitalist class ... [and] invite foreigners to exploit the labour of the Irish workers.’

He sought to reassure delegates that, ‘While the others were contesting the fate of Ireland at the polling booths; they could decide the fate of the capitalists when the election was over.’ It was ‘far more effective for them to have the industrial workers organised to fight the Capitalist class than to grip political power.’

The recommendation of the executive was generally welcomed by delegates but there were critics, of whom the most senior was probably David Campbell, another former President of the ILP&TUC, who represented the Belfast Trades Council on the executive. He asked why, if they were to follow Brother McPartlin’s advice and ‘stick to the workers’ party’, were

they to leave the field open to... Nationalists and Sinn Feiners in the South and to give a walkover to the Conservative crowd in the North?... Would a Labour man going forward not appear in the eyes of the proletariat as good a spokesman of his class as the representative of any other?’

The most comprehensive criticism of the decision not to contest came from a Dublin delegate, Tom Murphy of the Irish Clerical Workers Union. He described the executive’s decision as ‘a big back down’. The Dublin Trades Council had held two special conferences and decided to fight four seats, for which candidates were selected. ‘The Labour movement was the strongest movement they had in the country’, yet they were being asked ‘to sink their identity and allow the political parties to collar all the ... representation of Ireland.

The Peace Conference in Paris was going ‘to settle up the affairs of the world’ and their own executive was advising them that ‘the Irish Labour Party should sit down and remain quiet... Would Labour be represented at that Peace Congress, or would the workers of Ireland have no look in whatever?’

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1 In the event, electoral boundary changes increased the number of constituencies across Dublin city from four to six and in the country from two to four
3 Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, Special Delegate Conference, November 1st, 1918. Pages 102-3
During the Repeal of the Union campaign, the Tenant Rights movement, the Land War and the Home Rule controversy ‘they were told that their time had not arrived; the political issues were too grave for them to step in... and claim any representation.’

However, the majority of delegates thought otherwise. John Cronin, the veteran carpenter who was president of the Limerick Trades Council and self-proclaimed opponent of the ‘socialist clique’ in Dublin, where ‘the movement was run entirely by people who had never worked at any trade’, said that no matter ‘how powerful they might claim Labour to be in Ireland’, they could ‘be fairly certain that the great bulk of Labour in Ireland would vote for one political party or the other’. He had heard organised bodies of Labour down south stating that they would vote Sinn Fein against any man... and ‘until they had their fling Labour ought to stand aside and await its turn to win’.

There was so little appetite to fight the election that the executive’s recommendation was accepted without being put to a vote.7

Padraig Yeates

II.XI - Were workers better off under British rule? Northern divisions

Unity is the lifeblood of trade unionism and the Nationalist/Unionist divide was a constant threat to that unity. An early indication was in 1885, during the first Home Rule Crisis when Alexander Bowman was forced to resign as the founding secretary of the Belfast Trades Council because he ran as an Independent Labour candidate for North Belfast. He ran in 1886 as a Liberal and saw his vote fall despite his insistence that he was not a nationalist. It did him little good because of Gladstone’s conversion to Home Rule.

Twenty-six years later, and 18 years after the founding of the Irish Trade Union Congress, the Labour movement finally sought to grasp the sectarian nettle at the 1912 conference in Clonmel, in the belief that it would become a major force in the proposed Home Rule parliament. The Ulster crisis was in its infancy and the Easter Rising inconceivable. It is one of history’s ironies that the man who proposed founding the Labour Party, James Connolly, would become one of the principal architects of the events that subsequently split and marginalised the movement.

Moving the motion on June 28th, 1912, Connolly, who represented the Belfast branch of Jim Larkin’s ITGWU proposed;

‘That the independent representation of Labour upon all public boards be, and is hereby, included amongst the objects of this Congress; that one day at least be hereafter set apart at our annual gathering for the discussion of all questions pertaining thereto; that the affiliated bodies be asked to levy their members 1s per annum for the necessary expenses, and that the Parliamentary Committee be instructed to take all possible action to give effect politically to this resolution’.

Ever since the Local Government Act of 1898, the broader franchise included many workers and made it possible for trade unionists to win seats on Boards of Guardians and local authorities. Several trades councils had created local representation committees to fight these elections, with varying degrees of success. One problem had been a failure to develop coherent policies and, once elected, Labour councillors or poor law guardians often disagreed on issues, or defected to locally dominant

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4 ILP&TUC Conference Minutes pages 105-7
5 It was vintage syndicalism, or Larkinism as its Irish variant was known, a backhanded compliment to its author, now in America.
7 ILP&TUC Conference Minutes pages 113-4 and 122
nationalist and unionist groupings. It proved even harder to secure consensus at national level, where ITUC delegates were often committed supporters of bodies as diverse as the United Irish League, Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Orange Order or Conservative and Unionist clubs. This was particularly true of the craft unions which made up the bulk of delegates until the rise of the ITGWU. These unions often had the industrial muscle to secure improvements in pay and conditions without venturing into the potentially divisive world of politics. By contrast Jim Larkin built the ITGWU on a populist and volatile cocktail of socialism, syndicalism and militant nationalism.

It was the apparent imminence of Home Rule and the rise of a new generation of Labour leaders that included David Campbell and Tom Johnson in Belfast, Jim Larkin and William O’Brien in Dublin, not to mention Connolly, that made possible contemplation of Labour’s entry onto the national political scene. The influence of some members of the old guard, such as three times ITUC president, James McCarron of the ‘Tailors’ union, a prominent Irish Party supporter, carried less weight with delegates than previously. Others, such as William Walker, former secretary of Belfast Trades Council and a member of the Independent Labour Party who favoured closer relations with British labour, had also recently departed the scene.

Walker had resigned his post as district secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Tom McPartlin’s union, to work for the British government’s new national insurance scheme. The first phase of the reform programme introduced by the Liberals’ radical Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, had covered old age pensions and unemployment benefit, and had been passed undiluted against the bitter opposition of the Tories and the House of Lords. Irish people now constituted 27 per cent of all recipients of the old age pension in the United Kingdom, although Ireland only had nine per cent of the population. At one stroke the country was transformed from a net financial contributor to a net beneficiary of the Union, posing the question, for the first time, of whether Ireland’s working poor would be better off under British rather than native Irish rule?

Unfortunately, from the point of view of Irish workers, by the time Lloyd George was ready to push through the next phase of welfare reforms the Liberal government was dependent on the votes of John Redmond’s Irish Party, which was opposed to extending medical benefits to Ireland. It argued that this would place new burdens on employers who would have to contribute, like workers, to the new scheme. It would also incur the hostility of the Catholic church and the medical profession who both feared the possible consequences for private and denominationally based health care, plus closer supervision of hospitals and religious institutions by a secular state. Redmond had already succeeded in excluding Magdalene homes from the remit of the industrial inspectorate, with consequences still being felt today.

Connolly focussed on the denial of health benefits in garnering support for his motion, telling fellow delegates, ‘There was no use in blaming either the Home Rule Party or the Unionist Party for this discrimination against Ireland. The real reason’ was that Irish workers ‘had no organised means of expressing themselves’. During ‘[t]he years in which they would be waiting for Home Rule’, Connolly said they should be preparing to enter the new parliament as a political party.

‘They all felt the disadvantage, and he might say the humiliation, involved in the fact that the working classes of Ireland were practically the only workers in any country in Europe... that had not a definite organised method of expressing its view upon the political field’.

Most delegates representing Irish and southern based unions spoke in favour of the motion, with those from amalgamated and northern based unions, like George Greig of the National Amalgamated Union of Labour warning that, ‘If the resolution was carried it would have a very

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8 The ASCJ amalgamated with the Associated Carpenters and Joiners Society of Scotland to form the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers which, in turn, became part of UCATT. In 2017 the Irish membership transferred to the TEEU to form Connect.


10 Irish Trade Union Congress, May 27th, 29th, 1912, Pages 14

disturbing effect on trades unions, and it would lead to the shedding of many members.’ Connolly’s motion was asking them ‘to take up questions upon which they were divided. They were all agreed as to the necessity for combination’ to secure better pay and conditions, but Greig ‘thought the resolution was premature and should be left over until they knew exactly where they were.’

‘Where they were’ was of course on the brink of a rapidly escalating Home Rule Crisis. On April 11th, the British Prime Minister, H H Asquith, had finally introduced the Home Rule Bill to the House of Commons over the objections of Unionists and their Tory allies. Greig’s warning proved prescient when a Protestant Sunday School excursion to Castledawson was attacked by members of a Hibernian procession the day after Connolly’s motion was passed, followed three days later by the retaliatory expulsion of Catholic workers from the Belfast shipyards.

This sudden recrudescence of sectarian violence took Labour leaders totally by surprise. Only a year earlier in an otherwise bitter dispute in the columns of the socialist journal Forward, about which path the labour movement should be taking in Ireland, James Connolly and William Walker agreed that such outbreaks were a thing of the past. Connolly had written that ‘even the Orangeman of Belfast would not lose time by rioting when he might make money by working’, while Walker had asserted that ‘it has now become impossible in Belfast to have a religious riot’.

Within a month of the shipyard pogrom the Conservative Party leader, Bonar Law, warned the British government that if it tried to enact Home Rule, ‘I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster will go in which I shall not be ready to support them.’

The motion at Clonmel to establish a political wing to the ITUC had been comfortably passed by 49 votes to 18, but it begs the question what sort of debate would have taken place, or how would delegates have voted if the conference had taken place a week later, after the clash at Castledawson and the subsequent shipyard expulsions?

The Easter Rising

The momentous events of the next six years [1912-1918] explain, but they do not excuse, the failure of the ITUC to implement its decision to establish a functioning political wing. In 1915 the ITUC failed to hold a conference and the Dublin Trades Council declined to contest the Harbour Division by-election, when a vacancy occurred following the death of Land War veteran William Abraham. The Division covered Dublin city north of the Liffey and was the most working-class constituency in the country. Labour had put on a creditable performance earlier in the year during the College Green bye-election, when the Irish Party saw its vote halve, despite having a strong candidate in John Dillon Nugent, general secretary of the AOH. The explanation for the failure to contest the Harbour Division is far from clear. Undoubtedly a shortage of funds played a role, but there was also difficulty finding a candidate. Neither of the two obvious candidates, James Connolly and P T Daly, who was a sitting councillor for the area, put their names forward. They were protagonists in a bitter feud within the ITGWU and Connolly may already have been too focussed on insurrection to bother with electioneering. The seat went by default to a little-known publican called Alfie Byrne in a three-cornered contest between rival nationalists. Significantly, Byrne had shared anti-recruiting platforms with Connolly and opposed the Irish Party’s support for the British war effort.

In 1916 Tom Johnson, as president of the ITUC, had to perform a delicate balancing act in his address to the conference in Sligo, paying tribute to all those who had fallen since 1914. While he paid a special tribute to James Connolly as a friend and comrade, he said that he personally believed that a victory for Britain and France was necessary to advance the cause of democracy and he called on delegates,

‘whatever their views may be in regard to the war or the rebellion, to rise for a moment in token of respect for all our comrades who have been brave enough to give their lives for the cause they believed in’.

The motion at Clonmel to establish a political wing to the ITUC had been comfortably passed by 49 votes to 18, but it begs the question what sort of debate would have taken place, or how would delegates have voted if the conference had taken place a week later, after the clash at Castledawson and the subsequent shipyard expulsions?
The prominent role of Connolly in the Easter Rising would prove a poisoned chalice for the Labour movement. On the one hand, it gave the Irish Transport and General Workers Union a new legitimacy amongst nationalists, reflected in a spectacular growth in membership; on the other hand, it shocked and bewildered many of his socialist contemporaries in both Ireland and Britain. Tom Johnston, editor of Forward (the weekly paper of the Independent Labour Party in Glasgow to which Connolly was a frequent contributor) described the Rising as ‘not only futile... but one in which the insurrectionists were apparently being used as pawns and tools by the German government’.

Nevertheless, in the Rising’s aftermath Irish trade union leaders managed to paper over the cracks, at least temporarily.

A motion from Michael O’Lehane, secretary of the Drapers’ Assistants and a Sinn Fein member, calling for the release of the ILP&TUC’s Secretary P T Daly was carried after he accepted an amendment from Belfast calling for the ‘immediate public trial or release’ of all internees. It was really a truce brought on by the immediacy of the slaughter on the Western Front and at the Dardanelles, when the implications of what still seemed little more than a riot in Dublin by comparison had yet to become clear.

Disagreement over participation in Irish Convention

It was Henry Whitley, an NGA delegate from the Belfast Trades Council, who seconded O’Lehane’s motion in Sligo. He would play a significant role at the Irish Convention in 1917 and 1918 which southern unions largely boycotted. Sinn Fein boycotted the proceedings as well, so that the split in the ILP&TUC was well established by the time that the Convention began. Attendance was by invitation and the British government did not invite the ILP&TUC executive. This may have been because Congress was perceived as under the control of radical socialists and Sinn Fein supporters, although Tom Johnson proposed that the ILP&TUC executive should request an invitation. This was rejected by a split vote, decided by the casting vote of his successor as president, William O’Brien, a devotee of James Connolly and the executed rebel leader’s literary executor.

Johnson was still, at this stage, based in Belfast and believed the decision not to attend was a mistake. He was anxious to maintain links with the British TUC and Labour Party, just as he was interested in promoting Ireland’s cause internationally by participating in the international socialist conferences in Stockholm (in May 1917) and Berne (in February 1919). The first of these was an attempt to revive the Second International, which had collapsed with the onset of war. Although the Irish delegates, William O’Brien and D R Campbell, were banned from travelling by the British authorities it did not spare the executive from severe criticism when delegates assembled in Derry in August. This came primarily from Belfast delegates and Irish Party supporters on the basis that the British TUC held a special delegate decision which voted not to attend because socialist parties in Germany and Austria-Hungary had been invited.

Whitley’s criticism was particularly pointed. He said that if it had been decided to send delegates to Stockholm, David Campbell, one of the organisers of the anti-conscription campaign would not have been appointed to represent unions in the North. Whitley accused the executive of ‘devoting too much attention to matters abroad while they neglected matters at home vital to the interests of the workers of Ireland’. In a clear reference to the Irish Convention, which Whitley had attended, the executive had failed to ‘make any effort to get proper representation at the Conference that was
likely to evolve some form of government for their own country’. His motion was seconded by John Clarke, representing the Belfast Branch of the Typographical Association, a sister union of Whitley’s NGA (National Graphical Association). The comment on neglecting gatherings nearer home was a clear reference to the Irish Convention, but it was equally clear that most delegates were opposed to participating in the Convention when the vote of censure against the executive was taken. It was defeated by 63 votes to 26.

Attendance at the Convention reflected the growing split within the Labour movement along both north-south and militant nationalist-unionist lines.

Of course, the Convention was not happening in a vacuum. State repression and an increasingly militant republican response was reinforcing a process that had begun with the Home Rule crisis, was accelerated by the Easter Rising and augmented by events such as the death of 1916 leader Thomas Ashe on hunger strike in 1917 and, above all, by the conscription crisis of 1918. It was little wonder that Labour in the South came increasingly to see independence as the only route to the promised land.

Labour was unlucky during 1917 and 1918 that not one of the bye-elections caused by deaths in the Irish Party’s ageing cohort of MPs occurred in one of its urban strongholds, so that all of the momentum remained with Sinn Fein. Meanwhile, the boycott of the general strike against conscription by trade unionists in the North was a demonstration that the ILP&TUC had already split on the ground.

The reality was that Labour did not wait in December 1918, so much as allowed itself to be overtaken by events. It had always taken decisions based on maintaining its’ unity and it was impossible to do so in a rapidly polarising political situation. In the South it found itself deferring to Sinn Fein, while in the North, Belfast Labour ignored the decision of the ILP&TUC delegate conference on November 1st, 1918, and ran candidates in the face of threats and intimidation from the Ulster Unionist Council, its Ulster Unionist Labour Association puppet and the Irish Party’s Joe Devlin; and lost. It is an indication of how deep the differences now ran between the north-east and elsewhere, even in nationalist ranks, that Joe Devlin beat Eamon de Valera in West Belfast.

The roots of partition long preceded the 1918 general election, the convening of the First Dáil, the Belfast engineering strike, the War of Independence, the 1920 pogroms, the Belfast Boycott, or indeed the establishment of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.

II.XII - Peace or War?
Labour and the Treaty (1922)

The ILP&TUC was as divided as other organisations on the issue of the Treaty, and also on whether to contest the election and enter the new Free State Dáil if Labour succeeded in having any TDs elected. The core leadership, most of whom were veterans of the 1913 Dublin Lockout and had supported James Connolly’s motion to establish a political wing of Congress in 1912, wanted to contest the forthcoming election.

While trade union membership had fallen since its peak of 270,000, it still stood at 189,000 in 1922 and had spread from the ports and main cities such as Belfast, Dublin, Cork and Limerick to almost every corner of Ireland. The combination of rising trade union density and the introduction of proportional representation significantly increased the possibility of winning seats.

At the same time many trade unionists were Sinn Fein supporters, especially in the craft unions and held the view that the pro and anti-treaty wings of the existing Dáil should be given a clear run in
the next election to decide the future political direction of the country. On the other hand, there was considerable resentment in other unions, especially in the ranks of the ITGWU that, while the Provisional government danced attendance on the Southern Unionists and business leaders, their own support was being taken for granted.

They felt there was no recognition for the role Labour had played during the munitions strike, provided in terms of trade union personnel and structures to raise the Dáil Eireann loan, take industrial action in support of the hunger strikers and secure support from the British TUC and Labour Party for Irish self-determination.

There were further divisions in trade union ranks between those who wanted to continue the fight for a Workers Republic and those who felt the first priority had to be defending workers’ rights and jobs in the face of the recession that was now affecting most areas of the economy. When an ILP&TUC delegation met Arthur Griffith, the new President of the Irish Republic after de Valera and the anti-Treaty TDs had withdrawn from the Dáil in January 1922, their main demand was to ask for a compulsory Tillage Order to protect the jobs of 20,000 agricultural labourers facing lay-offs to make way for cattle, and to demand a social housing and public works programme to ease the housing crisis and reduce unemployment in the towns.

In a flash of revolutionary optimism that showed their internationalist spirit was still alive, the Labour delegation urged Griffith to conclude a trade agreement with Soviet Russia which would allow Irish food exports to be traded for Russian raw materials and agricultural machinery. Unfortunately, the Russian and British governments were now involved in discussions on a new trade agreement which would see the Russians exchange ideology for pragmatism and abandon earlier discussions with Dr Pat McCartan, the Sinn Fein envoy to the Soviet Union.

Labour’s analysis of the Treaty settlement
The ILP&TUC executive reflected divisions within its own ranks when it proposed to Griffith that the Provisional Government hold a plebiscite on the Treaty. When he ruled that out, they dropped the idea from their draft public response to the Treaty.

When a Special Congress was convened on 21st February, 1922, in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, to consider the forthcoming general election the executive explained that the Labour Party would have to consider running candidates because the next ‘Parliament’ would have ‘a task of enormous importance, i.e., the making of a Constitution’ that would shape all future legislation. ‘If the Constitution is faulty or reactionary; if the minds of those who frame it are dominated by a feudalistic or capitalistic outlook; if it is conceived of as an instrument for the preservation of private interests rather than of human needs; if its intention is to conserve the capitalistic regime in society; the damage to the cause of the common working people will be incalculable, perhaps irretrievable’.

On the ‘national question’ the Labour Party position was not significantly different from both wings of Sinn Fein in demanding
1. The withdrawal of all British military and other Executive forces;
2. That the people of Ireland as a single national entity shall be allowed to determine the form of government under which they shall live;
3. That while granting the fullest freedom to all local minorities, the political unity of Ireland must be maintained.’

It said that the Treaty

signed in London by the plenipotentiaries of Dáil Eireann and approved of after a long discussion by that Assembly, fall[s] short of the attainment of these objects. Nevertheless, we must recognise that they place the people of three-fourths of Ireland in a position to govern themselves in respect of ninety-nine hundredths of their individual day to day affairs, from the cradle to the grave. This is no small achievement as a result of the struggle and sacrifice of recent years, but the national aspirations still remain unsatisfied and Ireland as a nation is still denied the right of self-determination.

The Labour Party made it clear that ‘it had no responsibility for the negotiations’ but ‘Notwithstanding their failure to achieve their full purpose, we believe that the members of the Dáil, both minority and majority, according to their best judgment, have fulfilled their trust faithfully’. Drawing on their own experience as trade union leaders the ILP&TUC executive said settlements had to be agreed from time to time ‘by the representatives of the weaker Power after measuring its resources and counting the cost of continued resistance’. It was all the more urgent because of the emergence as a result of six years of struggle of

Problems of poverty, unemployment, and hunger; low wages and high prices; the shortage of houses; an epidemic of lawlessness; the prevalence in many places of the militaristic spirit; the assumption widely held that the soldier is above the law—the master, not the servant of the civil powers. All these are evident in our midst, and organised Labour must endeavour to remedy these economic evils and safeguard their civil rights.

By dating the struggle for independence from 1916 and the Easter Rising it was asserting Labour’s claim to a share of the credit for what had been achieved and reminded the electorate that in 1918 ‘the Labour Party abstained, so that the nation might express its demand for self-determination with such practical unanimity as would impress the Assembly of Nations then preparing to meet at Versailles, and to strengthen the hands of those who were demanding that Ireland should be admitted into that International Assembly’. Similarly, the elections of 1921 were held in the midst of the war, immediately following a threat by the British Premier to intensify the repression, and in circumstances which amounted to a challenge to the Irish people to prove that they really stood behind their leaders in the
struggle. Labour again stood down to prove that, despite Lloyd George’s threats, Ireland was still united and undaunted.

‘Notwithstanding the self-abnegation of the Labour Party in the interests of national solidarity... national unity has been broken’ and ‘our ideal commonwealth—a Republic based upon co-operative labour and service—not upon property and capital—is not to be attained through either party in the present Dáil’. Rather,

‘On Town and County Councils, on Boards of Guardians, in Farmers’ Unions, and Employers’ Federations, Labour finds that Republicans, Free Staters, and Unionists are too often to be found merging all political differences in a beatific harmony whenever a proposal to reduce wages comes forward. They agree cheerfully in placing the worker in the category of a commodity to be bought and sold, to be paid for only when hired, and to be hired only when hiring is likely to prove profitable to the hirer.

The Party reiterated the demands it made in the first draft of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil (see Module) that the new Free State Constitution assert:

That the natural wealth of Ireland belongs by right to the nation and may not be monopolised by any private interest, person or company; that the workers collectively, manual and mental, should own and control the whole produce of their labour, and that those who are actually engaged in an industry or service should administer that industry or service in the interests of the nation; that all adults shall have equal political and social rights and opportunities; and that all the privileges of wealth or birth shall be abolished.

The object of the Irish Labour Party ‘is, and must be, to establish in Ireland a Co-operative Workers’ Republic’.

It then laid out its immediate programme to tackle unemployment, guarantee ‘Every man or woman willing to work... a living wage’, prevent ‘profiteering in food, clothing, and other necessaries’, establish a National Housing Authority with ‘full powers to prohibit luxury buildings, to take over and enter upon the production of building materials as required, and to build or arrange for the building of houses wherever needed’. The cost of housing would ‘be borne out of taxation, and the rent to be charged not to exceed the sum necessary to pay for maintenance and depreciation, apart from rates’.

Labour’s demands

It called for the nationalisation of railways under workers’ control, reorganisation of the Education system with better schools, more highly qualified teachers ‘and a proper system of medical supervision and a generous provision for school meals. A national banking and credit scheme would be established to finance investment in jobs and a mother’s pension scheme introduced.

However, the manifesto was not published until after the general election was over because of continuing disagreements on policy, even after it was decided to contest the election.

Even before the delegates met a section of the manifesto proposing the Labour TDs elected should join whichever was the majority faction among the Sinn Fein TDs elected was deleted on the basis that if voters wanted to either support or reject the Treaty they would vote for pro, or anti-Treaty candidates rather than someone who could go either way.

Most of the larger unions, including the ITGWU, voted to contest the election. Some delegates, such as Cissy Cahalan, president of the Irish Drapers Assistants Association, who was opposed to the
Treaty said the Labour Party should abstain from an election that would split the Labour movement and weaken the republican cause. Helen Chenevix of the Irish Women Workers Union said that Labour MPs in Britain had ‘sold the interests of the workers’ and the IWWU ‘stood for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers’ Commonwealth’, while Walter Carpenter of the International Tailors and Tailoresses Union said ‘the men who seized the mills, the creameries and the railways’, not those ‘going into Parliament’.

But the debate was won by pragmatic veterans such as Thomas Kennedy, a Citizen Army veteran of the Dublin Lockout and Easter Rising. He said, ‘It was all right talking about the Workers Republic, but when they went before the working-class electors the question they would have to decide was “whether you are for peace or war, and whether you are prepared to put up with the consequences”.

Northern delegates ranging from socialists such as David Campbell of the Belfast Trades Council to traditional Unionist supporters such as Henry Whitley of the Typographical Society urged delegates to ‘contest and fight their corner’. A vote to defer a decision to a later date was defeated by 72 votes to 55 and the decision to contest was passed by a comfortable 104 to 49. A call for a plebiscite on the Treaty was passed by an even more comfortable 128 to 12.

Padraig Yeates

II.XIII Case Study - The Lankfords: Two local republican activists and their impact on the Irish Revolution

Seamus and Siobhan Lankford were committed activists in the Irish revolution who were both based in Cork during this period and were among countless individuals whose contribution remains largely hidden but would have a lasting impact within their communities.

Seamus Lankford and the ‘Workhouse Rats’

At the end of 1920 the Cork Board of Guardians faced a financial crisis. They had a bank overdraft of £8,208 and no credit to meet bills. It was decided to appoint three vice-guardians to implement radical reforms in line with Sinn Fein policy. The appointments were sanctioned by W T Cosgrave, the Dail Eireann Minister for Local Government, bypassing the British Local Government Board based in The Custom House, Dublin. Seamus Lankford was made senior vice-guardian and chairman. He had a powerful personality and drove the reform agenda.

He was a typical member of the new revolutionary elite. An Irish language enthusiast, he had worked as a Customs and Excise Officer in Britain, where he was known for his dedicated pursuit of smugglers. He returned to his native Cork in 1918 to avoid conscription and became an organiser for Conradh na Gaeilge through which he developed a close friendship with Terence MacSwiney. He subsequently worked with him in City Hall when MacSwiney became Lord Mayor.

Lankford was appointed a Registrar of the Dáil arbitration courts and then asked to take charge of the city’s workhouse with two assistants.

Their reform program included large reductions in expenditure on fuel, food and wages. Many employees were dismissed. Pensioners in the workhouse were required to hand over their pensions as a contribution to their maintenance and fever patients had their economic circumstances investigated to assess how much they could afford to pay for treatment. Most new applicants for relief were refused admission and some of the premises were used to accommodate republicans on
the run and detain suspected informers for interrogation.

Lankford described those who criticised his cutbacks as ‘pseudo humanitarians’. Like many of his colleagues he wanted to purify public life. While there was undoubtedly waste in the past administration of the workhouse, his programme of cuts was so severe that it alienated the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and the Workers Council staff, who had previously supported the Dail Eireann regime.

His critics included George Nason, President of the Cork Trades Council and John Good, a Republican Labour poor law guardian who said Lankford and his colleagues were acting in a ‘tyrannical’ manner. Good said that the reduction in diet and coal supplies had resulted in increased mortality rates among inmates. He also accused Lankford of calling inmates ‘workhouse rats’ and demanded an inquiry into allegations of beatings and ill-treatment. Another elected guardian, Miss Sutton, accused Lankford and his fellow vice-guardians of ‘work[ing] against the poor’ and said that inmates were too afraid to complain.

However Lankford and one of his fellow vice-guardians Joe Higgins said they were dealing with ‘blackguards’ and tackling ‘iniquity and social corruption’, while critics such as Good were ‘masquerading as protectors of the poor’. Lankford was backed by the Cork Weekly News, which praised the vice-guardians for checking ‘waste and extravagance’.

Some of Lankford’s Sinn Fein colleagues, such as Liam de Roiste, a TD for the city, shared his view that many of the poor were immoral and not to be trusted as they relied on the British state for social welfare. On one occasion Lankford himself had to hide when a ‘fallen woman’ he had expelled from the workhouse confirmed his worst suspicions by returning with a British army search party to identify Lankford who was on their wanted list. Lankford only evaded capture by hiding in the Nuns’ quarters, which the officer in charge decided it would be improper to search.

Lankford’s concern over the bad influence that ‘fallen’ women such as prostitutes and unmarried mothers had on other inmates led him, during the Truce, to travel to London and visit convents who worked to ‘save’ these women. He subsequently invited the Sacred Heart Sisters to come to Cork and assisted them in acquiring Bessboro House from its departing Unionist owners to open a Mother and Baby home. Women still had their babies delivered in the workhouse infirmary, but were then transferred immediately to Bessboro House.

Removing unmarried mothers from workhouses became a priority of the new Free State, which farmed out their care to religious orders. This pattern soon extended to juvenile crime so that, by 1924, there were more children confined in industrial schools in the Free State than in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined. The edifying atmosphere of a religious order was believed to be better for those consigned there than a secular establishment and offered to provide care more cheaply.

A Dail Eireann inquiry was established into the running of the Cork workhouse because of the controversy Lankford’s regime had provoked, but it had to be abandoned after the inspectors were kidnapped during the Civil War. An attempt to resume it in May 1923 had to be abandoned again after Bishop Daniel Coholan refused to allow any religious involved in providing services in the various institutions to be interviewed. Lankford took his cue from the Bishop and refused to give evidence under oath. When the report was completed it commended Lankford and his colleagues for their pioneering work to reform the poor law system. Meanwhile he had joined the Free State civil service in March 1923 and worked in revenue subsequently.

Lankford, S The Hope and the Sadness, Tower Books, Cork, 1980
Lucey, D S The End of the Irish Poor Law? Manchester University, 2015
Siobhan Lankford – Intelligence Officer in the War of Independence and Civil War

15 The Third Vice-Guardian, Sean Nolan, had been interned by the British
Siobhan (Jane) Creedon was the daughter of a small farming family in the Mourne Abbey area of County Cork. Her father was imprisoned briefly for defying an eviction order during the Land Wars. Like many young activists of her generation she imbibed a strong sense of national identity from local stories of the famine, Fenians and agrarian struggle. She was recruited to the post office in 1912 and, while attracted by Cumann na mBan, could not join because she was a civil servant.

However, in the week of the Rising she contacted local Irish Volunteer leader Tomas Mac Curtain and offered her help in monitoring cyphered messages, as well as tapping telephone conversations from the British authorities. Consequently, she was attached to Cork No 2 Brigade. She began recruiting other women, mostly typists working in civil service jobs locally and compiled daily reports for the Brigade. The proof of the value of her work emerged early, when she was able to alert the Volunteers to plans for the export of grain and livestock by the British authorities during 1917, when that organisation and Sinn Fein were engaged in a campaign of obstruction.

Besides her work locally for IRA intelligence during the War of Independence, she carried out liaison work between the local brigade and Dublin, using the trips on occasion to bring weapons down from the capital for local units.

Dismissed from the Post Office in April 1920 she then worked fulltime for the IRA, collating intelligence from her agents, mainly female typists and post office clerks. Her skill at analysing information not only enabled her to alert the Brigade to opportunities to attack the British forces but also to threats, such as a sting operation of the British army to lure a local flying column into ambushing a munitions train.

Her skills were recognised by Liam Lynch, the commander of the new Second Southern Division, the largest in the IRA, and she was attached to his staff. She managed to continue organising local intelligence work for the Brigade while meeting the Division's needs. On Lynch's orders she agreed to contact a member of the RIC involved in the death of her brother, who had been an IRA volunteer, and assured him he would not be killed if he provided information. However, dissatisfied with the quality of the information he provided and suspecting that he was a double agent, her assessment probably sealed his fate and he was executed.

Lankford also managed to cultivate local Unionists, including Colonel Longfield, the Deputy Lieutenant for Cork and a personal friend of the Viceroy, Field Marshal French. As a result of her ability to socialise in these circles, she identified local informers, including a policeman and a secret service agent operating in the area. At least two of those she identified were subsequently shot by the IRA.

During the Truce she worked with the IRA liaison officer dealing with the British forces in the area and kept GHQ in Dublin informed on developments.

On 12 June 1922 she was reinstated in the Post Office and transferred to Dublin. When the Civil War broke out two weeks later, she resumed her intelligence work for the anti-Treaty forces, keeping them informed on National Army deployments. She managed to work undetected until the Civil War ended. She was only discovered after a report she had sent was discovered in an IRA dump in West Cork in May 1923. She subsequently suffered a breakdown and convalesced for a period in Mallow.

She had no difficulty securing another civil service job when she returned to Dublin, this time in the accounts department of the GPO. The decision of many civil servants in the capital to transfer to Britain created a lot of vacancies for experienced staff such as Lankford.

She returned to Cork in 1932 where she married Seamus Lankford and had to retire from the Civil Service because of the marriage bar. They shared not alone the same national outlook but a deep religious faith. When she wrote her memoir, The hope and the Sadness, it was dedicated to Seamus and in it she praised his work tackling the problem of ‘fallen women’ and other workhouse undesirables.
The couple had five children and when Seamus died at a comparatively early age her eligibility for a military service pension proved of significant assistance in helping her rear them. Her application for a pension was endorsed by leading figures from both sides in the Civil War. In his reference, Liam Tobin, who had served in the IRA and then the National Army in the Civil War wrote that it was 'with great pleasure ... to try in some small way to pay tribute to one who did such splendid service'.

