

The Rise of Labour in Belfast, 1798 to 1914

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- Rise of unions:
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- Explore three case studies of labour disputes:
  - 1870s Strikes in the Linen trade.
  - 1880s/1890s Strikes at Harland and Wolff
  - 1907 Docker' Strike.
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- How effective and representative were the unions?



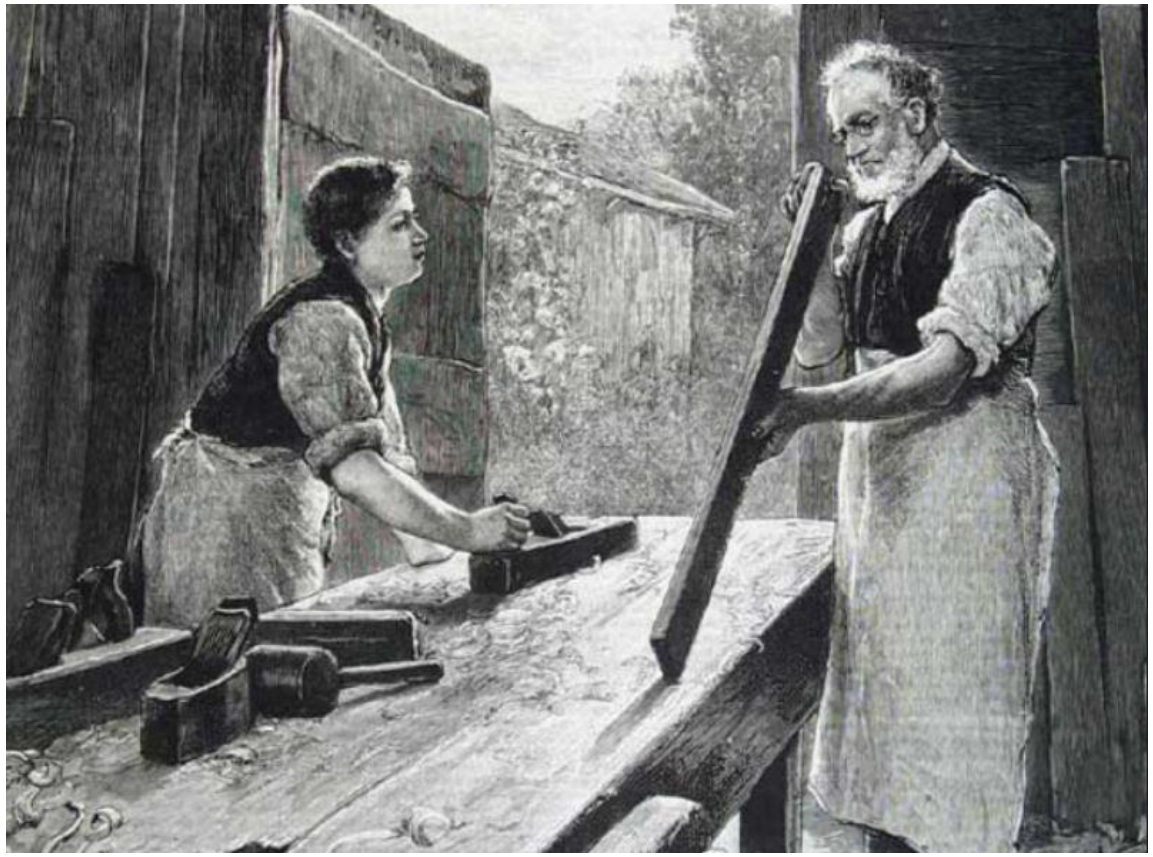
The dangers and challenges of the workplace



The workplace: The perils of being an apprentice

June 1846: William Purdy, a weaver, and his wife Ellen, were charged with ill-using a lad named John Winters, an apprentice. Winters had been about to fall asleep at his loom when William threw him to the floor and trampled on his arm. The boy claimed he had to work from 4am to 10pm. Magistrates examined his indenture papers and having satisfied themselves he had served five years, he was told he was at liberty to leave his master.

March 1855: A young man named James McCreight was prosecuted for misconduct as an apprentice. He was frequently absent for long periods from his work without any proper excuse. He was sent to jail for a month



The work place: Little freedom of labour

- August 1845: Six female workers in a mill owned by Mr. Craig, were imprisoned for one week for having left their employment.
- May 1851: Mr Martin Wallace, of Shankill, brickmaker, brought before the magistrates, one of his workmen, John Moffett, for having absented himself from work without leave. The defendant was given the option of returning to work or going to jail, and his antipathy to hard labour induced him to prefer the former.
- June 1866: William Boyd, Samuel McDonald, William Magee, Robert McMullan, Thomas McMullan, John Dunbar and David McTear were all imprisoned for one month charged by Messrs. Harland & Wolff, Queen's Island, with absenting themselves from their employment without leave.



The work place: The danger of fire

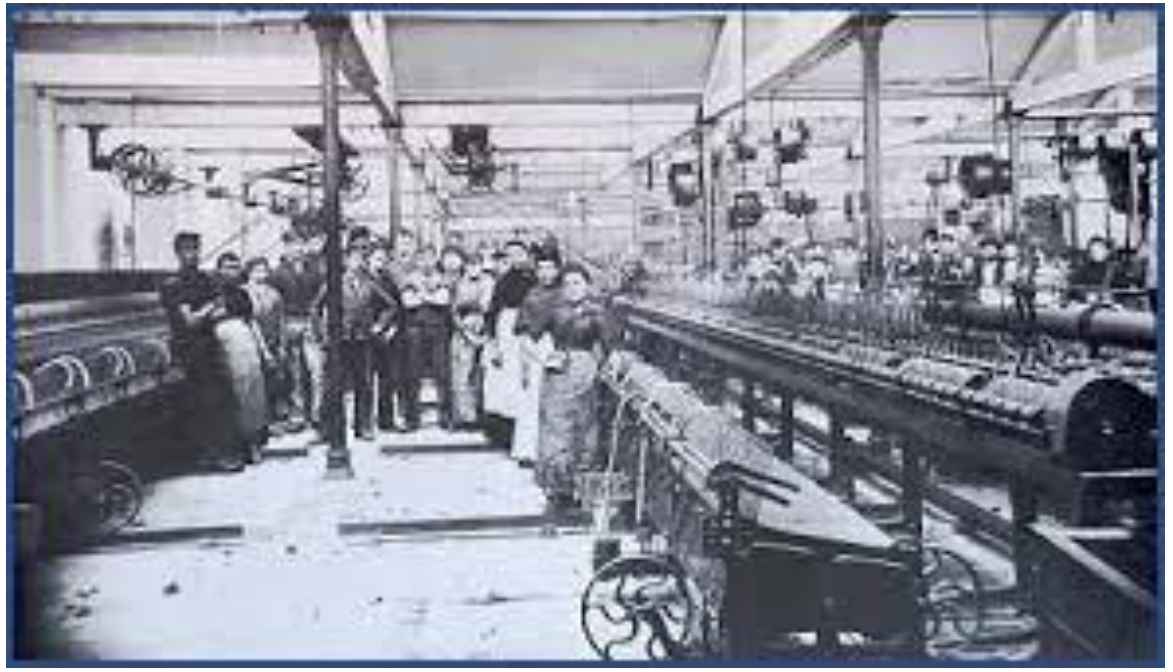
- December 1859: For upwards of two hours a fire threatened to destroy the premise of York Street Flax Spinning Company, the largest such company in Ireland. A boiler exploded in the building killing one man, William Connor and seriously injuring a second man, Joseph Jordan. Jordan is not expected to live. Over 2,000 jobs were threatened by the fire which destroyed one wing of the factory.
- September 1876: Messrs Duffin's mill at Ballymacarrett stopped work and 300 female hands were made redundant.
- October 1892: An extensive fire broke out in the ship building works of Messrs. Workman Clark and Company. A brisk wind fanned the flames causing much damage. Three thousand men have been laid off owing to the damage done.



ON January 28, 2016 more than 150 years of Bradford history went up in smoke when a huge fire tore through Drummond Mill.

1880s Depression: reduced business meant reduced wages

- September 1880: Notices have been posted in nearly all flaxspinning mills in Belfast stating that after 4th October the working week will be reduced from 56 hours to 37 hours.
- October 1880: Nineteen flax spinning mills began to work short time.
- July 1881: Workers have obtained a summons for wages from the Belfast Spinning & Weaving Company Ltd.
- January 1886: Messrs. Harland & Wolff have proposed a reduction of wages due to a depression in the shipbuilding industry.
- August 1894: The proposal to put flax spinning mills on short time was again discussed at a meeting of the Ulster Flaxspinners at their offices in Donegall Street.



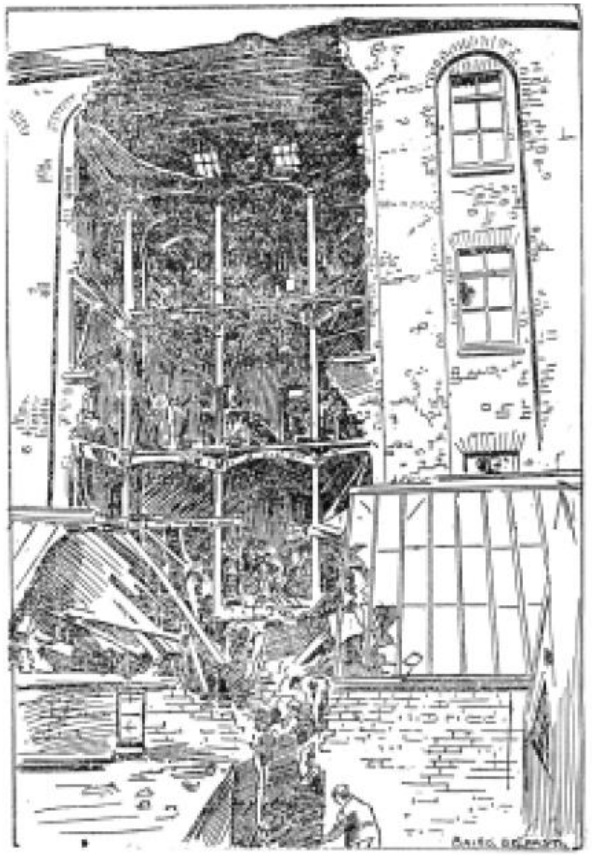
The work place: Industrial accidents in the linen industry

- December 1864: A young woman employed in one of the mills at Ligoniel was caught in the machinery and died instantly. A thirteen year old girl named Boyd, while engaged in the mill of Mr. Steen, got her arm broken and on arriving at the hospital, it was found necessary to amputate it.
- July 1871: Two young women…were admitted into the General Hospital suffering from injuries to the hand sustained in a mill in town. They appear to have come in contact with some part of the machinery, and the result was that each of the girls were injured, so as to necessitate the amputation of a finger.
- December 1892: An inquest was held into the death of Elizabeth Stewart, who died from the effects of injuries sustained on 24th November, when she became entangled in machinery at Ewart's Mill, Crumlin Road. The jury returned the verdict of accidental death.
- November 1911: The boiler house adjoining the New Northern Spinning Company on the Falls Road exploded causing terrible injuries to employees. Some of the injured were named as William Neill, John Clyde, William McElmeel and Robert McCullough. William (James) McIlmeel later died from his injuries.



Smithfield Flax Spinning and Weaving Company accident

- 20 January 1902, 13 linen workers killed at the Smithfield Flax Spinning and Weaving Company in Winetavern Street when a wall collapsed.
- Many sightings of ‘ghosts’ of the deceased workers.
- See Belfast Ghost Guide by Glenravel Local History Project.



A DRAWING OF THE DISASTER SHOWING THE COLLAPSED WALL

Lucifer Match Factory Fire

- 15 December 1882, four workers were killed in a fire at the Lucifer Match Factory in Millfield Place.
- Residents in the local area heard screams which appeared to come from the factory.
- People heard that one girl was calling ‘daddy, daddy’ through the screams.

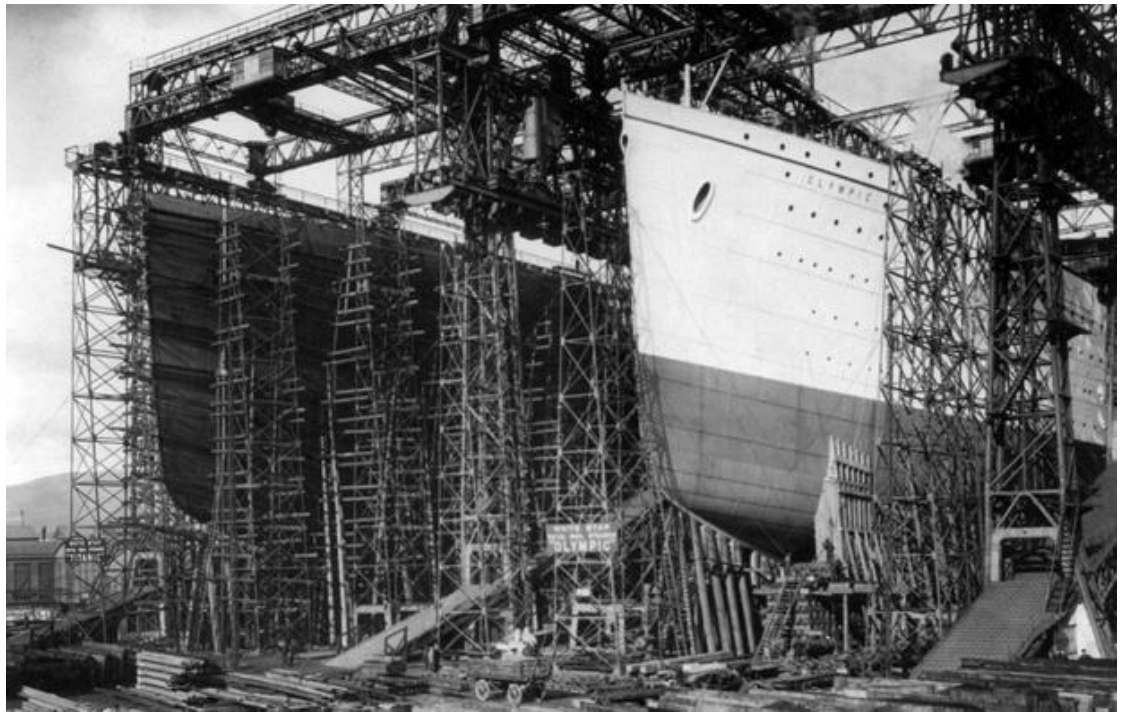


Industrial accidents at Harland and Wolff

December 1894: Two accidents occurred at the shipbuilding yard of Messrs Harland & Wolff, Queen's Island. John Cotter, aged 17, of 15 Cargill Street fell 65 ft from a gangway. He was dead on arrival at the Royal Hospital. Edward Grant, a riveter, of 27 Arundel Street fell from scaffolding sustaining a severe leg injury.

Another inquest was held into the death of John Cotter, of 15 Cargill Street. The jury concluded he died from injuries received when he fell from a gangway at Harland &Wolff shipbuilding yard. They found negligence on the part of the employers and none on the part of the deceased.

November 1897: David Scott of 29 Harvey Street, who was employed at Messrs. Harland & Wolff shipbuilding yard, Queen's Island, died when he fell into the hold of a White Star Liner called the 'Cymric' at Alexandra Dock. The inquest jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

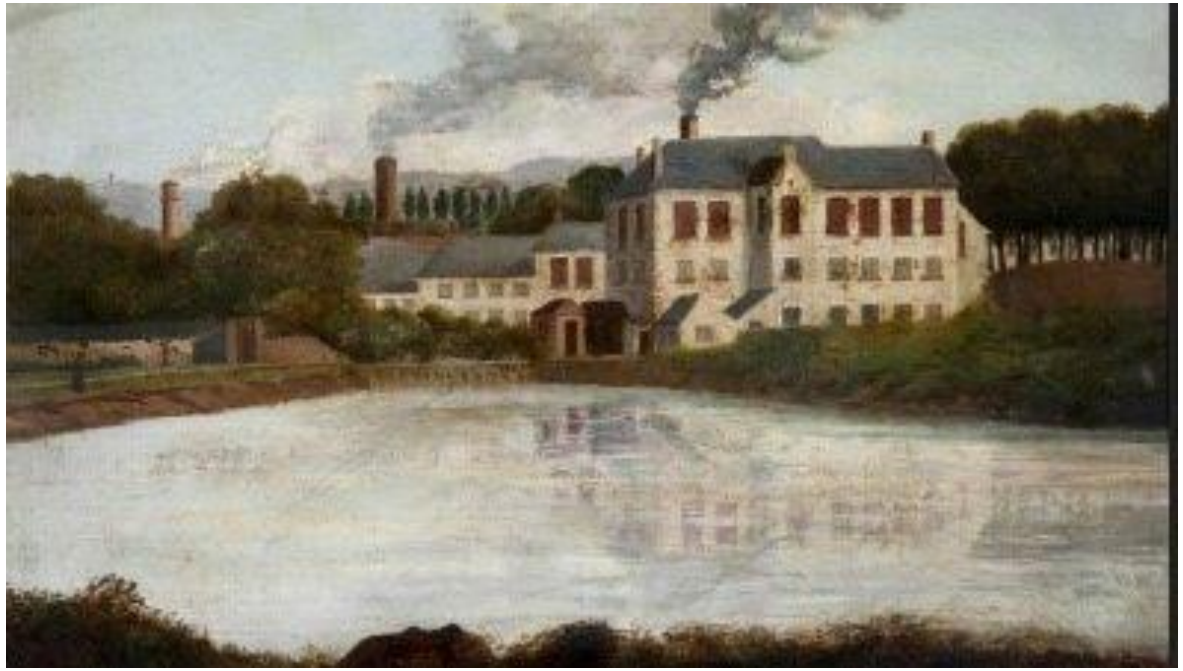




Gradual improvement of working conditions

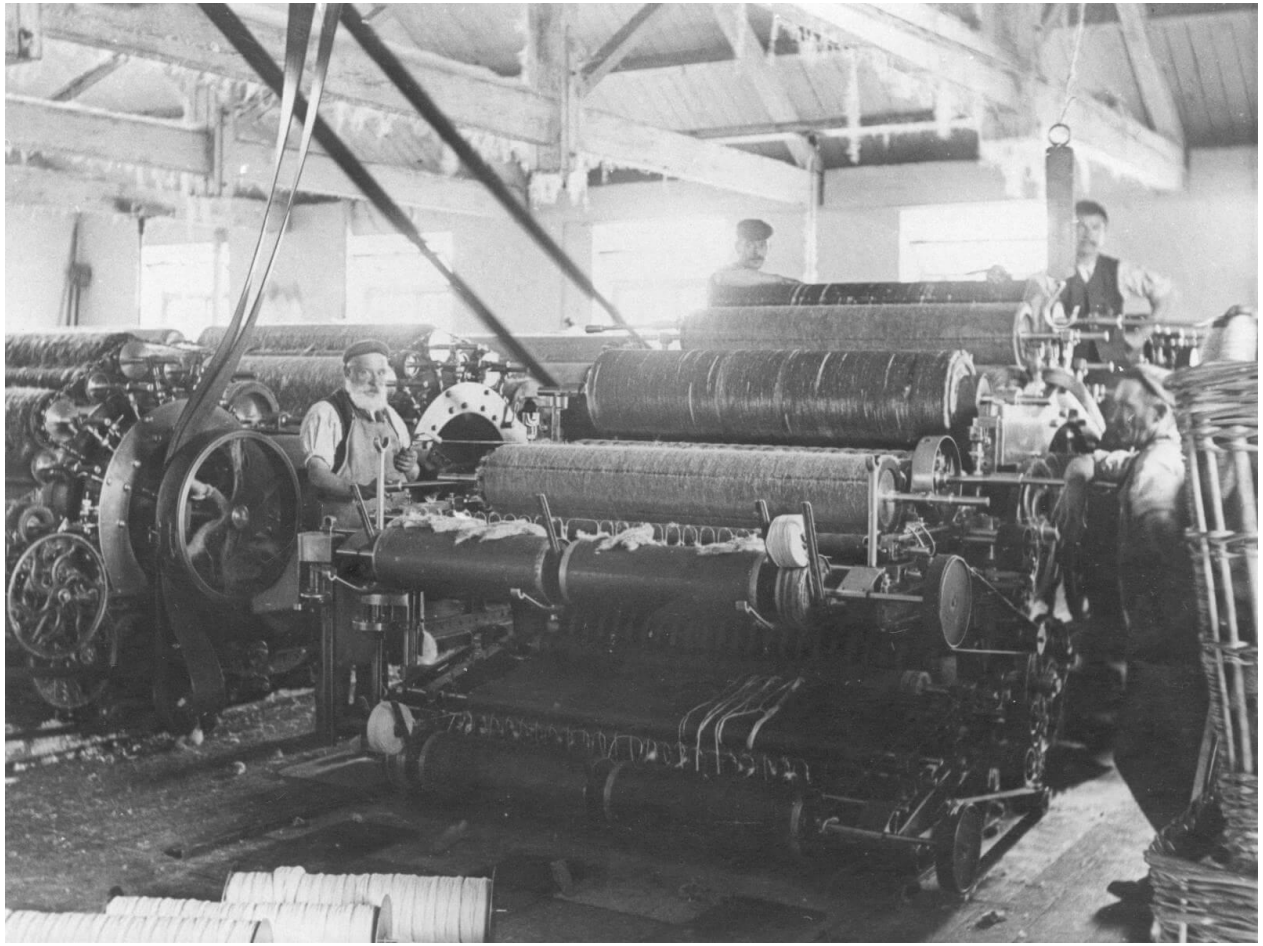
Factory Act 1833

- No child workers under nine years of age
- Employers must have an age certificate for their child workers
- Children of 9-13 years to work no more than nine hours a day
- Children of 13-18 years to work no more than 12 hours a day
- Children are not to work at night
- Two hours schooling each day for children