Lankford, S The Hope and the Sadness, Tower Books, Cork, 1980


Padraig Yeates

II.XIV - International Developments

The outbreak of the First World War fundamentally changed the map of Europe and the conflict ended its brief domination of world affairs. Three empires, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Russia disappeared, two others, those of France and Britain were fatally weakened and Germany became a republic, lost its overseas colonies and large tracts of territory to the east and west. Italy’s social and economic development was stunted, resulting in the rise of fascism.

Many of the problems we face today can be traced back to that conflict, not alone in Europe but across the Arab world, Africa and the Far East.

President Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the ILO

The main beneficiary of the conflict was the United States of America, which replaced Britain as the world’s leading creditor nation but it was not yet ready to displace the latter politically and militarily across much of the globe. President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, delivered in an address to Congress on January 8th, 1918, were hailed internationally by millions as forming the basis for a new, democratic world order based on free trade, freedom of the seas, recognition of the right of peoples to self-determination and the creation of ‘a general association of nations... affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike’.

The latter became the League of Nations, but its potential was fatally weakened by the refusal of the US Senate to approve America’s affiliation. However, this was far from clear in 1919 when small nations such as Ireland pinned their hopes on the Paris peace talks. After the 1918 general election the First Dail’s representative in Paris Sean T O’Kelly tried unsuccessfully to gain admission to the talks. Britain, as one of the principal victors, ruled out and discussion of Irish self-determination.

The League’s most important achievement was the creation of the International Labour Organisation in 1919. It is the world’s oldest functioning international organisation, having survived the Second World War at its base in Geneva and being incorporated in the United Nations, which was the successor body to the League of Nations.

As the organisation’s website states today,

The driving force for the ILO’s creation arose from security, humanitarian, political and economic considerations. The founders of the ILO recognized the importance of social justice in securing peace, against a background of the exploitation of workers in the industrializing nations of that time. There was also increasing understanding of the world’s economic interdependence and the need for cooperation to obtain similarity of working conditions in countries competing for markets.
The creation of the ILO was also recognition of the growing power of organised labour. The head of the Commission appointed to create the ILO was Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labour and its first Director was Albert Thomas, a leading French socialist who served as Minister of Munitions in the First World War.

Padraig Yeates

II.XV - Decent Work and the creation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

“Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice” ILO Constitution 1919

A Chronology of the International Labour Organisation can be found in the YouthConnect Working World resource Module 6 p81-85.

The International Labour Organisation, a UN agency and the only global tripartite organisation that exists, was established in 1919 following World War I, with an initial membership of 45 countries. The ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of all 186 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting Decent Work for all women and men.

Its establishment was part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. It promotes social justice within and between member states and is committed to spreading humane working conditions and combatting injustice, hardship and poverty.

In November 1917 the Bolshevik revolution led to a series of labour and political strikes and revolution spread rapidly across central Europe, with the democracies of Britain and France also threatened. It was considered at that time that world revolution was possible, born out of the demands of the international labour movement for the recognition of workers’ rights and minimum standards for labour for all. It was considered that the creation of the ILO was an alternative to a possible revolution of workers and was a significant achievement of itself, due to the competing interests of European governments and other powerful countries such as the US and Japan.

In its early years the ILO dealt with the most basic of workers’ rights such as hours of work, unemployment, maternity protection, minimum age for employment and labour inspections.

The ILO also conducted “missions” to countries to inspect factories and other workplaces, meet with trade unions and campaigning to raise awareness among citizens to put pressure on their governments to ratify ILO conventions and introduce new labour laws for the benefit of workers.

In the 1920s the ILO moved into the area of technical assistance, which provided support to governments in the drafting of labour legislation as well as its implementation. The areas in which it became involved included social insurance law, industrial hygiene and factory inspections.

Governance

It has a tripartite structure of governance involving representatives of workers, employers and government. Each Member State is represented by a delegation consisting of two government delegates, an employer delegate, a worker delegate and their respective advisers. The International Labour Conference establishes and adopts international labour standards and is a forum for discussion of key social and labour questions. It also adopts the Organisation's budget and elects the Governing Body.
Ireland is a Member state of the ILO. The Irish delegation to the International Labour Conference each year comprises of an ICTU representative, an IBEC representative and two representatives from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The ILO aims to ensure that it serves the needs of working women and men by bringing together governments, employers and workers to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes. The very structure of the ILO, where workers and employers together have an equal voice with governments in its deliberations, shows social dialogue in action. It ensures that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in ILO labour standards, policies and programmes.

The ILO accomplishes its work through three main bodies which comprise governments, employers (ACT/TEMP) and the workers’ bureau (ACTRAV) which is also a key characteristic of this organisation. Governments and Social Partners (employers and trade unions) have an equal voice in shaping policies and programmes, with its work conducted through the following bodies:

- **the International Labour Conference** sets the International labour standards and the broad policies of the ILO. It meets annually in Geneva and is often called the international parliament of labour; the Conference is also a forum for discussion of key social and labour questions.

- **the Governing body** is the Executive Council of the ILO and meets three times a year in Geneva. It takes decisions on ILO policy and establishes the programme and the budget, which it then submits to the Conference for adoption.

- **the International Labour Office** is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization. It is the focal point for the International Labour Organisation’s overall activities, which it prepares under the scrutiny of the Governing Body and under the leadership of the Director-General. The work of the Governing Body and of the Office is aided by tripartite committees covering major industries. It is also supported by committees of experts on such matters as vocational training, management development, occupational safety and health, industrial relations, workers’ education, and special problems of women and young workers.

- **Regional meetings** of the ILO member States are held periodically to examine matters of special interest to the regions concerned.

The ILO promotes social dialogue in each member state and reflects tripartism in its structures in that delegates to conference for each member state comprises two government representatives and one each from the employers and from the trade unions respectively.

[Tripartism refers to economic corporatism based on tripartite contracts of business, labour and state affiliations within the economy. Each is to act as a social partner to create economic policy through co-operation, consultation, negotiation and compromise. Tripartism is a common form in neo-corporatism.]

**The Irish connection**

Edward Phelan was born on 25 July 1888 in Ireland and had a distinguished career at the International Labour Organisation. He was an official advocate of the ILO Project at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and became its fourth Director in 1941 and Director General under its new constitution in 1946. He was the innovator of the ILO “tripartite” formula which forms the basis of representation at the International Labour Conferences. Each country’s delegation includes not only Government delegates, but also representatives of workers’ and employers’ organisations. He has since been described as “one of Ireland’s greatest international civil servants upon whom the National University of Ireland conferred an honorary LLD in 1944. He was a generous benefactor to the NUI and part of his continuing legacy is the prestigious NUI EJ Phelan Fellowship in International Law.”
In 2013 the Edward J Phelan Lecture series was established.
The lecture in 2015 was given by President Michael D Higgins and can be found at this link
http://www.nui.ie/publications/docs/2015/E_PhelanLecture2015.pdf and viewed at this link

The Decent Work Agenda
The Decent Work agenda was established as a campaign by the ILO in 1999 and its definition of
decent work is as follows;
“Decent Work means productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate
income, with adequate social protection. It also means sufficient work, in the sense that all
should have full access to income-earning opportunities. It marks the high road to economic and
social development, a road in which employment, income and social protection can be achieved
without compromising workers’ rights and social standards”.

For a more comprehensive explanation of Decent Work, what is encapsulates, and some key
activities please refer to the YouthConnect Working World Resource 6 p9-17, which includes the
criteria and dimensions for decent work, along with lesson plans p31-79.

A number of trade union organisations throughout the world, including Ireland, have adopted the
campaign as a way to progress the priority issues of concern to workers which include;

• Access to employment opportunities for freely chosen productive work;
• Social protection and security systems;
• Social dialogue including empowerment, inclusion and representation;
• Rights at work (core labour standards and fundamental principles).

Core labour standards
International labour standards are first and foremost about the development of people as human
beings. In the ILO’s declaration of Philadelphia in 1944, the international community recognised
that “Labour is not a commodity”, it is not an inanimate object that can be negotiated for the
highest profit or lowest cost. Work is an essential element within life, as it is currently ordered,
and is strongly connected to an individual’s dignity, well-being and standard of life. The develop-
ment of a country in terms of its economic and social policies should ensure that it creates jobs of
high quality, standards and value in which people can work in freedom, safety, dignity and with
decent conditions and pay.

An economy should not be developed for its own good, but rather an economy should be the en-
gine of social progress where the lives of all citizens are improved. In the world today, it is more
important to discuss and debate sustainability and how we can limit the damage to the environ-
ment by creating new and innovative ways to live and work together, than simply continuing
business as usual with unfettered economic growth, vast levels of income inequality and increas-
ing damage to the planet.

Labour standards are legal instruments drawn up by the ILO which set out basic principles and
rights at work. Standards can either be a convention which is legally binding international
 treaties that may be ratified by a member State, or a recommendation which serve as non-binding
guidelines. Conventions tend to lay down the basic principles to be ratified by a State, while a re-
lated recommendation supplements the convention by providing more detailed guidelines on
how it could be applied.

The ILO has set minimum labour standards that should be a right for every worker, everywhere in
the world.
This is expressed as four core labour standards, which contain four fundamental, universal and indivisible human rights:

- Freedom from forced labour
- Freedom from child labour
- Freedom from discrimination at work
- Freedom to form and join a union and to bargain collectively

across 8 fundamental ILO conventions which include:

**Freedom from forced labour** is enshrined in Convention 29 on Forced Labour (1930) and Convention 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour (1957).

**Freedom from child labour** is enshrined in Convention 138 on Minimum Age for Entry into Employment (1973) and Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).

**Freedom from discrimination at work** is enshrined in Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration (1951) and Convention 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (1958).

**Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining** is enshrined in Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (1948) and Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (1949).

These standards are the most widely ratified ILO conventions where 124 of the member states have ratified all eight conventions.

The principles of the freedom of association conventions have been binding on all ILO member States since 1948, regardless of ratification. With the **1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**, this universal obligation now covers the principles of all eight conventions.

The 1998 Declaration recognises that economic growth alone is not enough to ensure equity, social progress and to eradicate poverty. It makes clear that these universal rights apply to all people in all states – regardless of the level of economic development. As an ILO constitutional instrument, its principles are binding on all member states whether or not they have ratified the conventions.

The standards in question are also regarded as human rights by all other parts of the United Nations system and are incorporated into other international law.

These core labour standards are required for a variety of reasons which include improving equality and social justice and redressing the unequal distribution of the benefits of globalisation (wealth) to ensure all countries and all citizens within those countries receive a better share. It has long been understood that access to decent work with a decent wage is a way out of poverty. Globalisation has unfortunately brought with it the negative impact of the “race to the bottom” where businesses chase ever increasing profits at the expense of workers who receive ever reducing wages and their share of the gains. Forcing wages down in one part of the world, through globalisation, eventually will push prices and wages down in other parts of the world. Ensuring global labour standards are adhered to and implemented will slow down the race to the bottom and provide a more equal platform for all. Providing a minimum social floor will help eradicate unfair competition due to worker exploitation.

It also provides a safe space for workers to organise and ensure they win and retain those rights. Over the course of history rights are rarely given, but rather are taken after a long and hard-won battle. Without the collective strength of a trade union, it is more difficult for workers to receive what is their right. The freedoms to join, form and bargain within the protection of a trade union is a critical part of this process.
Child labour

Children participate in many different types of work, not all of which should be classified as child labour. As outlined in the earlier section on the UNCRC, work that is undertaken by children is defined as child labour where it is detrimental or injurious to a child’s health, mental wellbeing or personal development and which interferes in their schooling.

As the statistics show from the ILO, in 2016 there were 152 million children world-wide involved in child labour with 73 million of them in hazardous forms of employment that directly endangers their health, safety and moral development with 48% of them aged 5-11 years, 28% aged 12-14 years and 24% 15-17 years. 70.9% of those children were working in the agriculture sector with 17.2% involved in the services sector. The African continent accounts for 19.6% of those involved in child labour.

Further detail on the 2017 report into child labour can be accessed at the following link; (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575541.pdf)

One of the most effective ways to prevent child labour is to set the minimum age for the legal employment of children, which are set out in ILO conventions below;

- Convention No. 7 & 58 Minimum Age (Sea) 1920 & 1936
- Convention No. 10 Minimum Age (Agriculture) 1921
- Convention No. 33 & 60 Minimum Age (Non-industrial) 1932 & 1937
- Convention No. 58 Minimum Age (Sea) 1936
- Convention No. 5 & 59 Minimum Age (Industry) 1919 & 1937
- Convention No. 112 Minimum Age (Fisherman) 1959
- Convention No. 123 & 124 Minimum Age (underground work) 1965
- Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work 1973
- Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour 1999
- Convention No. 189 Domestic Work 2011

The worst forms of child labour

It is necessary to eliminate, without further delay, the worst forms of child labour as soon as possible because they are so detrimental to a child’s health, wellbeing and development. Article 3 of ILO Convention 182 defines it as the following;

a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;

b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;

c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties;

d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Article 3 of ILO recommendation 190 provides guidance on some hazardous forms of child labour which should be prohibited;
In determining the types of work referred to under Article 3(d) of the Convention (190), and in identifying where they exist, consideration should be given to, inter alia [among other things], to:

(a) work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;
(b) work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;
(c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment or tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;
(d) work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
(e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of an employer.

Additional resources


More details on Edward Phelan’s life and contribution to the work of the ILO can be found in the book “Edward Phelan and the ILO: Life and views of an international social actor” at this link http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_104746.pdf

More information on the ILO can be found at www.ilo.org

More information on the conventions, recommendations and how the ILO operates can be found in this publication http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/----ed_norm/----normes/documents/publication/wcms_318141.pdf

Fiona Dunne
II.XVI - The Russian Revolution and its influence in Ireland

The decision to establish the ILO was prompted by fear among employers and governments of revolutionary socialism after the collapse of the Russian Empire in March 1917. In November 1917 the radical Bolshevik wing of the social democrats seized power and created the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which advocated international revolution.

By then various attempts to revive the Second Socialist International, which had collapsed at the outbreak of war, had failed and the Soviet government established a rival Third, or Communist, International. Socialist parties and trade unions across Europe now split. Some affiliated to this new revolutionary international, and others supported various attempts to revive the Second International which led, after 1945, to the establishment of the Labour and Socialist International.

It would be hard to overestimate the impact of the Russian revolution and there were attempts by radical revolutionary groups to seize power in imitation of the Bolsheviks in places as far apart as Hamburg and Shanghai during the next decade. Nor was the Bolshevik model of organisation adopted only by left wing organisations, but nationalist and right-wing movements as well.

Because Ireland had been an integral part of the United Kingdom, the ILP&TUC had never achieved international recognition in its own right until the Berne conference in February 1919, one of several attempts to build a new Socialist International. The Irish delegation consisted of Tom Johnson and Cathal O’Shannon. The trip proved divisive. The decision to attend was criticised by some delegates representing amalgamated unions from Belfast and conservative nationalist trade unionists, while many delegates in the south defended the decision. The ILP&TUC did not affiliate to any of the rival Internationals during the revolutionary period but extensive support for the Russian Revolution and its objectives manifested itself in many general strikes and Labour demonstrations of the period.

In fact, the general strike on May 1st, 1919 was in large part inspired by the revolution and as early as the first anniversary of the initial Russian revolution in February 1918 the then president of the ILP&TUC, William O’Brien, declared that the Russians had achieved ‘the most complete political and economic freedom that the world has yet seen’. At the same rally in Dublin’s Mansion House, Cathal O’Shannon proposed a motion passed with acclamation ‘that the people of Dublin are at one with the Bolsheviks... and the Russian interpretation of the democratic principle’ was ‘the only one acceptable to the people of Ireland.’ Tom Johnson, the future leader of the ILP&TUC in the Free State called on the crowd ‘to follow the action of the Russian revolutionaries and do the whole job at once’.

These were of course the three men who drafted the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil. The only speaker that night who uttered a word of caution was Dr Kathleen Lynn who warned that ‘some people are shy of acclaiming Russia for fear of the cry of anti-clericalism’. It was ‘the most potent... slur on any cause in this country and make[s] the ordinary unthinking person afraid of it’.

It was only gradually that the realities of life in revolutionary Russia, marred by civil war, foreign intervention and internal power struggles saw many initial supporters have second thoughts about the Soviet Union. Meanwhile differences of opinion within the ILP&TUC tended to reflect other tensions within the movement, such as those between supporters of the Labour-Republican alliance such as O’Brien and Shannon, and more traditional labour figures such P T Daly and Tom McPartlin in Dublin, most of the Belfast leadership and conservative elements throughout the country.

Nevertheless, during the revolutionary period, the ‘soviet’ phenomenon in Ireland was a powerful indication of the popularity of the Russian revolution and the concept of workers power. It did not require a deep understanding of events in Russia or Marxism to grasp the basic concept that, as the producers of the nation’s wealth, workers should also control it.
The debate on the Treaty at the special ILP&TUC delegate conference in February 1922 showed how far most of the leadership of the labour movement had moved from the revolutionary positions of 1918 and 1919, but continuing support for revolutionary socialist alternatives remained among the radical and mainly younger members of the Labour and republican movements, of whom James Connolly’s children Nora and Roddy were representative.

Padraig Yeates

ILP&TUC: http://centenaries-ituc.nationalarchives.ie/

II.XVIII - Was Civil Resistance a viable alternative strategy to Military Action?

Could Irish Labour’s blueprint for opposing conscription have been adapted to secure independence in 1919, thus avoiding military and sectarian violence?

Was the War of Independence necessary? The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress representatives on the Mansion House Conference set up in 1918 to consider the most effective means of resisting conscription provided an interesting alternative strategy to that of the Irish Volunteers. It could easily have been modified to meet the changed conditions of early 1919 if the Dáil Eireann administration had not been catapulted into an armed conflict the country was unprepared for.

In 1918, armed resistance was certainly not a viable option. Membership of the Irish Volunteers may have soared during the conscription crisis but weapons were pitifully few because the British authorities had confiscated most weapons in nationalist hands after the Rising.

Traditionally attention has focussed on dramatic plans by Cathal Brugha in 1918 to bring a group of Volunteers to London to assassinate members of the British Cabinet if conscription was introduced. There were also plans to develop a ‘block’ system in Dublin, converting tenements into fortresses that would allow Volunteers to defend themselves with the use of home-made bombs and hand grenades. If weapons were few, explosives remained surprisingly plentiful because of munitions plants, quarrying and civil engineering projects, including ironically the construction of military aerodromes around the country. If such activities gave Volunteers a sense of purpose, it is doubtful if they would have had much practical value.

The ILP&TUC came up with more practical proposals to resist conscription, which prefigured the munitions strike during the War of Independence. In an undated ‘Plan of Action’ the Labour representatives on the Mansion House Conference committee advised that, as the British authorities would probably retain existing recruiting areas with inhabitants divided into Classes and Grades as in Great Britain... Within those areas certain trades or occupations will be exempted, unmarried men only will be called upon, and of these possibly none over a certain age.’ As the British would probably aim to isolate and divide the population, Labour proposed that if any one area or group was targeted every other area should respond as if it was under attack. The ILP&TUC was particularly exercised about Dublin being proclaimed first as it was considered the most vulnerable area.

Labour called for a director or small executive committee to be established in each military district. These would maintain contact with the Mansion House Conference. The committees would have ‘full power to act’ locally and be responsible for communications with other areas. In their ‘Plan of Action’ the Labour representatives proposed:

1. Withdrawal of Bank deposits by ‘Merchants, farmers, shopkeepers, clergy and all classes’. This was intended to stimulate banks into putting ‘pressure on the Government to withhold the [Conscription] Proclamation’.

88
2. Rail workers to stop for proscribed periods – ‘a week or fortnight’ – forcing the military to take over railways. ‘Steps should be taken to make the efficient working [of the railways] by military very difficult’.

3. General stoppage of work: ‘All postal officials, civil service clerks, police and all city and town employees should “down tools”’ and appeal to soldiers ‘with a view to “sympathetic action”.’ This would ensure no area was left isolated to bear the brunt of military attention, and ‘to demonstrate to the world that the nation was united in its resolve to resist at any cost’. The Mansion House Conference should ‘act strongly in the hope that a sympathetic reaction will take place among the Irish population in Industrial Britain’.

All of these measures were adopted in principle by the Mansion House Conference, except, predictably, withdrawal of bank deposits. There are limits to popular patriotism. Unlike the subsequent Sinn Fein policy of using the boycott tactic to isolate the RIC, Labour suggested that, ‘If police and civil servants can be persuaded to act with the people the battle can be won’, because the country would become ungovernable. ‘On behalf of the people, the [Mansion House] Conference should promise that all the force of the nation will be used to ensure re-instatement without penalties of all civil servants after the struggle.’

Under the heading of ‘Food Harvest’, the Labour memorandum advised that,

‘Farmers and dealers should be warned against sending any grain, roots, pork or live stock to market for shipment out of the country. Grain be kept in stack as long as possible so as to render Commandeering more difficult. The country must aim at supplying home needs, not to ship food while the crisis lasts. We do not suggest this as a permanent policy – but we must use the most effective economic weapons we have’.

It further proposed that the local Committees ‘should consider issuing licences to dealers who will guarantee to trade only for home consumption’. As mentioned earlier, the ILP&TUC was particularly concerned about Dublin and the plans by the Irish Volunteers to create a ‘block’ system there. It predicted that:

‘If Dublin were proclaimed a conscripted area and their (sic) ensued armed opposition, a ruthless example would be made of the city by the military. A state of siege set up and the opposition overborne by force and starvation. No prolonged opposition can be made by armed action in the city.

‘The alternative is: - a united passive resistance. For a week no work to be done except the conveyance of food. Men of military age to remain indoors – men who are “taken” to be taken singly – not to allow themselves to be rounded up in groups as would happen if they gathered together in public places.

‘Passive resistance imposes on the Government the responsibility of keeping up food supplies. They dare not starve the city in these circumstances.’

Acknowledging that the GNR railway would probably continue to operate, as it did during the 1918 general strike due to the antipathy of many loyalist NUR members, the memorandum said this should be taken advantage of to bring food supplies into the city, along with seaborne traffic. County Dublin farmers also had a role to play and a rationing system should be established to ensure equity of sacrifice.
In a prefiguration of the Dáil loans launched during the War of Independence, the Plan of Action proposed that payment for food supplies should be guaranteed by ‘the Nation... when the battle is over’. Arrangements for ‘Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Derry and the larger towns may follow on similar lines’, but they would have to rely on sea and road transport as ‘rail traffic will be interrupted’.

As for the men arrested and ‘shipped across to England’, the ILP&TUC document said seamen should be called upon to black these ships and, if military vessels were used, it accepted that an appeal to world opinion would probably be the most viable recourse. As many seafarers were as hostile to ILP&TUC policy as NUR rail workers, this might have proved problematic. Members of the National Seamen and Firemen’s Union had already refused to carry Irish delegates to the Stockholm Peace Conference in 1918 and 13,000 seafarers, many of them NSFU members, had died in the Great War.

While none of the measures proposed by the ILP&TUC were tried out, because conscription itself failed to materialise, they did provide a glimpse of alternative strategies to those adopted during the War of Independence that might have proven at least as effective as the military activity that did take place. The speed and comprehensive success of the general strike against conscription suggests that such a policy of organised resistance could well have left us with a more benign historical legacy, both in terms of relations with Britain and between North and South, than that bequeathed by military activity. independence.

As it was, there were of course many forms of passive resistance between 1919 and 1921, such as the Limerick Soviet in April 1919 in response to the military curfew, the refusal of transport workers to allow the export of foodstuffs after price controls were lifted in March 1920, mass support for the republican hunger strikers in April 1920 which led to the second general strike against British rule and the Munitions strike in May 1920 severely hampered British military operations throughout the second half of the year. In fact, it was so effective that it had to be called off in December as the economy approached collapse in many parts of the country. There was also of course the establishment of the Dáil Courts and the arbitration system to regulate industrial disputes.

However, most of these were not undertaken as part of an overarching strategy directed from the centre, as had been envisaged in the anti-conscription campaign of 1918. Rather, they were often the result of individual local initiatives, not unlike the emerging guerrilla campaign and, in the case of the many industrial disputes, often revealed divisions. By 1921, Dáil Eireann and the IRA were intervening more frequently than the British authorities to end strikes, occupations and ‘Soviets’, usually established in pursuit of better pay and conditions rather than overturning the established order.

Not only was military activity counterproductive in terms of mobilising popular support for independence but it deepened the alienation in the loyalist community, which exploded in the pogroms of 1920. The Dáil Eireann response, the Belfast Boycott, only deepened the divide, while the decision to set up the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers Trade Union in order to undermine the predominantly British based craft unions in Ireland was another initiative that reinforced the partitionist mentality.

While It is unlikely that anything done by Dáil Eireann could have successfully wooed Unionist opinion, the failure to explore the sort of options outlined in the 1918 ILP&TUC document was a missed opportunity to involve and give greater ownership of the struggle for independence to the wider community. Instead a self-elected and relatively small group of militants filled the vacuum. The decision of the majority within the Irish Labour movement to tamely follow Sinn Fein’s lead was an important contributory factor for which they would be punished electorally in the following decades.

Padraig Yeates
Part III
Key events
III.I - The Rise of the Labour movement 1887-1922:

In 1887 the Dublin Council of Trade Unions (DCTU) established an Honorary Role of Prominent Citizens interested in ‘the cause of Labour’. It included radicals such as Michael Davitt but also public notables Lord Iveagh and Dr William Walsh, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Lord Iveagh was identified with philanthropic ventures such as the construction of housing, community baths, markets and playgrounds in inner city Dublin, while Dr Walsh was an early pioneer of conflict resolution and arbitration in industrial disputes.

1890: The DCTU acquires the Trades Hall in Capel Street, Dublin City, incorporating a large theatre, billiard room, bar and library as well as meeting rooms for union business.

1894: The founding conference of the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC) is held in Dublin at the instigation of the DCTU and Belfast Trades Council. 119 delegates gather in the Trades Hall on Capel Street. 119 delegates representing 21,000 workers directly and 39,000 others indirectly through the Trades Councils of Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Drogheda. The early conferences were dominated by moderate craft unions, happy to supplement the efforts of the British TUC rather than replace it. Among the sponsors were the Phoenix and Guinness breweries, Lord Iveagh and William Martin Murphy, the foremost Catholic capitalist in Ireland. A major reason for holding ITUC conferences was the prohibitive cost of sending delegations to TUC conferences in Britain. The first president, Tom O’Connell, a Dublin carpenter, warns delegates against seeking a compulsory eight-hour day as it would be suicidal to many enterprises. Four women delegates attend, two from the Textile Operatives Society in Belfast and two from the Book Folders section of the Irish National Labour Union in Dublin.

1896: James Connolly’s mixed fortunes as a revolutionary socialist in Dublin: The Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP) is founded in Dublin by members of the Dublin Socialist Society, a short-lived organisation formed out the remnants of the ILP in Dublin. It appoints James Connolly as its organiser on the recommendation of Scottish socialist veteran John Leslie. Connolly also edits the ISRP newspaper, the Workers Republic where he develops his ideas on the relationship between socialism and nationalism. Although the IRSP was small and it never succeeded in winning any elections at even local level, the power of Connolly’s writing had a decisive impact in convincing many young activists in the labour movement that the future for socialism and the working class in Ireland lay in struggling for an independent republic rather than confederation with British labour or Home Rule. The manifesto he wrote for the ISRP called for free education and health care for children, nationalisation of the railways, canals and banking, and universal suffrage as he was an early advocate of female suffrage. He also became one of the leading advocates of syndicalism within the Labour movement, arguing that the industrial power of trade unions was as important as political action in winning state power and that a general strike was as legitimate as a general election as a means of toppling capitalist governments. This was an outlook he shared with Jim Larkin and had a permanent impact on the thinking of the Irish labour movement. If Connolly’s overly romantic view of an idealised Celtic past led him to overestimate the revolutionary potential of Ireland’s still infant labour movement it would dovetail neatly with militant nationalism and give it a distinctive radical edge in the coming decades.

During these years ‘new unionism’ had emerged in Britain, where some of Connolly’s contemporaries such as Tom Mann shared his syndicalist outlook. This saw previously unorganised, unskilled and semi-skilled workers join unions for the first time. They tended to be more militant and politically radical than many craft unions. However, attempts to transpose the model to Ireland were largely stillborn.
**1901:** The turn of the century saw the growth of trade union consciousness among white collar workers as well as manual workers. The Dublin Municipal Officers Association, founded in 1901, evolved into the Municipal Officers (Ireland) Trade Union, which played a key role in supporting the Sinn Fein local authorities when they declared their allegiance to Dáil Eireann. It has now merged with most other public service unions in FORSA.

**1903:** Connolly emigrates with his young family to America as the ISRP implodes into rival factions.

**1907:** Larkin and the ‘New Unionism’ Come to Ireland: Jim Larkin arrives in Belfast as an organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL), often called ‘the Irish union’ because it had been formed by Richard McGhee and Edward McHugh, two émigré Irishmen and Home Rulers who were close allies of Michael Davitt. McGhee had previously helped Davitt establish the Knights of Labour, which organised agricultural labourers in Ireland. It was subsequently taken over by the conservative Redmondite establishment within the Irish Party and was transformed into a network of Land and Labour organisations that was mainly concerned with ensuring the smooth transfer of land ownership from the great Anglo-Irish estates to the growing class of tenant proprietors.

Like Connolly, Larkin was born of Irish parents and was raised in Liverpool. An early apostle of socialism he was recruited by McGhee’s successor as leader of the NUDL, James Sexton as an organiser. After enjoying considerable success in British ports, the Liverpool-Irishman was sent to Belfast where previous attempts to organise by the NUDL had failed. Larkin proved spectacularly successful in organising dockers and carters in Belfast across the sectarian divide and military had to be drafted in after the RIC went on strike. His success proved short lived as Sexton, alarmed at Larkin’s revolutionary syndicalist strategy reined him in and negotiated a disappointingly poor settlement over his head.

A disillusioned Larkin turned his energies to organising in Dublin, Cork and other Irish ports. Suspended for issuing strike pay to Cork dockers before sanction had been given by the NUDL executive in Liverpool, he was charged with misappropriation of funds and Sexton was the main witness for the prosecution. He was sentenced to 12 months and became a hero overnight to a new generation of labour activists such as William O’Brien, who had been deeply influenced by Connolly’s writings and now identified with this new champion of syndicalism and revolutionary left-wing nationalism. Larkin was released from prison after three months.

**1909:** Even before he was sent to prison Larkin had established the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU). Later William O’Brien would say he advised him to add ‘General’ to the title to broaden the new organisation’s appeal. Larkin’s buccaneering style offended much of the ITUC establishment and his initial attempt to affiliate to Congress was rejected.

**1910:** Divisions emerge between old guard of traditional trade unionists and radical younger generation: By now the ITGWU has the largest union membership in Ireland and Larkin succeeded in gaining admission to the ITUC after acrimonious exchanges with Alderman James McCarron of the Londonderry Corporation. McCarron had been elected President of Congress three times and was secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors in the North. He was a strong advocate of the alliance between the Irish Party and the British labour movement, which, he argued, had been fruitful in advancing both the trade union and Home Rule agendas. He refused to go forward again for the ITUC executive after his clashes with Larkin and the conference marked a changing of the guard with Larkin, William O’Brien and their allies moving into the ascendant.

In the same year Connolly visits Ireland and Larkin makes him secretary of the Belfast branch of the ITGWU, enabling him to bring his family back from America.

**1911:** Conflict in Belfast: Connolly clashes with Mary Galway, Secretary of the Textile Operatives Society of Ireland (TOSI) and recruits mill workers in Belfast factories. Galway accuses him of poaching members while Connolly responds by saying TOSI was failing to organise and represent them effectively. But it also represented a clash of cultures with Galway favouring negotiation and
incremental improvements to Connolly’s more confrontational style and belief that workers are better mobilised and educated through class conflict and confrontation with the employers.

Connolly also engages in a debate with William Walker, long serving secretary of the Belfast Trades Council and a former unsuccessful ILP candidate in Belfast North against George Clark, the Unionist candidate and managing director of Workman Clark. The debate is conducted through the columns of the Glasgow socialist paper Forward. Walker argues that Irish Labour’s future lies within the United Kingdom as part of one united movement, whereas Connolly and Larkin wanted to fragment the movement, sacrificing it to a backward Irish nationalist cause. Connolly countered that Irish and British interests differed. Irish workers interests would always be subordinated to those of British workers within the United Kingdom. The one issue that both could agree upon was that the days of sectarian conflict were over.

1912: Connolly proposes a political wing for the ITUC and Congress changes its name to the ITUC and Labour Party (ITUC&LP). He highlights the reactionary policies of the Irish Party and the Unionists who were opposed to the provision of social insurance and health cover for Irish workers to bring their entitlements into line with those in Britain. The move is opposed by Northern and most British based unions but they are outvoted by the growing strength of the movement in the South. Tom Johnson and David Campbell, who are delegates of the Belfast Trades Council, support the motion but the vote is an early indication of the split that would emerge as the Home Rule crisis worsened.

One day after the ITUC agrees to establish an Irish Labour Party a group of Hibernians attacked a Protestant Sunday School outing in Castledawson. Three days later Catholic workers were expelled from the Belfast shipyards in a retaliatory measure. The Conservative Party leader, Bonar Law, warns the Liberal government that if it tries to enact Home Rule, ‘I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster will go in which I shall not be ready to support them’.

1913: The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) is established in January to resist Home Rule by force if necessary.

A year of Lockouts: The year is marked by a series of major industrial disputes involving the ITGWU, particularly in Sligo and Dublin. The issues were remarkably similar in both places and involved a clash between the right of a worker to be in a trade union and the right of an employer to complete control over what happened in the enterprise and who could do what. These issues always have the potential for serious conflict and both parties studiously avoid such conflicts in most situations.

At Sligo the dispute arose over the comparatively minor issue of ‘cattle money’ for seamen who had to look after livestock on board. The men walked off the vessel and were promptly arrested for deserting their ship. Sligo was the main port in the most industrialised region of Connacht and the Steamship company promptly retained the services of the Shipping Federation, the most powerful employer body of the day to hire ‘scabs’ or strike breakers. There were violent confrontations on the docks and one ITGWU member, Patrick Dunbar was killed. The strike paralysed local trade in March and April. Eventually the company backed down and effectively conceded control over hiring dockside employees to the union. Jocelyn Gore Booth, the brother of Countess Markievicz and Eva Gore Booth helped mediate. The unity of the local workers, antipathy of rate payers at the company because of the cost of supporting the troops and police drafted in to maintain order and losses to local shopkeepers were all factors in the ITGWU victory.

In Dublin there were 30 strikes in the first half of 1913, all of them victories for the ITGWU. After Sligo, Larkin had proposed the introduction of an arbitration system to resolve disputes and one was set up in Dublin during the summer, endorsed by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions and the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. But before it could meet a union recognition dispute erupted at the Dublin United Tramway Company that resulted in the 1913 Dublin Lockout (See ICTU YouthConnect module on the events of 1913 and National Library of Ireland exhibition: https://www.nli.ie/lockout/).
It was initiated by William Martin Murphy, who said he supported respectable trade unionism but not Larkinism and the ruffianism associated with it. The dispute was in large part a contest between the predominantly Catholic, conservative Ireland that Murphy personified and the radical alternative that Larkin represented. Many militant nationalists and feminists associated with the strikers’ cause including all seven signatories of the 1916 Rising and women such as Countess Markievicz, Helena Molony, Kathleen Lynn, Helen Chenevix, Louie Bennett and Madeleine Ffrench Mullen all of whom would play important roles in the years ahead. It was as much a dispute about the nature of the long-promised Home Rule Ireland as about union recognition. The defeat of the ITGWU and all of the other unions that became involved was an indicator of the underlying balance of forces in Ireland that would ensure the Free State that emerged in 1922 would be closer to William Martin Murphy’s vision of twentieth century Ireland than Larkin’s or Connolly’s.

One unusual feature of the dispute was the creation of the Irish Citizen Army.

In March 1914, the Irish Citizen Army adopted a constitution. It declared, ‘That the first and last principle of the Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland.’ It also stands for ‘the absolute Unity of Irish Nationhood ... the principle of equal rights and opportunities’ and, shortly afterwards, admits women to full membership, unlike the UVF and Irish Volunteers who only allow them to enter auxiliary organisations.

Countess Markievicz is elected to the ICA Army Council. Ironically, Sean O’Casey, the author of the ICA Constitution, resigned shortly afterwards because of a row with the Countess over her joint membership of Cumann na mBan, which was associated with the Irish Volunteers.

In October Larkin departs on a fund-raising tour of America that will not see him return to Ireland until 1923. Connolly takes over as Acting General Secretary of the ITGWU and commander of the ICA. While both the union and the ICA declined in numbers between 1914 and 1916, Connolly was at least able to turn the latter into a compact, well-disciplined and relatively well-equipped force. He also builds links with the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, agreeing to participate in the Easter Rising in January 1916.

1915: The Dublin Council of Trade Unions agrees to contest the College Green constituency when the incumbent, Joseph P Nannetti dies in April. He was a printer and one of the founders and first President of the Council of Trade Unions but had since joined the Irish Party. Thomas Farren, the current President of the Trades Council is nominated to run against the Irish Party candidate John Dillon Nugent, Secretary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. It is in many ways a rerun of the 1913 Lockout. While Nugent wins by 2,445 votes to 1,816 for Farren, it is with a drastically reduced majority and is an indication of how support for John Redmond’s policy of supporting the British war-effort was draining away.

When the Harbour Division has a vacancy after another veteran Home Rule MP, the same William Abraham who denounced the co-operative movement at the 1880, TUC conference in Dublin, dies in August 1915 it is expected that the Trades Council will run a candidate in what is the most working class constituency in the country but it proves impossible to find one. Connolly, an obvious choice, refuses to run, possibly because he is already committed to an armed insurrection and the sitting councillor P T Daly is embroiled in a civil war within the ITGWU with Connolly. Instead the seat goes to Alfie Byrne in a three-sided contest between rival Irish Party factions.

1916: Many of Dublin’s leading Labour activists participate in the Easter Rising and Connolly is executed as one of its guiding spirits. His participation in the Rising causes consternation with Labour ranks and deepens the divide within the movement, not alone between Unionist and nationalist, and constitutional versus physical force nationalists, but with British trade unionists as well. Nevertheless, Thomas Johnson uses his position as president of the ITUC&LP to persuade members to agree to disagree on the National Question. He preserves unity but leaves the question of political loyalties unresolved.
1917: This year witnesses the resurrection of the ITGWU with William O’Brien, secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses undertaking the reorganisation of Connolly’s union, along with its’ president Tom Foran. O’Brien was close to the Irish Volunteers and IRB and was probably a member of the latter, although a cleft foot meant he could not take part in the Rising. An organiser of genius, his work helped the ITGWU increase its membership from less than 5,000 in 1916 to nearly 68,000 by the end of the First World War and 120,000 by December 1920, when it constituted over half of the ITUC’s 229,000 members. By far the biggest increase was in farm labourers after the British government included them in its wartime arbitration system, facilitating union recognition.

The calling of the Irish Convention in August by Lloyd George, in a last-ditch attempt to salvage the Home Rule Bill, and the Irish Party’s political fortunes, reveals deep divisions within the ITUC&LP. Dublin and Cork trades councils reject invitations to attend but representatives of northern trade unions, nationalist and unionist, accept and subsequently endorse the majority report issued in 1918. The Labour representatives include James McCarron and Henry Whitley, who were on opposite sides of the Home Rule debate but were both opposed to partition. When Tom Johnson proposes at the ITUC&LP executive that it seek an invitation to the Convention the motion is defeated on the casting vote of the new president, William O’Brien. (see Key Events, Module III.III)

1918: On April 14th Tom Johnson and David Campbell organise the first rally against conscription in Belfast. However, when they call a second rally three days later it is broken up by shipyard workers and Johnson is sacked from his job. He moves to Dublin, where he becomes secretary of the Mansion House Committee to oppose any attempt to extend conscription to Ireland. William O’Brien represents the ITUC&LP on the committee, alongside Sinn Fein, the Irish Party, All for Ireland League and Irish Volunteer leaders. The ITUC&LP calls the first general strike in Irish history to oppose the measure on April 23rd. It is a complete success everywhere except in the North-East. In Belfast many Catholic workers are warned they will lose their jobs if they do not turn in on the day of the strike. (see Key Events, Module III.V)

Labour fails to contest general election: The ILP&TUC had intended contesting at least 15 seats in the general election declared once the First World War ended but when a special delegate conference is convened on November 1st, 1918, just two days after the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis had voted to contest, the executive recommends that delegates vote against participating in the election. Tom Johnson tells delegates that calls had come ‘from all parts of Ireland for a demonstration of unity’ over self-determination, as had happened earlier in the year over opposition to conscription. The executive believes that ‘the workers of Ireland ... would willingly sacrifice for a brief period their aspirations towards political power if thereby the fortunes of the nation can be enhanced.’ However, Labour in Belfast ignores the decision of the conference and runs three candidates in the city, polling 12,000 votes to the 30,000 polled by members of the Ulster Unionist Labour Alliance, a front for the Ulster Unionist Council. None of the three Belfast Labour candidates is elected. (see Key Events, III.VI)

On January 21st, 1919, Dail Eireann is convened and adopts the Democratic Programme drafted by Tom Johnson, William O’Brien and Cathal O’Shannon of the ILP&TUC executive, but references to public ownership of the nation’s resources, trade union recognition and other radical proposals are deleted. (see Key Events, II.IV)

In January 1919 Belfast witnesses the greatest industrial dispute in its history, when 40,000 engineering workers go on strike for a 44-hour working week. The engineering unions first demanded a reduction in the basic working week from 54 hours to 44 in August 1918. Following protracted negotiations at national level, the employers conceded 47 hours in November 1918, with no loss of earnings, from January 1st, 1919. The offer was accepted by a narrow margin on a low turnout in most British yards, but rejected in Belfast and on the Clyde. Co-ordination between strikers in Belfast and Scotland is poor and their aims are at variance. After four weeks they are starved back to work but the disputes frightened the British government and causes many employers
to concede shorter working weeks, helping achieve the biggest reduction in the working week ever achieved at one stroke on these islands. (see Key Events III.VI)

**In April 1919 a Limerick Soviet is established** after the British army imposes a curfew on the city following a clash between the RIC and IRA. It arises out of the arrest of Robert Byrne, the adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, for being found in possession of a revolver and ammunition. The Soviet founders when the ILP&TUC declines to escalate it into a general strike. Support from the Catholic church leaders in the city, initially sympathetic, is also in danger of being withdrawn. (see Key Events III.VII)

**These two disputes provide a stark contrast.** The Belfast strike was exclusively to do with industrial issues with the strike committee resolutely refusing to broaden it, even rejecting the ILP&TUC offer of nationwide support because of its potential political connotations, while the Limerick Soviet had practically nothing to do with industrial relations but the local Trades Council wanted a general strike called in its support. Although the engineering strike involved approximately four times as many workers, lasted twice as long, preoccupied War Cabinet meetings and closed down Ireland’s second largest city it is almost forgotten. The Limerick Soviet received international coverage because of its coincidence with an attempt to set a new transatlantic record and it subsequently fitted into a nationalist and socialist narrative regarding the struggle for independence. Belfast’s demonstration of working-class militancy led by predominantly Protestant workers (although the chairman of the FEST strike committee was a Catholic) fitted neither nationalist or Unionist agendas. If both disputes were indications of widespread unrest, they also demonstrated a lack of common purpose or agreed political objectives among Irish workers. (see Key Events III.VI and VII)

**May Day** is celebrated in many towns throughout Ireland (students should check local newspapers). The largest demonstration is in Belfast, where an estimated 100,000 workers and their families celebrate the event in Ormeau Park on Saturday, May 3rd, 1919. Banners are carried declaring the workers were ‘Solid for the 44’. (see Key Events III.V)

**Motor Permits:** On November 15th, the growing use of motor transport by the IRA for military operations leads the British government to introduce permits, requiring drivers to place the document on their vehicle. Unionised workers who drive these vehicles refuse to use the permits and the ILP&TUC supports them.

**1920:** Further protests are held in Dublin and elsewhere over Motor Permits. On January 16th, Macpherson the Chief Secretary for Ireland narrowly escapes injury when his car is overturned by protestors in Phibsboro, Dublin. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Britain’s largest union and the largest craft union in Ireland withdraws its sanction for the dispute, and other British based unions follow suit. They are growing increasingly concerned at the number of ‘political’ strikes in Ireland, causing increasing tension with nationalist minded workers. (see Key Events III.VIII)

**Municipal elections:** January 1920 witnesses a major political boost for Labour, north and south, when it wins 18 per cent of first preference vote in municipal elections compared with 27 per cent for Sinn Fein candidates and 26 per cent for Unionists. Because proportional representation has been introduced for local elections, rather than the first past the post system used in Britain, this allows smaller parties to secure more seats. The Unionist vote is concentrated in the north-east so that it only secures 20 per cent of the seats overall. Despite concerns about the unfamiliarity of the electorate with the new system there are relatively few spoilt votes – only 2.25 per cent in Dublin. Polling levels vary. The national average is 72 per cent with the highest votes cast being 78 per cent in Connacht, but only 63 per cent in Dublin

Despite its high profile and strong organisational network in Dublin, Labour only secures 12 per cent of the vote, compared with over 20 per cent in Belfast. Factors affecting the poor performance in Dublin include a split between the traditional Trades Council and more radical elements around William O’Brien, who run under a ‘Republican Labour’ label. Many craft workers in the city also
identify ‘Labour’ with unskilled and semi-skilled workers while the long traditional links between the craft unions and the IRB have transferred into support for the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Fein. Several Sinn Fein candidates in the municipal elections are craft workers and both of the city’s senior IRA commanders during the War of Independence, Dick McKee and Oscar Traynor, are printers.

In Belfast, ten Labour councillors are elected, making them the largest block after the 35 Unionists. The latter included three Ulster Unionist Labour Association councillors. Sinn Fein and the nationalists win five seats each and the Independent Labour Party another two seats - as do independent unionist candidates. The ILP members tend to vote with Labour, providing a bloc of 12.

Sinn Fein is still very much an urban party in the South, capturing 45 per cent of the vote in Dublin and 53 per cent of the seats. The Unionists, who made up the second largest party before the First World War only secures 12 per cent of the vote, the same as Labour but the latter secures three more seats because of transfers from Sinn Fein. Many Unionist and former nationalist voters opt for the new Municipal Reform Association, effectively a ratepayers’ party while former nationalists do surprisingly well, securing 14.5 per cent of the vote, the same figure as nationally. However, in Dublin over half of these votes go to the city’s popular Lord Mayor Lawrence O’Neill, who works closely with Sinn Fein and to the legendary vote getter Alfie Byrne, whose combination of intense clientelism and ability to identify himself with the popular causes of the day make him largely impervious to changes in the wider political landscape.

The growing alliance between the ILP&TUC and the independence movement is further cemented by a general strike called on April 12th in support of the republican hunger strikers in Mountjoy Prison, resulting in the mass release of prisoners. The Irish Times declared it ‘will be claimed as a great triumph by Sinn Fein and the Irish Labour Party’. In Dublin and other parts of the country where IRA activity is increasing, extra security measures such as the military curfew, introduced to Dublin in February further fuelled resentment at British rule. (Was martial law imposed in your area and, if so, how did it affect everyday life? How did people react?) (see Key Events III.V)

The Munitions Strike: The most significant development in the evolving alliance between the independence and Labour movements was the munitions strike in May, 1920. It was inspired by the example of London dockers refusing to load munitions on a ship bound for Poland to assist its war with the new Soviet Union. Irish transport workers refuse to carry troops or munitions. Over the next six months the British army finds its operations severely hampered but the strike also causes factory closures, food and fuel shortages and is deeply divisive in the railway unions between workers with nationalist and Unionist affiliations. It is eventually called off in December 1920. (see Key Events III.IX)

New Irish engineering union emerges backed by Dáil Eireann and IRB: Attempts by the ILP&TUC to secure support from the British TUC for the rail strike prove as unsuccessful as earlier efforts to maintain the Motor Permits boycott. British trade union leaders, while becoming increasingly sympathetic to the Irish demand for self-determination, including dominion status rather than Home Rule, still baulk at the idea of ‘political strikes’. The establishment of the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers Trade Union (IES&FTU) and the Belfast Pogrom are further evidence of the very different environment that Irish unions faced compared to their British cousins. (see Key Themes II.VIII, ‘The IRB and Trade Unions’).

The Belfast pogroms erupt as the War of Independence intensifies in the South, exposing the underlying weakness of Labour in the city. Loyalist workers refuse to allow Catholics back into the shipyards and other employments, even when threatened with expulsion. Trade union organisation in these former strong holds collapses. (see Key Events III.X)

International Relations: There was one moment of unintentional humour at the annual conference when the Dublin Council of Trade Unions called for the ILP&TUC to disaffiliate from the Second International and join the Communist Third International only to be told the party was not
affiliated to either. Although a delegation had attended the Berne conference in February 1919 and been allowed to address it, it had not affiliated. However, the debate did reveal differences among delegates on the future direction of the Irish labour movement. Tom McPartlin, a Dublin representative of the ASCJ which had just been rebuffed by its own membership in the Belfast shipyards, asked delegates ‘How many, like myself, know anything about the Internationale, or want to know anything- about it? We want to know about Ireland and the Labour movement in Ireland’. He called for the Dublin Council of Trade Unions motion to be rejected. Cathal O’Sullivan of the ITGWU, who had supported the motion, said it was ‘pretty well known’ that ‘the Second Internationale burst up at the beginning of the war, and since then it is a moribund body, dead and done with, having nobody supporting it except the pro-war social democrats in Germany and the pro-war Labour Party in England. It is practically dead and damned.’ As usual it was Tom Johnson who sought to find common ground on practical grounds for future policy formation. He said that ‘while the present state of disorganisation exists ... within the Labour and Socialist parties of the world respecting the constitution of any future Internationale... we are better doing our own work. Let our entry into the Internationale be on the work we are doing. Let the Internationale come to us and say they are prepared to follow our lead, for we are doing things that they are only preaching about. (applause).’

A major initiative that the ILP&TUC did undertake in the coming months was to invite British Parliamentary Labour Party members to visit Ireland and see conditions for themselves. The delegation was headed by Arthur Henderson, a former leader of the British Labour Party, other senior members, including Arthur Greenwood as Secretary and, at this early stage in his career the head of Labour’s research department. Brigadier-General C B Thomson was the delegation’s military adviser and the ubiquitous Tom Johnson accompanied the visitors, ensuring they met a broad swathe of interests, while the ITGWU provided a stenographer. The Commission toured extensively, visiting Cork City centre after it was burnt down by RIC Auxiliaries in revenge for an ambush at Dillon’s Cross, burnt out creameries in Munster and Connacht and the town of Balbriggan, after its sack by Auxiliaries. However, it did not visit Belfast. It also carried out its own investigation into the events of Bloody Sunday on November 21st in Dublin and investigated shootings and beatings carried out by the IRA. The overall picture it produced was of a country descending into chaos and a police force, elements of which were out of control. It concluded that:

*Things are being done in the name of Britain which must make her name stink in the nostrils of the whole world. The honour of our people has been gravely compromised. Not only is there a reign of terror in Ireland which should bring a blush of shame to the cheek of every British citizen, but a nation is being held in subjection by an empire which has proudly boasted that it is the friend of small nations.... Only by repudiating the errors of the past and the infamies of the present can the democracy of Great Britain recover its honour. Only by granting to Ireland the freedom which is her due can we fulfil our great responsibilities towards our sister nation.*

1921: The Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland was published in January and, while it was undoubtedly embarrassing for the British Government and spurred further peace efforts it had little noticeable effect on the activities of the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans. At the same time, incidents such as the shooting dead of three railway workers killed in Mallow and ITGWU secretary Thomas Hand, a member of a local Dáil Eireann arbitration body in Skerries, saw growing support from the Labour movement abroad for Irish independence.

Meanwhile elections are held for the new Assembly in Northern Ireland on May 24th. Belfast Labour is so pulverised by the sectarian violence that it fails to run a single candidate. Belfast engineering strike veterans James Baird and John Hanna ran, as well as ILP veteran Harry Midgeley as independents on an anti-partitionist and socialist program in the face of intense intimidation. They secured less than 2,000 votes between them. The Unionists win 40 seats, the nationalists six and Sinn Fein four.
On July 27th, the employers begin an offensive in Ireland to cut wages and conditions in line with victories already secured in Britain. The onset of the Truce on July 11th probably adds to their confidence that these can be achieved. The British based Engineering Employers Federation tells the Irish unions, including the IES&FTU and ITGWU, that it wants a 6s cut in pay, plus the elimination of a 12.5 per cent bonus scheme only agreed the previous year. Nor is the EEF prepared to accept negotiation on the cuts at company level, because of ‘the unsettled political situation’. In Dublin the main engineering firms align themselves with the Federation and make it clear that they still regard themselves as ‘an integral part of the United Kingdom’. Employers in Cork and other centres follow suit. The Dáil Ministry of Labour says that if men accept the cuts the employers will engage in localised bargaining on any further changes, once the political crisis is resolved. The IES&FTU orders an immediate strike. The British based craft unions are in a dilemma as their parent organisations have already accepted the pay cuts in the rest of the UK; but some of their shop stewards pledge to support the strike, even if they have to do so on an unofficial basis. It was in some ways a defining moment for the new Irish craft union, which had just renamed itself the Irish Engineering and Industrial Union (IEIU), providing a concrete example of the implications of self-determination. The union bases its rejection of the pay cuts on the fact that it does not accept that Ireland is ‘an integral part of the United Kingdom’. The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress meet in Dublin and Thomas Foran, the incoming President of the ILP&TUC, throws his full support behind the engineering workers. The railway companies also announce that they would be seeking pay cuts once wartime Government controls end in a few weeks’ time. Despite the public displays of solidarity, tensions run high behind the scenes between the IEIU and some of its British counterparts, including the Amalgamated Engineering Union, which has succeeded the ASE. Meanwhile the railway companies carry out their threat to seek a 6s reduction in pay. The shipping companies seek a 2s, cut, having first mooted a cut of 4s. The AEU threatens to break ranks in the railways and accept the proposed reduction, while relations with other unions are frayed because of the continuing stream of defections to the new Irish union. Despite the public show of unity and strong speeches in support of the engineering and railway workers from Tom Foran, relations with the ITGWU are strained by the perennial problem of demarcation disputes. The IEIU also experiences internal difficulties because of intense rivalry between craft sections, many of which have belonged to different unions in the past. The engineering strike finally ends on October 22nd, when agreement is reached at a conference in the Mansion House under the auspices of Alderman Laurence O’Neill, the Lord Mayor. The unions are forced to accept the 6s a week wage cut but are given guarantees that there will be no victimisation. Although they have fought much harder than their British counterparts, the outcome for the IEIU and ITGWU is probably inevitable, given the severe economic downturn. John Smellie, one of the owners of the Dublin Dockyard, traces the closure of his business in 1923 to industrial disputes and the unwillingness of the workforce to accept pay cuts as quickly as shipyard workers among competitors in areas such as the Clyde.

1922: The debate on the Treaty dominates the deliberations of the Labour movement in the first half of the year, much as it does the rest of Irish society. Many unions are divided over what course of action they should take ahead of the special ILP&TUC conference on February 21st. Not surprisingly, given its origins, the IEIU believes the pro and anti-Treaty wings of Sinn Fein should be given a clear run in the forthcoming election, while the ITGWU is determined that the opportunity to contest the election that was missed in 1918 should not be missed again. Inevitably, the ILP&TUC executive was divided on what course of action to follow. Initially it wanted a plebiscite on the Treaty and, failing that it proposed that if there was a hung Dáil its’ TDs would support the anti-Treaty position and ‘carry the country forward a long way towards transforming the Republic into our ideal Workers Republic’. However, it quickly realised that to do so would not only alienate workers who supported the Treaty but would leave the ILP&TUC candidates presenting themselves as a second-best choice to de Valera’s anti-Treaty Sinn Fein. As a result, when the delegates assembled in the Abbey Theatre it was not to debate the Treaty so much as to consider whether to contest the election. Besides those who wanted to give Sinn Fein’s two blocks a clear run there were others, including women delegates representing the IWWU such as Helena Molony and Helen Chenevix,
and Cissy Cahalan of the Irish Drapers Assistants who believed that the ILP&TUC should focus on ‘the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers Commonwealth... by direct action’. Walter Carpenter, a founding member of the Communist Party, called for the seizure of mills and creameries. On the other hand, P J Rooney of the Clerical Workers Union said he was going to defy his union mandate and back the proposal to contest the election. Thomas Kennedy of the ITGWU summed up the position of his union and most delegates when he said ‘it was all right talking about the Workers Republic, but when they went before the working class electors the question they would have to decide was “whether you are for peace or war” ... and put up with the consequences.’ J T O’Farrell of the Railway Clerks said unity was important ‘but unity at the expense of doing nothing was absolutely useless [...] It was absolutely unthinkable that in a country so highly organised as Ireland, labour should not have a single representative in the first assembly elected under Irish auspices.’

William O’Brien, general treasurer of the ITGWU summed up for the executive, saying he ‘had attended every Congress since 1909 and he was never more disappointed than today’. He had been present when James Connolly had proposed that Congress should be a political party and every time the opportunity arose ‘some reason was put forward why it should be postponed .... If the majority of the workers did not want representation let them say so’. Johnson was so alarmed that delegates would reject the election option that he proposed the matter be referred back to the executive. Once this was defeated, by 72 votes to 55 the main motion was put and passed by 104 votes to 49. As so often in union debates, the final vote bore little resemblance to the views of the most vociferous speakers.

The increasing chaos of the Truce period continued into the elections, leading to the last general strike of the period, on April 24th, 1922, but on this occasion, it was against militarism. It was the most respected of all the general strike calls of the period with neither businesses or public offices open, no ships calling to the ports and not even a train to Belfast. But it was also the least effective, as the British army was evacuating barracks throughout the 26 counties and opposing factions in Dáil Eireann and the IRA were sliding into Civil War. There was some talk of creating a workers’ army, with the ITGWU entering negotiations with the ICA on the possibility of using the latter as a basis for creating one. It was argued that, such a force could also protect workers on picket lines or in ‘soviets’ when they occupied enterprises. However, the ICA did not want to lose its autonomy and once it was clear that Labour TDs would enter the new Free State Dáil, the anti-Treaty majority in the ICA did not want to be used to suppress the Republic.

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Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive: The Labour Party had its best result in a general election, until 1922. It supported the Treaty but offered voters a radical social and economic alternative to the pro and anti-Treaty factions of Sinn Fein. It also capitalised on James Connolly’s legacy as a leader of the 1916 Rising by quoting extensively from his writings.
In the election, on June 16th, Labour won 17 seats to 58 for pro-Treaty Sinn Fein, 36 for anti-Treaty Sinn Fein, seven for the new Farmers Party and ten independents. It was the best result the Labour Party would secure in a general election until 2011, and the party would almost certainly have won extra seats if it had run more candidates. Tom Johnson topped the poll in South County Dublin and, as the anti-Treaty Sinn Fein TDs refused to take their seats, he became leader of the opposition in the new assembly.

John Cunningham and Padraig Yeates

III.II - The Easter Rising (1916)

It is unlikely that the Easter Rising could have taken place without the participation of the Irish Citizen Army. After the mobilisation debacle caused by Eoin MacNeill’s countermanding order on Easter Sunday there would not have been enough Volunteers to man all of the vital points in the capital. The turnout by the ICA was much better and they constituted a third of the forces available to the leaders of the Rising on Easter Monday, April 24th, 1916.

Connolly also had a significant input to the 1916 Proclamation, which incorporated elements of the ICA Constitution, so that it could be said that Sean O’Casey, the future Communist playwright, should be included with the seven signatories as one of the authors. Without Connolly’s involvement in the Rising the Proclamation might not have included the passages asserting ‘the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible’, or the guarantees of ‘religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens’. On the other hand, one of the most quoted sections, that the Irish Republic commits itself to ‘cherishing all of the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past’ is a reference to the Unionist population not to children as such.

Connolly’s involvement in the Rising saw his incorporation into the pantheon of national heroes but it also posed serious problems for the Labour movement. When the ITUC&LP held its annual conference in Sligo that August the current President, Tom Johnson, had to perform a delicate balancing act in his speech by acknowledging all those who died in the Rising and the thousands more killed in the First World War. While he paid a special tribute to James Connolly as a friend...
and comrade, he said that he personally believed that a victory for Britain and France was necessary to advance the cause of democracy and called on delegates, ‘whatever their views may be in regard to the war or the rebellion, to rise for a moment in token of respect for all our comrades who have been brave enough to give their lives for the cause they believed in’.

Many of Connolly’s socialist contemporaries in Ireland and Britain could not understand his actions. Tom Johnston, editor of Forward (the weekly paper of the Independent Labour Party in Glasgow to which Connolly was a frequent contributor) described the Rising as ‘not only futile... but one in which the insurrectionists were apparently being used as pawns and tools by the German government’.

Nevertheless, in the Rising’s aftermath Irish trade union leaders managed to paper over the cracks, at least temporarily. A motion from Michael O’Lehane, secretary of the Drapers’ Assistants and a Sinn Féin member, calling for the release of the ILP&TUC’s Secretary P T Daly was carried after he accepted an amendment from Belfast print delegate Henry Whitley calling for the ‘immediate public trial or release’ of all rebel internees.

*Padraig Yeates*
III.III - The Irish Convention: Labour involvement in a last chance to save Home Rule and avoid a split over Partition

The Irish Convention was established by David Lloyd George in 1917 in a last-ditch attempt to reach a Home Rule settlement between John Redmond’s Irish Party and Edward Carson’s Ulster Unionists. It was also intended to stop Sinn Fein’s growing political momentum in the wake of the Easter Rising and its’ by-election victories over constitutional nationalism earlier in the year.

The Convention held its inaugural meeting on August 23rd, 1917, in Trinity College, Dublin, and concluded its’ work on April 5th, 1918. Although most of the Irish Party, Southern Unionist and Labour delegates to the Convention signed off on the majority report recommending a diluted form of Home Rule, its rejection by the Ulster Unionists and a substantial minority of Irish nationalists sealed its fate.

Labour Divisions and the Irish Convention

Divisions within the Labour movement were mainly between those activists who accepted invitations to attend and those who rejected them. The invitations went sent by the British government to the country’s four leading trades councils at the time, Belfast, Cork, Derry and Dublin. Belfast and Derry accepted them and the southern trades councils rejected them even before they arrived.

Ironically, the ILP&TUC was not invited but when it met on June 30th 1917 the former President Tom Johnson proposed that it seek one. The executive split and the decision not to do so was taken on the casting vote of the Chairman and new President, William O’Brien. This reflected a division between northern based and more moderate trade union leaders voting in favour of attending and those who were aligned with Sinn Fein and militant nationalism who voted against.

O’Brien had been a close friend of James Connolly and was his literary executor. Like other leading union activists, he had been interned after the Rising, when a shared experience had cemented personal ties with Sinn Fein and Irish Volunteer prisoners. As well as being the current President of the ILP&TUC O’Brien was secretary of the Dublin Trades Council, and when he proposed rejecting the invitation to the Convention he argued that it was ‘in no sense representative of the opinions of the Irish people’ as the [British] government had already given a commitment to ‘a small minority of people in this country’ to introduce partition. This was a clear reference to the Ulster Unionists.

Another member, Tom Farren of the Stonecutters Union, who had fought in the Easter Rising as a member of the Irish Citizen Army said that the men ‘going into the Convention... did not own their own souls’ and ‘had to do the bidding of certain people from whom they received benefits of one kind or another’, while William Murphy of the Heating Engineers Union accused Lloyd George of ‘squatting a lot of people, but the Labour men in Dublin... were not going to be squatted’.

The Cork Trade and Labour Council rejected the invitation without bothering to convene a meeting. John Good, its secretary, had already told a Sinn Fein meeting in City Hall it would be rejecting the invitation on the same basis as Dublin, because partition had already been conceded to the Unionists.

The British government had better luck in Ulster. Alderman James McCarron of the Londonderry Corporation and secretary of the local branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors accepted the invitation. A former president of the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1899, 1907 and 1910, he was a strong advocate of the traditional alliance with the Irish Party and the British labour movement, which, he argued, had been fruitful in advancing the Irish trade union and Home Rule agendas. A long-standing opponent of James Connolly and his predecessor as general secretary of the ITGWU, Jim Larkin, McCarron believed their support for a more independent Irish labour movement that practised a militant revolutionary syndicalist strategy would fatally weaken trade union influence.
This view was shared by the Belfast delegates such as Henry Whitley, a printer and member of the National Graphical Association, who asked, 'What would be the result to trades unionism in Ireland if they broke away from their headquarters at Manchester, or elsewhere?' Irish workers needed closer combination to meet the combinations of the employers. The other delegates were Charles McKay, a pattern maker and Chairman of the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades in Belfast and Robert Waugh of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the largest union in the shipyards. Unusually, for someone who held the most strategically important trade union position in the city, McKay was a Catholic, while Waugh was well regarded in the trade union movement and worked with Dubliner Tom Farren as a trade union representative on the government’s Food Control Committee that set quotas and prices for essential supplies.

Other ‘Labour’ delegates were Thomas Lundon, John Hanna and John Murphy. None was nominated by a trades council. Lundon was an Irish Party MP and member of the Land and Labour Association, which was not affiliated to the ILP&TUC and was regarded by most trade unionists as a Redmondite body. Hanna was a shipwright but held no union position. He was nominated by the Ulster Unionist Council while it is unclear who nominated Murphy. A member of the National Union of Railwaymen he was not nominated by his union and was an employee of the notoriously anti-trade union Dublin employer William Martin Murphy, who is thought to have had him appointed. The inclusion of these men undermined the credibility of the Convention among many workers. John Murphy never spoke at the Convention although he attended every meeting.

We are largely dependent on the Chairman of the Convention, Sir Horace Plunkett, for a record of its proceedings. He reported that it was not until the second week that he was able to persuade any of the seven designated labour representatives to participate in the debate.

‘In conversation with them I gathered that collectively, they had no particular views upon the main issues before the Convention, and would have preferred merely to hold a watching brief until concrete proposals affecting their interests were under discussion... [I] urged them at least to state their views on proposals.

The first labour contributor was Whitley, who was prompted to speak in response to Unionist businessmen. He said that,

‘The progress of the North was, no doubt, great from a capitalist point of view, but if an improvement in the condition of the masses of the people be the truest test of prosperity, there was another side to the picture... Labour in Ulster was not satisfied with its position. Using wholly imaginary fears as that, under a scheme of self-government orders for ships would not be given to Belfast, politicians had brought it about that Labour had no representatives either on public boards or in parliament.’

He cited unmet grievances over pay differentials between Ireland and Britain before predicting that, ‘After the war there will be a new Ulster, and the men who have gone to fight will come back as brothers, having met friends “on the other side”. He hoped they would bury the past and put their house in order, so that when these men came back, they would find a peaceful and a better land for all.’

James McCarron told the Convention that, ‘Labour did not want separation as it well knew that Ireland could not exist apart from the Empire.’ But that Labour did want ‘the Irish question settled, once and for all because Labour could then take its’ part in public affairs.’ He also wanted to protect Irish industry ‘against unfair competition’ and defend minorities from discrimination. Like Whitley, he appealed to Irishmen to ‘cease falling out over religion and politics’. Instead, ‘Let Ulstermen and Southern Unionists understand that Labour would be the dominant power in the Irish Parliament’.