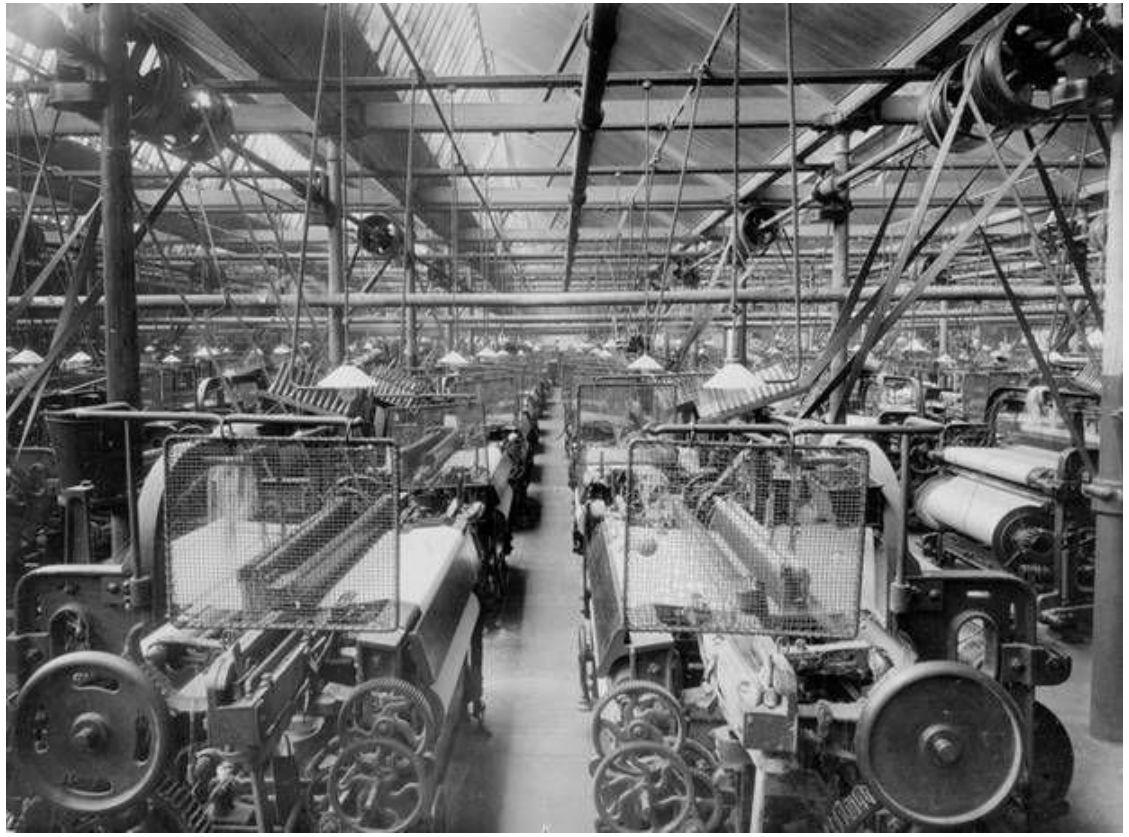
Accidents were ‘accidental’

- December 1867: Two mechanics named Edward Bruce and Andrew Porter were killed while making some repairs to one of the boilers in the boiler-room of the Northern Spinning and Weaving Company, Falls Road. They were killed instantaneously by suffocation after opening the flange, as the jack-heads, which shut off the steam, had not been screwed down. An open verdict was returned at the inquest, attaching no blame to anyone.
- December 1867: Five people were burned to death in a fire that broke out in the premises of Mr. Joseph Macaulay, hat and bandbox manufacturer, Church Street. The five who died were Mrs Macaulay, aged thirty years, her stepdaughter Margaret, aged thirteen years and her daughters Harriet, aged five, Jane, aged three and Sarah, aged sixteen months. The jury at the inquest attached no blame to anyone for the incident.
- February 1870: An inquest was held in the office of J. Rowan & Sons, York Street, on the body of a seventeen-year old boy named John McCloy, who was killed by being caught by the machinery in Messrs. Rowan’s foundry. The boy had been an apprentice in the pattern shop. A verdict of accidental death was returned.



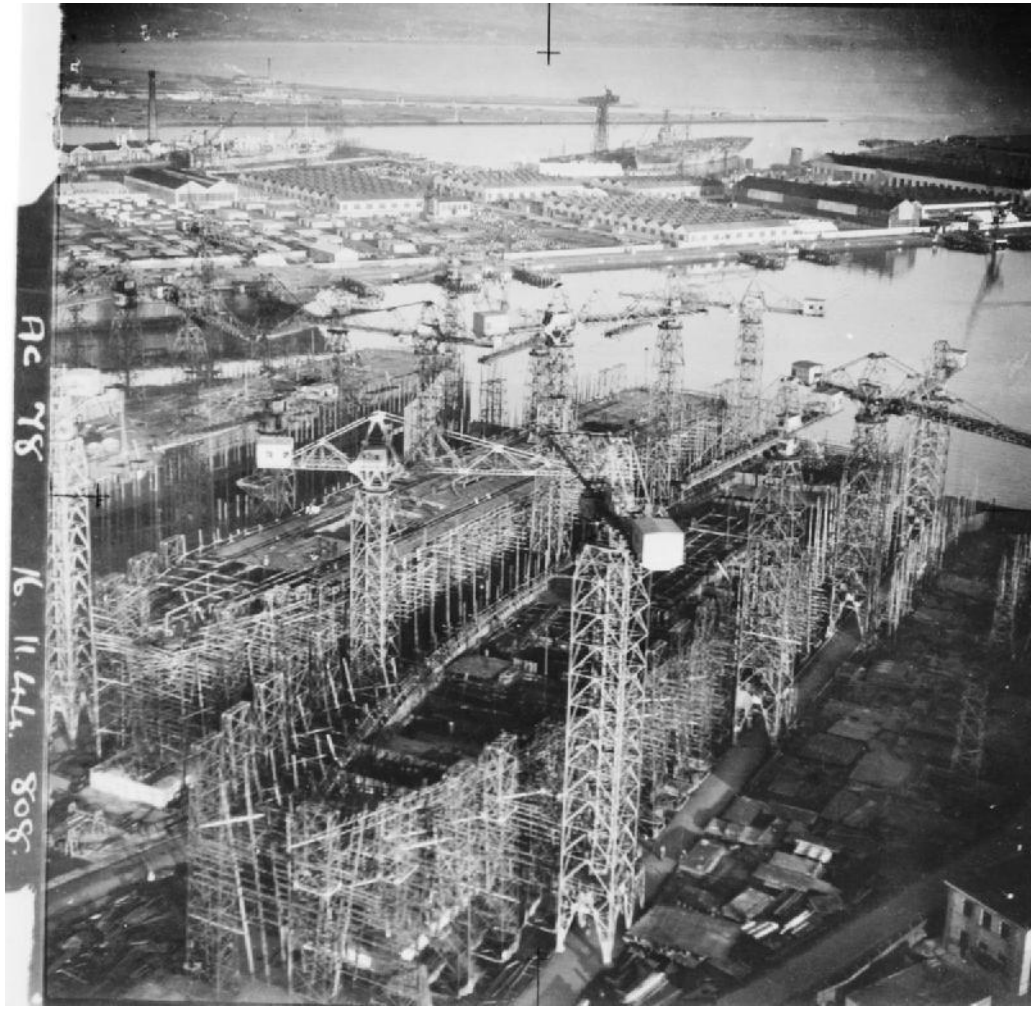
Factory Act of 1844

- Children 9–13 years could work for 9 hours a day with a lunch break.
- Ages must be verified by surgeons.
- Women and young people now worked the same number of hours. They could work for no more than 12 hours a day during the week, including one and a half hours for meals, and 9 hours on Sundays. They must all take their meals at the same time and could not do so in the workroom
- Time-keeping to be by a public clock approved by an inspector
- Some classes of machinery to be "securely fenced."
- Children and women were not to clean moving machinery.
- Accidental death must be reported to a surgeon and investigated; the result of the investigation to be reported to a Factory Inspector.
- An abstract of the amended Act must be hung up in the factory so as to be easily read, and show inspectors for the district.



Factory and Workshop Act 1878

- This Act may be said to be the first attempt at comprehensive factory legislation.
- Now the Factory Code applied to all trades.
- No child anywhere under the age of 10 was to be employed and compulsory education for children up to 10 years old was established.
- 10–14 year olds could only be employed for half days.
- Women were to work no more than 56 hours per week.



Prosecutions for regulation breaches

- January 1883: John Hampson, proprietor of the ropeworks, Newtownards Road was summoned for employing a child, James Gervis, under the age of 14, without ensuring his attendance at school according to the Factory Act. He was fined 30 shillings.
- May 1885: Twelve residents adjacent to the Gasworks were awarded compensation from Belfast Corporation Gas Company for damage caused by ‘smoke and noxious matters’ emanating from the gasworks.
- July 1890: John Carmichael, a hat manufacturer of North Street, was summoned for breach of the Factory and Workshops Act, for keeping employees at work after the hour of 10pm. He was fined 15 shillings for each of the seven cases against him.