Charles McKay accused ‘those in power in Ulster’ of hoodwinking labour for their own political purposes by playing on the religious prejudices of the workforce. Both camps had ‘used the Pope as a great political agency’. He told the Convention to ‘Take away religion and Belfast will be all right.’ He was the first contributor to the debate to state that ‘the religious difficulty .... must be frankly
faced before a settlement can be reached’. The ‘real grievance to ... Labour interests in the North’ was their habitual subordination of social and economic issues to party politics.

John Hanna, the Ulster Unionist nominee said that

‘He belonged to what was known as the “Black Squad*”, the highest paid workmen in the British Isles, many of whom “had money in the Three per Cents” [War Bonds], some, himself included, being the proud possessors of the last luxury of the idle rich, a motor car. He told us that the organised industrial workers of Ireland were too closely affiliated to the great trade unions across the channel to look with favour upon any weakening of the political link. The unions had vast sums accumulated in English investments, which were drawn upon to support the Irish unions in their labour disputes.’

While Plunkett found the comments distasteful, he observed that,

‘Mr Hanna alone of the Labour delegates made what I had thought to be the strongest argument, from their point of view against Home Rule; the danger of inferior industrial legislation from a Parliament dominated by small farmers out of sympathy with Labour. Fortunately, there were two further Labour speeches... which offered better hope of settlement.’

These were made by Robert Waugh and Henry Whitley, the latter being the only Labour representative to make a second contribution to the debate. Both were dismissive of Hanna’s claims. According to Plunkett, Waugh

‘stated definitely that the same principle of delegation from the Central unions in England to their Irish sections could... be applied with safety in the sphere of government. As long as the Imperial connection was maintained, Labour had no objection to an Irish Parliament to deal with Irish matters.’

Like McCarron, he believed that, ‘until the Home Rule question was settled, Labour would never get representation in Ireland, even upon local administrative bodies.’

Plunkett recorded Whitley as telling the Convention,

‘he did not share Mr Hanna’s fears for the interest of Trade Unions. He, also, was a member of several [sic] trade unions whose headquarters were in England and whose branches were scattered throughout the Empire. He was neither for nor against Home Rule but was for a settlement. So long as Labour in England, Scotland and Ireland combined, it could afford to look with indifference upon any change in the system of Irish government.’

When Lord Midleton indicated that Southern Unionists could accept Home Rule, in return for guarantees on the maintenance of the Imperial link, and ‘re-establishment of law and order’, Plunkett, ever the optimist, saw labour as a potential ally in building a political consensus that Ulster Unionists would accept. McCarron agreed. Looking at it from a nationalist perspective, he said, ‘if we do not accept Midleton we would get nothing’.

In his second contribution to the debate Whitley, as a self-declared imperialist, insisted that customs must remain within Westminster’s remit. In those circumstances, he thought that ‘the Ulster working man... would see that the danger to their interests from an Irish Parliament was wholly imaginary’. He might not have been so sanguine if he had been present at a meeting of the Convention’s Grand Committee with Lloyd George on February 13th, 1918. In an effort to circumvent partition, the Prime Minister suggested a committee for Ulster, which could veto and initiate legislation. ‘As labour did not like the prospect of being “cut off” from future legislation favourable to their class, any such legislation passed in England should be adopted for Ulster’, he opined. McCarron interrupted the Prime Minister to tell him labour members made no such claim for special consideration.

*The Black Squad was a common term in the shipyards for the most highly skilled, and paid, engineering workers*
Labour’s three principal issues

Despite internal tensions, labour delegates were united on three issues. These were:

1. Opposition to partition,
2. Opposition to an upper chamber in the Home Rule Parliament, and adequate representation for workers if one was established
3. Weighting for urban constituencies to offset the inevitable dominance of rural communities.

The latter issue had been a long running grievance dating back to the publication of the initial Home Rule proposals in 1912. At that year’s Congress, Jim Larkin had led the protest to proposals in the Government of Ireland Bill that most towns would be included in large rural constituencies where ‘they will be at the mercy of the farming classes.’

By 1913 the ITUC’s secretary, P T Daly, was writing to John Redmond to demand that every town of 8,000 inhabitants should have representation in Parliament and warning him that Congress would only accept a second chamber if members were elected rather than be nominated by vested interests. The ITUC’s position would not change on the franchise or partition, although it was one of history’s ironies that it was the strength of the North’s loyalist working class that gave Ulster Unionism the social and economic ballast required to make partition politically viable.

When the trade union representatives opted to support the majority report of the Convention on April 9th, 1918, with the predictable exception of John Hanna, the issue of the second chamber continued to rankle.

More progress was made on the weighting of urban-rural votes, when the Grand Committee agreed in principle that, ‘Special representation [is] to be given to urban and industrial areas by … grouping smaller towns and applying to them a smaller quota on lines recommended by the Electoral Systems Sub-Committee.’ Urban dwellers were to be considered ‘minorities’, like Southern Unionists. It also showed a convergence of interest between industrialists and unions, who both saw themselves as modernisers in Irish society.

The labour members of the Convention were praised by Plunkett for recognising that there was no hope of a settlement ‘without some very undemocratic arrangements’. In the closing debates of the Convention, McCarron admitted that he would ‘gulp down a lot’ to secure an agreement.

The final report

The final majority report of the Irish Convention was issued on April 12th, 1918. Predictably, John Hanna signed the Minority Report issued by 19 Ulster Unionist representatives and Thomas Lundon signed the minority report issued by 22 nationalists, including three members of the Catholic hierarchy, Belfast MP and AOH chief Joe Devlin and William Martin Murphy, who all felt far too much had been conceded to the Unionists. The five mainstream labour representatives said they were endorsing the majority report because:

‘We recognise that an agreement could not have been brought about without certain temporary concessions made in regard to the Constitution of the Irish Parliament which we, as democrats and representatives of Labour, regarded with strong dislike. But we feel so deeply the necessity of setting up a Parliament in Ireland, in which labour amongst other interests may be able to find a place, that we have been willing to subordinate our democratic beliefs to what we conceive to be the highest interests of Ireland.’

They had two other proposals. One was that members of the House of Commons be paid and the other was that the new Representation of the People Act which gave the vote to all men over 21 and women over 30 in the United Kingdom should apply to elections under Home Rule as well.
Whether a Report that was rejected by over 40 per cent of those attending the Convention, was boycotted by Sinn Fein and by most trade unionists in the South would ever have had a future is debatable, but its’ architects were doubly unfortunate because it coincided with the great German spring offensive on the Western Front and the consequent conscription crisis.

Five days after the Convention ended the British Government announced it was introducing conscription to Ireland. Two Belfast trade unionists, one of whom, Tom Johnson, had proposed that the ILP&TUC should attend the Convention, organised the first anti-conscription rally at the Custom House steps in Belfast on April 14th, 1918, which 10,000 people attended. But when they attempted to repeat the exercise outside City Hall three days later the meeting was broken up by loyalist ship yard workers and Johnson was sacked by his employer for ‘unpatriotic activities’.

John Redmond had died a month before the Convention completed its work and the Conscription crisis would consolidate Sinn Fein’s position as the dominant force in nationalist Ireland. How much longer the Labour movement could defy the drift towards militant nationalism in the South and Ulster Unionism remained to be seen.

Dublin Trades Council Minutes, 1917 and 1918, Irish Labour History Society

Padraig Yeates
III.IV - The Democratic Programme for Government (1919) – A missed opportunity?

1919: The ILP&TUC (it had reversed the order of the title in anticipation of participating in the 1918 election) was invited by the Sinn Fein leadership to draft a Democratic Programme for adoption by the First Dáil. Tom Johnson, Cathal O’Shannon and William O’Brien worked on the draft, using extracts from the writings of P H Pearse, but he proved too radical for the IRB, particularly Michael Collins, who insisted on amendments diluting its socialist message. The amended document took out major clauses as can be seen in the table below.

Sourced at the Irish Labour History Society.
Thomas Johnson was born in Liverpool but his work took him to Belfast where he was sacked in 1918 for organising Ireland’s first mass demonstration against conscription. He then moved to Dublin where he became secretary of the ILP&TUC and subsequently leader of the Labour Party in Dail Eireann in the 1920s.
### ITUC&LP Original (Deletions in Red)

| Repeating in the words of the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic ‘We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible’. And further in the opinion of its President, P H Pearse, we declare that the nation’s sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation but to all the material possessions of the nation: the nation’s soil and all its resources, all wealth producing processes within the nation. In other words, no private right to property is good against the public right of the nation. |
| We declare further that as the nation in the exercise of its sovereignty may entrust its soil and its resources, its wealth and wealth producing processes to the care and charge of any of its citizens, to use and exploit for the nation’s enrichment, on such terms and on such conditions as may be determined by the whole people, so the nation must ever retain the right and power to resume possession of such soil or such wealth whenever the trust is abused or the trustee fails to give faithful service. |
| In the same manner as we affirm that the duty of every man and woman is to give allegiance and service to the commonwealth, so we declare it as the duty of the nation to ensure that every citizen shall have the opportunity for spending his or her strength and faculties in the labour of wealth-producing or the service of the people. In return for willing service in the name of the Republic we declare the right of the nation’s citizens to an adequate share of the produce of the nation’s labour. |
| The Irish Republic shall always count its wealth and prosperity by the measure of health and happiness of its citizens. It shall, therefore, be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to ensure that no child shall endure hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing or shelter, that all shall be provided with ample means and facilities requisite for the education and training of free citizens of a free Gaelic nation. A condition precedent to such education is to encourage by every reasonable means the most capable, sympathetic men and women to devote their talents to the education of the young. |

### Amended Version (IRB Additions in Green)

<p>| We declare in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible, and in the language of our first President, Pádraig Mac Piarais, we declare that the Nation’s sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the Nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation’s soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and with him we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare. |
| We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all, which alone can secure permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people. |
| We affirm the duty of every man and woman to give allegiance and service to the commonwealth, and declare it is the duty of the Nation to assure that every citizen shall have opportunity to spend his or her strength and faculties in the service of the people. In return for willing service, we, in the name of the Republic, declare the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation’s labour. |
| It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Labour Text here – it did not envisage the dismantling of the recent reforms introduced by the British government before and during the First World War.</th>
<th>The Irish Republic fully realises the necessity of abolishing the present odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law System, substituting therefor a sympathetic native scheme for the care of the Nation’s aged and infirm, who shall not be regarded as a burden, but rather entitled to the Nation’s gratitude and consideration. Likewise, it shall be the duty of the Republic to take such measures as will safeguard the health of the people and ensure the physical as well as the moral well-being of the Nation.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>To promote the development of its resources, to increase the productivity of its soil, to exploit its mineral deposits, peat bogs, fisheries, waterways and harbours in the interest of and for the benefit of the Irish people, the nation, exercising its right of sovereignty, shall deem it to be a duty to organise and direct into fruitful contact the labour of men with the land and raw materials and machinery and industry. Wherever the land, the mineral deposits and other forms of the production of wealth are wrongly used or withheld from use to the detriment of the Republic, then the nation shall resume possession without compensation.</td>
<td>It shall be our duty to promote the development of the Nation’s resources, to increase the productivity of its soil, to exploit its mineral deposits, peat bogs, and fisheries, its waterways and harbours, in the interests and for the benefit of the Irish people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the sphere of overseas commerce the Republican Government to safeguard the interests of the nation shall itself undertake the organisation of the import and export of merchandise so as to prevent the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessities until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for and to obviate the waste of life and labour which competitive commerce involves and the risk of destroying Irish productive enterprises. It shall be the purpose of the Government to encourage the organisation of people into trade unions and co-operative societies with a view to the control and administration of the industries by the workers engaged in the industries. It shall also devolve upon the National Government to seek the co-operation of the governments of other nations in determining a standard of social and industrial legislation with a view to general improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour. (ILO) Finally, the Republic will aim at the elimination of the class in society which lives upon the wealth produced by the workers of the nation but give no useful service in return, and in the process of accomplishment will bring freedom to all who have hitherto been caught in the toils of economic servitude.</td>
<td>It shall be the duty of the Republic to adopt all measures necessary for the recreation and invigoration of our Industries, and to ensure their being developed on the most beneficial and progressive co-operative and industrial lines. With the adoption of an extensive Irish Consular Service, trade with foreign Nations shall be revived on terms of mutual advantage and goodwill, and while undertaking the organisation of the Nation’s trade, import and export, it shall be the duty of the Republic to prevent the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessities until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for. It shall also devolve upon the National Government to seek co-operation of the Governments of other countries in determining a standard of Social and Industrial Legislation with a view to a general and lasting improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One reason for the Dáil’s indulgence of the ILP&TUC was that the latter had been invited to attend the first post-war conference of the Socialist International in Berne where it had been granted recognition as a delegation in its own right. This was the first time an international body had recognised Ireland as a separate entity to the United Kingdom.

**NOTE:** The above table is fairly self-explanatory, apart from the paragraph added by Sean T O’Kelly about abolishing the ‘odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law system’. Whatever the original intention this became a charter for cash-strapped Sinn Fein dominated local authorities to introduce savage cuts to services and contract out much of the work to religious institutions from 1920 onwards.

Padraig Yeates

### III.V - Labour and the General Strike Weapon 1918-1922

The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress called four general strikes during the Struggle for Independence. All were short lived, three were successful and one was not.

The first was a one-day strike against Conscription on April 23rd, 1918. The second, calling for international proletarian solidarity and self-determination, was held on May Day 1919, everywhere except Belfast, where a rally was held on Saturday May 3rd. This was the largest of all the ‘May Day’ rallies but it highlighted the continuing demand for a 44-hour week in the engineering trades rather than Irish self-determination, which would have been deeply divisive.

The third general strike was on April 12th, 1920, in support of republican prisoners in Mountjoy who had gone on hunger strike on April 5th. The general strike was in support of the prisoners demands that all republican prisoners awaiting trial, and that all those serving sentences be treated as prisoners of war. The hunger strike lasted ten days and the general strike three days, ending with the release of all the prisoners. The fourth general strike was on April 24th, 1922, against militarism. All of these strikes were effective outside of Belfast.
The Conscription Crisis 1918

The strike against conscription was the one of the shortest but also the most effective demonstration of workers’ power in the revolutionary decade.

The proposals put forward by the Labour representatives for fighting conscription were the most comprehensive and innovative of any organisation involved in the campaign. If adopted they would have radically changed the nature of the struggle for independence by basing it on mass passive civil disobedience. They included:

1. Withdrawal of Bank deposits by ‘Merchants, farmers, shopkeepers, clergy and all classes’. This was intended to stimulate banks into putting ‘pressure on the Government to withhold the [Conscription] Proclamation’.

2. Rail workers to stop for proscribed periods – ‘a week or fortnight’ – forcing the military to take over railways. ‘Steps should be taken to make the efficient working [of the railways] by military very difficult’.

3. General stoppage of work: ‘All postal officials, civil service clerks, police and all city and town workers to “down tools” and appeal to soldiers ‘with a view to “sympathetic action”’. This would ensure no area was left isolated to bear the brunt of military attention, and ‘to demonstrate to the world that the nation was united in its resolve to resist at any cost’.

4. The Mansion House Conference should ‘act strongly in the hope that a sympathetic reaction will take place among the Irish population in Industrial Britain.’

The very success of the first general strike in Irish history never saw such policies adopted, for instance during the coming years Sinn Fein initiated a boycott of RIC members subsequently escalated by the IRA into armed attacks. Unfortunately, it also intensified divisions within the Labour movement between a rapidly emerging, nationalist oriented and largely Catholic working class in the 26 counties and its long-established Protestant counterpart in Belfast and its’ hinterland, which traditionally identified with Britain and the Empire. The dynamics of the conscription crisis probably made this breach both inevitable and irreversible once the Catholic Church decided to actively support opposition to the measure and a pan-nationalist front was established that included constitutional and militant nationalists, the majority within the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (ILP&TUC) and the Catholic Church.
It was the great German offensive on the Western Front in March 1918 that made the threat of conscription a reality. Recruitment in Ireland had fallen to 80 men a week, and a petition signed by over 100,000 people in Britain, including 46 MPs, had been submitted to parliament demanding conscription on the neighbouring island. With the prospect of raising the call up age from 42 to 48 or 50, and sending teenagers to the front, Lloyd George’s coalition government had to be seen to be doing something to find Irish replacements of prime military age.

The crisis pitched the conflicting aims of nationalist Ireland and the British Empire against each other in the starkest terms imaginable. Two of the most senior Irish trade union leaders, Thomas Johnson and David Campbell went to lobby the British TUC leaders in London when the British government introduced the Military Service Bill to the House of Commons on April 9th, 1918. Unable to secure any support, they organised the first anti-conscription protest in Ireland on Saturday April 14th, at Belfast’s Custom House steps.

They predicted that, ‘All active Trade Unionists, branch presidents, secretaries, shop stewards’ and young men generally ‘would be forced into military service.’ They said that, ‘Now is the time to resist, before the Bill becomes law’.

Some 10,000 people attended the rally and a second meeting was called three days later at City Hall only to be broken up by loyalist shipyard workers. Johnson was injured in the melee and the unwonted publicity cost him his job as a commercial traveller with Day and Company for this display of ‘disloyalty’ to the Crown. He found a new occupation as secretary of the Mansion House Committee, which was established in Dublin on April 18th to campaign against conscription. Meanwhile Johnson’s fears about the Bill rapidly becoming law were confirmed when it received the Royal Assent on the same day.

The Irish Party withdrew from Westminster on April 16th, when the Bill passed all stages in the House of Commons, marking a rapid escalation in the conscription crisis. Many leading Labour activists in Dublin had been participants in the Rising and many others were interned afterwards. On the other hand, in Belfast many loyalist workers who had not joined the colours would have been among the Ulster Volunteer Force members deployed to protect locations such as the shipyards and docks so that troops could be released to suppress the insurrection in Dublin. If the Rising consolidated the primacy of the separatist tradition in the capital it posed new problems of class and national identity in its northern counterpart.

One of the key figures in the strategic realignment in the South, as was so often the case in these
years, was William O’Brien, Johnson’s successor in 1917 as president of the ILP&TUC. By early 1918 O’Brien enjoyed a prominence within militant nationalism unequalled among labour leaders. A veteran of the 1913 Lockout, confidante of the 1916 martyr, James Connolly, and a post-Rising internee, on his release O’Brien played a leading role in establishing the Prisoners Dependents Fund and, subsequently, in the North Roscommon and South Longford by-elections. He attended Count Plunkett’s conference to explore the possibility of building a pan nationalist front in 1917 and his name headed the list of signatories on the declaration seeking ‘complete independence’ for Ireland issued afterwards.

In April O’Brien put out feelers to Sinn Fein to establish a common front, uniting militant nationalists, Labour and the Irish Party against conscription. For the Irish Party it was a last desperate attempt to save itself, while it allowed Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers to maintain the momentum of the independence struggle.

Dr William Walsh, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, also anticipated events and ensured the Catholic Church would be strategically placed at the centre of this pan nationalist front to oppose Conscription. A conference was called at the Mansion House in Dublin on April 18th, the same day as the Military Service Bill received the Royal Assent and the Catholic Hierarchy was gathered in Maynooth. The national committee selected that day in Dublin consisted of John Dillon and Joe Devlin from the Irish Party, William O’Brien MP, from the All for Ireland League, all veterans of constitutional nationalism; Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith from the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Fein, and no less than three Labour representatives, Thomas Johnson from Belfast, Michael Egan from Cork and Bill O’Brien from Dublin. Johnson was the only Protestant present, and English to boot. Its members adjourned to Maynooth to receive the bishops’ blessing to oppose conscription by all means ‘consonant with the laws of God’.

Meanwhile the ILP&TUC organised a special delegate conference in the Mansion House on April 20th to call a general strike for the following Tuesday, April 23rd. On the day itself, Dr Walsh called a meeting of senior clergy to consider how best to combat the threat posed by the spread of ‘Bolshevism, anarchy and republicanism’, but it does not appear to have taken place because the churches were as packed as on Sundays with ‘large numbers of communicants’ among the trade union congregations. Instead of a central demonstration, unions in Dublin gathered at their respective halls and marched in a body to mass at designated churches. Elsewhere, the national and provincial press reported rallies in at least 59 centres, with clergymen presiding at 29 of those
for which details of platform speakers are given. Catholic clerics administered the Anti-Conscription pledge and comprised the majority of speakers mentioned by name.

On June 9th women took a pledge not to do the work of men conscripted. Again, demonstrations took place countywide. In Dublin the Irish Women Workers Union formed the single contingent in a march to City Hall to sign the pledge.

Meanwhile, there was a mixed reaction to the strike among British trade unionists. The secretary of the Leather Workers Union in Walsall told Bill O’Brien he was ‘grieved’ to receive a letter seeking support for the anti-conscription campaign. He told O’Brien that of his members, ‘Forty-two of a total of 123... are fighting at the Front, some have been wounded, three have paid the sacrifice; and you ask the remainder to pass a resolution condemning the action of conscripting you. I should not like to get you insulted by putting your proposition to them.’

However, when the ILP&TUC executive wrote to the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC and the British Labour Party executive seeking their support to avert the ‘massacre and rapine’ that would inevitably follow conscription they agreed to a joint statement recognising that,

> the passing of the Conscription Act has done more to cement [Irish] ... national unity than any other act could have done. It must be clearly evident to the Government that the attempt to enforce conscription will mean not merely the shedding of the blood of thousands of Irishmen, and Englishmen and Scotsmen too; but also, the maintenance of a huge permanent army of occupation in Ireland. To-day every soldier is needed at the western front.

Both bodies appealed to the Government ‘on grounds of principle and of expediency alike not to violate the national conscience, and not to jeopardise the whole future of this country ... [by] imposing conscription upon a nation without its own consent, and in face of ... the most determined and united opposition.’

The British labour movement became increasingly sympathetic to the plight of the Irish people as repressive policies escalated and the mass arrests of leading figures such as de Valera in May saw many British union branches protest at ‘the long series of injustices and wrongs suffered by the Irish people at our hands’. A number of Irish branches of ‘amalgamated’, or British based unions in Ireland, passed resolutions condemning the arrests and opposing conscription. But there were none from the North of Ireland.

**The ‘May Day’ General Strike of 1919**

The general strike on Thursday May 1st, 1919, was both an affirmation of support by the Labour movement for Irish self-determination and a demand for a greater role in determining the nature of a free Ireland. Coming less than a week after the end of the Limerick Soviet (see Soviets Module) and the League of Nations Covenant that pledged signatories to defend nations from external aggression, it proved a double-edged sword. On the one hand it subordinated working class demands to the struggle for independence, which alienated many workers in the North while alarming employers and conservative elements in Sinn Fein and the IRA by raising the spectre of a
Bolshevik ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’.

In some towns and villages, it led to confrontations between workers, employers and farmers, while other trades councils, such as Galway, eschewed displays of the Red Flag as inconsistent with ‘Catholicity’. As in the general strike against conscription, clergymen still spoke on some strike platforms, but there were far more rallies where Red Flags were flown and speakers were now unashamed advocates of socialism than in 1918.

Belfast had the largest demonstration with a reputed 100,000 workers and their families attending but it was held on Saturday May 3rd, so it was not a strike, although it disrupted many businesses. This was also to dissociate it from the general strike in the South, while not violating the Sabbath on Sunday.

The Hunger Strike of 1920

The announcement that republican prisoners in Mountjoy were on hunger strike caused widespread alarm in 1920. As Dorothy McArdle, one of the first historians of the Struggle for Independence wrote, ‘It was not realised in Ireland that a hunger striker may take weeks to die. Night and day crowds stood around the prison saying the rosary and singing Fenian songs for the prisoners to hear.’ The Irish Volunteers organised marches through the city to the prison, where barbed wire, gun emplacements and tanks were deployed.

Clashes occurred, with RAF planes flying as low as the eaves of the houses in Phibsboro to intimidate the protestors. ITGWU members and railway workers, who were later to play a leading role in the Munitions strike (see below), initiated the strike but other unions quickly joined the action. British unions such as the National Union of Railwaymen, which usually refused to endorse ‘political’ strikes backed this protest because, as its general secretary J H Thomas MP told a rally in Dublin, ‘there was no justification for condemning people without trial. These men who were at this moment suffering and risking all were doing so because they were guided by their conscience’.

As in the anti-conscription strike, rail services still operated on the Great Northern line and there were sailings from Belfast, but elsewhere trains and shipping schedules were suspended. By Wednesday even British army pay clerks came out rather than face mass pickets.

The general strike took the British authorities by surprise. To add to the confusion, the dispute occurred just as a new British commander, Sir Nevil Macready, took over the Irish command. He found the prison administration in chaos and Government policy was unclear.

Convicted prisoners and those awaiting trial were incarcerated together. Convicted prisoners were demanding prisoner of war status while those awaiting trial were demanding their release. Within a few days, Peadar Clancy, the leader of the hunger strikes, sensing victory, demanded that all the prisoners be released.
Macready met with Laurence O’Neill, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, who had been visiting prisoners in Mountjoy. O’Neill pleaded for all of them to be released on signing a parole form but Clancy rejected this compromise, saying that signing the parole form conceded the principle that men were criminals. It was then suggested to Macready that the prisoners on remand be allowed out on parole. He agreed only to discover that a convicted prisoner was the first man discharged by error, at which point he conceded defeat and all the prisoners were freed.

As in the Conscription Crisis of 1918 the general strike was the most effective and visible way in which popular support could be mobilised in support of militant nationalism and imprisoned Volunteers. Unlike military activity, it was also extremely difficult for the British administration to counter with superior force.

**The General Strike Against Militarism 1922**

The fourth general strike during the Struggle for Independence was very different from its predecessors. The lawlessness that emerged during the Truce, from July 11th, 1921, united farmers, trade unionists, business interests and the general public in de facto support for the Free State. Between then and the outbreak of the Civil War on June 28th, 1922, many parts of the country descended into lawlessness.

The general strike called by the ILP&TUC for April 24th was even better supported than its predecessors with no trains running between Dublin and Belfast, and all of the Free State’s post offices and ports closing. More than 75,000 workers marched in Dublin alone. The Irish Independent reported that, "No games or pastimes were indulged in. Football and hurling grounds and golf courses were deserted as if it was a day of national mourning. Labour pickets were on duty in all parts of the city... There was little or no necessity for their presence; for there was not an establishment in the city, outside of a few dairy shops, that had not its doors locked and barred'.

Cork had witnessed some of the worst excesses of militarism on both sides, including the burning down of large parts of the city centre by Auxiliaries in retaliation for IRA ambushes. A delegate to the ILP&TUC conference in following August said that the strike had a marked effect for two or three weeks. However, the ILP&TUC could not fill the power vacuum that remained in place.

The British forces were gradually withdrawing from most of the 26 counties, handing over barracks to whichever faction of the republican forces was strongest in the area. The Belfast Boycott was still being enforced by the anti-Treaty IRA, which meant that its patrols regularly raided business premises and removed or destroyed goods deemed to be contraband. This was often looting by another name.

The only large garrison the British retained was in Dublin as a guarantee of the Treaty. It only evacuated the capital in December 1922 when it was clear that the new Free State was defeating its enemies.

In Dublin the Labour leadership drew on members of the Irish Citizen Army to provide stewards on the day of the general strike and it considered creating a larger workers army capable of fighting the British or republican forces, if necessary, to defend the labour movement. The ITGWU held meetings with the ICA to discuss using it as the nucleus for such a force but the talks broke down because of mutual distrust. The primary reason was that the majority of ICA members were anti-Treaty, while the leadership of the ITGWU and ILP&TUC were largely in favour of the settlement.

Unless the labour movement could overcome its own divisions and develop a clear strategy for dealing with the crisis posed by the Treaty, demonstrations of workers’ power, even ones as powerful as a general strike, could have no lasting effect.

*Padraig Yeates*
III.VI - The Engineering Strike, Belfast (January-February, 1919)

At 12 o’clock sharp on January 14th, 1919, workers at Harland and Wolff, and at Workman, Clark’s South Yard, many of them still wearing their dungarees, gathered in what the Belfast News Letter described as a ‘dense body’ on the Queens Road and, with fife and flute bands to the fore, marched to City Hall with banners declaring ‘44 Hours means no unemployment’ and ‘44 means work for demobilised soldiers’.

It was the largest demonstration of industrial power ever held in the city by workers in pursuit of better pay and conditions.

As the banners proclaimed, the Belfast engineers were demanding a 44-hour week. Up until the end of the Great War they had been putting in 54 hours on basic pay and many additional hours of overtime, which was often necessary not just to provide vital replacement for shipping lost to the German U Boat offensive but to ensure their wages kept up with wartime inflation. The men had first demanded a 44-hour week in August 1918 and, following protracted negotiations at national level, the employers conceded a 47-hour week in November 1918, with no loss of earnings, from January 1st, 1919. However, less than a third of the 1.6 million Federation of Engineering and Shipping Trades (FEST) members participated and only 337,029 votes in favour. Engineering workers in Belfast and on Clydeside had overwhelmingly rejected the offer and were now determined to undertake their long threatened industrial action to secure 44 hours, or, in the case of Scotland 40 hours. In fact, the Clydeside Workers Committee wanted a 30-hour week.

In Belfast J J Hill of the Boilermakers opened proceedings outside City Hall by reminding the men that, after voting on strike action at their respective union offices to make sure, whatever else they did that day, to ensure they reported for work at 6 am as usual next morning. When the meeting ended the crowd dispersed peacefully.

It says something about the close relationship that these men enjoyed with the local political regime that, when they arrived at their various union halls to cast their votes it was in the same Belfast Corporation ballot boxes that had been used a few weeks earlier in the general election. At that time the Unionists won every seat except for Joe Devlin’s in West Belfast, where he saw off a threat from Eamon de Valera.

Sir Edward Carson had addressed a mass meeting of FEST members on the eve of the general election and told them that he backed their demand for a 44 hour week, but they needed to reverse the decision of the UK-wide ballot if they were to win, as otherwise it would put the Belfast yards at a competitive disadvantage.

17Belfast News Letter, January 15th, 1919
Meanwhile three Belfast Labour Party (BLP) candidates who also attended the meeting and stood in defiance of a decision by the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress not to contest the election gave their full support to the workers. Joe Devlin sent his apologies as he was suffering from a cold. All three BLP men would be beaten comfortably by Unionist candidates, two of whom were running under the auspices of the Ulster Unionist Labour Alliance. And all three BLP candidates, James Freeland of the ASE, Robert Waugh of the ASCJ and Sam Kyle of the ILP would play active roles in the forthcoming strike, unlike their successful opponents who had polled 41,176 votes to their still very creditable 12,164. Sinn Fein polled 2,319.

When the strike ballot was counted it was found that only 1,184 men voted to accept a 47-hour week, whereas 20,225 voted for industrial action, which would be unofficial as the engineering unions were bound by the national ballot held in November. The strike was set to begin on Saturday, January 25th if no concessions were forthcoming. Other workers, including municipal employees and linen workers also called for a 44-hour week, but were discouraged by the engineering workers from joining the strike, as were those in the transport sector. It was an early sign that the caste system that bedevilled industrial relations in the shipyards would hobble the effectiveness of the campaign. In the case of the linen mills it was because most of the workers were women and in the case of the transport workers it was because they were largely unskilled and members of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, which was seen as too closely aligned with Sinn Fein.

In the shipyards there were more disputes between skilled and semi-skilled workers such as platers, riveters and their helpers than with management. The National Amalgamated Union of Labour was not admitted to FEST, which negotiated on behalf of all the unions with management, until 1908. The National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers was not admitted until 1910. Even then it was on the basis that both unions ‘knew their place’. It took a World War for the Workers’ Union to gain admission after it failed to give satisfactory assurances it was would act with due deference to its’ betters.

The mentality in the FEST in Belfast was therefore very different from the militant syndicalist tradition of Jim Larkin and James Connolly which was now dominant in the South, or of John McLean and Willie Gallacher on Clydeside. 18

Even without the participation of the ITGWU and linen workers the city ground to a halt on Saturday, January 25th, 1919. Manual municipal workers of all grades and workers in the power stations, gas and water works also came out, without asking for a ‘by your leave’ from anyone. As a result, the trams stopped at 4 pm and so did any business dependent on gas or electricity. Power was restored on Sunday evening by the strike committee to allow hospitals to access power on condition that other customers did not abuse the utility. Skeleton crews were left at utility plants to prevent a complete shutdown.

Any company wishing to reopen had to apply to the strike committee for a permit and patrols were mounted to ensure compliance. When the Belfast Telegraph and other city centre businesses attempted to use power surreptitiously angry groups of workers smashed their windows and forced them to close. A Strike Bulletin was issued costing a penny but other newspapers struggled to appear. Within days bread rationing had begun and 20,000 workers had been laid off to join the 40,000 already on strike.

In any society such a major industrial challenge to the status quo is serious but for Ulster Unionism it was potentially disastrous because its’ bargaining power with the British government and with the emerging power of Sinn Fein rested on its capacity to mobilise the working-class communities of the North-East. Without them it was as vulnerable as Southern Unionism to a sell-out. Already the leaders of Ulster Unionism, such as Richard Dawson Bates, Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council, were writing off figures such as Lord Midleton, and the distiller and banker Andrew

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19 Hourican, B, Dictionary of Irish Biography, November 27th, 2018
Jameson, as too willing to reach accommodations with nationalists so be trusted. Instead the Council was busy building a base within the labour movement to counteract the ‘Bolshevik’ threat, even sending delegations of loyalist workers to address British trade union conferences and district committees.

However very few of the strike leaders were members of the Ulster Unionist Labour Association. Charles McKay, a pattern maker and Chair of FEST was a socialist and a Catholic, while Robert Waugh had stood unsuccessfully as a Belfast Labour candidate in the 1918 election. None of the strike leaders was an ideologue or a revolutionary, nor were the vast majority of the 150 strong strike committee, its size dictated by the need to include representatives of every trade and occupation in the yards.