Factory Act 1891

Made the requirements for fencing machinery more stringent. Under the heading Conditions of Employment were two considerable additions to previous legislation

1. The prohibition on employers to employ women within four weeks after confinement
2. Raising the minimum age at which a child can be set to work from ten to eleven.



Employers' Liability Act 1880

- The Employers' Liability Act extended protection to workers concerning accidents caused by the negligence of managers, superintendents and foremen.
- Railway companies were also made liable when their employees were injured through the negligence of signalmen, drivers and pointsmen.
- However, the act did not protect employees against accidents caused by fellow workers.



Factory safety the responsibility of the factory

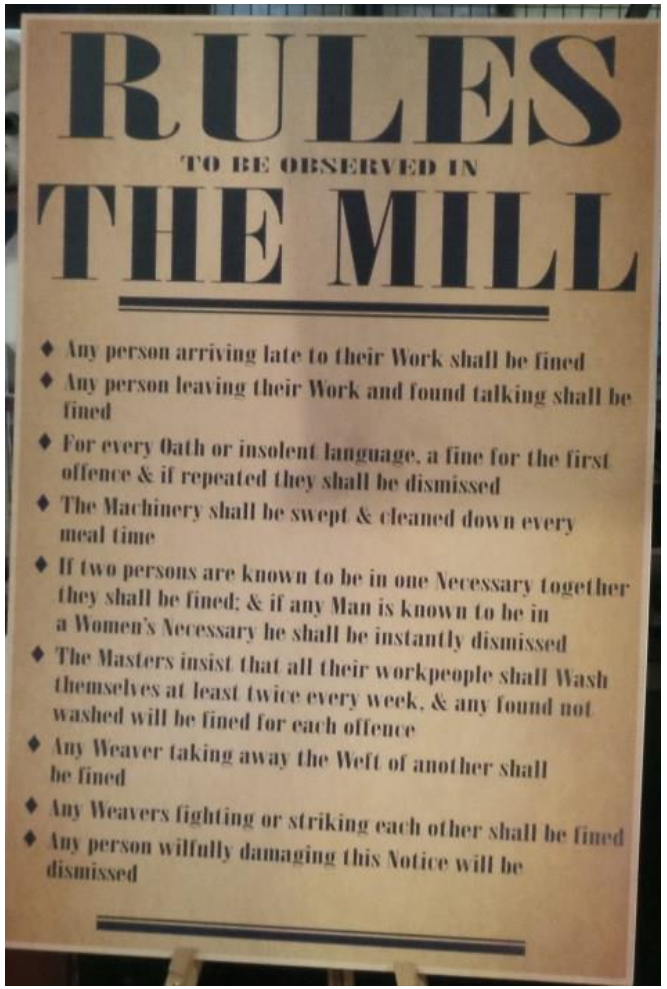
- November 1894: William McClelland of 57 Weir Street, a stager at Queen's Island Shipbuilding works, was killed when a stanchion fell on him, crushing him. An inquest jury found he had died from his injuries and found there was negligence on the part of Messrs. Harland &Wolff in not having the stanchion properly secured.

- An inquest was held into the death of William Morrison, of 73 Brussels Street, who died from injuries received while at work on the erection of Messrs Marsh & Company's new biscuit factory in Clifton Street. The jury concluded he had died from compression of the brain, caused by a blood clot, produced by a fracture of the skull. They added that there was negligence on the part of the building firm, but not the deceased.



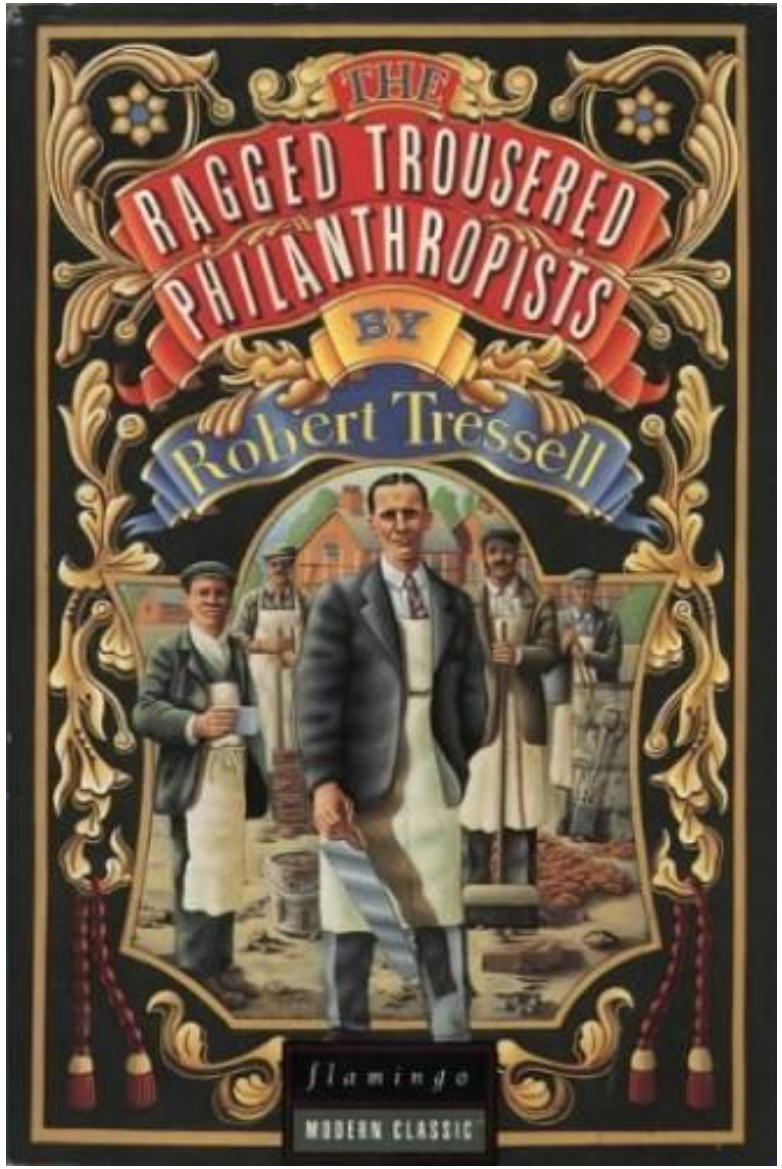
Social class determined workers' rights?

- June 1882: Hugh Corcorran, of 2 Sultan Street, summoned The York Street Flax Spinning Co. Ltd for wrongful dismissal, claiming £8 wages owed. The case was dismissed, with costs of 12 shillings and 6d.
- June 1912: Robert D Fox a teacher with the Church of Ireland received damages of three months pay for breach of contract. He had stated in court that he had been ill for some time and produced medical certificates in evidence but when he was fit enough to return to work his services had been terminated.



The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists by Robert Tressell (1908)

- Focuses on a group of builders and decorators in Hastings, England and how the workers are "philanthropists" who throw themselves into back-breaking work for poverty wages to generate profit for their masters.
- The main character Frank Owen, is a socialist who tries to convince his fellow workers that capitalism is the real source of the poverty he sees all around him, but their education has trained them to distrust their own thoughts and to rely on those of their "betters".

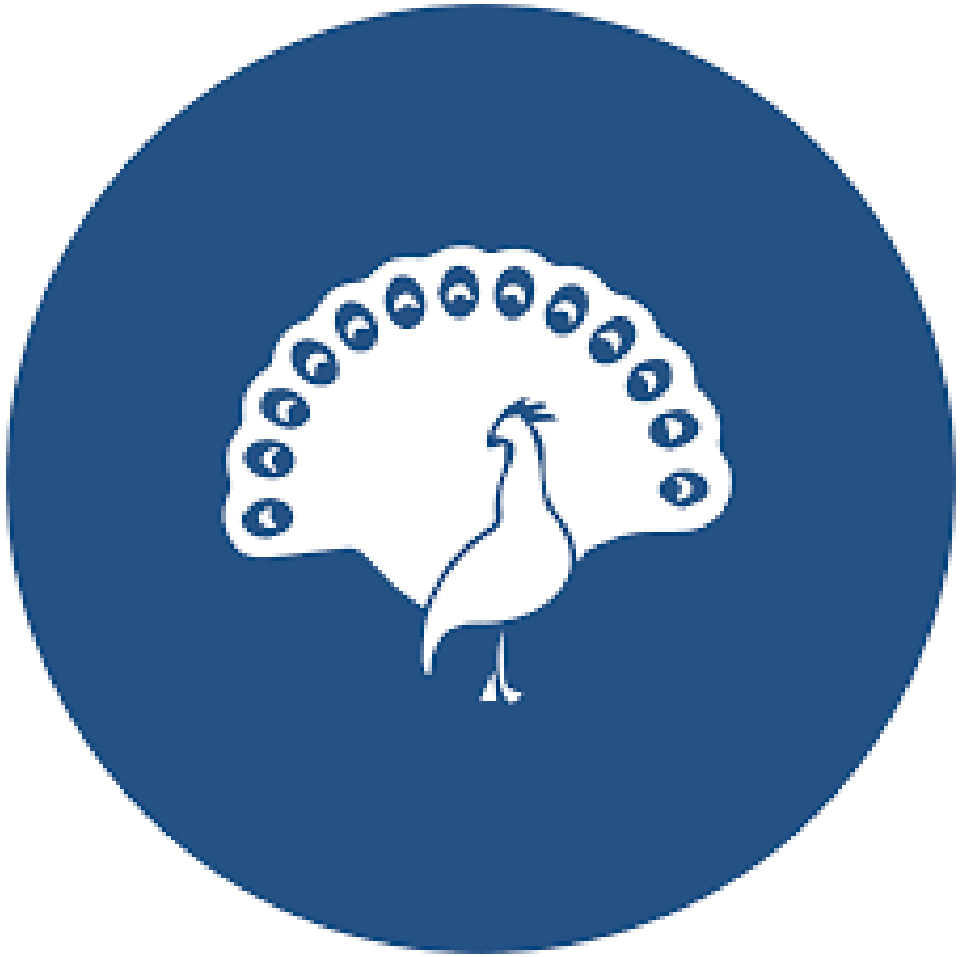




Illegal to legal: trade unions

First trade union and industrial action

- Cabinetmakers Club set up in 1788 for the purpose of defending its members' wages and regulating the apprentice system.
- Militant action taken by carpenters, shoemakers, bricklayers, coopers and cotton weavers in the 1790s.
- 1802: BNL was concerned about the amount of trade unionism in the town.



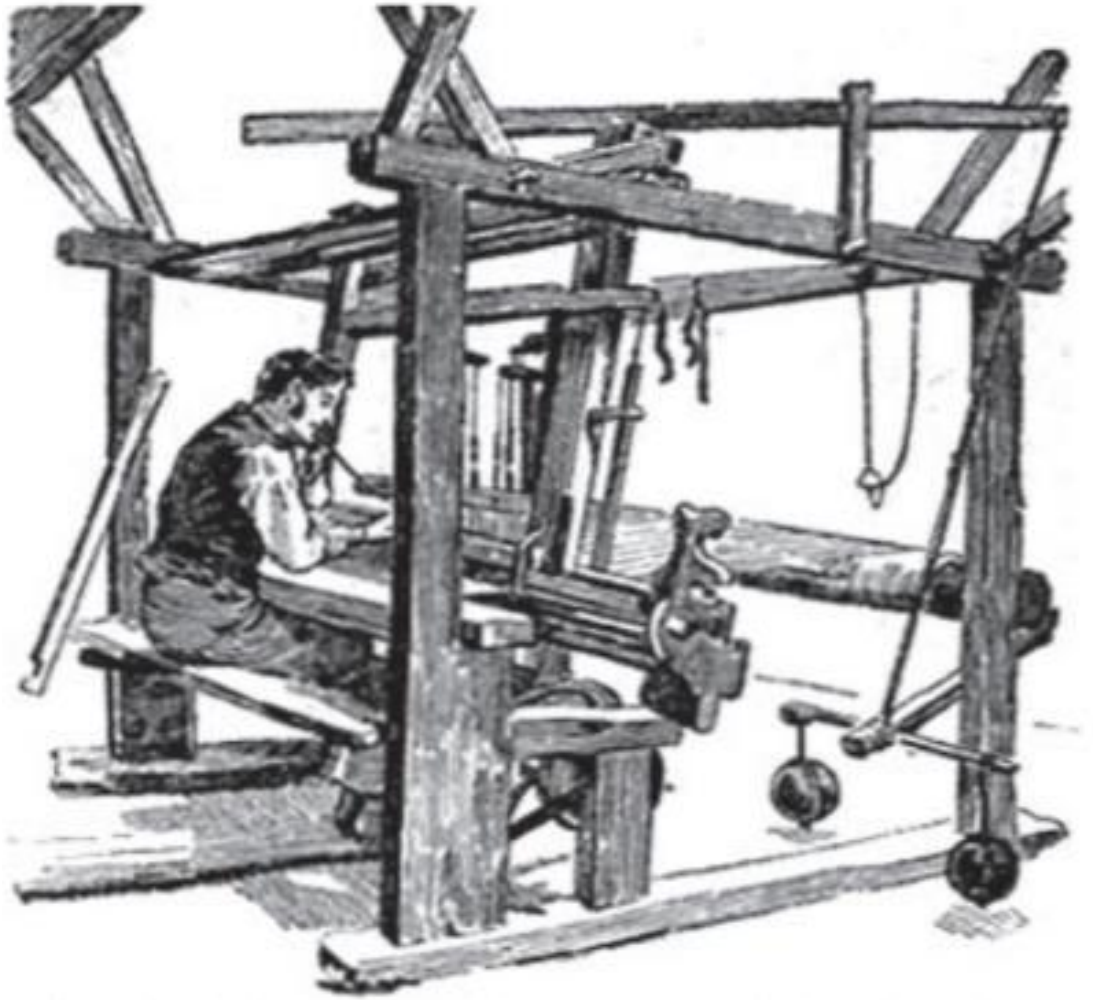
Combination Act 1799

- Series of acts pass in 1799 and 1800 known as the Combination Acts
- Passed by William Pitt the Younger (right) as a response to 'Jacobin activity' (i.e. United Irishmen) and the fear that workers would strike during a conflict to force the government to accede to their demands.
- The legislation drove labour organisations underground.



Fiery times: Francis Johnston

- Francis Johnston was an employer who employed home based weavers.
- In 1815, weavers were in dispute with him and agreed to 'neither weave a web for him…or permit others to work for him'. It was alledged that Johnston had given work to others at lower prices than other employers at the time.
- August 1815: an attempt was made to burn Johnston's home down in Peter Hill. In February 1816, Johnston was burned out of his home.
- A £2k reward given to catch the culprits. Several were arrested. James Park and James Dickson were given 18 months and 300 lashes.
- Two weavers, John Doe and John Magill were hanged for their part outside Bank Budlings (Primark).
- Another weaver, Joseph Madden, was also executed for his part in the attack.
- 1817: John McCann, tried but acquitted for having shot the president of the Weavers' Society with whom he had a dispute.



Combinations of Workmen Act 1825

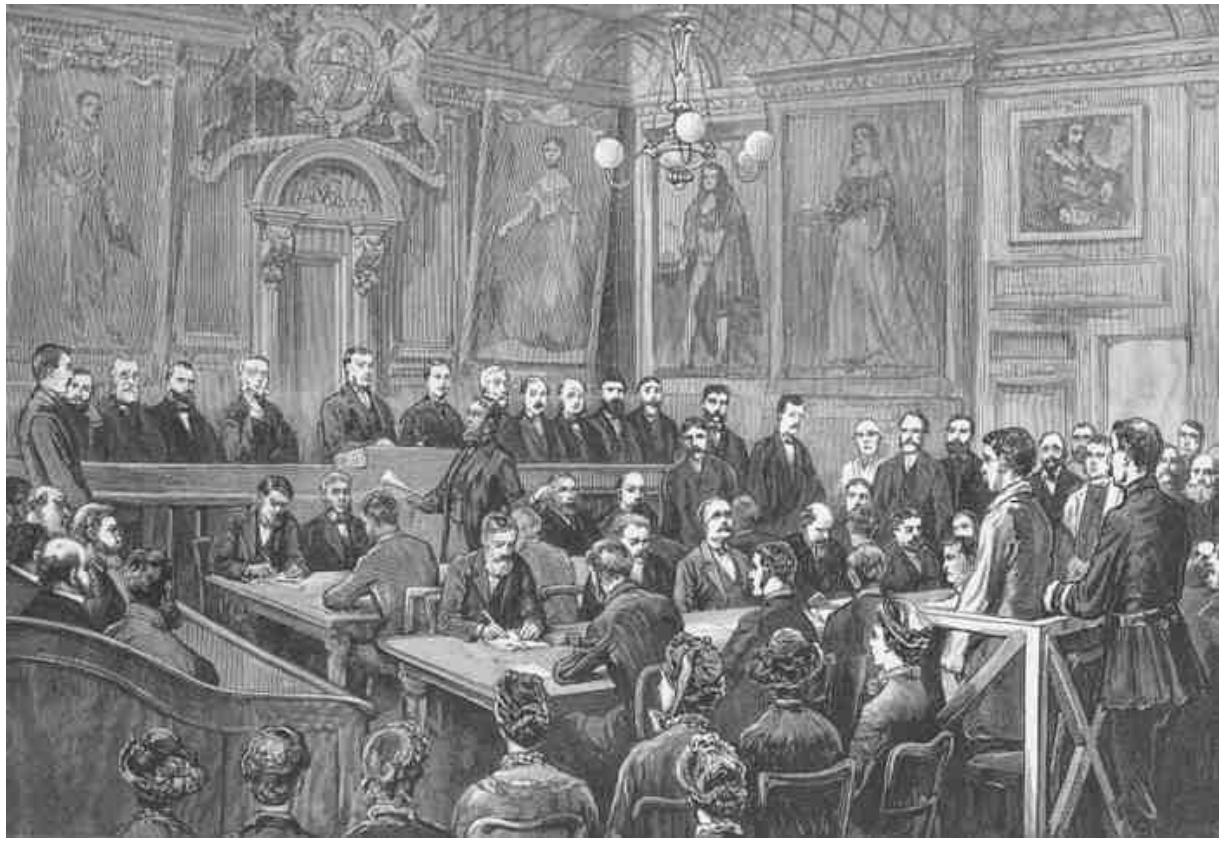
- Allowed trade unions but prohibited them from attempting to collectively bargain for better terms and conditions at work, and suppressed the right to strike.
- This law made illegal any combinations not for the purposes of pressing for wage increases or for a change in working hours.



Legal action against ‘combinations’

- February 1846: A number of men were charged with ‘combination’, for forming an organisation to protect the interests of workers at Messrs. Herdman & Company. The case was dismissed for lack of evidence. Later the same men were charged with conspiracy to injure Mr. Herdman in his business. The proceedings were quashed.

- September 1847: Ten sailors, the crew of the ship ‘Hebe’, bound for Russia, were summoned by their Captain, Mr. Mackenroit, for refusing to go to sea. Magistrates told the crew they must return to their ship or spend one month in the House of Correction. All of the crew refused to return to the ship and serve under the captain and were gaoled for one month.



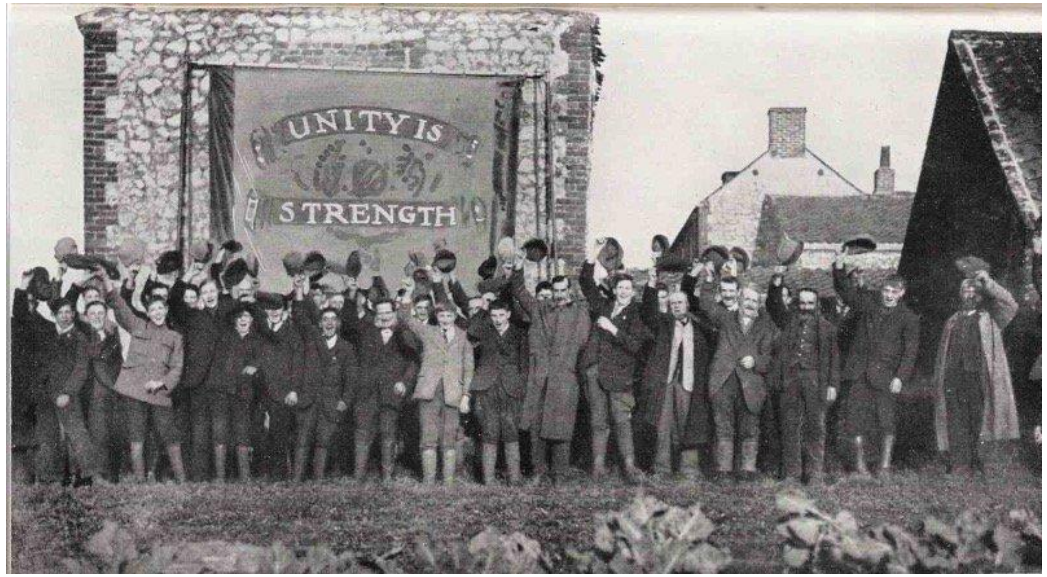
Industrial organisation and activism did take place

- 1811: some cotton weavers joined a UK wide organisation.
- 1815: weavers marched leaving their looms and webs unwoven in protest at a reduction in wages.
- December 1837: A meeting was held by the towns Hand-Loom Weavers. Another meeting was held in the Exchange Rooms by the Belfast Female Servants Friends Society.
- May 1842: A meeting of the Weaver's of Ballymacarret was held to resolve the matter of Mr. Gilbert Vance and his proposed reduction in wages. Four or five hundred people attended. A public meeting of the Belfast Weavers was held concerning the continuing distress and to find a means of procuring employment.