Unlike the Red Clyde, where workers were now demanding a 30 hour week and would soon be battling with the police in Glasgow’s George Square, the FEST strike committee co-operated with the British army commander in Belfast, General Hackett Pain, a former leading figure in the UVF, and 300 strikers were enrolled as special constables to work with the RIC and ensure there was no breakdown in law and order. Far from establishing dual power the strike committee was supplementing that of the state.

The difference in approach was exemplified by an exchange between the Clydeside leader and future Communist MP Willie Gallacher and a heckler when he came over to address a rally in Belfast. When the heckler demanded to know if Gallacher was loyal to the King, Gallacher replied, ‘That’s a stupid question. You know I am a revolutionary and that my only loyalty is to the working class’.

James Baird, a shipwright, was the most militant strike leader and the Northern Whig accused him of advocating ‘class war and terrorism’. He certainly advocated a syndicalist programme. However, his views were too advanced for most the strike committee’s tastes and he was marginalised as the strike progressed.

The strike committee held its first mass meeting at the Custom House steps on Sunday, January 26th, 1919. Next day the strike leaders met the Lord Mayor, John Whyte, and council officials to discuss the administration of the city during the dispute, while strikers surrounded City Hall. On Tuesday, January 28th, 1919 a march was held from Carlisle Square, where Orange Parades normally began, to City Hall. Union banners and Union Jacks were carried. McKay told the crowd that, ‘The fight would be bitter and some of them had got to suffer… It was better to make it fast and furious, short and sharp.’

The Strike Bulletin said that ‘no compromise is now possible’ because for ‘four long years’ the men ‘endured the grind of inhuman hours under the spur of necessity’ and now needed it to end.

This did not mean they were becoming susceptible to the Bolshevik virus. When a man calling himself O’Hagan tried to address the meeting on January 26th he was heckled and when he organised a meeting with two companions calling themselves Meehan and O’Mahon outside City Hall on Thursday, January 30th, two members of the strike committee, Clarke and Waugh mounted the platform and said these men had no authority to speak on the committee’s behalf.

O’Hagan, Meehan and O’Mahon’s real names were John F Hedley, an English deserter from the Royal Navy, Charles O’Meagher, a Dublin deserter from the army and Simon Greenspon, another Dubliner of Eastern European extraction who claimed to have taken part in the 1913 Lockout. Dawson Bates wrote to Carson the next day telling him that resentment was being shown ‘at men like the Russian Jew being brought from Dublin to teach Belfast men their business’. Eventually all three men were imprisoned for unlawful assembly after continuing their meetings.

The British government was simultaneously having to deal with the deteriorating security situation in the South, where the First Dáil had assembled on January 21st and the Soloheadbeg ambush had occurred earlier on the same day. On January 30th the ILP&TUC called a conference for Saturday, February 8th to demand pay rises and a 44-hour week across Ireland. It offered ‘Moral and financial’ support to Belfast, which led to the Irish Unionist Alliance accusing Sinn Fein and Irish Labour of
'marching hand in hand' with 'Bolshevism' to undermine 'the very foundation of social order'.

Carson and Craig in London were kept in touch with events in Belfast through Bates and Hackett Pain. All opposed involving troops in the dispute. Bates said that, 'Once one of the workers got injured in a melee with the troops nothing could save Belfast from becoming a scene of disorder and tumult'. He told Craig that the employers would not budge off the 47 hours while he reckoned that only a quarter of the strikers were 'out and out socialists', although he thought the strike committee were 'practically Sinn Feiners'.

The Workers Bulletin of February 1st, seemed about to live up to Dawson Bates’ prediction when it announced that FEST was the

'Labour Parliament in Belfast... and the work of this body is going to be an education to the workers of Belfast. Belfast this week has found itself. The workers have discovered their friends. They are not in City Hall, nor yet in the Elected Legislature. They, like themselves, were always to be found on the Queen’s Road and on their way to the engine shops all over the city at 5.30 each morning. Labour in Belfast has discovered that when it must fight, it must fight alone. No helping hand is stretched out to help on the way. Labour will fight, and Labour will be right. LABOUR CAN STAND ALONE!'

On February 3rd, 1919: Colonel Wallace, Belfast Grandmaster of the Orange Order, issued a manifesto to the workers calling on ‘the decent men to secede from the Sinn Fein Bolshevik element’. He offered to arrange a conference with the employers, but the strike remained solid. Harry Howard of the boilermakers declared that, ‘The workers were as full of grit and determination as the boys who went over the top on July 1st, 1916’.

Although the strike committee continued to demonstrate a worrying degree of independence it showed no interest in accepting offers of support from the ILP&TUC in Dublin or joining the Scottish workers in calling for a general strike in Britain. The authorities played on this willingness of the strike committee to be reasonable to secure agreement that the supply of essential services should be done jointly with City Hall to ensure food and coal reached local communities suffering from shortages.

Privately, the Unionist Lord Mayor, John Whyte, asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Iain MacPherson, for 100 naval stokers to restore gas and electricity supplies on January 31st, 1919, and the employers were ready to supply him with 100 free labourers, or strike breakers. But MacPherson followed Government instructions and refused to sanction the use of naval personnel, while Hackett Pain remained absolutely opposed to deploying troops.

Meanwhile the electricians now threatened to black out London on February 6th in solidarity with Belfast and Glasgow and on February 5th, 1919, the government used the Defence of the Realm Act to ban this solidarity action. The main British engineering union, the ASE, suspended its district councils in Belfast, Glasgow and London and reasserted its authority, followed by the other engineering unions. The official trade union leadership was as anxious as the government to curb shop floor militancy.

Now Lord Pirrie, who was the Government Controller of Shipping as well as the owner of Harland and Wolff and other shipping interests across the globe arrived in Belfast to meet with the unions, along with George Clark of Workman, Clark, the other shipyard. Clark was the former Unionist MP for North Belfast, who played a leading role in financing the UVF to resist Home Rule.

Rumours were rife as the talks began and there were reports that the strike committee would be arrested. And on Monday, February 10th, 1919, for all their sound and fury, the Glasgow strikers returned to work on the basis of a 47-hour week. By now electricity supplies were becoming more widely accessible as the joint Belfast city council–strike committee members issued nearly 50 permits, and some strikers started drifting back to work, even though men in the engineering shops

War Cabinet Minutes 523, 524, 525 and 530, January 31st, February 3rd, 4th and 10th
had still not received an offer.

The offer to the shipyard men was minimal. There would be a return to a 47-hour week with a promise that the employers would call a national conference of employers within 30 days to try and secure a shorter working week across the UK. If this did not happen there would be a local settlement with a reduction on the 47-hour week guaranteed at some unspecified date in the future.

On Friday February 14th, 1919, the strikers voted by 11,963 to 8,774 to reject the offer. It was almost the same turnout as on January 14th, but this time the number in favour of rejecting the offer had virtually halved while the number prepared to accept it had quadrupled. There were significant differences in voting patterns, with craft workers more opposed to it than general workers.

Meanwhile on February 13th, ahead of the ballot, the General Officer in Command for Ireland, Major General Frederick Shaw, had travelled to Belfast to see the Lord Mayor, John Whyte and on February 14th, when the ballot was held, he issued a proclamation announcing that troops would be made available to protect ‘ordinary employees or volunteers’, a code word for strike breakers, if the employers chose to use them. Next day, Saturday, February 15th, 1919, troops moved into the gasworks and power station.

The strike committee met on Sunday, February 16th and decided to continue the strike, but next day municipal services were once more operational again and by Tuesday, February 18th, many businesses and engineering works had reopened.

Thursday, February 20th saw the shipyards reopen. The unions were invited to another meeting with Pirrie and Clarke but received no improved offer. The strike committee recommended that members return to work. At Harland and Wolff, 85 per cent of men returned and 80 per cent at Workman, Clark. The Northern Whig, which had been the newspaper most sympathetic to the strikers, praised the strikers for showing ‘the same quality which saved Ulster from Home Rule five years ago and may be needed again’. But it also condemned the strike leaders as ‘red flaggers’ adding that, ‘On reflection the great majority of the men must see that Orange is a much better colour than Red’.

On Saturday, May 3rd, 1919, some 100,000 workers and their families gathered in Ormeau Park for a May Day celebration with banners declaring the workers ‘Solid for the 44’. In the January 1920 municipal elections ten Belfast Labour councillors were elected, making them the largest block after the 35 Unionists, who included three UULA councillors. Sinn Fein and the nationalists only secured five seats each and the ILP another two, as did independent unionist candidates.
British yards refused to even consider discussing shorter hours and on October 18th, 1920, Harland and Wolff rejected any further improvements. The FEST district committee ‘decided to defer this matter owing to the unsettled and uncertain position at present prevailing in Belfast’. By then of course the pogroms had rendered official union structures impotent. Many members of the strike committee, including the chairman, Charles McKay has been expelled from the yards by Orange militants in the July Pogrom.

Padraig Yeates

III.VII - Limerick Soviet (April 1919)
The Limerick Soviet attracted worldwide attention because the international Press Corps descended on the city to witness an attempt by Major J C P Wood to win the Daily Mail prize for the first transatlantic flight. The attempt never took place but journalists had an equally newsworthy event that captured the mood of the moment and a confluence of nationalism, internationalism and socialism. A general strike was called on Sunday, April 13th, 1919, in response to a curfew imposed by the local British commander, Brigadier C J Griffin after a clash in the city between the RIC and IRA that resulted in two fatalities. The deaths arose out of the arrest of Robert Byrne, the adjutant of the 2nd Battalion of the Irish Volunteers, now increasingly referred to as the IRA, for being found in possession of a revolver and ammunition. He had previously been dismissed from his job with the Post Office for ‘disloyalty’. Sentenced to twelve months with hard labour he had organised a prison protest and gone on hunger strike.

The clash occurred after Byrne was transferred to hospital with a small police escort. It had been hoped to overpower Constable Martin O’Brien but quickly escalated into a gun battle in which O’Brien and Byrne were fatally wounded. Byrne’s funeral was used as a demonstration of strength by the IRA. Although the military regularly imposed martial law in such circumstances Brigadier

Sourced at the Irish Labour History Society.
Despite the ‘Soviet’ title bestowed on them by the international press most of them were very traditional craftsmen like the Chairman, John Cronin, of the Carpenters’ Union, who had little time for socialism or syndicalism but were determined defenders of workers’ rights and opponents of military rule.
General Griffin took the unusual action of sealing off the city rather than imposing a curfew and patrols, effectively sealing off the city from the outside world rather than occupying it. In the circumstances the local trades council took over the city administration of Limerick, organising food supplies and keeping local factories open.

International press corps members were somewhat perplexed by the Limerick Soviet, which did not conform with the Russian model. When Ruth Russell of the Chicago Herald asked the Sinn Fein Lord Mayor Alphonsus M O’Mara about Soviet patrols wearing red badges but also observing the Angelus, he assured her there was no danger of communism taking root in the city. ‘The people here are Catholics’. Bishop Brendan Leahy told her, with a smile, ‘Isn’t it well that communism is to be Christianised?’

John Lynch, the president of the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council was a highly skilled but deeply conservative trade unionist, who had opposed the syndicalist policies of Jim Larkin and James Connolly to the point of voting against the admission of the ITGWU to the Irish Trade Union Congress. The very name of the ‘Trades Council, which put ‘Trades’ before ‘Labour’ in the title indicated the pecking order. In his message of condolence to Byrne’s mother he told her that her son died ‘for the cause of self-determination’ and was ‘murdered by the minions of English tyranny’. This was a clear reference, not alone to the dead Constable O’Brien but Constable Spillane, whose spine was shattered by a bullet and to other RIC constables and a warder wounded in the gun battle. Robert Byrne’s mother replied in a similar vein. ‘Thank God that our son’, she wrote, ‘died a free man fighting for his country’s cause. I pray the Almighty that his blood has not been shed in vain and that our dear Motherland will soon shake off the shackles of the Foreigner and take her righteous place among the Nations of the World’.

The Soviet foundered when the ILP&TUC declined to escalate it into a general strike in order to raise this latest siege of Limerick. One reason was that there was no obvious industrial objective and it was far from clear how much support it would receive. Even more important was the lack of a revolutionary political strategy among the ILP&TUC leadership. The decision not to contest the 1918 general election was a recognition of the fact that Sinn Fein was the dominant force in the south and the decision of Belfast Labour to contest the election regardless, confirmed the dominance of Ulster Unionism in the north. The ILP&TUC leadership never put in place a political strategy that could challenge the hegemony of militant nationalism or Ulster Unionism.

As all the disputes of the period showed, industrial action was only sustainable for a limited period because the resources of the British military, backed by the government in London, could always outlast those of the Irish unions. Once the Catholic church in the city, initially sympathetic indicated...
that its support might have to be withdrawn for the Soviet it was concluded on Sunday, April 27th, 1919 and normal work resumed. The military restrictions were lifted a week later.

The Belfast engineering strike and Limerick Soviet provide vivid contrasts of different forms of industrial struggle in Ireland where the determinants were as political as they were economic. The Belfast strike was exclusively to do with industrial issues, the strike committee resolutely refusing to broaden it, even rejecting the ILP&TUC offer of nationwide support because of its potential political connotations. The Limerick Soviet had practically nothing to do with industrial relations but did want a general strike called in its support. Although the engineering strike involved approximately four times as many workers, lasted twice as long, preoccupied War Cabinet meetings and closed down Ireland’s second largest city it was almost forgotten afterwards.

The Limerick Soviet received international coverage because of its coincidence with an attempt to set a new transatlantic record and it subsequently fitted readily into a nationalist and socialist narrative regarding the struggle for independence. Belfast’s demonstration of working-class militancy led by predominantly Protestant workers (although the chairman of the FEST strike committee was a Catholic) fitted neither nationalist or Unionist agendas. If both disputes were indications of widespread unrest, they also demonstrated a lack of common purpose or agreed political objectives among Irish workers.

Padraig Yeates


Walsh, M Bitter Freedom: Ireland in a Revolutionary World, 1918-1923, Faber and Faber, 2015, Pages 163-181
III.VIII - The Motor Permits Dispute (November 1919 to January 1920)

This dispute arose as a direct result of the rising military tempo of the struggle for independence during 1919, when the IRA was making increasing use of motor vehicles in their attacks on Crown forces. On 15 November the British authorities introduced motor permits, which drivers were required to display with a photograph of themselves on their vehicles for inspection by the police or army. Members of craft and transport unions reacted immediately by refusing to drive, repair or service vehicles which carried these permits.

Dublin became the flashpoint because of the concentration of motor transport in the capital compared with elsewhere, plus the high levels of unionisation among drivers and the availability of police and soldiers to enforce the scheme. On 30th November 1919 a meeting was called in the Trades Hall on Capel Street where Eamonn MacAlpine of the Irish Automobile Drivers and Mechanics Union (IAD&AMU) summed up the mood, declaring that no British government was going to turn his union into ‘a semi-spy organisation’ by forcing them to carry permits.

On 7th December the DMP mounted patrols on all the city’s bridges to check vehicles for permits, while the unions mounted pickets to ensure drivers did not display them. Donations poured in from other unions to provide strike pay for drivers sacked or suspended. Many employers were as opposed to the scheme as their employees, not least because vehicles carrying permits were liable to be damaged by gunfire, attacks by union pickets and local mobs.

In an attempt to placate business interests, the British government amended the scheme to exclude large commercial vehicles but the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Ian Macpherson, only enraged Irish public opinion more when he announced the changes in the House of Commons by assuring MPs that the scheme would ‘not impose any hardship of loyalists’. His subsequent explanation that by ‘loyalists’ he only meant loyal, law abiding subjects of the Crown and did not intended to offend nationalists failed to assuage Irish public opinion.

On Sunday 4 January 1920 drivers organised a protest march through Dublin and on 16th January, the day after the local government elections, MacPherson experienced the public mood at first hand when his own car was attacked by a crowd in Phibsboro and he was only rescued with difficulty when an attempt was made to roll it over.

However, there were divisions within union ranks. The British unions took immediate strike action while most Irish unions took their lead from the Irish Transport and General Workers Union that members should not apply for permits but should continue working normally without one. Eventually this led to the driver’s suspension and, or dismissal as well but created space for negotiation. It led to allegations by members of British unions that the Irish unions were ‘scabbing’.

Meanwhile not alone drivers and employers but other groups voiced concern over the hardship that the strike was causing. One Dublin GP said that the dispute cleared the roads for the ‘bad boys’ who would race around breaking the law regardless, while it entailed hardship and suffering for the poor who were too sick to visit his surgery, while the dispute prevented him from using his car to visit them. He was particularly concerned for expectant mothers.

At this stage the Government offered drivers the option of signing an undertaking that they would not knowingly allow their vehicle to be used for an unlawful process, which would protect them from prosecution. But it still insisted that they must display the permits. M J O’Connor secretary of the IAD&AMU offered to allow photographs to be attached to drivers licences instead of displayed on the vehicles, but this was rejected by the authorities.

Dublin Corporation had yet to convene after the local elections but the city’s Board of Guardians
passed a motion demanding the withdrawal of the Motor Permits Order because it was ‘entirely opposed to the elementary rights of citizenship and interfered with the livelihood of both motor-owners and motor-drivers’.

At this stage the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Britain’s most powerful craft union intervened in the dispute as it did shortly afterwards in the Belfast and Glasgow engineering disputes (see Belfast engineering dispute module). Like most British unions it regarded these Irish disputes as primarily political campaigns that had little to with basic trade union rights or demands. The British union executives then went over the heads of the local membership and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions to make an agreement with the DMP Commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, to facilitate the permit scheme.

The only concession the DMP made was that if a driver changed employment, he could continue to use the same permit instead of having to apply for a new one. The local unions issued a statement condemning the agreement, which had been made ‘behind the backs of the Joint [strike] Committee’. However, as the majority of drivers were in British based unions, the strike collapsed without their support.

The experience soured relations between the British and Irish craft unions and helped prepare the ground for the establishment of the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers Trade Union in 1920 (see Barmen, Printers and IRA men Module). The British based unions had adopted a more militant approach to the Permit scheme initially, precipitating strike action and accusing their Irish counterparts of ‘scabbing’ for not following suit only to reach a private agreement with the British authorities. Not only that, but many workers had come out in sympathy with the drivers found they were denied strike pay by these same unions. This experience fuelled demands for greater autonomy from the British Labour movement.

See ILP&TUC Annual Report for 1920, Pages 11-18

Padraig Yeates


III.IX - The Munitions Strike
(April to December 1920)

After the general strike against conscription in 1918, the munitions strike was the most effective act of resistance to British rule during the Struggle for Irish Independence. It severely disrupted the ability of the British army to carry out operations against the IRA and generated support within the labour movement not alone in Britain but as far away as Australia. It was inspired originally by the example of London dockers, who refused to load a shipment of arms on the Jolly George to Poland, where they were intended for use against the Red Army in the Russo-Polish War.

The General Treasurer of the ITGWU, William O’Brien, had been interned in Wormwood Scrubs, London, during the boycott of the Jolly George and he followed the progress of the dispute closely while convalescing from a hunger strike that succeeded in securing his release. Granted permission to return to Ireland in early May he gave an interview to the Freeman’s Journal about the political situation and praised the action of the London dockers in opposing the shipment of arms to fight the Russian revolutionary forces.

Shortly after he returned to work in Liberty Hall a docker, who was a 1916 veteran and Irish Citizen Army member, called to tell him there was a ship in the port with munitions on board that were
supposed to be unloaded next morning. He wanted to know if they could black the vessel, like the London dockers. O’Brien met with the ITGWU president that night and they decided to authorise industrial action. Next morning the dockers refused to unload the munitions and the authorities diverted a second vessel to Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) station, where soldiers unloaded the supplies and loaded them on the train for Westland Row (now Pearse) station.

However, porters refused to unload the munitions at the station and all 400 employees came out on strike. This was a major escalation to the dispute because, while the dockers were casual workers who regularly switched from one ship to another, the workers at Westland Row were employees of the Dublin and South-East Railway who faced suspension or even dismissal if they refused to carry out their duties.

Most of the workers involved were in the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Associated Society of Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF). O’Brien, bearing in mind the hostile attitude of the British unions to what they regarded as ‘political’ strikes, realised that many of these workers could be quickly starved back to work without financial support. He approached Arthur Griffith, Acting President of the Irish Republic during Eamon de Valera’s absence in America and John Dillon of the Irish Party, who were the trustees of the funds collected to support the general strike against conscription in 1918, but they refused to help. O’Brien said later that Dillon was the main obstacle.

O’Brien then decided to approach the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress and propose a levy on all affiliates that would guarantee every docker or railwayman sacked or suspended from work £3 a week. This was the equivalent of the average industrial wage, although considerably less than some skilled workers such as locomotive drivers or fitters would earn.

Despite O’Brien’s fears, there was considerable support for the strike among British workers. The NUR executive referred the issue to its allies in the Triple Alliance, the miners and dockers unions in Britain. The Alliance, in turn, referred it to the TUC’s senior body, the Parliamentary Committee. Meanwhile support came from local trades councils and union branches.

In June the ILP&TUC sent a deputation to London to formally seek support from the TUC. The fact that it included representatives of the new IESFTU which had poached many craft workers from British unions does not seem to have prevented the TUC from agreeing to meet the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George on the issue. But he refused to contemplate a climb down, which he believed would represent a much bigger blow to British authority in Ireland than any IRA ambush. Meanwhile, some British ex-servicemen’s associations, comprised of Great War veterans called for the withdrawal of soldiers from Ireland and advised any members called up as reservists to refuse to serve there.

The munitions strike spread rapidly across Ireland and was so effective that the strike committee had to issue permits excluding perishable items such as eggs and medical supplies. In some cases, it proved impossible to separate consignments. For instance, a train loaded with imported foodstuffs such as sugar, tea and cocoa destined for Kildare might also have included items that ended up for sale in The Curragh military base. Supplies for the RIC were also affected and civilian passengers often had to carry their own luggage, as porters were suspended for refusing to handle military supplies.

Not alone were rail unions and the ITGWU involved in the dispute but so were craftworkers whose action could have an impact out of all proportion to their numbers. For instance, maintenance staff brought the cross-channel railway depot of the London and North Western Railway in Dublin to a standstill after the company suspended rail workers in the munitions strike. This caused major disruption to all cross-channel train services between Britain and the Irish capital.

Train drivers and firemen bore the brunt of the dispute. They were assaulted and even threatened with summary execution by the military if they refused to carry troops. Although none were shot during the strike, three ASLEF members were shot in Mallow as a reprisal for an IRA attack shortly after the strike ended, showing the continuing hostility of some British soldiers towards rail workers.
The strike disrupted military traffic for the rest of the year with troops having to be redeployed to protect motor convoys bringing supplies to British garrisons across the country on Ireland’s very poor road network. This in turn provided IRA snipers and flying columns with targets, while the Royal Navy carried supplies to some coastal garrisons.

The one black spot for the ILP&TUC was the North. As with the general strikes against conscription in April 1918, and the following general strike calling for the release of all political prisoners in April 1920 (see Key Events, Anti-Conscription and Hunger Strike in Labour and the General Strike Weapon 1918-1922, III.V), the munitions strike received no support from Belfast. Instead, Belfast locomotive drivers and firemen offered to bring a train stranded in Dublin and loaded with munitions to Belfast. Taken in conjunction with increasing IRA activity in the South, the munitions strike heightened sectarian tensions among Belfast workers that would lead to the shipyard expulsions in July and sectarian violence that lasted until June 1922 and cost some 500 lives.

Eventually the strike proved to be too effective, as the British Labour Party discovered, when the fact-finding Commission it sent to Ireland (see Key Events, Labour Commission III.XI) had to curtail trips or arrange alternative motor transport to visit areas most affected by the military struggle. This was because, in 1920, the railway network was the primary transport system for the whole country. By December some towns were suffering dire shortages of food, fuel and other vital supplies. Factory closures and the suspension of public services soon loomed. (Students could be asked to research the effects in their own areas. The pattern would vary enormously but in parts of Munster and Connaught, at least, it must have been considerable.)

In Dublin a special committee was established that included public representatives from all of the political parties, Tom Johnson on behalf of the ILP&TUC, and Richard Mulcahy and Dick McKee, representing the IRA to make contingency plans for the introduction of food rationing and a fixed tariff for road hauliers bringing vital supplies into the city. Ironically, the motor permit system provided a template for this.

The head of the Corporation’s Electricity Supply Department, John Devine acted as secretary to the committee and McKee, as commander of the Dublin Brigade, acted as de facto chair and director. So desperate was the situation that the Shamrock, the Corporation’s steam vessel that dumped raw sewage into the Irish Sea was overhauled to bring in food supplies from Britain while plans were being made to hire tramp steamers.

If the British army’s military capacity was severely hampered by the strike and left it incapable of carrying out any significant offensive operations against the IRA, it was much better equipped to deal with the daily inconveniences it caused to civil society because it had its own transport, catering and other logistical infrastructure.

On November 15th, 1920, Dublin Corporation joined the growing ranks of local authorities, poor law unions and even trade unions appealing for the munitions strike to be called off. On November 16th the ILP&TUC held a special all-Ireland conference to discuss the crisis. Many delegates were unable to attend because 15 trains on the GSWR failed to run that day and the Midland and Great Western Railway put all employees on notice.

At the conference Tom Farren of the ITGWU, who was President of the ILP&TUC, paid tribute to the rail workers, but Tom Johnson said that with winter imminent social life in Ireland would be thrown back ‘perhaps a hundred years’ and would have to become self-supporting if the strike continued much longer. The conference mandated the executive to continue its support for the rail workers but to take all the necessary measures to protect workers’ wider interests.

A month later the ILP&TUC executive formally advised the railway workers ‘to offer to carry everything that the British Military Authorities are willing to risk on trains’. It was the end of a strike that was one of the most remarkable episodes of the Struggle for Independence, and one of the least remembered.

Padraig Yeates
III.X The Belfast Pogrom

Sectarian violence had been a recurring problem in Belfast since the mid-nineteenth century and provided an unsettling undercurrent that disrupted the city’s public life in almost every generation. It had a particular impact on the development of the Labour movement, yet as recently as 1911, James Connolly the newly arrived Belfast secretary of the ITGWU and the longstanding local advocate of socialism in the city, William Walker of the ASCJ had agreed that sectarian violence was a thing of the past in an otherwise extremely bitter debate on whether the future of Irish Labour lay in aligning itself with Irish nationalism or integration in the British labour movement.

This misplaced confidence was soon exposed in the shipyard expulsions of 1912 that followed an attack on a Protestant Sunday School outing to Castledawson by members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians who were holding a local parade. It came only days after the Irish Trade Union Congress had voted to establish a political wing. (see Key Themes III.II The Rise of the Labour Movement 1912)

The establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Force was not only a demonstration by Ulster Unionists of their willingness to resist Home Rule by physical force if necessary, but a means of controlling and channelling loyalist working class militancy. The establishment of the Irish Volunteers in the city, dominated by Irish Party and AOH leader Joe Devlin, had a similar effect in the Catholic ghettos. The outbreak of the First World War had a further calming effect in the short term with large numbers of working-class Protestants and Catholics, many of them UVF and IV members, joining the British Army. But this was of course merely deferring unfinished business.

Even during Belfast Labour’s heyday in 1919 and early 1920 there was an undercurrent of tension, manifested in the Belfast Engineering strike by the demand by some strikers for unemployed Protestant ex-servicemen to be employed, even if it meant dismissing Catholics recruited during the war, and the refusal to accept support from the ILP&TUC.

The Belfast pogroms erupted in 1920 as the War of Independence intensified in the South. It is sometimes blamed on Sir Edward Carson’s speech on July 12th at Finaghy, where he attacked ‘men who come forward posing as the friends of labour’, whose real object was ‘to mislead and bring disunity amongst our own people; and in the end, before we know where we are, we may find ourselves in the same bondage and slavery as is the rest of Ireland’.

However, the annual industrial holiday intervened and the more immediate trigger was the funeral of Lt Colonel G B Smyth, Divisional Commissioner of the RIC in Munster. He was shot dead by the IRA on July 17th in Cork after a speech he had made in Listowel urging RIC members to shoot more rebels. Railway workers refused to transport his body home to Banbridge and rioting broke out after his funeral which quickly spread to Belfast. On July 21st the Belfast Protestant Association organised meetings at the Workman, Clark and Harland & Wolff shipyards that were followed by the violent expulsion of all Catholics and ‘Rotten Prods’, including the strike committee members from 1919. The latter included James Baird, a Labour councillor, John Hanna a former master of an Orange
Lodge and the chairman of FEST, Charles McKay, who doubly qualified as a Catholic. The expulsions spread to the main engineering works and some linen mills. An estimated 10,000 workers were expelled of whom a quarter were ‘Rotten Prods’. Shipyard workers were subsequently attacked on their way home through Catholic areas and sectarian conflict erupted, which would leave almost 500 dead, over 2,000 seriously injured and 23,000 driven from their neighbourhoods. The Dáil Éireann government retaliated by imposing a boycott on Belfast goods but this largely impacted on Catholic owned companies as the major engineering industries exported very little to the South. Like the shipyard expulsions by Protestant militants, the Dail boycott, enforced by the IRA, further cemented the growing division between North and South. When the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the largest union in the yards tried to secure the reinstatement of its members, management said it was unable to comply or guarantee the safety of any men who did return. The union tried unsuccessfully to persuade its members to support its policies and called a strike in support of those expelled. Only 600 members joined the pickets while 2,000 walked past. The pogrom coincided with the end of the post-war boom and unemployment in the shipyards soared to 28 per cent before the end of the year. In the post-mortem in August at the ILP&TUC conference delegates heard graphic details of how ‘men armed with sledge-hammers and other weapons swooped down on the Catholic workers in the shipyards, and did not even give them a chance for their lives’, on July 21st. ‘There was no … no provocation, or no “rebel” cries. The gates were smashed down with sledges, the vests and shirts of those at work were torn open to see were the men wearing any Catholic emblems, and then woe betide the man who was. One man was set upon, thrown into the dock, had to swim the Musgrave Channel, and having been pelted with rivets had to swim two or three miles, to emerge in streams of blood -and rush to the police office in a nude state.” But beyond passing resolutions condemning these attacks there was little the ILP&TUC could do. While money was collected to help the expelled workers and their families, they were actively discouraged from moving South and told to ‘fight their corner’.

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Further reading:

Grayson, R Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists fought and died together in the First World War, Continuum, New York, 2010

Patterson, H Class Conflict and Sectarianism: The Protestant Working Class and the Belfast Labour Movement 1868-1920, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1980


BOR FO9-10a: The Daily Herald was the newspaper of the British Labour Party and gave sympathetic coverage to the struggle for Irish Freedom, including a platform for opinion pieces such as this article by Erskine Childers, a leading Sinn Fein propagandist, that was subsequently published as a pamphlet. Childers warned British trade unionists that methods being employed by the British Army to suppress the republican cause might be used against them as well.
III.XI - The British Labour Commission to Ireland (1920)

On 25th October 1920 a former leader of the British Labour Party and member of the War Cabinet, Arthur Henderson, moved a motion in the House of Commons:

That this house regrets the present state of lawlessness in Ireland and the lack of discipline in the armed forces of the Crown, resulting in the death or injury of innocent citizens and the destruction of property; and is of opinion that an independent investigation should at once be instituted into the causes, nature, and extent of reprisals on the part of those whose duty is the maintenance of law and order.

When the British government rejected the motion and refused to establish an independent inquiry the British Labour Party decided to send its own Commission to Ireland.

The Personnel of the Commission

Besides Henderson, a former trade union and Labour Party leader, five other senior Labour MPs, A G Cameron, J Lawson, W Lunn, W Adamson and F W Jowett served on the Commission, along with Brigadier-General C B Thomson as military adviser, and Captain C W Kendall as legal adviser. Henderson’s son William accompanied the Commission as press secretary. Tom Johnson, secretary of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, was attached to the Commission and the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union provided a stenographer, E Rooney.
Its Significance

The Commission arrived in Dublin on November 30th, two days after the Kilmichael ambush and just over a week after ‘Bloody Sunday’ in Dublin, when the situation was clearly spiralling out of control. It produced the most damning and authoritative report produced in Britain during the struggle for Irish independence. Its’ investigations were as thorough as circumstances and resources permitted. Interviewees included public representatives such as the Acting President of the Irish Republic Arthur Griffith, co-operative society members, trade unionists and business people.

The delegation was perceived as striving to be fair by interviewing government officials, senior military and police officers, and victims of IRA violence as well as victims of the Crown forces. Besides serving as a Labour member of Lloyd George’s War Cabinet, Henderson’s own three sons, including William had served in the British army during the Great War and one had been killed in action in 1916. No one could accuse them of being unpatriotic.

Besides providing a searing account of the impact of the struggle on the lives of ordinary people the Labour Party Commission sought to analyse the dynamic of the conflict, showing how attacks on Crown forces by the IRA led to reprisals by the Crown Forces, leading to more attacks by the IRA, leading to the collective punishment on entire communities. The British government later introduced reprisals as official policy to try and gain control of the process, incurring further criticism in Britain and abroad in the process. Collective punishment of communities for acts of resistance by occupying armies has existed since time immemorial, culminating in the atrocities of the Third Reich in the Second World War.

The most glaring omission from the Commission’s work was its’ failure to visit Belfast, the scene of the most vicious outbreak of sectarian conflict on the island that led to hundreds of deaths and thousands of people being expelled from their homes and
jobs. (see Key Events II.I The Rise of the Labour Movement 1910-12 and 1919-1920; and Key Events II.VI Belfast Engineering Strike)

The Diary of the Commission

Tuesday, November 30th to December 3rd: The Commission arrived in Dublin and was based in the Shelbourne Hotel, where it took evidence from witnesses. Visits were paid to Balbriggan, Skerries, Croke Park, Mountjoy Prison, Dublin Castle and other locations in Dublin itself.

At Balbriggan Commission members visited the sites of the hosiery factory, houses, pubs and other premises burnt down by the Auxiliaries on September 20th. The evidence of eye-witnesses was taken in the Town Hall.

At Skerries, witnesses were examined with regard to assassinations carried out by Crown forces, including that of Thomas Hand, the local ITGWU branch secretary and a member of a Dáil Eireann arbitration court.

At Croke Park, the Commission inspected the site of the massacre on Sunday, November 21st, and took evidence on the spot. It also visited the Painters’ Trade Union Club and the Women’s Trade Union Club, both of which had been raided and damaged by Crown forces.

Henderson and Adamson interviewed Arthur Griffith in Mountjoy Prison and Dr William Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin at his residence.

Henderson also travelled to Armagh and interviewed Cardinal Logue, the Roman Catholic Primate.

Saturday, December 4th: The Commission visited Dublin Castle and had an interview with Hamar Greenwood, the Chief Secretary for Ireland. He was accompanied by senior military, police, and civil service personnel.

Sunday, December 5th: Adamson returned to Scotland to fulfil engagements there and on the following morning Henderson had to return to London. A G Cameron took over as chair of the Commission for the remainder of its stay in Ireland.

Monday morning, December 6th and 7th: The Commission travelled by train to Cork. It met the Lord Mayor, Donal O’Callaghan, who was Terence MacSwiney’s successor, and several members of the City Council. A room in City Hall was placed at its disposal.

Later members of the Commission travelled to Bandon, to see the hosiery works and other property destroyed by Crown Forces. They took evidence from witnesses.

Wednesday, December 8th: The Commission travelled to Killarney by car due to the Munitions Strike (see Munitions Strike Module).

Thursday, December 9th: The Commission drove to Tralee, ‘which place provided us with abundant evidence of “reprisals” and terrorism’. On the way to Tralee it investigated the burning of the co-operative creamery at Ballymacelligott, then motored out to the Abbeydorney Co-operative Creamery to take evidence of its partial destruction by fire. Other members journeyed to Ardfert to investigate the shooting of a girl there. ‘In this case, however, the Commission was not able to obtain sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that the girl was shot by a member of the Crown forces’.

Friday, December 10th: The Commission visited Listowel, Foynes and Limerick. In Listowel, it saw shop signs in Irish obliterated by order of members of the Crown forces. At Foynes, it saw a co-operative society store and a working men’s club, which had been burnt down and at Shanagolden it visited the site of another co-operative creamery destroyed by fire, along with damage to other buildings and the site where an old man had been shot.

Arriving at Limerick, the Commission proceeded to take evidence of further outrages.
Saturday, December 11th: The Commission split, with some members meeting the Mayor of Limerick and councillors at the Town Hall, where further evidence was taken, while others visited Hospital and Tipperary to take evidence from witnesses. They then reunited at Limerick Junction and caught the train for Dublin.

On their return the Commission members completed their investigations into the Croke Park shootings and took evidence in other cases. Members of the Commission also visited Dublin Castle and interviewed senior officials there.

Sunday, December 12th: News of the burning of many buildings in Cork city centre was received.

Monday, December 13th: Two members of the Commission visited Cork to collect evidence.
Meeting workers in Munster towns such as Mallow, where Crown Forces engaged in large scale reprisals beyond the public eye, the Labour Commission played a major role in informing British public opinion.
Tuesday, December 14th: Cameron, Jowett, and Bromley travelled to London to attend a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party.

Wednesday, December 15th: The remainder of the Commission left Dublin. It concluded that the evidence collected was more than sufficient to justify the strongest possible condemnation of British Government policy in Ireland.

Thursday, December 23rd: Failing to elicit a satisfactory response from the Government, the Labour Party wrote to the Prime Minister notifying him that it would oppose his failed policies of repression.

December 29th: The British Labour Party held a Special Conference to discuss the Irish situation. It subsequently declared that the British Cabinet had ‘plainly forfeited whatever rights it may have possessed to govern Ireland’ and pledged itself to campaign to end the policy of repression.

The Conference called for:

(1) To withdraw all the armed forces;

(2) To place the responsibility for maintaining order in each locality in Ireland (as in Great Britain outside the metropolitan area) on the local authorities themselves; and,

(3) To provide for the immediate election, by proportional representation, of an entirely open constituent assembly, charged to work out, at the earliest possible moment, without limitations or fetters, whatever constitution for Ireland the Irish people desire.

Padraig Yeates

Sources: ILP&TUC Report for 1921, Pages 6-13

III.XII - Labour’s civil war: Larkin v the ITGWU, April 1923 to June 1924

In October 1914, worn out after the lockout, Big Jim Larkin left Dublin for a speaking tour of the United States. He remained general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union (ITGWU), but if and when he would return remained unclear. In April 1923, after many adventures, he did return. There followed the most vicious, and most serious split in Irish Labour history. Moreover, it came after the post-war boom had yielded to a slump and just as employers were about to launch a major wage-cutting offensive.

Everyone expected trouble on Larkin’s return. He had founded the ITGWU and run it as ‘his’ union, and was known to be domineering and combative. James Connolly had taken over as acting general secretary in 1914, and after Easter Week the union came under the control of William O’Brien, its general treasurer. In propitious times, it expanded rapidly, rocketing from 5,000 members in 1916 to 120,000 by 1920. Larkin and O’Brien had contrasting styles and personalities. Larkin was a brilliant agitator and a careless organizer. O’Brien was an efficient organizer and no agitator. But in their different ways, both were jealous and dictatorial.

Disembarking at Southampton in April 1923, Larkin was welcomed by P.T. Daly and a deputation from Dublin trades council, who briefed him on their disputes with O’Brien. The O’Brien-Daly antagonism had caused the ITGWU to lead the formation of a rival Dublin Workers Council in 1921, leaving the smaller trades council dominated by communist sympathisers and Larkinites. On the quayside too was Willie Gallacher of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Larkin had been central to the project of turning the Socialist Party of America into a communist party and hoped to lead Irish communism.
On Monday 30 April, Larkin landed at Dún Laoghaire. A crowd of 4,000 followed a brake and a band to Liberty Hall, where he spoke from an upper window, explaining his absence during the independence struggle. Justifying his departure in 1914 would acquire a huge importance for him. He would also make a few gestures to republicans, who regarded him as an unreliable ally. O’Brien and ITGWU general president Tom Foran had prepared their ground at a special conference which agreed to lock the general secretary into a five-man collective leadership. On 4 May, Larkin attended a meeting convened to reacquaint him with the ITGWU executive. He seemed unsure of what direction to take, and spoke of going to Russia and resigning as general secretary. Taken aback, and worried about the loss of his name just before the bosses’ ‘big push’, Foran proposed he embark on a tour of the branches to get a better handle on the situation.

What was supposed to be a two-month tour of the branches began on Sunday 20 May. Everywhere, Larkin was received as a celebrity, and the Voice of Labour provided enthusiastic coverage. Then, at the end of May, he made an unscheduled return to Dublin. He had seen enough to know how much the ITGWU had changed. It was no longer ‘his’ union, and he was not the man to sit patiently and perfect a campaign to win it back. On 30 May, he summoned O’Brien to his office. Arguments about the union drifted to the American mission. Once again, Larkin said he had been sent by Connolly, Patrick Pearse, and Tom Clarke to secure aid for the Rising. Seething with anger over what he knew to be a lie, O’Brien suggested they put the case to a jury appointed by the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (ILPTUC). Next day, Larkin called a meeting of the no.1 branch, ITGWU.

On 3 June, some 2,500 out of 11,000 members of the no.1 branch took their seats in the La Scala for an operatic tragedy. Foran chaired. Larkin began with a review of how he had built the union, and why he had gone to America. He soon got bogged down in petty, ad hominem details about who did what. The nub of his grievance was that the ITGWU was no longer as he knew it. The pre-1914 achievements were forgotten. Connolly’s status nettled him: ‘He agreed that it was the sacrifices of James Connolly that built up the Union, but who sowed the seed? The employers were massing for an attack on them now, and how were they going to fight it with this spirit of antagonism in the Union’. Oblivious to the irony, Larkin rambled over an incoherent series of allegations of misappropriation of funds in 1913-14, and subsequent maladministration, and argued that the recent rules conferences were illegal. Time and again, he came back to O’Brien, the ‘Machiavelli’ of it all. The argy-bargy ended with exchanges between Foran and Larkin over whether O’Brien was doing his job properly. Larkin said he would call a meeting of the executive immediately.

The meeting took place on 5 June. At the outset, Larkin demanded O’Brien’s resignation from the executive on the ground that he was a salaried TD. Ever a barrack-room lawyer, he further protested that the new rules were invalid. It was an extraordinarily litigious way to carry on in the middle of a class war, and it alienated the entire executive. The bulk of officials backed the executive, as did the mass of members in the provinces. What is striking about the sheaf of letters and telegrams from provincial branches on the dispute is the common opinion that the trouble was driven by Larkin’s ego rather than policy issues and that it amounted to an attack on themselves as much as the executive. But in Dublin, Larkin had a more personal relationship with union members. He deepened the split by reviving the Irish Worker on 15 June extending his offensive to the ‘God save the King Labour Party’.

The industrial storm broke on 16 July. Since April, the ITGWU had been negotiating with the Shipping Federation on pay cuts for seafarers and hoped that a settlement would also prevent a threatened confrontation on the docks. When a section of Dublin seamen refused to compromise, the ITGWU detected Larkin’s influence. The breakdown of talks with the Shipping Federation encouraged the feared national dock dispute. On 16 July, 3,000 dockers struck against a pay cut of 2s per day. The dispute triggered a wave of similar employer demands, marking the final phase of the wage-cutting offensive. With the ITGWU also fighting protracted farm strikes in Kildare and Waterford, it was a disastrous development for Labour, which left the pillars of the movement
looking pathetically passive and feeble. Since May, Larkin had highlighted a blatant weakness in Labour Party strategy; its stolid refusal to exploit the political instability to force the government to restrain the employers. The cabinet took seriously his threat to disrupt the forthcoming general election failing a settlement of strikes. On 1 August it agreed to request employers to postpone wage cuts for three months, during which conferences would be convened under government auspices. The dock employers rejected the appeal, but it was heeded in some quarters. With little choice, the ITGWU backed the dock strike and supplied strike pay. Larkin took unofficial command of the Dublin dockers.

Over the summer and autumn, ITGWU branch officials tried to heal the rift, and deputations met Larkin on a number of occasions. A steering committee was appointed to convene an ‘Unofficial Rank and File Delegate Conference’ to seek a resolution. On 27 September, after several failed initiatives, the committee reported that it would be pointless to proceed. O’Brien now opened a propaganda war, publishing the committee’s report as a leaflet entitled ‘Larkin ignores members’ authority’. Another leaflet was headed ‘Is it jealousy?’. ‘Why is Larkin attacking the Transport Union Executive? Because he ran away in 1914 and returned in 1923 to find the Union a powerful and nation-wide organization...Larkin cannot bear to think that the Union survived his absence’. And another leaflet asked ‘Is it the Employers who pay Larkin and Daly to attack the Transport Union?’.

On 26 October, the unions in the dock strike accepted a cabinet proposal that the dockers accept a 1s per day cut, pending an enquiry into wage rates. On Larkin’s advice, Dublin dockers voted 687-433 to fight on. The ITGWU executive dismissed the ballot and withdrew strike pay. On 29 October, Larkin and Daly issued a call for a general strike for the release of 8,000 or so republican prisoners, hundreds of whom had been on hunger strike since 14 October. Larkin made a separate and desperate offer to President W.T. Cosgrave, promising to end all strikes – save the intractable Waterford farm strike – on government terms in return for the release of the prisoners. Cosgrave sent him a curt rejection. Dublin dockers then accepted the pay cut, and allied occupations suffered related reductions.

The hearing for legal cases against the ITGWU and its counter cases against Larkin opened before the Master of the Rolls in the High Court’s Chancery Division on 12 February 1924. The court found against Larkin on 20 February 1924, leaving him with legal costs of £1,300. The judge’s summing up was damning, and deplored his wasting the union’s time and money. On 13 March, the ITGWU executive voted unanimously to expel him from the union.

There the matter might have lain. Larkin did not appeal the court ruling, and his response to the expulsion was to busy himself with the Irish Worker League (IWL), a political organization he had founded in September 1923. His priorities were shifting back to Russia. On 2 June he left Dublin for London, Leningrad, and Moscow, to attend congresses of the Communist International or Comintern, and its trade union equivalent, the Profintern.

Larkin was scarcely out of the country when the crisis in the ITGWU came to a head. In May a dispute had broken out in Alliance and Dublin Gas. On 20th, the gas workers voted 407-44 to invite Larkin to a meeting in the Mansion House. Strike action was approved by the no.1 branch, but O’Brien refused strike pay because of Larkin’s involvement. Larkin then asked all ITGWU members to pay their subscriptions to the gas workers’ dispute committee. On departing for Moscow, Big Jim instructed his brother Pete to ‘under no circumstances’ to break with the ITGWU. However, Peter and his eldest and favourite son, Young Jim, did not share his view of events. If Big Jim’s war on the ITGWU executive was personal, the membership divide echoed the earlier divisions of the European left into communists and social democrats. On 15 June Pete and Young Jim launched the Workers’ Union of Ireland. Sixteen thousand workers, two-thirds of ITGWU’s Dublin membership, joined; as did twenty out of 300 provincial branches. Pete and Young envisaged the Workers’ Union as a communist union, and promised that it would soon be paired with a communist party. It would pursue a policy of aggressive militancy until near bankrupted in 1925.
There is no mystery to why Larkin threw it away in 1923-4. The 1913 lockout had turned his egotism to egomania, and he never recovered. He was not acting rationally. He didn’t even want the ITGWU. The lockout had exhausted his appetite for union work. On returning to Ireland, he intended to agitate, not organize, and hoped the Comintern would bankroll him as a political leader. But his jealousy distracted him into the civil war in the ITGWU. O’Brien too was a gritty fighter who was prepared to wage a ruthless war against Larkinites. Nor did it end there. The divisions between Larkin and O’Brien were merely the centrepiece of a suicidal sectionalism that plagued the Labour movement in the mid-20th century. The ITGWU and the Workers’ Union of Ireland were re-united as SIPTU in 1990.

Emmet O’Connor
Part IV
Lesson Plans

Author: Fiona Dunne
Lesson 1: Ireland, Socialist Pioneers and the emergence of the modern Labour movement

Lesson aims:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• To provide students with an understanding of the early influences on Irish politics and society;
• Expand students’ knowledge of life in Ireland and key events prior to 1917;
• Provide students with an understanding of the importance of historical events and their effect on the current political situation;
• Highlight living and working conditions for people in the time leading up to the period in question.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Describe some of the key events leading up to this period and how they may have influenced actions in the 1917-1923 period;
• Choose events and decisions taken in this period and identify how they have impacted on the current situation in Ireland;
• Understand what life was like for people in Ireland at this time and identify key elements which may have led to subsequent unrest in the period in question.

Lesson outline:
Explain to students that in order to gain a better understanding of the 1917-1923 period, it will be necessary to go back further in history in order to understand the context in which events happened. Therefore, this lesson provides a brief overview of some of the ideas prevalent a century before which will be beneficial to gaining a better insight into this period of social, political and military revolution.

Student assignment: Comprehension
Provide students with access to section 1.I Ireland, Socialist Pioneers and the emergence of the modern Labour movement and answer the questions in Worksheet 1a which follows this section. The answer to some of the questions contained in the worksheet may require further reading, and relevant references can be found at the front of this resource in the Key Resources section.

In-class activity: Comprehension review
When the class has completed the worksheet, discuss the section using the following to guide the discussions;
• What did you learn from this exercise (list 3 points)?
• Were there any concepts or ideas that you had never heard of before?
• Did you understand everything in this exercise? If not, list what you are still unsure about.
• What stood out to you most in this section? Explain.
• Do you think these concepts are relevant in the modern world? Explain.
Class work: General discussion
Following the completion of the comprehension exercise, the class should undertake an in-depth discussion about some of the ideas from the period. The following questions could be used as a guide to stimulate this discussion:

- Socialism has been debated for more than 100 years, why hasn’t it been implemented in Ireland?
- Is the ideology of socialism implemented anywhere in the world? What is your view of that?
- Is the co-operative movement a viable idea in which to encourage a better distribution of wealth?
- Poverty has been with us for a very long time, do you think it is just a fact of life or something which can be eradicated? Explain your answer.

Student project: In-class presentation
Ask students to choose one of the following for further study and make a presentation to their class:

- The ideas of Robert Owen and what they meant for Irish people and society;
- A history of co-operatives and their impact on society;
- The Combination Acts: Protection for property or people?
- Explaining the Labour Theory of Value
- Comparing Engels & Marx in the matter of capital, class and labour
- The implementation of socialism and the establishment of a co-operative system of economics would have averted the worst excesses of the Irish Famine of 1848.

Class activity: Student Debate
Debates provide students with the opportunity to practice skills whilst looking at an issue from different perspectives. Student should work in teams of no more than 4 per side of the debate. The following guidelines are helpful to apply to a debate:

- Arguments should be presented for 5 minutes with a reply time of 2 minutes;
- Time should be allocated to take contributions from the floor;
- At the end of each debate, the class should vote on whether they agree or disagree with the motion;
- Students should explain why they have agreed or disagreed with the motion, citing particular points (this encourages listening and learning by all and provides feedback to debates for their skills development);
- All students in the class should have the opportunity to participate in a debate;

The following topics could be debated:
This class believes that the distribution of wealth is fairer now than prior to 1917
This class believes that the labour theory of value makes no economic sense
This class believes that wealth distribution will always be unequal to facilitate economic development

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:

- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
Individual project: Researching assignment on a key personality

Ask students to select a key personality from this period (students need not confine themselves to this text) and conduct some research into their lives and contribution to society. The research should then be presented to the class and should cover the following areas:

- A short biography and background (family, education, where they lived)
- What was their area of expertise or interest?
- What was their key achievement?
- What challenges did they overcome?
- Why was this person selected for research?
- Did the student know about their achievements prior to undertaking this exercise?
- What is the most important thing people should know about this person?

Student assignment: Essay

Ask students to write an essay entitled “Applying the labour theory of value in today’s world”

Recommended reading:


In-class activity: Lesson wrap-up

On a noticeboard or in a scrap-book (or something similar), ask students to write onto a post-it one of the following (or something similar):

- The most interesting period in this period is ….
- The most interesting thing I learned about this period of history is ….
- The best thing I learned about Irish history today is ….

Worksheet 1a: Comprehension

After reading through Ireland, Socialist Pioneers and the emergence of the modern Labour movement answer the following questions.

What is a utopian socialist? …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Explain what a co-operative is and how it works? ………………………………………………………………………………………

Explain the term “amelioration” ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What is meant by distribution of wealth? ……………………………………………………………………………………………

What is a Commonwealth? Does it have a more favourable outcome for ordinary citizens? Explain.

What is your view of Thompson’s of “pauper management” to describe Owen’s ideas?

Why might there have been agrarian unrest in 1822?

What is the labour theory of value? What does it mean?

What were the Combination Acts? What were they required to do? Why were they enacted?

Why were trade unions outlawed? What is your view of such action?
What is meant by a “liberal stance on economics”?

Why was O’Connell opposed to unions? Do you agree with his view?

Who was Fredrich Engels? What was his ideology and beliefs? Are they relevant today?

Who was Karl Marx? What was his ideology and beliefs? Are they relevant today?

Why were trades councils established? What were their aims? Do they have resonance and relevance to workers today?

Lesson 2: Early Socialist thinking

Lesson aims:
The aim of this lesson is to;

• Introduce students to the early thinking on socialism and the reason why it was favoured;
• Highlight and explore the lives of those who lived before 1917 and understand the impact of their working conditions on other aspects of their lives;
• Enhance students’ investigative, research and analytical skills;
• Explore typical working conditions of the time which gave rise to the establishment of the trade union movement and social changes.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;

• Explain the rationale and thinking in socialist ideology;
• Understand and explain what life was like for a young person prior to 1917;
• Compare and contrast working conditions and life of those living prior to 1917 and people today;
• Evaluate what their own life might have looked like if they were alive before 1917.

Student assignment: In-class worksheet and discussions
Provide students with Worksheet 2a and ask them to complete it. Some of the questions may require additional assistance and resources.

Class activity: Discussion and review
When the answers have been taken from the students, initiate a discussion on the reading and the subject of that reading using the following to stimulate discussion and encourage students to engage.

• What was your view of the reading?
• What was your opinion of life in this period? How would you feel to have been alive in this period? Why?
• What was the most important point that you took from that reading?
• What would life have been like for someone your age? What do you think you might have been doing at your age back then?
• What was life like for children generally at this time?
• Ordinary workers didn’t have the vote during this period, do you think that made a difference in their lives? Explain.
• How might they have changed their working conditions at this time?
• Comparing life today with that of this period prior to 1917 – what are the main differences?
• Why did people put up with such conditions? How could they have been improved?

Group assignment: Exploring life and work in more detail
Using all the resources available to them, such as their school or local library, plus the National Library and Archives, ask students to conduct some mini investigations in order to answer the following questions;
• What were the most common jobs in your county in the late 1800s [pick a year for which data is available]?
• What jobs were available in other towns/cities in your county? Was this different to the smaller communities?
• What quality were the jobs available?
• What was the percentage of men and that of women working, nationally and in your county? What is it today?
• What were the average earnings in Ireland in the late 1800s [as above]? What is it today? Compare using index of inflation. Which worker is better off? Why?

Group assignment: International research
Investigate the working and living conditions for garment workers in Asia.
Make a presentation on your findings to your class.
Homework assignment Essay
My life as a child in the 1850s.
In-class activity: Student debate
This class believes that child labour is necessary to ensure poor countries can progress and develop economically.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following;
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

Comparison exercise
Compare Irish and British industry at the time in terms of pay, safety, hours of work, treatment etc.
Worksheet 2a: Understanding life before 1917
You will be provided with Section I.II Early Socialist thinking to read through. When finished please answer the following questions. Additional assistance or other resources may be required to finish it.
What is your initial impression of what life was like, as described in this article?
Lesson 3: Living and working conditions in Ireland: Pre 1917

In order to complete the activities in this lesson plan, students should read sections II.I, II.II and II.III of this resource, along with Module 6 of the YouthConnect Working World resource, pages 19-124 and lessons 4-6.

The aim of this lesson is to:

- Expand students’ knowledge of life in Ireland in the period prior to 1917 by exploring key events and personalities;
- Provide students with an understanding of the importance of events which shaped the following period of revolution (1917-1923);
- Draw attention to and highlight typical living and working conditions experienced by ordinary people and workers in Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
Lesson objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Describe some of the key events in this period and their impact on life in Ireland at the time;
- Understand and describe what life was like for ordinary workers in this period;
- Explain why poverty was such an issue for people in Ireland and the reasons for its existence;
- Highlight aspects of life and draw comparisons between the lives of young people (12-18 years) in this period and today;
- Understand the effect of low wages and a lack of decent working conditions had on children and adults in the period;
- Provide a commentary on the improvements in people’s lives today and how they came about;
- Compare and contrast the lives of their ancestors and those which they experience today;
- Explain how the living and working conditions of this period may have led to the demands during the period of revolution;
- Evaluate what their own life might have looked like in this period.

Lesson outline:

Prior to progressing through this lesson plan, students should complete activities from Lessons 4, 5 and 6 of Module 6 of the Working World resource.

Group activity: A brief glimpse at the period

Provide students with section II.III Living and working conditions in Ireland: pre 1917 and ask them to read through it.

When finished reading it, ask students to complete Worksheet 3a, which requires some additional research, outside of this module.

In-class activity: Group discussions

When students have completed the worksheet, bring them together to discuss their findings and their thoughts on what life might have been like for workers and their families at this time. Compare the answers among students, and particularly draw out their own views and perceptions of what life might have been like, particularly in comparison with their own life today. The following questions, which are not exhaustive, may help to stimulate this discussion;

- What is your view of the quality of life in the period prior to 1917?
- Do you think this had a direct bearing on the need for a revolution in Ireland? Explain.
- How would you feel to have been alive in this period of time?
- What would life have been like for someone your age prior to 1917?
  What do you think you would have been doing at this time?
  What was life like for children prior to 1917? What was life like for women at that time?
- What do you think about the different roles women and men had then? What has changed since?
- What, in your own opinion, is the main difference between this period and today?
• How could such conditions have been improved? How could people bring about those changes?

**Student assignment: Investigating and reporting**

Participation in the workforce in Ireland was segregated according to traditional gender roles. Students should investigate the above topic and report back on the outcome of their investigations.

Teachers’ note: Students should make their report as a verbal presentation to ensure all students get the opportunity to obtain different perspectives.

**Student assignment: Local research project**

Explain to students that they are going to research what life was like for children in their local area around the time prior to 1917.

Using worksheet 3b ask students to research their locality in the period prior to 1917 to get a sense of what it would have been like for children to live there at the time.

**Homework activity: Essay**

Based on the research already undertaken as part of the previous exercise, ask students to write an essay on the following:

*My life as a student of an Irish industrial school.*

**In-class activity: Debate**

This class believes that children have never been equally cherished in Ireland.

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:

• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

**Worksheet 3a: The seeds of revolution**

Student hint: Check out the Central Statistics Office for assistance with this worksheet.

**The labour force prior to 1917**

[1911 census is the closest available statistics]

Numbers of people employed ……….

Numbers of people unemployed ……….

% of women participating in the labour force ……….

% of married women participating in the labour force ……….

% of men participating in the labour force ……….

% of married men participating in the labour force ……….

Age at which people started work ……….

Average working week ……….

Average working wage ……….

___ % men _____% women employed by ________sector

___ % men _____% women employed by ________sector
___ % men  ____% women employed by ________ sector
___ % men  ____% women employed by ________ sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectoral participation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing sector</td>
<td>……..</td>
<td>……..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural sector</td>
<td>……..</td>
<td>……..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic service</td>
<td>……..</td>
<td>……..</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Society**

**Education**

Average duration of education

What was an industrial school? How many existed in Ireland at this time?
When were they established in Ireland?

What was a reformatory school? How many existed in Ireland at this time?
When were they established in Ireland?

Why did children live in these schools?

How many children, throughout the country, lived in? Reformatory schools... Industrial schools...

**Life expectancy**

What was the infant mortality rate? ............
Life expectancy for men ............
Life expectancy for women ............

**Housing**

How many housing units had less than 10 rooms in Ireland at this time? ............
What was the percentage of one-room dwellings in Dublin in 1911? ............
What is a perishable housing unit? ............
How many of these units existed in this period? ............

**Marriage**

Average age at which men married ............
Average age at which women married ............

**Voting**

Voting age for women ............
Voting age for men ............
Emigration
Number of men emigrating in the period .......... 
Number of women emigrating in the period .......... 
Deaths 
Death rate in Ireland ............. 
What was the leading cause of death in Ireland in this period? ............. 

What types of industry existed in Ireland? 
What type of jobs did these industries provide? Were they well paid? 

According to the text, what was the best paid job in Ireland at this time? 
What was the best paid job for women in Ireland at this time? 

Why did so many people work in agriculture, do you think? 
Why did children work, at this time? 

In today’s currency, how much is the following worth: 
6d .......... 
A tanner .......... 
A shilling .......... 
£1 ........ 
A guinea ........ 
A crown ........ 

Worksheet 3b: The local community before 1917
Student hint: Check out the Central Statistics Office, National Library, Archives, Local library or Newspaper archives for assistance with this worksheet.

What area are you researching? 
What was the infant mortality rate for your town/county/region/province? 
What were the primary industries and occupations in your town/county/region/province? 
Was there a reformatory or industrial school in your local area/county? 
What was the name of the school? 
Why did children go there?
How many children lived in it, in any particular year?

How many were?
Boys
Girls

Where records exist for this institution, answer the following questions:
What type of education did students get at this school?
How many hours of education took place at this school?
How many classes were there in the school? How many students per class?
What other activities were students involved in at this school?
How many teachers were employed in this school?
Who was in charge and from where did they come?
At what age did students leave this school? Could students leave voluntarily?
In general, can you find out what type of work students obtained when they left this school?
What occupations might they have been able to obtain in your local community on leaving school?

Compare your findings with your school today in terms of:
   School hours and facilities
   Extra-curricular activities
   Opportunities after leaving school

If no records exist, why, in your opinion, might this be the case?
Lesson 4: Living and working conditions in Ireland: 1917-1923

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Expand students’ knowledge of life in Ireland in the period 1917-1923 by exploring key events and personalities;
• Provide students with an understanding of the importance of historical events at that time and also their impact and influence in shaping the modern world;
• Draw attention to and highlight typical living and working conditions experienced by ordinary people and workers in Ireland in the early decades of the 20th century;
• Increase student awareness of the importance of decent working conditions for workers and society;
• Develop a better understanding of living and working conditions by encouraging students to undertake research within their own family and community history;
• Enhance students’ investigative, research and analytical skills;
• Draw comparisons between the lives of those living and working in this period (1917-1923) and in Ireland today.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Describe some of the key events in this period and their impact on life in Ireland at the time;
• Understand and describe what life was like for ordinary workers in this period;
• Explain why poverty was such an issue for people in Ireland and the reasons for its existence;
• Highlight aspects of life and draw comparisons between the lives of young people (12-18 years) in this period and today;
• Understand the effect of low wages and a lack of decent working conditions had on children and adults in the period;
• Provide a commentary on the improvements in people’s lives today and how they came about;
• Compare and contrast the lives of their ancestors and those which they experience today;
• Choose events and decisions within this period and identify how they may have impacted on the Ireland of today;
• Evaluate what their own life might have looked like in this period.

Lesson outline:
Before class begins choose a number of photographs from the resources and display them around the classroom so that students get the opportunity to study them closely in class. Ensure the photographs chosen represent different aspects of children’s and workers’ lives.
Provide students with a copy of Worksheet 4a and ask them to complete the questions.

Class activity: Review of exercise and group discussion
When they have completed the worksheet, ask them to come back into the full class group to discuss their answers. After the answers on the worksheets have been discussed, encourage students to engage in a broader discussion on the period. The following questions may be used to guide and stimulate this discussion;
• What have they learned by examining these photographs? Were they surprised by this?
• What might life have been like for those who appear in the photographs?
• This was a very turbulent period in Irish history, so what do students know about this period and its impact on Irish society? Do they think there is enough information taught on this period in school? Explain.
• Is it important to understand how these events impacted on the everyday life of ordinary people? Why?
• Is social and labour history important to understand? Explain.
• What can we learn from this period?
• Should we also learn from oral and local history of the period? Explain.

**Group activity: A brief glimpse at the period**

Provide students with section I.IV Living and working conditions in Ireland: 1917-124 and ask them to read through it.

When finished reading it, ask students to complete Worksheet 4b.

**Team activity: Health & Safety research**

Ask students to research the following statement;

Workplace health and safety has made little material difference to the lives of workers since 1917.

When their research is complete, they should present their findings to the class, explaining whether they agree or disagree with the statement.

**Individual student project: Researching local history**

Explain to students that the aim of this project is to identify some key events that happened locally in the period 1917 – 1923 and the living and working conditions at that time.

**Local library research:**

Encourage students to visit their local library and read through the papers of the time to identify a key event in the locality. On choosing the event of note, they should attempt to answer the following questions;

• What is the event about?
• When did it happen? Why did it happen?
• Who was involved?
• What was the outcome of the event?
• Was it important locally? Did it have any impact on local people? How?
• If you were alive in this period, would you have been involved in this event, do you think? Explain.

**Online research**

When they have identified a key event and explored the detail of it, students should then start to investigate the lives of those living in the area at the time. Using the online census, as the starting point, students should locate a person of their own age, living in the vicinity of their school or home at this particular time. They should attempt to answer the following questions;

• What age is this individual?
• Where were they living?
• Who are they living with?
• Are they educated?
• What school might they have attended?
• Are they still in school or working? If working, what job do they have?

They should try to explore the life of this individual a little more using their local library and archives – these can be sourced in the Directory of Irish Archives, www.theirisharchives.com or www.nationalarchives.ie along with local media;

• What type of jobs might be available to them in their locality?
• What was employment like in the area throughout this period (high employment or unemployment)?
• Find out the type of conditions of such jobs including pay, hours of work, was there a union for these workers?

Student assignment: In-class worksheet and discussion

Using the YouthConnect Module 6 The Commemorating the events of 1913 and the ongoing struggle for decent work, take students through Lesson 4: Living in 1913, to enable students understand the type of living conditions prevalent at the time.

This will provide some insight into the period before students continue the activities in this lesson.

Group Assignment: Exploring life and work at county level

Using all the information in this module and resources listed, such as school and local libraries, ask students to conduct some minor research within their county in order to answer the following questions;

• What were the most common jobs in your county across the period 1917 – 1923?
• What were the largest county towns at the time?
• What jobs were most available in those towns?
  Can you ascertain what type of quality were those jobs?
• Identify the gender breakdown in the workforce. Compare to the current gender breakdown in your county. [NOTE: If figures are not available for the county, compare national or other such figures];
• What were the average earnings in Ireland in 1917 and in 1923? What are the average earnings in Ireland?
• What was the average weekly hours worked? What are the average weekly hours worked today?
• Compare a basket of goods from 1917 (rent, food, clothing etc) and today, in terms of affordability? Were workers better or worse off in 1917 than they are today?

Individual student activity: My life in 1917

Using the census for the period 1917-1923, ask students to research someone from their family tree or someone living in their street at the time, to enable them write a short report on the living and working conditions at the time.

Provide students with a copy of Worksheet 4c: What life might have been like for me in 1917-1923 to complete. Ensure students have access to the census for research.
Individual assignment: In-class presentation on their research
When students have completed their research project, it should then form the basis of a short presentation to the full class. [Teachers can decide what type of presentation is most appropriate to the student’s ability].