‘Illegal’ strikes did occur

- June 1862: Workmen employed by Mr. William Girdwood, proprietor of the Oldpark Print Works, went on strike due to dissatisfaction arising from the introduction of a larger block for the printing of Madras handkerchiefs than was previously used
- November 1870: The strike of the Belfast quay labourers was brought to a satisfactory and amicable termination. At a meeting of steamboat agents it was agreed that the increase of 2s per week should be granted. The men on strike returned to work as soon as they became aware of this agreement



Royal Commission

- Full Title: Eleventh and Final Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Organization and Rules of Trades Unions and Other Associations
- The Commissioners who wrote the Report were divided, and delivered a Majority Report, and a dissenting Minority Report.



Majority Report

- The Majority Report recommended that trade union internal affairs should be regulated in a manner ‘resembling in some degree that of Corporations.
- It wanted a system of registration, which would give immunity from criminal law.
- Union rules would be subject to approval by the Registrar of Friendly Societies, which would reject rules that restricted entry to trade, had a closed shop objective, or permitted sympathetic action on behalf of other workgroups.



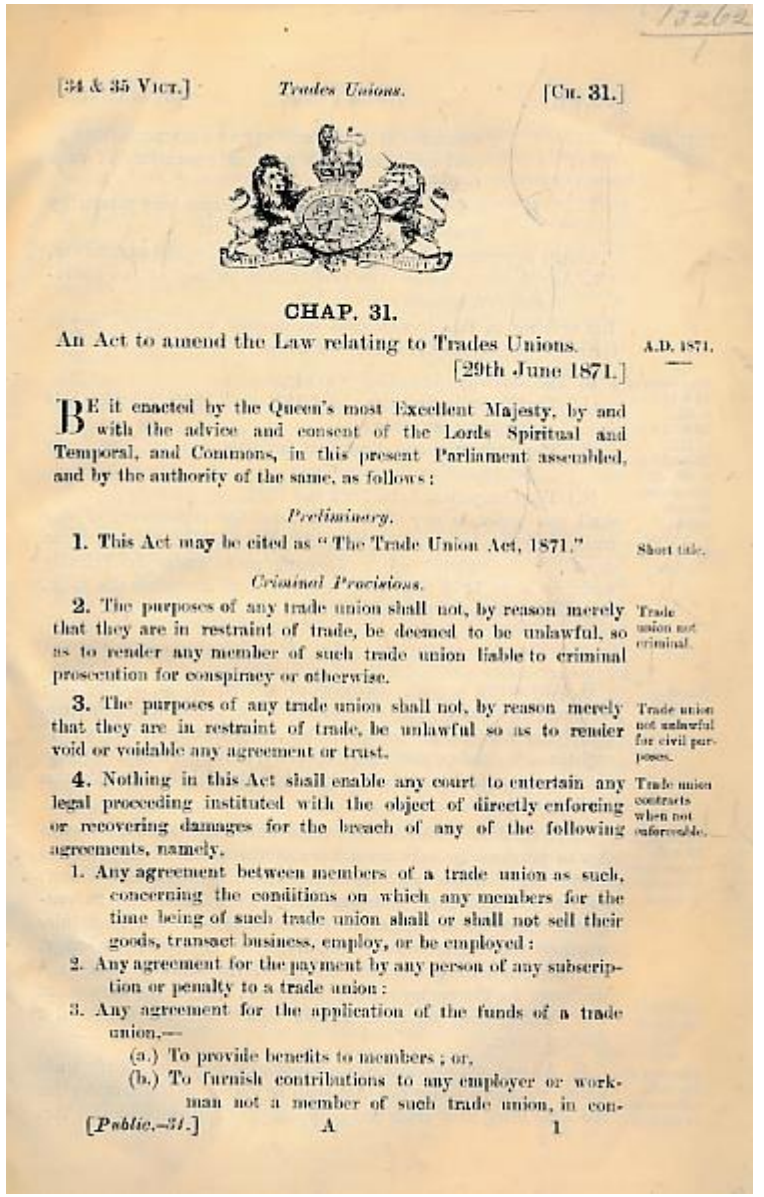
Minority Report

- The Minority Report emphasised the work of unions in providing benefits to their members.
- It recommended they be given sufficient legal status to have immunity from criminal and restraint of trade laws and to enable protection of their funds.
- It wanted rule registration, but no control for the Registrar, except where incomplete or fraudulent, and no legal process over union internal affairs.



Trade Union Act 1871

- The Minority Report was preferred by the Liberal Government, and this led to the Trade Union Act 1871.
- Section 2 provided that the purposes of trade unions should not, although possibly deemed to be in restraint of trade, be deemed unlawful to make any member liable for criminal prosecution.
- Restraints of trade is a common law doctrine relating to the enforceability of contractual restrictions on freedom to conduct business.
- Section 3 said the restraint of trade doctrine should not make any trade union agreements or trusts void or voidable.
- Section 4 stated that any trade union agreements were not directly enforceable or subject to claims for damages for breach. This was designed to ensure that courts did not interfere in union affairs.
- It also allowed union members to access the financial records of the union.



[34 & 35 VICT.] *Trades Unions.* [CH. 31.]

CHAP. 31.

An Act to amend the Law relating to Trades Unions. A.D. 1871.

[29th June 1871.]

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Preliminary.

1. This Act may be cited as "The Trade Union Act, 1871." Short title.

Criminal Provisions.

2. The purposes of any trade union shall not, by reason merely that they are in restraint of trade, be deemed to be unlawful, so as to render any member of such trade union liable to criminal prosecution for conspiracy or otherwise. Trade union not criminal.

3. The purposes of any trade union shall not, by reason merely that they are in restraint of trade, be unlawful so as to render void or voidable any agreement or trust. Trade union not unlawful for civil purposes.

4. Nothing in this Act shall enable any court to entertain any legal proceeding instituted with the object of directly enforcing or recovering damages for the breach of any of the following agreements, namely, Trade union contracts when not enforceable.

1. Any agreement between members of a trade union as such, concerning the conditions on which any members for the time being of such trade union shall or shall not sell their goods, transact business, employ, or be employed:
2. Any agreement for the payment by any person of any subscription or penalty to a trade union:
3. Any agreement for the application of the funds of a trade union,—
   (a.) To provide benefits to members; or,
   (b.) To furnish contributions to any employer or workman not a member of such trade union, in con-

[*Public.—31.*] A 1



Rise of unions

Why form a union?



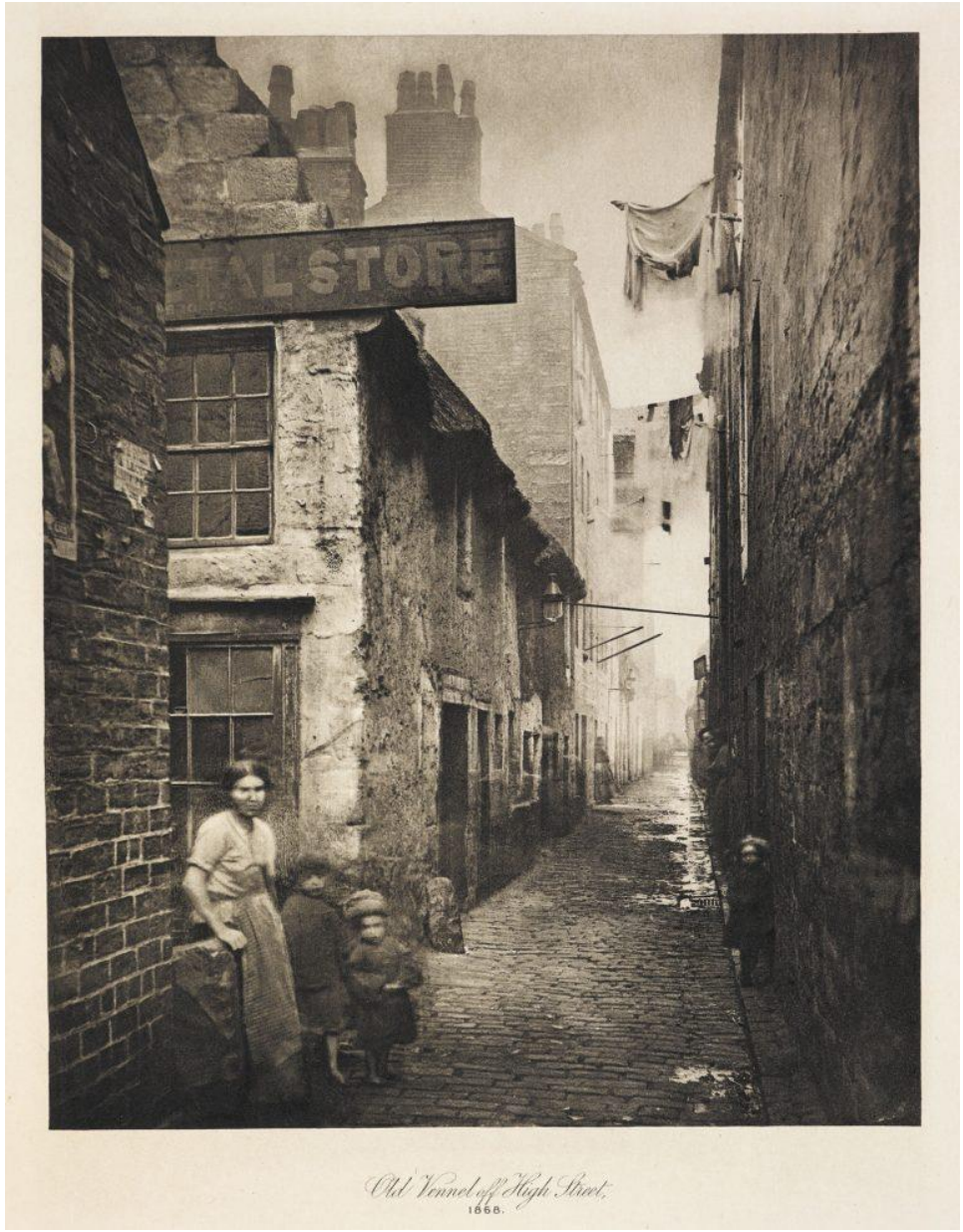
Few workers' rights

- March 1855: A young man named James McCreight was prosecuted for misconduct as an apprentice. He was frequently absent for long periods from his work without any proper excuse. He was sent to jail for a month
- June 1866: William Boyd, Samuel McDonald, William Magee, Robert McMullan, Thomas McMullan, John Dunbar and David McTear were all imprisoned for one month charged by Messrs. Harland & Wolff, Queen's Island, with absenting themselves from their employment without leave.



Arbitrary dismissal

- August 1841: Forty-eight labourers were dismissed from the new Waterworks construction due to ill feeling between the manager and one of the workers. James Bowman, a labourer, sued for wages due for the remainder of the week, but lost his case as magistrates concluded that the men were engaged for work on a daily, not weekly, basis.



Poor working conditions

July 1846: Victor Taylor was sent for trial at the Quarter Sessions for assaulting an iron moulder named Boyd, in connection with the issue of ‘combination’.

James Taylor, a foreman moulder, was dismissed for having allegiance to a ‘club’ rather than to his employers.

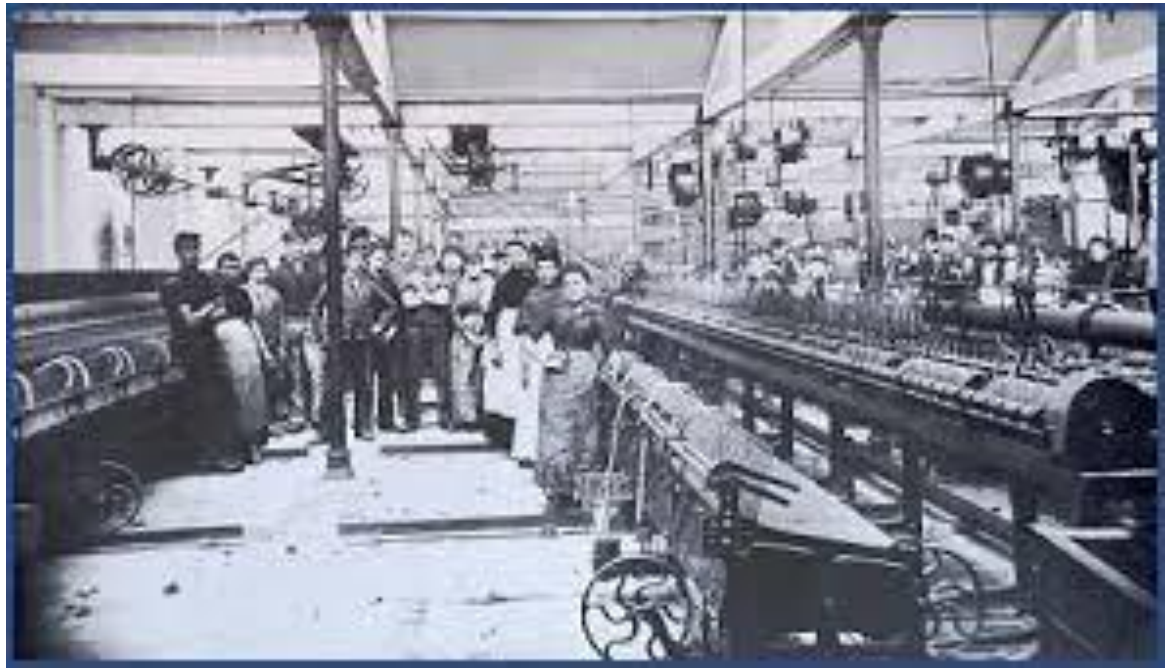
Workers complained about the rules in the foundry, which included being fined:

- 2shillings and 6d for fighting or damaging machinery
- 5-shilling fines for introducing intoxicating liquor
- 6d for leaving a window open.



Insecurity of work

- September 1880: Notices have been posted in nearly all flaxspinning mills in Belfast stating that after 4th October the working week will be reduced from 56 hours to 37 hours. October 1880: Nineteen flax spinning mills began to work short time.
- October 1892: In extensive fire broke out in the ship building works of Messrs. Workman Clark and Company. A brisk wind fanned the flames causing much damage. Three thousand men have been laid off owing to the damage done.



Industrial accidents

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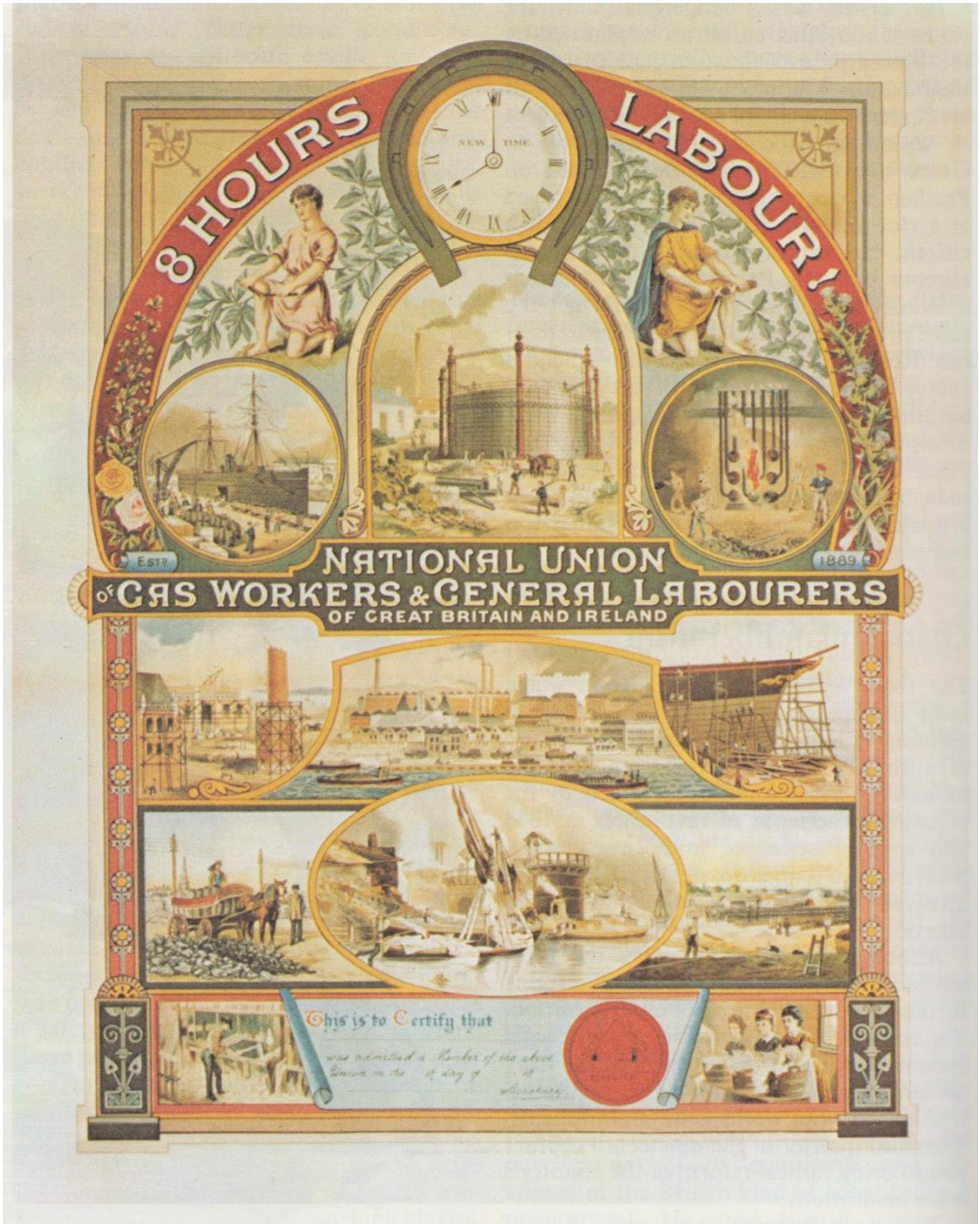
Other factors

- Industrial collectivisation of the workforce into factories made mass action much easier.
- Rise of literacy, mass media and communications.
- New socialist ideas on trade unions (e.g. Marx, Engels, Chartists).
- Decline of deference and rise of individualism
- Focus on people's rights (e.g. Labour movement, Chartists, Suffragettes, franchise movements)
- Community cohesion and solidarity.