The presentation should cover the following [but not limited to];
• Who was your research subject?
• How did the student go about their research?
  What institutions did they visit? What records did they use?
• What were the most interesting findings?
• What was the most surprising finding and why?
• How do they feel about what they found in this period?
• Would they have liked to live with this subject in the period? Explain.
• What are the most important improvements they would like to see happen in this period? How might that have happened?
• What help was available in this period to assist workers and their families?

Student assignment: Living in contrast
Based on the information already gathered from each subject, students should compare and contrast those lives with their lives (or someone similar) today. This information should then form the basis of a short report or essay entitled “Lives in contrast – comparing life in 1917-1923 and today”.

Comparisons should be made in a number of different areas such as a) education b) health c) living conditions d) working conditions e) life expectations f) leisure/holidays g) special occasions.

In-class activity: Discussion
Ask students to consider what they have learned about working and living conditions in Ireland at the time. To begin the discussions, ask them to consider the following;
• Why were living and working conditions in Ireland generally, and the cities specifically so bad?
• Were such conditions an influencing factor in the nature of revolution in Ireland during this decade, do they think?
• What impact might such action have on the lives of ordinary working people, who were not involved in such activity?
• Do they think that ordinary working people supported these activities?

Student activity: Debate
This class believes that Irish independence is credited for the progress in living and working conditions since 1917.

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following;
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
Worksheet 4a: Looking back in time

Pick a photograph from those displayed (see below) and write a short description of it.

Who are the people in the photograph? What are they doing?

What do you think they are thinking?

What is your first impression of the environment?
Would you consider it an area of wealth or poverty? Explain.

List three things which stand out for you in this photo. Explain.

What is your impression of how the people are dressed? In your opinion, is their attire adequate for the environment?

What do you think of the conditions in which they live or work? Do you think they have any choice about their living conditions? Explain.

Do you think standards today are better? Why? How did that come about?

What do you think it would have been like to live somewhere like that?

Focussing on the children in the photograph (if any), can you imagine what kind of life they might have lived? Were they healthy? What might their adulthood be like?

Who do you think took this photograph? Why do you think they took this photograph? If you were taking this photograph, how would you feel about what you see before you?

What is the photograph which you liked/disliked the most? Explain.

Write a caption for the photograph chosen, what is it about and explain why you chose it.

If you could interview someone from these photographs, who would it be and what would you ask them?

What would you like to change in these photographs?
Photos for use with Lesson 4.

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive. Chancery Street, Dublin circa 1911.

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive. Kavanagh’s Court, Dublin circa 1911.

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive. North Cumberland Street, Dublin circa 1911.
Dublin City Library and Archive.
Angle Street, Dublin circa 1911.

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive.
Black Pitts, Dublin circa 191

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive.
Storey’s Buildings, Dublin circa 1911.

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive.
Crabbe Lane, Dublin, where overcrowding and insanitary conditions were the norm and a breeding ground for revolution.

Courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive.
Dublin smallpox hospital. Not untypical of the very basic conditions available to patients.
An indoor playground in Dublin’s Liberties built by the Guinness family. These children are being taught dance.

Gorman’s Yard, Inchicore, Dublin. Courtyards such as this were barely habitable in summer and infant mortality was the highest in the United Kingdom.

New houses built in Inchicore as the result of a campaign led by William Partridge, who served as a local Labour councillor. He was also a full-time organiser with the ITGWU and Captain in the Irish Citizen Army. He died of nephritis shortly after his release from Lewes Gaol in 1917. His funeral at Ballaghaderreen (see below) was the first mass demonstration of popular support for the Easter Rising in the West of Ireland.
The advent of the internal combustion engine transformed many jobs.

Dockers primitive working conditions bred militancy and formed the core group around which Jim Larkin, the founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union built his organisation.

Dublin Disinfectors at work eradicating infectious diseases.
But social relations remained stratified. The manager’s dining room at St James’s Gate Brewery, Dublin.

Munitions work was one of the most highly paid jobs women workers could engage in but these job opportunities soon disappeared when the British government prioritised finding jobs for demobilised soldiers. A million men had been demobilised by the end of January 1919 and they continued to come home at the rate of 10,000 a day. Because conscription was never enforced in Ireland the impact was significantly less but it meant the loss of any prospect of well-paid employment for thousands of working-class women.

Harvest Time at Malin Head. In much of the country the impact of technology was still relatively limited. Traditional patterns of labour ranging from the use of unpaid family labour to migrant workers continued to be the norm.

Courtesy of the Guinness archive.

Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum.
The construction of railways in the nineteenth century was a great source of employment in rural Ireland and subsequently. The Great Southern and Western Railway was the largest employer in Ireland in the 1920s after the Belfast shipyards. It employed over 9,000 people, compared with over 36,000 in Harland & Wolff and Workman Clark.

Workers in many employments, such as this shoe and boot factory were often segregated with the men being more highly paid for what was regarded as the most skilled occupations and also because they were regarded as bread winners who were entitled to higher remuneration as the ‘head of the family’.
Worksheet 4b: Comprehension

Using the materials provided by your teacher from the resource, answer the following questions:

What was the bonus, described by the author, given to workers during Easter Week 1916?

What was the dispute about?

What was the difference between the management and union sides in this dispute?

What tactic did the labour movement agree to in “strategically sensitive industries”? What did employers also agree to at this time?

What were employment prospects like in Dublin during this period?

In your opinion, why did women in the “shell” factories earn more money than building workers?

Is there an equivalent industry (strategically important) in Ireland today? Who works there?

What was found out about improving productivity of the women during this time?

Why did female union membership grow so rapidly at this time?

Why was Irish food cheaper in London than in Dublin? Was this fair? What should the government have done about this?

Why were mortality rates so high in Ireland at this time?

What was the Milk battle about?

Who was PT Daly? What was PT Daly’s solution to this crisis?

What “scourge wrought more deaths in the city than the war or the rising”?

Worksheet 4c: What life might have been like for me in 1917-1923

The answers to questions 1-9 can be found within the census records of your chosen research subject, the remainder of the answers can be found through your school or local library resources. The on-duty librarian can provide valuable assistance, is an excellent source of knowledge and can advise on the best direction in which to take your research.

Other useful institutions include the National Archives, the National Library, City Library and the National Museum of Ireland.

Some of the questions may require additional research.

Who are you researching? [Relative or former neighbour]

What is their name?
Congress - Labour, gender and class in the struggle for Irish Independence 1917 – 1923

What age are they?

Can they read and write?

Are they still in school? If not, what age did they leave at and what is the highest level of education they attained?

Where do they live?

Who do they live with? How many are living at the same address?

Do they have children? Are they all alive? If so, how old are they?

Did these children go to school?

What is their occupation?

Were they employed locally?

What entitlements and benefits might they have had in that job?

What pay might they have received?

Would they have had paid holidays? [Hint: when were paid holidays legislated for?]

Was this type of job was considered a ‘decent job’ in 1917-1923 period?

On completing the questions above, consider the following:
a. What are the main findings of your research?

b. What surprised you about what you found?

c. What conclusions can you draw from your research about your subject’s living and working conditions?

d. Is there any aspect you would like to see improved? What is that?

e. How might these circumstances be improved? What help was available?

f. Based on your research, what is your view about life and work in Ireland in 1917-1923?

g. How do you feel about what you found out during your research?

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Lesson 5: The co-operative movement

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Highlight to students the existence and ideology of the co-operative movement;
• Explain to students what a co-operative organisation is and what the co-operative movement hopes to achieve;

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Outline, briefly, the ideology and history of the co-operative movement;
• Provide a definition of a co-operative organisation and outline its general aims and objectives;
• Compare the co-operative environment in the 1917-1923 period with today;

Lesson outline:
Explain to students that they are going to learn about the history of the co-operative movement in general and specifically the types of co-operatives which operate in Ireland.

Ask students for their understanding of the word co-operate. Then write the word “co-operative” on the board so that students can see it. Ask them what that means? What type of organisation do they think it describes? What might it do? Put all their contributions onto the board or somewhere they can see them.

Discuss their explanations referring to Section II.V The Co-operative movement and explain that a co-operative organisation differs from a standard business organisation.

Continue the discussion, using the following questions as a guide:
• What is the difference between a co-operative organisation and a business organisation?
• Why are co-operatives in business, do you think?
• How might co-operatives be important to society?

Student assignment: Understanding co-operatives
Provide students with Worksheet 5a Understanding Co-operatives and ask them to complete the questions to gain a better insight into the history, principles and operations of co-operatives and why they were established.

Group exercise: Comprehension
Provide students with the following quotation from Fr. Tom Finlay
“... The Co-operative movement ... is one in which groups of humble men combine their efforts, and to some extent their resources, in order to secure for themselves those advantages in industry which the masters of capital derive from the organisation of labour, from the use of costly machinery, and from the economies of business ... With this difference, however, the gains from the better methods are shared equitably amongst all those who are engaged in the industry ....”

And ask them to answer the following questions;
• Using your own words, paraphrase the above quotation.
• What does the author describe as the advantages in industry?
• Is this quotation a realistic view of an alternative system to capitalism? Explain.
In-class exercise: Review
Ask students to review and discuss the exercise in more detail using the following to stimulate the discussion:
- Did you know anything about co-operatives prior to this exercise?
- What was the most interesting thing you learned about them?
- In your opinion, do they have a place in modern society? Explain.
- Given the opportunity, would you become a member of a co-operative organisation?
  Which one and why?
- Does this information change your perception of the organisation of the economy?

Group assignment: Analysing the principles of co-operatives
The trade union movement and the co-operative movement share similar values and principles. Construct a table to illustrate the similarities between these two movements. Additional information on the trade union movement can be found in modules 1-6 of the YouthConnect working world resource on the website www.youth-connect.ie

Student research: Interview with a co-operative organisation
Ask students to contact a national co-operative organisation such as Co-operative Housing Ireland, Irish Co-operative Organisation Society or the Irish League of Credit Unions (www.cooperativehousing.ie www.icos.ie www.creditunion.ie) to request a brief interview with a member of their staff or board. The student should outline the reason for the interview and questions to be posed to the individual. Use the following as a guide when preparing for the interview (this is a list for guidance and can be amended as required).
- What is your current role? How long have you been in this role?
- What are the aims and goals of this organisation?
- What attracted you to this role?
- What is your least/most favourite element of it?
- What is the most important thing about co-operatives that you would like young people and students to know?
- What is the message you would like to give to the general public about co-operatives as an efficient way of doing business?
- Do you consider the co-operative movement an alternative to organising the economy? Explain.
- Do you think the co-operative movement will continue to grow into the future? Explain. How might this happen?
- What are the major challenges or obstacles to the growth of this movement? How can they be overcome?
- What changes would you like to see happen a) nationally b) globally to support the growth of the co-operative movement?
- Do you consider the co-operative movement important to wider society? Explain.

Teachers’ Note: Debating Guidelines
Debates provide students with the opportunity to develop and practice key communication skills which are transferable to other elements of their lives. It also enables students to assess an issue from a range of different perspectives. Students should work in teams of no more than 4 per side of this debate. The following points are useful as a guide to setting up in-class debates.
- Arguments should be presented for 5 minutes with a reply time of 2 minutes;
- Time should be allocated to take contributions from the floor [fellow students in the audience];
• At the end of each debate, the class should vote on whether they agree or disagree with the motion;
• Students should explain why they have agreed or disagreed with the motion, this will encourage learning by all and allow debaters to better hone their skills;
• All students should have the opportunity to participate in a debate.

**Group homework activity: Preparing to debate**

Divide the class into a number of different teams and ask students to prepare to debate one of the following topics;

This class believes that co-operatives are a viable alternative to the capitalist system of economic organisation

This class believes that co-operatives can’t compete with the demands of a market system

Teams should be given the opportunity to read through the material in this section, including some of the recommended readings, and research other topics which they consider relevant to this debate.

**In-class activity: Activity review**

Following the debates review how it went with the class;

• Was each team satisfied with their performance and arguments? Explain.
• Did any students change their original position on this topic? Why?
• What were the most convincing arguments made?
• How relevant to the world today, is this topic in their opinion?

**Essay**

The co-operative movement did not grow to its full potential in the 1917-1923 period as the principles of collaboration and co-operation were not fully accepted by all players. Discuss.

**Group work: Student team project**

Making the case for co-operatives to create a more sustainable Ireland

Ask students to study in more detail the co-operative movement, both internationally and in Ireland, including the historical context, the basis and rationale for their development and comparisons with UK and the wider world.

**Worksheet 5a: Understanding co-operatives**

What is a co-operative and its functions?

Which of the following best describes the business of a co-operative?

Agricultural business
Banking
Housing
Food production

Which of the following describe the principles of co-operatives?

Voluntary and Open Membership
Democratic Member Control
Shareholder priority
Member Economic Participation
Profit driven
Select three most important co-operative principles (from above) and describe why it is important to the business and to the overall ethos of co-operatives?

With what type of business do co-operatives engage?

When & why were the co-operatives established in Ireland?

How many co-operatives were in existence in Ireland in the 1917-1923 period and how many people did they employ?

What (if any) is the link between the quote “killing Home Rule with kindness” and the co-operative movement? Explain.

What type of co-operatives were most successful in Ireland, and why were they so successful?

Why were some organisations opposed to the establishment of co-operatives in the 1917-1923 period?

Why were co-operatives targeted by the British military in this period? Explain.

Identify one major supporter of the co-operative movement at this time and write a short biography of them.

How many co-operatives are in Ireland today, what is their business and how many do they employ?

How many co-operatives are there worldwide?
Lesson 6: Feminism, Capitalism, Socialism & Nationalism

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to:
• Highlight the importance and influence of ideologies on activists and society in the period of revolution in Ireland;
• Broaden students’ understanding of this period of Irish history and provide a comprehensive picture of society at that time;
• Provide students with the range of concepts and ideas which influenced activists at the time.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Define and explain the concepts of feminism, capitalism, socialism and nationalism and what it meant at that time;
• Explore and understand the importance of how these concepts impact on society, then and now;
• Evaluate how these concepts influenced key players in the revolutionary period.

Lesson outline:
Explain to students that they will explore the roles of women in society and their participation in the labour force during the period of revolution. However, to do that it is important for them to understand the meaning of feminism and its links to other ideologies such as capitalism, socialism and nationalism.

Write the word ‘feminism’ onto a black/white board and ask students what they understand this to mean. Take all relevant contributions and write them where all students can see them.

Next ask students to create their own individual mind-map for the word ‘feminism’, writing down words which they feel are linked to it.

Time permitting, repeat the exercise using the words capitalism, nationalism and socialism.

In-class activity: Follow-up discussion
Students should then be provided with the formal definitions of each of the ideologies, a set of which is contained in the teachers’ notes at the start of section II.VI.

To stimulate a discussion, ask students the following questions;
• What is your first reaction to these definitions? Do you understand what they mean?
• What is the primary difference between socialism and capitalism?
• How do you think feminism fits into each of the other concepts? In your opinion, are they compatible with feminism?
• What is their opinion on each concept?
• Do they agree or disagree with their principles? Explain.
• Divide students into groups and ask them to come up with their own ideology or “set of rules” for society.
• When they have agreed in each group on their ideology, these should be retained and placed in the classroom for reference. (Such an ideology could be worked into the exercise around politics and the Democratic Programme for Government of 1919).
Student homework activity: What were they thinking?
Provide students with Section II.VI and ask them to complete Worksheet 6a for homework.

Class discussion:
Discuss the quotation from the Cork Examiner of 1925 contained in the text.
• What is your initial impression of this?
• What did the priest mean by it?

Individual student assignment: Organisational research
Provide students with one of the following organisations and ask them to research it using the questions which follow as a guide:
• Innighidhe na hÉireann
• Cumann na mBan
• The United Irish Women
• Domestic Workers’ Union
• Irish Women Workers’ Union
• Women’s Social & Political Union
• Irish Women’s Franchise League
• Irish Women’s Suffrage Federation
• Cumann na Saoirse

The following can be used as a guide;
1. What were the aims and objectives of the organisation?
2. When and why was it established?
3. Who was involved?
4. What type of actions did they undertake?
5. Does it still exist, or something like it?
6. Do women-only organisations exist today and if so, why are they required?

In-class activity: Student Presentation
Present research findings
Individual student assignment: Research into personalities
Louie Bennett, Margaret Buckley, Eva Gore Booth, Winnifred Carney, Helen Chenevix, Maire Comerford, Charlotte Despard, Ada English, Mary Galway, Maud Gonne, Isabel Maria Gordon, Rosie Hackett, Anna Haslam, Kathleen Lynn, Dorothy McArdle, Mary MacSwiney, Constance Markievicz, Helena Molony, Madeline ffrench Mullen, Nora Connolly O’Brien, Jennie Wyse Power, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Margaret Skinnider, Anna Doyle Wheeler

Worksheet 6a: Thinking of revolution
Using the information provided by your teacher, answer the following questions. The first two sections will require minor research for the period. Answers to the questions in the subsequent sections can be found in the text.
The labour force in 1917-1923 [or closest year statistics are available]
Numbers of people employed ..........
Numbers of people unemployed ..........
% of women participating in the labour force ..........
% of married women participating in the labour force .......... 
% of men participating in the labour force .......... 
% of married men participating in the labour force .......... 
Age at which people started work ............ 
Average working week ............ 
Average working wage ............ 
___ % men _____% women employed by ________sector 
___ % men _____% women employed by ________sector 
___ % men _____% women employed by ________sector 
___ % men _____% women employed by ________sector 

Society in 1917-1923 [or closest year statistics are available] 
Average duration of education 
Life expectancy for men ............ 
Life expectancy for women ............ 
Average age at which men married ............ 
Average age at which women married ............ 
Voting age for women ............ 
Voting age for men ............ 
Number of men emigrating in the period ............ 
Number of women emigrating in the period ............ 

Why were so few women employed in the labour force? 
What type of work were women typically involved in at this time? 
Why were women not expected to return to work after marriage? 
How many hours a week were girls expected to work in the factory mentioned in the text? 
Why were significant numbers of married women employed in the textile industry? 
What were the reasons given for more Catholic than Protestant married women participating in the labour force? 
Why were there so many female street traders in the large towns and cities at the time? 
Did working women become union members? 
Why did Louie Bennett, according to the text, get involved in the trade union movement? 
What is the IWWU? What did they win for workers that still impacts on workers today? 
When did women get the franchise to vote? 
Did all women get the franchise to vote at the same time? Explain.
Lesson 7: An independent Irish Republic

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
- Enhance students’ understanding and insight into the form of government which is a republic;
- Highlight the key aims and objectives of a republic;
- Explore the variety of usage of the term republic(an);

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
- Explain what the term republic means in relation to a nation-state;
- Describe what an Irish Republic should mean to its citizens;
- Explore and evaluate the various terms described as republican;
- Compare what was originally envisaged by revolutionaries with the current republic and evaluate the outcomes;

Lesson outline:
Explain to students that this section of the module deals with understanding the ideals and principles of a Republic, which is a particular form of government.
Write the word “Republic” where students can see it, next ask them what is their understanding of it and write down all their answers. Ask each student to create their own mind-map of the word “republic” by placing the word into the centre of the page and writing words which they associate with it stemming as branches from the centre. Other words, ideas and examples can then be added to each branch until students have exhausted all possibilities of their understanding of the word.

Homework assignment: Defining the republic
Provide students with Worksheet 8a and ask them to answer the questions for homework. Their answers will then form the basis for further discussions in the next section of the module. This activity should be followed-up with a review exercise, where students can share their answers but it will also resolve any difficulties students may have had with the assignment.

In-class activity: Group discussion
When students have completed the worksheet, work through their answers with them, discussing and providing answers to any questions they may have struggled with. Ask students;
- What did you learn from this exercise?
- Identify and explain what, interested you, surprised you, you didn’t know before this exercise, you had never considered before?
- Has this exercise changed or influenced your view of a “republic” or the ‘republican agenda’? Please give reasons why.
- Has this changed your view and understanding of politics?
- Has it changed your perspective on what politicians are striving to achieve? Explain.

Then provide students with formal definitions of a republic, such as that contained at the beginning of Section II.VII. Ask students what their initial reaction is to this definition and if they agree with it.
**Group activity: A New Republic**

Using what they have already learned in relation to “a republic” divide students into small working groups and:

- Ask them to create a new definition and statement for their own Republic.
- What would it mean to them and what would they like to see included in it?
- Each group should elect a rapporteur to outline their new definition to the class and why they chose it;
- The class should then work on an overall definition to which they can all agree. This might entail a process of elimination by vote or by other means as the student see fit.
- The statement should be no longer than 150-200 words and when complete, should be displayed somewhere the students can easily view it.

**Student activity: A Republic for All**

Students will be asked to write a short report entitled “A republic for all” following another brainstorm type activity [think-pair-share];

- Refer to the “Republic” mind-map created earlier;
- Ask students to think about what the phrase means to them and to write down 4-5 words [new or from the map] which they think sums up what a republic is;
- Then in pairs, students discuss and compare their sets of words to compile one list of words or phrases, where none are repeated;
- When finished, each pair of students work with another pair of students to create a larger list of words, ensuring that no words or phrases are repeated;
- This word bank will then form the basis of their short essay on this topic;
- The essay should contain a) a brief explanation of the term b) some background to its genesis c) conditions/principles of a republic d) importance to citizens and e) the different types of republics around the world.

**Student project: An analysis**

Students should be encouraged to compare the Republic, as envisaged by the revolutionaries, with the Republic as it is today, in terms of the following areas;

- Economy
- Wealth distribution
- Public services (education, health, housing, transport)
- Children and young people (access to education, health, etc)

**Class assignment: Debating our freedoms**

Divide the class into sets of teams to debate the following:
This class believes that the revolutionaries achieved freedom from the Crown but not from poverty
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following;

- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
Individual student assignment: Essay
The IRB and the trade union movement had strong links because essentially, they held the same
principles and agreed on the same outcomes, fairness, equity and decency for all citizens.
Compare the principles of the two and draw your own conclusions as to the effectiveness of their
actions.

Group project: An international perspective
Students should construct a table to illustrate the shared principles of countries considered to be a
republic (old and new) and identify which, if any, Ireland is closest to. Were you surprised at what you
found? Why?

Worksheet 7a: Defining the Republic
Answer as many of the following questions as possible.
The answers will then form the basis for a class discussion where the answers to questions which
proved challenging can be worked through together and researched if required.
What do you understand by the term “republic”?

Have you heard of this term before? Give examples of how it has been used?

Name the core principles of a republic;

In your opinion, what are the two most important principles of a republic? Why?

What makes a country a republic?

Do other countries currently operate this system? Name them.

Are all countries which are considered a republic, the same? Explain their similarities and their
differences.

In your opinion, are all current Irish political parties, Republican? Explain.
Lesson 8: The Labour movement and the struggle for independence

In order to undertake the activities in this lesson, students should read sections II.VIII, II.IX and events contained in part III, III.V Labour and the general strike weapon 1918-1922, II.VI The Engineering Strike (1919), II.VII The Limerick Soviet (1919), II.VIII The Motor Permits Dispute (1920) and II.IX the Munitions Strike (1920).

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
- Highlight to students what Irish Independence might mean for ordinary working people and their families;
- Develop a better understanding of the types of independence sought by a variety of groups and organisations and the differences between them;
- Provide some background to the influence of the labour movement on the struggle for Irish Independence;
- Raise awareness among students of how trade unionists engaged in the struggle for independence, their role in the activities of this period and what they hoped to achieved through independence;

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
- Understand what Irish independence meant to ordinary workers and their families;
- Explore the different types of independence sought by different groups and their impact on society;
- Outline what type of independence would best serve the needs of ordinary working people and their families;
- Understand and explain the different approaches the labour movement took to progress towards an independent state, without resorting to military violence;
- Outline the role of labour throughout the revolutionary period and explain their strategies which they believed would lead to independence;
- Understand the role trade union activism played in advancing the cause of independence;

Lesson outline:
Tell students that this lesson is about exploring the idea of independence, what it meant to people in Ireland and the role and strategy the labour movement took to make progress towards this aim. However, it is first important to explore the variety of opinions of independence, what it would look like when achieved and why so many people engaged in this struggle.

Ask students to discuss the term independence, what does it mean? Is there only one meaning to it in a political sense? What is their view of political independence and what it means for citizens?

What might workers and ordinary people understand about independence from Britain? Do you think it made a material difference to them in their daily lives? Explain.
Class discussions: Linking unions, politics and a republic
The content of the sections outlined above should be used as an introduction to these topics and students should then complete Worksheet 8a in order to gain a broader understanding of these topics.

Student assignment: Research and report
Identify what links, if any, there are between independence, a republic and syndicalism and if they reinforce each other’s values.

Class discussion:
Although World War I was a positive recruitment force for unions, it was not the time to achieve decent work. Discuss.

In-class activity: Student debate
This class believes that syndicalism is a real solution to the removal of capitalism and the establishment of a more egalitarian society.

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:

• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

Group work: Defining a different type of republic
Using what they have already learned in Lesson 7, ask students to consider what a Workers’ Republic might look like. What would (if anything), make it different to a republic as previously discussed? Is it purely ideological or can it practically be applied?

Student home-work: Comparing views
Was the position of workers on partition and independence based on political affiliations or economic ideology? Discuss.

Ask students to construct a table with two columns, one headed a) Remaining in Britain and the second b) An independent Ireland. Ask them to list the difference these situations would have a workers’ lives.

When finished, the class should compare the differences, asking the question, did workers’ get the best deal after partition? Ask the student’s their own opinion on the list, which one do they think was best for workers?

Student essay: Explaining Syndicalism
Syndicalism is the best strategy for trade unions to take in order to achieve better living and working conditions for workers. Discuss.

In-class activity: Debate
This class believes that union membership of British based unions, was a significant impediment to workers uniting for independence.

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.
The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:

- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

**In-class activity: Presentation to the Socialist International**

The Labour delegation to the Socialist International agreed to call for self-determination for Ireland, along with the British Labour party delegation. Ask each student to imagine themselves as a delegate to this conference and prepare a speech making the case for Ireland’s self-determination.

**Individual student activity: Understanding Labour’s contribution to independence**

At the end of section II.IX, it was suggested that Labour’s unique contribution to independence was the four general strikes. Ask students to complete Worksheet 9b in order to better understand the context and impact of such strikes.

**In-class activity: Group discussion**

Organise students into groups in order for them to discuss their findings from the last exercise and outline what they have learned. Ask students to consider the following questions and prepare to put forward their thoughts to the broader group:

- Why was the strike used as a weapon so often in the period 1919-1922?
- Was it the most effective strategy to use? Explain.
- Is this the strongest and most legitimate way to exercise citizen power? Explain.
- What other options would you suggest to labour leaders at the time (if any)?
- Are strikes used in the same way today? Why?

**Worksheet 8a: The unions’ political role in seeking a republic**

Answer as many of the following questions as possible. The answers will then form the basis for a class discussion where the answers to questions which proved challenging can be worked through together and researched if required.

**Why was there a particularly benign view towards unions during the World War I period?**

........................................................................................................................................................................................................

**What is an amalgamated trade union? Why were workers in such unions fearful of the future?**

........................................................................................................................................................................................................

**What exactly is a Workers’ Republic, according to James Connolly? And what is the link between that and British rule in Ireland?**

........................................................................................................................................................................................................

**How would it benefit workers and society?**

........................................................................................................................................................................................................

**In the struggle for independence, who or what parties were working towards establishing a Workers’ Republic?**

........................................................................................................................................................................................................
What does syndicalism mean?

What does it hope to achieve?

What, in your opinion, are the challenges or barriers to implementing it?

Why was it important to the trade union movement?

Do other countries currently operate in such a way? Name them.

Worksheet 8b: Strike – the workers’ weapon of choice

The answers to this section can be found in sections II, IV, V, VI, VII & VII of the resource manual.

What exactly is meant by a strike? What is your understanding of a general strike?

What was the conscription crisis of 1918?

What were they fighting against?

What did their actions entail?

What were they hoping to achieve from this action?

How long did the strike last? Was it successful? Explain.

What happened in May 1919? Who was involved?

What were their demands?

What actions did they take? Were they successful?

Why were there Hunger strikes in 1920? Who was involved?

Who supported them?

What actions did they take?

Were they successful?

What was the general strike against militarism?

Who was involved and why?

What did they hope to achieve? Were they successful?

Why did the Engineering strike of 1919 happen?
What was its purpose? Who was involved?

How long did it last? Was it successful?

How was this different to the strikes previously mentioned (Conscription, Hunger strikes & May Day)?

Explain the term “Soviet”.

What exactly was the Limerick Soviet and when did it occur?

What sparked the Limerick Soviet to be established?

What was involved and how long did it last?

Was it successful? Explain.

What was its impact locally? Explain.

Explain the reasons behind both the Motor Permits Dispute and the Munitions Strike.

Who was involved and what were their demands?

What actions did they take?

How long did it last and was it successful?

What was the impact of these two strikes?
Lesson 9: Labour’s repeated failure to seize the revolutionary initiative

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Provide students with information on the General Election of 1918, the key events prior to and during the election campaign and the personalities involved;
• Highlight the different perspectives on party participation in this election;
• Outline some of the reasons behind the participation in this election.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Identify the key players and personalities involved in the general election of 1918;
• Outline and understand the reasoning for the positions adopted by the various political parties at the time;
• Explore the impact of key decisions at that time on the modern political landscape;

Lesson outline:
In discussing the election of 1918, ask students to outline the fundamental differences between the policies of the Labour Party and Sinn Fein party, particularly in relation to;
• The national question
• The economy
• Workers’ rights
• Socio-economic issues such as education, housing, transport etc.
Ask students would a better outcome have been achieved if a) labour contested the election and b) won a majority, c) made a pre-election pact with Sinn Fein d) went into coalition. Explain. Why did the Labour Executive suggest workers would “willingly sacrifice for a brief period their aspirations towards political power, if thereby fortunes of the nation can be enhanced”?

Class Debate: A nation’s fortunes
Ask the class to debate the following:
This class believes that enhancing the fortunes of a nation will result in improvements in the lives of all citizens.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
**Student assignment: Individual analysis**

Divide students into small working groups and ask them to read the statement “The main purpose of the Labour Party was not the election of one or two dozen members of Parliament but the building up of an organised political Labour consciousness in this country”? Following the discussion, students should answer the following questions;

a) What is your initial reaction of this quotation?

b) Explain political labour consciousness. Was it achieved?

c) What does it mean in this context? Does it exist in Ireland today? What might be achieved by it?

d) Do they agree with the statement? Explain

e) Did Labour’s election strategy of 1918, help or hinder such ambitions?

f) What do they think is the purpose of a political party?

g) Has this impacted on the labour party today?

h) Is this debate still relevant to the Labour party today?

**In-class activity: Discussion**

Initiate a class discussion using the following questions to guide the discussion:

- Why did Labour and Sinn Fein not work more collaboratively together in 1918?
- What were the fundamental differences between them?
- Did they hold any common ground?
- What are the major policy differences between both organisations today?
- Do these still hold today between the parties?

**In-class activity: Debate**

Divide students into debating teams and ask them to debate the following;

This class believes that the fundamental purpose of a political party is to take power in whatever way they can.

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following;

- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

**Student activity: Comparing policy perspectives and development**

“Their policy would be decided from the point of view of the working classes” (ILP&TUC Congress 1918).

Reading the above statement, answer the following questions;

- How is policy in Ireland developed? Who inputs to policy? Who decides final policy?
- Do you think policy is made “from the point of view of the working classes”? Explain.
- From whose point of view, do you think policy is made? Answers should be supported by evidence of policy making in 1917-1923 and 2019.
- Would there be a difference to outcomes, if policy was decided by (for) the working classes? Explain.
- What challenges or barriers do you think need to be addressed for this to happen?
Group activity: Policy analysis
Interview politicians from across the political spectrum on policies and their impact on working people and their families. Sample questions can be used from the exercises in Lesson 15.

Student assignment: Capital -v- Labour
“While the others were contesting the fate of Ireland at the polling booths, we can decide the fate of the capitalists when the election was over”.
The above is a statement made by Tom McPartlin concerning the 1918 election. Ask students to answer the following:
• What does this statement mean? What is your view of it?
• Is it an accurate assessment?
• Why is the fate of the capitalists important to McPartlin?
• Was it prudent to separate politics from economics in that way?
• How did they go about achieving this objective? Did it work?
• In your opinion, is this thinking still relevant today?
• In your opinion, should you separate political influence from capitalist power?

Student assignment: Essay
Ask students to write an essay on one of the following:
“The British Welfare System under Lloyd George was more beneficial to ordinary workers than anything the Irish Party put forward”. Discuss.
“The consequence of Redmond’s decision to exclude the Magdalene Homes from the industrial inspectorate, essentially allowed institutional abuse to continue for decades”. Discuss.

In-class activity: General discussion
According to Connolly “the working classes of Ireland were practically the only workers in any country in Europe ...that had not a definite organised method of expressing its view upon the political field”.
Is this true? How did European workers express their political views at the time? What has changed since then, in Ireland and in Europe? In your opinion, has the EU had a positive bearing on workers in Ireland?
How do workers express their political views today? Is it a coherent and united voice? Explain.

Student project: Examining the 1918 election
Ask students to examine the election of 1918 in terms of their local constituency:
• Who ran in your local area in 1918? What party were they from? What did they work at?
• What were their key election priorities?
• Investigate how they were considered locally through local media sources at the time. What coverage did they get? Was it favourable?
• Who won in the area? What was the largest party of power in the area?
• Does this have any bearing of who wins the vote in this area today? Why do you think this is so?
• A number of candidates adopted an abstentionist policy, in that they would not take up their seats in Westminster if elected;
  o What is your view of this position?
  o Can anything be achieved by such action? Explain.
  o Do such policies exist today? Why?
  o Is there a better approach to take in order to achieve your aims? Explain.
  o Can political gains be achieved outside the political system? Explain.
**In-class activity: Class Conference**

Explain to the class that they will debate the original motion put forward by the Executive at the ILP&TUC Congress in 1918.

Provide each student with the wording of the original motion and ask them to read through it and ensure they understand it. They should then decide if they support or reject the motion and write a 3-minute speech based on their adopted position. The class should then be set up, as at a conference, where each contributor is given 3 minutes to make their points. The session should be chaired by the teacher.

Every student should be invited to make their initial contribution to the floor (remainder of the class), then ask for second contributions if there are any (some students may wish to reiterate or make new points based on what they have heard). When there are no further contributions to be made, ask students to vote by a show of hands on the motion.

**In-class activity: Post conference review**

The class should review this exercise, using the following questions as a guide;

- Explain the reasons for how you voted.
- What was the most compelling argument that persuaded you?
- Do you think you would have voted differently in 1918? Explain.
- If the conference voted against the motion and fully participate in the 1918 election, what difference do you imagine it might have made (if any)?
- What impact might it have had on politics today?

**Lesson 10: Were workers’ better off under British rule?**

**Northern Divisions**

**Lesson aim:**

The aim of this lesson is to;

- Provide students with a brief introduction to British social policies in place at the time and their effect on Irish workers.

**Lesson objectives:**

At the end of this lesson students will be able to;

- Explore and explain the impact of British social policy, particularly those of Lloyd George;
- Compare the policies which existed and welfare reforms, with the manifestos of those seeking independence;
- Evaluate whether Irish sovereignty was financially and socially better or worse for Irish workers.

**Lesson outline:**

The topic of this section is to understand, in brief, social policy and welfare reform under the Lloyd George government. It is also important that students should have read through the earlier sections dealing with living and working conditions around this period in order to understand the importance of social welfare benefits to them.
Student research: Welfare reforms
Ask students to research into the reforms that Lloyd George proposed in terms of social welfare and outline their potential impact on workers at the time.

Class discussion: Understanding the Irish position
The Irish Party, under John Redmond, opposed extending medical benefits to Ireland. Explain why that might have been and what impact it had on ordinary workers and their families.

Student assignment: Responding to criticism
A constituent has written to John Redmond complaining about their position taken on the welfare reforms. Ask students to compose a letter of response to the constituent outlining:
• The background to the reforms
• The position of the Irish Party and why it was taken
• The impact of those benefits in Ireland
• What the party proposed to do instead

Lesson 11: Peace or War? Labour and the Treaty (1922)

Lesson aim:
• Provide students with an understanding of how the treaty was considered in Ireland by different organisations but particularly how Labour and the Trade union movement viewed it;

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Explain the position Labour took on the Treaty and why;
• Assess the impact of that decision, then and now;

Lesson outline:
Explain to students that this section will examine the reasons for the divided response to the Treaty, but in particular that of the labour movement.
Provide students with the text of section I.XIII to read and ask them to identify the two sides of the argument of whether to contest the 1922 election. Students should then choose a ‘side’ and present their argument for that course of action to the class, following which the entire group should take a vote.

Student research: Policy proposals, 100 years on
The Labour programme for government or election manifesto contained proposals such as a living wage, improved housing, rent caps, nationalisation of essential services, better schools and improved medical schemes. Using national institutions, ask students to find the Labour programme of 1922 and compare it to the most recent programmes of current Irish political parties, particularly the Labour party. Ask them to make an assessment of the differences and similarities between them.
Following this exercise, ask students to discuss the following quote and assess if it has proven to be correct; “If the constitution is faulty or reactionary, if the minds of those who frame it are dominated by a feudalistic or capitalistic outlook, if it is conceived of as an instrument for the preservation of private interests rather than of human needs, if its intention is to conserve the capitalistic regime of society; the damage to the cause of the common working people will be incalculable, perhaps irretrievable”

Lesson 12: International Developments

Note: This lesson incorporates sections I.XV, I.XVI and I.XVII and students should read through each in order to complete the activities in this lesson plan.

Lesson aim:

The aim of this lesson is to:

• Highlight the international political events taking place at this time and provide information as to their impact on Irish politics;
• Outline the meaning and importance of Decent Work;
• Provide the reasons and background to the establishment of the International Labour Organisation;
• Highlight how this organisation impacts positively on the lives of workers.
• Provide students with an understanding of the impact of the Russian revolution on revolutionary politics in Ireland.

Lesson objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

• List some of the key political events taking place around the world during this period;
• Evaluate their influence on political thinking and action in Ireland;
• Understand the impact these events had, not only at the time but in modern politics;
• Explain the meaning of Decent Work and the importance of it for workers;
• Identify the conditions behind and aims of the establishment of the International Labour Organisation (ILO);
• Outline the role and structure of the ILO and compare this to the organisation in 1919;
• Explain how the Russian Revolution might have influenced political thinking and events in Ireland at this time.

Lesson outline:

Explain to students that this is a very brief introduction to a number of key events which took place at international level in this period and included Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen points, the Russian Revolution and the creation of the ILO.

Ask students to complete worksheet 13a

Decent work and the creation of the International Labour Organisation

Note: This section and lesson should be read in conjunction with Module 2 and 6 of the YouthConnect Working World resources for a background to and overview of the ILO.
Lesson outline:
To ensure students understand the background to the ILO and the decent work agenda, take them through pages 9-14 and Lesson 2 Understanding the concept of Decent Work contained in Module 6 of the YouthConnect Working World Resource pack.
Then ask them to complete Worksheet 2 of Module 6 Analysing the preamble to the ILO constitution. This will ensure that students obtain a clear understanding on the background to this organisation.

Student assignment: Essay
When students have read through sections II. XVI and II.XVII of this module, ask them to write either of the following essays, which may require additional reading and research.
It is believed that the establishment of the ILO prevented a workers’ revolution. Was this a good thing for workers? Discuss.
The Russian Revolution completely changed the course of history by rebalancing power in the hands of workers thus inspiring revolution world-wide. Discuss.

In-class assignment: Debate
This class believes that the Russian Revolution never achieved its aims of economic equality for all citizens.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the debate by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following;
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

Class activity: Group discussion
Based on the learning on some of the key international developments outlined in this section, ask the class to discuss those developments using the following to stimulate and guide the discussions;
• Ask students whether they believe the Russian revolution was successful or not?
• Why do they think the revolution achieved such broad world-wide support?
• Was there an alternative strategy which could have been taken? Explain.
• Was the “soviet” phenomenon more about Bolshevik ideology or workers’ power?

Student activity: Making your case
Ask students to write a report on the success or otherwise of the Russian Revolution, taking into consideration the effect on a) working conditions b) quality of life for all c) all forms of inequality d) freedom e) civic & political engagement f) distribution of power.
Worksheet 12a: Understanding international developments

After reading through sections II.XV, II.XVI & II.XVII answer the following questions.

In your opinion, why do you think there was so much conflict happening world-wide at this time?

What was Woodrow Wilson’s 14 points?

What was the overall aim of the 14 points?

What were the key principles behind the 14 points?

List two of the points and explain what they mean and why they are important?

What was the outcome of the 14-point plan? Was it successful?

What was the League of Nations? Who were the members and what were their aims?

Was the League of Nations successful? Explain.

What is the International Labour Organisation? When was it established?

What was the driving force behind its establishment?

What are the aims of this organisation?

Are its aims still relevant today?

Has it been successful? Explain.

What was the Socialist International? What did it hope to achieve?

Who were the Bolsheviks and what were their aims?

What was the direct impact of the Russian revolution in Ireland at this time?

What was the ‘Soviet phenomenon’ mentioned in the article and how did it manifest itself in Ireland?
Lesson 13: Was Civil resistance a viable alternative strategy to military action?

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
- Facilitate students to analyse and assess historical events and actions, with a view to critically evaluating a different course of action;

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
- Explore the events and circumstances in this period to enable them assess what options actually existed;
- Understand and outline what civil resistance means and how best it could have been (and can be) utilised to achieve similar or better outcomes;
- Make an informed decision about whether civil resistance during this period was a real option for revolutionaries;

Lesson outline:
Explain to students that this lesson is an exploratory one, it deals with the “what would have happened..... if...” question which historians often pose. Was there more than one avenue open to revolutionaries, politicians and other such historical actors at the time? Could such an avenue have had better outcomes. If so, why did they not use it, or at least explore it?
Ask students to explain their understanding of “civil resistance”, providing examples of such civil resistance. Is this type of organisation successful? What is required to make it successful? Why do all revolutions follow such action?

Teamwork: Planning & campaigns
Using the Labour “plan of action” as a guide, ask students to ascertain how they would organise civic resistance in their own locality to pursue a political aim, such as climate action, more affordable housing, improved access to education, or a political goal of their own choosing.
Provide students with Worksheet 14a to assist with planning a campaign or other action.
When the worksheet is complete, the group should put together a campaign plan to be presented to the class and following the last presentation, the class should vote on the plan they believe will most likely be achieved.

Teamwork: Civic resistance in action
Each team should then develop a clear campaign plan outlining the actions to be taken and who should be involved (student unions, trade unions, businesses, etc).

Group assignment: Debate
This class believes there are more long-term benefits for citizens and positives outcome for nations, by initiating civic resistance rather than initiating military action. Discuss.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the debate by a show of hands.
The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:

- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

**Student assignment: Essay**
Civil resistance should be the choice of modern revolutionaries. Discuss.

**Group activity: General discussion**
Ask students to discuss “What place has civil resistance in modern politics in Ireland?”

**Student assignment: Research, assess and report**
The article indicates a number of reasons for the failure to use civil resistance effectively in Ireland during this period. Compare the success of military campaigns against some of the civil resistance campaigns such as the Limerick Soviet, the general strike and munitions strikes, and assess if such civil resistance might have had more long-term success. Drawing your own conclusions from this research, outline what you would have recommended to the leaders of this revolutionary period and why.

**Worksheet 13a: Organising for action**
The following questions may be useful to guide your group in organising an action to achieve a specific outcome.

- What is your campaign about?

- What does it wish to achieve?

- What goals should you set – (short, medium-term)?

- Who should be involved in this campaign?

- What are the capabilities of your group (time, skills, funding, volunteers, facilities)?

- What is your campaign message?

- Who are your allies?

- Who do you propose to target and why?

- Who do you need to influence to bring about the change required?

- What is your strategy to achieve your aims?

- What tactics might your group employ?

- What events should be organised to gain support for your campaign?
Lesson 14: The rise of the Labour movement 1887-1922

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Outline to students the structure of the trade union movement at this time;
• Highlight the different groups within the movement, their roles in society and their influence on politics;
• Enhance students understanding of unions and councils of trade unions and their evolution;
• Briefly introduce the trade union environment prior to this particular historical period;

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Explain the role of a trade union and a council of trade unions;
• Explore the role of trades councils in Ireland during this period and outline their importance;
• Compare and contrast the role of Councils of Trade Unions in this period with the modern Councils of Trade Unions;

Lesson outline:
A brief background and overview to the Trade Union movement is contained in the YouthConnect Working World Resource Module 2 Unions and Solidarity.
Explain to students that this section explores the links between the trade union movement and politics in the period 1917-1923. However, in order to do so, it is necessary to understand its structure and how the movement operates.

In-class activity: Group discussion
Divide the class into small groups and ask students to answer the following;
• What is a trade union?
• With what do they associate trade unions?
• When were trade unions founded? Why were trade unions founded?
• What do they aim to achieve?
Bring the class together to discuss their answers. Then ask them if they know what a Council of Trade Unions is and what it might entail? Who do they think are members of such Councils? How are they elected and whom do they represent?
Ask students to complete Worksheet 15a., using The Parliament of Labour: 100 years of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions by Seamus Cody, John O’Dowd and Peter Rigney; 1986 Dublin.

Group activity: Comparing 1917-2019
How many unions were in Ireland then? Who did they represent? Why were there so many? In your opinion, were they more or less effective than today?
In-class activity: Discussion
Now ask students to discuss what they have learned. The following questions can be used to guide and stimulate this discussion;
• Were students aware of trade unions and Councils of Trade unions prior to this lesson?
• Do they understand the role of each of these organisations?
• Are they relevant to the world of work today? Explain.

**Student activity: Exploring political engagement 1920**
Ask students to complete the questions in Worksheet 15b.

**Class activity: Group discussion**
Given what students learned about working and living conditions in the previous section, do you think candidates took working peoples issues into account in their campaigns?
• In the elections of 1918 and 1920, did everyone who had a vote use it do you think? Is that different today? Why do you think it is different?
• Is politics relevant to young people today? How could it be made more relevant? Does voting make a different, do you think? Explain your answer.

**Group activity: Comparing then and now**
Compare the franchise rules between 1918, 1922 and today in terms of:
• Age
• Gender
• Property
• Voter registration
• Exclusions from voting

**Why do you think these rules were imposed? Who benefitted most from the rule changes? Why do you think this happened?**

**Student research: The local dimension**
Ask students to explore their local electoral area and compare the elections of 1918, 1920 with the most recent comparative elections.
Their investigations should reveal the answers to the following:
• Is there a difference in terms of voter turnout and voting pattern between these elections?
• Is there a difference in party dominance in this area across elections? Explain.
• What candidates ran in the local area and to which party were they affiliated?
• Which candidates, in your opinion, were concerned about workers’ rights and made them a top priority? How did they fare in the election? Why did that happen, do you think?

**Class activity: Discussions**
Why did Ireland retain the PR electoral system when Britain still operated the First-past-the-post (FPTP) system? What advantages are there of a PR system over a FPTP system? Explain.

**Individual assignment: Essay**
The elections of 1918 and 1920 continue to shape and influence the Irish political landscape today. Discuss.

**Student activity: Debates**
This class believes that history suggests that the electoral franchise should be extended to 16- and 17-year olds.
This class believes that politicians are all the same, so voting makes no
difference to the outcome for ordinary people.
This class believes that politics is about populism, not priorities.
This class believes that everyone should vote as it is the best way to engage politically.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:
- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

Student activity: Researching the franchise
Students should attempt to sketch a timeline tracing the expansion of the franchise in Ireland, the UK, Europe and Internationally (US, Australia) and then make comparisons in terms of the achievement of equality in each region.

Student research: The shape of local politics, then and now
Answer the following questions in relation to an election in the 1917-1923 period and the most recent elections in Ireland;
- Who is/was elected in your local constituency? (Local Authority, Dáil and Seanad)
- Are/were they linked to or members of particular organisations or movements [Trade Unions, Irish Farmers Association, IBEC, Chamber of Commerce etc]?
- What parties do/did they represent? Which party holds/held the most seats?
- Using their election literature and party manifesto, identify the key priorities of each party for the following areas (historical records may have been reproduced in local papers at the time);
  a) Work
  b) Welfare
  c) Climate Action
  d) Housing
  e) Health
  f) Education
  g) Transport
  h) Taxation
- What policy priorities do you agree with? Explain.
- What are the main differences between the parties, then and now?
- List any similarities between the parties.
- Did the answer to the two previous questions surprise you? Explain.
- What type of impact might the policies of each party (and in each period) have on;
  a) Children
  b) Students
  c) Worker
d) Families
e) Public services
• Who would you vote for in either election? Explain.
• Do you agree with the current political representation in your area? Explain.
• What policy priorities would you like to see parties adopt today? How could you make this change?
• What policy priorities should they have adopted in the historical period you researched?

Student interview: Shaping local politics
Students should choose a politician, from the previous exercise, with whom they identify and request an interview with them. The following questions could be used as a guide for that interview:
• Why did they choose to enter politics? How difficult/easy was it to get involved?
• Why did they choose this party? Do they agree with all party policy? Explain.
• How would they encourage younger people to get involved in politics?
• What is their stance on a) students’ rights b) workers’ rights? Do they support students’ and workers’ rights? How?
• What would they like to see change in terms of living and working conditions, for working people in Ireland?

Worksheet 14a: The parliament of Labour
Use the Parliament of Labour book as the source of questions on this Worksheet along with www.ictu.ie for information on current Councils of Trade Unions.
What is a council of trade unions?
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What is their function?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Where are they located?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
When were they founded?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
How were Councils engaged in the political sphere?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
What is the historical background to Councils of Trade Unions?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Is there a trades council in your area? When was it founded?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Give a brief description of its activities from this time period.
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Were members of the Council involved in politics or political agitation during this period?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Do Council of Trade Unions exist today? (The ICTU www.ictu.ie will be of assistance with this)

What type of work are Councils currently involved in today? Are they politically active? Explain.

Worksheet 14b: Elections and political engagement
This exercise will assist you to better understand the elections which took place in 1918 and 1920, explore links with the trade union movement and compare to modern day elections.

What were the electoral franchise rules in 1918 and 1920? Why was this? Was there a difference in the franchise rules in each year?

What are the electoral franchise rules today? Are they different? How? Why was this? Do you agree with the changes? Explain.

What was the turnout overall in the elections of 1918 and 1920? And what was the percentage of spoiled votes in each?

What was the turnout in your local area in 1918 and 1920? What was the number of spoiled votes in your area for each election?

If there was a significant difference between the national and local figures, how might that be explained?

How many candidates ran in each election and to what parties did they belong?

How many candidates were affiliated to a trade union?

What parties ran in your local area?

What was the dominant party in your local area? What were their policy priorities?

What was the outcome of the elections in 1918 and 1920 (who won, percentage of vote etc)? Was there a significant difference? To what can you account for that difference?

How did these election results translate locally?

How far did trade union membership correlate with political affiliations among candidates in your area?

Were there policy differences between trade union candidates and non-union candidates? Explain.
Lesson 15: The Easter Rising (1916)

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Enhance students’ understanding of the events and influence of the labour movement in the 1916 Rising;
• Provide opportunities for students to understand the context in which the labour movement engaged in such military action;
• Encourage students to explore the 1916 Rising from the labour perspective.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Understand the pivotal role of workers and the labour movements in the events of 1916;
• Explain the rationale for labour involvement in these events;
• Explore the impact of the events on the labour movement.

Lesson outline:
Start the lesson by providing students with Worksheet 16a to complete in order to understand the involvement of the labour movement in the Rising of 1916.

Class activity: Group discussion
When completed students should then discuss their findings, using the following questions to encourage further discussions on this topic;
• Were you surprised at the labour involvement in the 1916 Rising?
• In your opinion, was this the best strategy for the movement to take? Explain.
• Why did they get involved?
• What was the immediate impact on the labour movement of the ICA’s involvement?
• Was the movement strengthened or weakened by their participation? Explain.
• Do you think the actions and engagement of Connolly further divided the Irish labour movement? Explain.

Student activity: Debates
This class believes that the 1916 Rising could not have taken place without the support of the labour movement.
This class believes that labour led civic resistance would have better succeeded in 1916.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion (whichever has been debated) by a show of hands.
The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following;
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
Worksheet 15a: Understanding Labour’s role in the Rising
This exercise will assist you to better understand the role of the labour movement in the 1916 Rising.

What was the Irish Citizen Army?
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When and why was it established?
........................................................................................................................................................................

Why did they get involved in the events of 1916?
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Why were they so important to the success of the Rising?
........................................................................................................................................................................

Explain what James Connolly meant by “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible”.
........................................................................................................................................................................

Why did some people think that the Rising was “not only futile but one in which the insurrectionists were apparently being used as pawns or tools by the German government?”
........................................................................................................................................................................

What do you think Connolly hoped to gain by the involvement of the labour movement?
........................................................................................................................................................................

Lesson 16: The Irish Convention: Labour involvement to save Home Rule and avoid a split on partition

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;

- Provide opportunities for students to better understand the rationale for the Irish Convention and Labour’s involvement in it;
- Explore the complexities of labour’s attitude to the Convention.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;

- Explain the position(s) which the labour movement took on the Convention;
- Understand and outline the principle issues put forward by the labour movement

Lesson outline:
Provide students with Worksheet 17a to begin their study of the Irish Convention. When students have completed the questions, bring the class together and ask them to discuss this topic further, using the following to encourage and stimulate those discussions;
In your opinion, was there a need for the establishment of the Convention?
What do you think it achieved?
Would it have been more successful, had the spring offensive on the Western front not coincided with its report?
Could it have prevented partition? Explain.
What might the labour delegates have done differently to achieve a successful conclusion?

Student research: Comparing positions
Ensure students can access the Convention report which can be found here: https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed124-ConventionReport1-IA.pdf
Then ask students to identify the main recommendations made by each of the following:
- The Ulster Unionists
- The Nationalist members
- The Majority of the Labour representatives
What were the primary differences between each grouping?
What were the primary differences between the two Nationalist groups?
How might those differences be resolved?
What solutions would you have proposed?

Classroom activity: Role-play & negotiations
This exercise will bring to life the positions taken within the Irish Convention by asking students to play out the roles of each of the groups. Assign students to a particular grouping as follows:
- British government representatives
- Ulster Unionists
- The 22 Nationalist group (no requirement to have 22 on this group)
- The majority Nationalist group
- The majority of the Labour representatives
Each group should then be given the letters of correspondence and the report of the full proceedings, along with the report of their own specific grouping. Each group should prepare to negotiate with the other teams. All teams should be part of the same set of negotiations.
The ‘rules’ of this negotiation are that a) each side must move their position b) teams can put forward alternate proposals not contained in the original Convention report.
Note: The teacher should decide if it would be preferable for teams to negotiate on a one-to-one basis rather than as a set of five different teams.

Student assignment: A difficult conversation
Ask students to consider how each of the parties might have felt regarding the outcome of the Convention. Then ask them to write a short dialogue outlining the imagined content of a conversation as follows:
- Between Sir Horace Plunkett and Lloyd George;
- The Labour representatives and their constituents;
- The Ulster Unionists and their constituents;
- The Nationalists and their constituents;
- The lead of each group and a colleague.
Individual activity: Essay
The labour movement has always fought for improved economic and social conditions for all people.
Why do you think poverty and inequality continues to exist? Discuss.

Student activity: Debates
This class believes that a successful convention would have negated the need for partition.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion (whichever has been debated) by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:

- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

Worksheet 16a: The Irish Convention 1917

What was the Irish Convention of 1917?

What was its purpose and aims?

When was it called and who participated?

What was controversial about the attendance at the convention?

Why was it important to “stop Sinn Fein’s growing political momentum”?

Why did some of the unions and trades councils not accept an invitation to participate?

What were the three principle issues for Labour?

Why were they opposed to an upper chamber in the Home Rule Parliament?

How did they suggest weighting for urban constituencies? And why was it necessary, according to them?

What happened to the report of the Convention?

What is a minority report?

Why was one issued in this case?
Lesson 17: The Democratic Programme for Government (1919) – A missed opportunity?

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Provide students with an understanding of the content of this programme and its likely impact on workers and their families, had it been implemented;
• Raise awareness amongst students of the existence of this programme in both its formats;
• Illustrate the differences between the original drafting of the programme and the amended version and what they meant to society;
• Highlight the importance of the principles contained within this programme.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Understand and explain the significance and vision of the Democratic Programme for Government;
• Analyse the difference between the original and the amended version and why those changes might have been made;
• Compare and contrast this programme in its original and altered state with the 1937 constitution and current government programmes;

Lesson outline:
Provide students with Worksheet 18a and ask them to complete the questions. Teachers should review the exercise with students using the following as a guide;
• What is your initial view of the original text?
• Do you think this was better than the amended text? Explain.
• What happened to this programme after 1918? Why?
• What type of Ireland would we live in today, if either programme was properly implemented?
• Ask students to vote on each of the versions and explain their reasoning for taking that position.

Class discussion: Learning from history
Ask students to read through the following paragraph from the programme, and discuss using the questions which follow it;
‘In the sphere of overseas commerce the Republican Government to safeguard the interests of the nation shall itself undertake the organisation of the import and export of merchandise so as to prevent the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessities until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for and to obviate the waste of life and labour which competitive commerce involves and the risk of destroying Irish productive enterprises.
It shall be the purpose of the Government to encourage the organisation of people into trade unions and co-operative societies with a view to the control and administration of the industries by the workers engaged in the industries”.
Do you think this paragraph was influenced by the experiences of Ireland during the potato blight of the 1840s? What might have been the rationale for its removal?
Class activity: Proclaiming our programme
During the period of 1916-1922 there were at least two documents for which key political and revolutionary figures fought. Ask students to identify the key principles of the 1916 Proclamation, the Democratic Programme of 1918 and compare them to the policies of the Irish government post-1922.

Student research: Political analysis
In your opinion, is there a gap between state policy, party manifestoes and actual implementation in areas such health, education and work? Use materials from the 1917-1923 period, along with current materials to support your answer. How should such gaps be bridged?

Student essay: Improving children’s welfare
Students should write an essay based on the following:
If the phrase “sympathetic men and women to devote their talents to the education of the young” were adequately implemented, would it have prevented some of the abuses subsequently experienced by children throughout Ireland in the 1930s, 40s and 50s? Discuss.

Student assignment: Relevance to Ireland today
Interview current politicians to discuss the Democratic Programme and whether a new one is required for the country today. Students can use Worksheet 18b to assist them with this activity.

Student assignment: Election manifesto
As a politician you have made the following statement “No child shall endure hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing or shelter”. How do you intend to go about this? Draft an election manifesto which will adequately address these issues.

Student activity: Debates
This class believes that a divided labour movement allows inequality to grow.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion (whichever has been debated) by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
Worksheet 17a: Understanding the Democratic Programme

After reading through Section III.IV answer the following questions.

What is the programme about?

What is your initial understanding of the programme?

How would you describe this programme in terms of left-right politics? Why?

Investigate the personalities involved in the original drafting and amending of the programme. Did they belong to particular political parties and if so, what parties? Do they still exist today?

Compare both texts in terms of a) major differences b) impact on workers and ordinary citizens c) what is your first impression of such a programme.

What do you think is meant by “an adequate share of the produce of the Nation’s Labour?”

Do you think this was achieved?

Is it achieved today? If so, what impact would it have on poverty?

What were the poverty levels in Ireland in 1918?

How did this programme seek to eradicate poverty?

Is there an equivalent phrase in the Irish Constitution? If so, what does it state? Has it been delivered?

Is it possible to measure the health and happiness of citizens? What would it look like – “a happy country”?

What was the Poor Law System?

What replaced this system?

The Labour version chose to nationalise some industries? What does that mean and why did they wish to do so?

Why might the proposal have been removed from the programme?
Worksheet 17b: A modern democratic programme

Are you familiar with the Democratic programme of 1919?
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What is your view of it?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Do you agree with the principles of it? Explain.
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What elements of it are still relevant today?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Is it achievable?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

How might a modern democratic programme be implemented?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

No child shall endure hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing or shelter” is taken from the programme, yet a significant number of children live in poverty, are homeless or don’t have access to proper services such as education etc. In your opinion, how come we are still dealing with these issues as a country and haven’t provided for all children? What should be done now?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Lesson 18: The Belfast program

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Provide information to students on the context and events surrounding the Belfast pogrom;
• Highlight the impact this event had on politics and society at the time.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Explain the context for this event and its impact on politics.

Lesson Outline:
Explain to students that this lesson is based on the event referred to as the Belfast Progrom. Ask them if they know what the word “pogrom” is? Have they heard it before? If so, in what context?
Provide students with the relevant section and ask them to answer the questions in Worksheet 19a

Class activity: Review and discussion
After students have completed Worksheet 19a, ask them to discuss their findings and use the following questions to continue and delve deeper into the topic;
• Had you heard of the Belfast pogrom before?
• What surprised you about this?
• How did you feel about the events during this time? Explain.
• What would be the immediate effect of such actions on;
  o Workers
  o Children
  o Students
  o Families

Classroom activity: Role-play & negotiations
This exercise will bring to life what it was really like for workers and their unions during this period of turmoil in Irish history. Assign students into different teams representing groups of workers, unions and management. Then ask them to role-play one of the following scenarios;
a) A meeting between management and workers to discuss worker demands for Protestant ex-servicemen to be employed;
b) Discussions between railway management and workers to discuss the transport of the body of Lt. Colonel GB Smyth;
c) Discussions between the ASCJ and management seeking the reinstatement of its members to the shipyards;
d) Discussions between the ASCJ membership and the executive of the union seeking support for expelled workers;
Student activity: Essay
The complexities within Irish politics meant that the labour movement could never fully represent all workers everywhere across the Island. Do you agree? Discuss.

Student activity: Debates
This class believes that the Dáil Eireann imposed boycott achieved nothing only further divisions.

When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion (whichever has been debated) by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:
- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?

Worksheet 18a: Understanding the Pogrom
After reading through Section III.X answer the following questions.

What is a Pogrom?

What is the purpose of a Pogrom?

What happened in Belfast in 1920?

What caused the Pogrom?

How did the Dáil Eireann government respond?

Do you think this action intensified the events? Explain.

What action would you have taken to resolve this situation?

What did Carson mean when he said “men who come forward posing as the friends of labour, whose real object was to mislead and bring disunity amongst our own people and in the end, before we know where we are, we may find ourselves in the same bondage and slavery as the rest of Ireland”

Do you agree with this statement? Explain.

Was partition inevitable where such divisions existed between the North and South of Ireland?
Lesson 19: The British Labour Commission to Ireland (1920)

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
- Highlight to students the work of the British Labour Commission, its impact on and importance in the progress to Irish independence;

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
- Understand the rationale and aims for the British Labour Commission in 1920;
- Explain what the Commission hoped to achieve;
- Explore the activities of the commission;
- Evaluate the impact and significance of the Commission on British and Irish politics at the time.

Lesson outline:
Students should, at the least, read through section III.XII on the Commission and complete Worksheet 19a to get a better understanding of the Commission and its remit.

Homework assignment: Letter
Ask students to write a letter to the British Prime Minister of the time, outlining the reasons why British policy in Ireland should change, what policies should be adopted instead and the rationale for them.

Group activity: Parliamentary debate
Group students into teams of government and opposition and ask them to prepare to debate the motion as brought before Westminster in 1920. The motion reads:
That this house regrets the present state of lawlessness in Ireland and the lack of discipline in the armed forces of the Crown, resulting in the death or injury of innocent citizens and the destruction of property; and is of opinion that an independent investigation should at once be instituted into the causes, nature, and extent of reprisals on the part of those whose duty is the maintenance of law and order.

In-class activity: Student debate
This class believes that the British Labour Commission was crucial in moving towards peace in Ireland. When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:
- Why did they vote in the way they did?
- What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
- Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
- What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?
**Class role-play: Commissioning interviews**
Divide students into groups of 4-6, ask them to identify an event as reported by the Commission and research it further. Then ask them to prepare to interview the local people affected by this event.
When the groups have researched and prepared their interviews, each group should role-play the interview and ensuing dialogue within their assigned group.

**Media research: Investigative analysis**
Ask students, “Would coverage today be different?” then ask them to explain and present their reasoning for this opinion.

**Local research activity: Using more than one source**
Research the activity in your local area during this period of time, assessing the type of event it was, who was involved and what was the impact on local people.

**Worksheet 19a: Understanding the British Labour Commission**
After reading through section II.IX, please answer the following questions. Additional assistance or other resources may be required to fully complete this exercise.

What was the British Labour commission?

Why did it come about? What was its remit and authority?

According to the text, what was the “most glaring omission” from their work? Explain.

What happened on the 5th November in Ardfert and the 21st November in Croke Park?

What did the Commission do about such events?

What was the result of the Commission’s work?

What do you think, might have been the impact of the Commission’s work on civilians in Ireland? Explain.

What was the British Government’s response to the report of the Commission?

What did the Commission call on the British Government to do about the situation in Ireland?

What are the three most important things you have learned about the Commission?

Lesson aim:
The aim of this lesson is to;
• Highlight to students the internal and external challenges facing the labour movement at this time;
• Increase their awareness of the complexities of the relationship between the main players in the labour movement;
• Enable students develop a better understanding of the fractious nature of labour relations and the impact this period had on the Irish trade union movement throughout the 20th century.

Lesson objectives:
At the end of this lesson students will be able to;
• Outline the events which took place within the ITGWU in this period;
• Explain the reasons behind the relationships between the main players at the time;
• Describe the impact this period of labour history had on the labour movement in the 20th century.

Lesson outline:
This lesson will focus on the relationships between the main players in the ITGWU. Explain to students that Jim Larkin had left Ireland shortly after the 1913 strike and didn’t return until 1923, almost 10 years later. This particular period of time was both tumultuous and pivotal in the development of the Irish state and his absence and subsequent return affected people differently, particularly those who had been in charge of the union during his absence.

Class activity: Opening discussion
After reading through section III.XII encourage students to discuss this period of labour history, using the following to stimulate that discussion;
• What damage did the war between Larkin and O’Brien cause in the labour movement?
• What, do you think, was the impact for workers?
• Was the creation of the Workers’ Union of Ireland, a positive development for workers? Explain.

Student assignment: Making a speech
Ensure students are provided with the information contained in section III.XII before proceeding with the activities in this lesson.
Each student should be asked to imagine they are Jim Larkin who has just returned from America and write a five-minute speech that he delivered from Liberty Hall which should include;
• The reasons why he left for America;
• What he did in America;
• What he learned when he was there;
• The reason he returned;
• How he plans to use that information here in Ireland;
• What he wants to do to improve workers’ lives.
Pairing assignment: Writing a dialogue
Assign students into groups of two and ask them to write a dialogue between two friends, one a Larkinite and the other a supporter of William O’Brien, to discuss Larkin’s return and the future direction for the ITGWU.

In-class activity: Class discussion
There was never a good time for Larkin to wrestle for the leadership of the ITGWU. Discuss.

Student assignment: Essay
The split in the ITGWU was more about personality than political policy. Discuss.

Group activity: Student debates
This class believes that union rivalry was the biggest challenge to worker solidarity and the achievement of decent work.
This class believes that syndicalism is the only way to stop inter-union rivalry and achieve greater worker solidarity.
When the debate is finished the teacher should call for a vote on the motion by a show of hands.

The teacher should then ask students for their feedback on the debate, asking them to answer the following:
• Why did they vote in the way they did?
• What was the argument or point that persuaded them?
• Were there additional arguments/points not made that should have been?
• What other tips or pointers would they give to the debaters for next time?