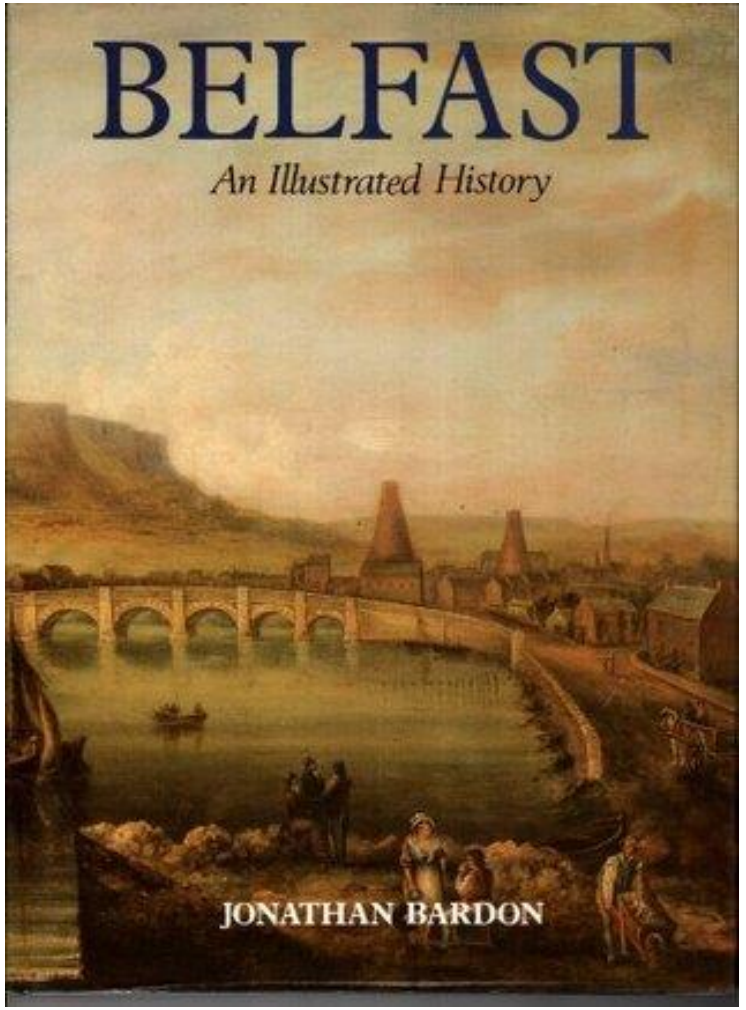


Unionisation of the workforce



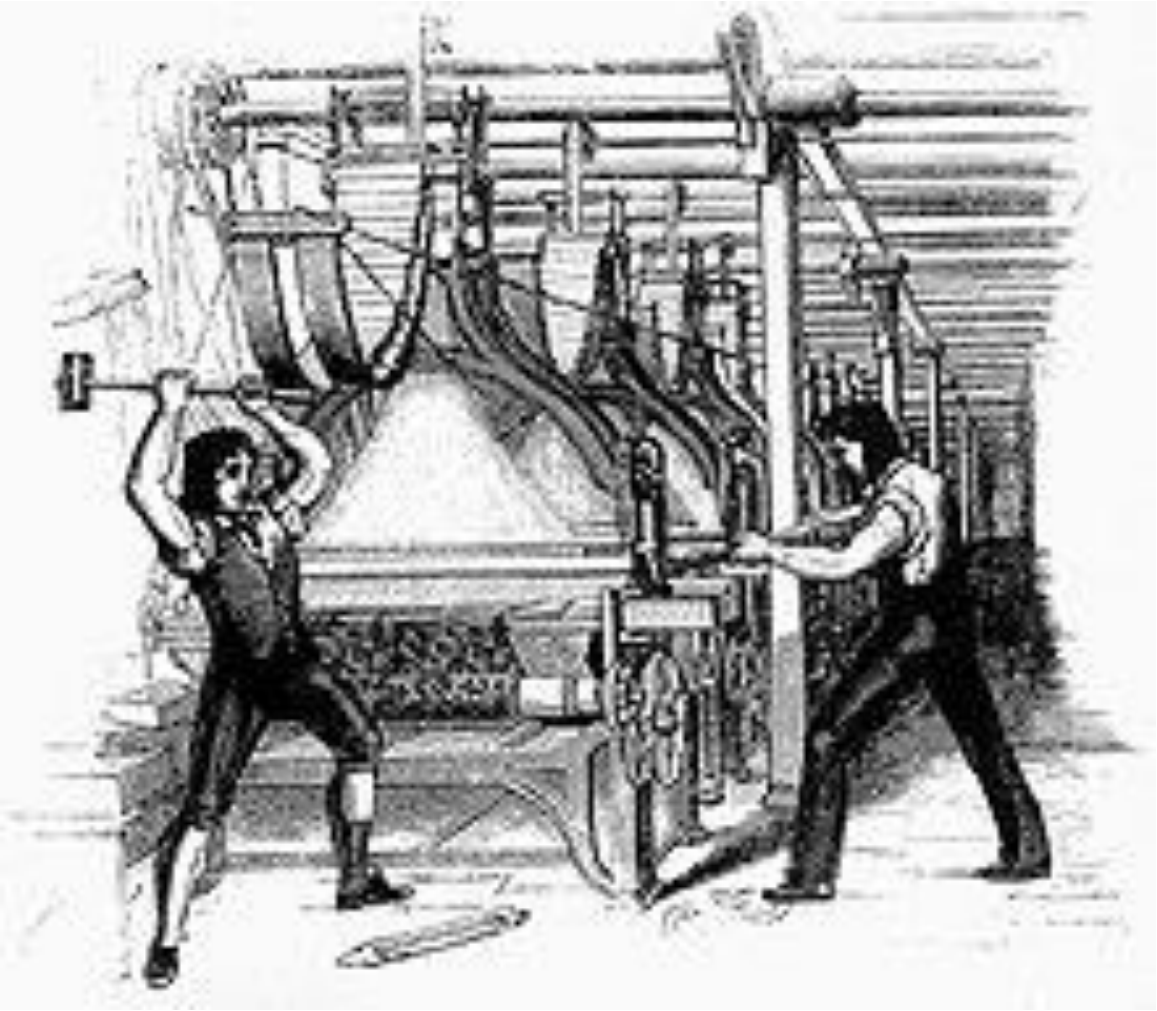
Ireland was slow to unionise (Bardon)

- Ireland was one of the last places in Europe to develop a labour movement.
- The reasons unions did not start to organise in Belfast were:
  - Discontent of the labouring masses expressed through emigration.
  - Many were rural ‘impoverished, unskilled and unassertive people’ from west of the Bann.
  - Sectarian and political differences.



First wave: occupational/trade based unions

- Trade based unions of skilled workers established first.
- 1841: Boilermakers' and Iron and Stell Shipbuilders' union set up.
- 1851: Amalgamated Society of Engineers established with 250 members.
  - 1863: 618 members
  - 1868: 730 members



Collectivisation spreads

- June 1883: Belfast grocers assistants held a meeting at the Bakers Hall, Winecellar Entry to form an association with a view to reducing their hours of work.
- July 1894: meeting of the Postal Telegrapher's Clerk's Association was held in the Forester's Hall, Garfield Street.

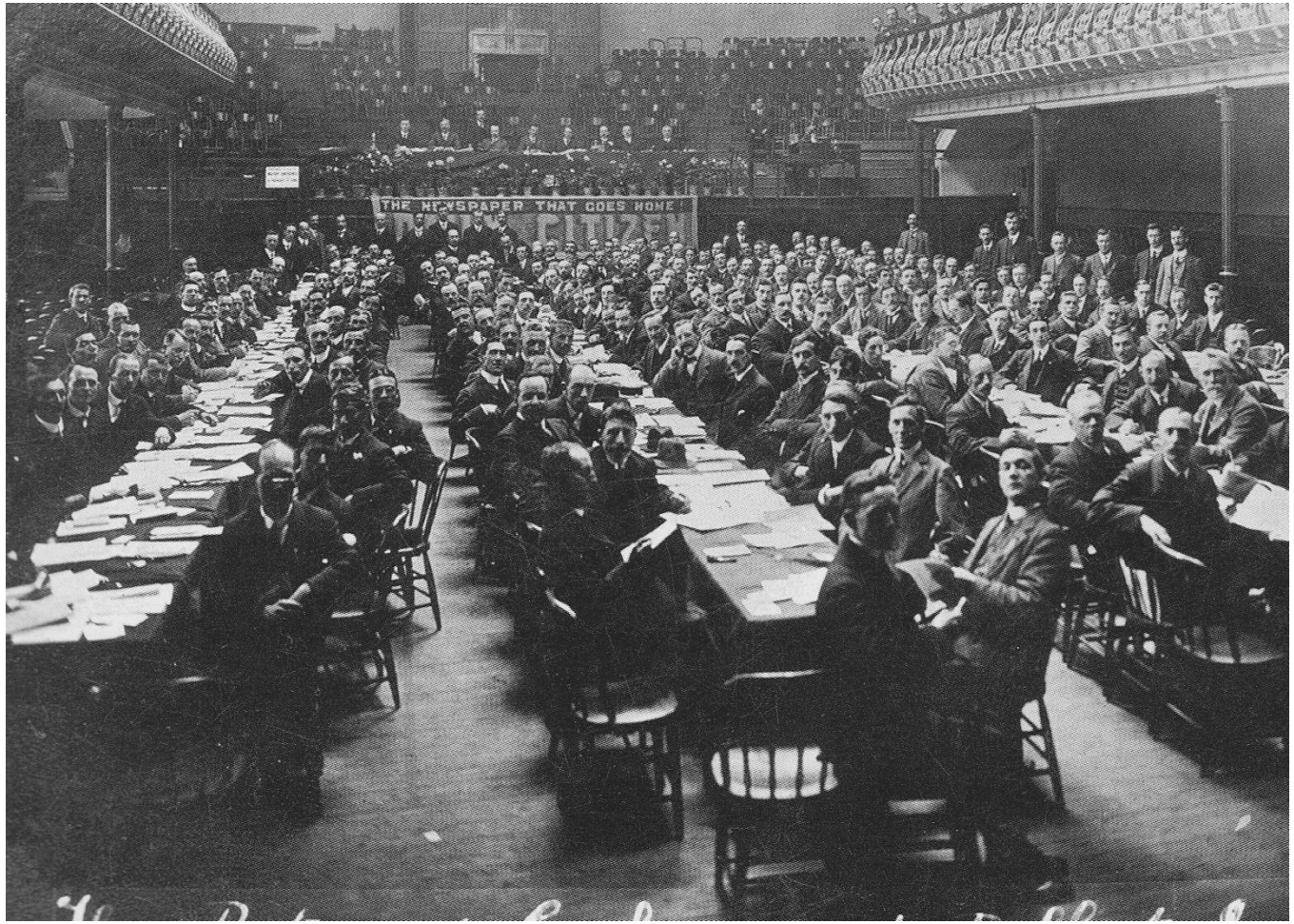


Second wave: ‘new unionism’

- Creation of mass membership unions of largely low or unskilled workers.
- Many unions UK based unions. In Belfast in 1891 the Gasworkers Union of Labour had 2,000 members in the city. This was established in London in 1889.
- Larkin establishes the National Union of Dock Labourers in 1907. Previous branch had collapsed in 1892 depression. Original branch founded in London in 1889.
- UK trade union membership rises from 750k in 1888 to 6m in 1918.



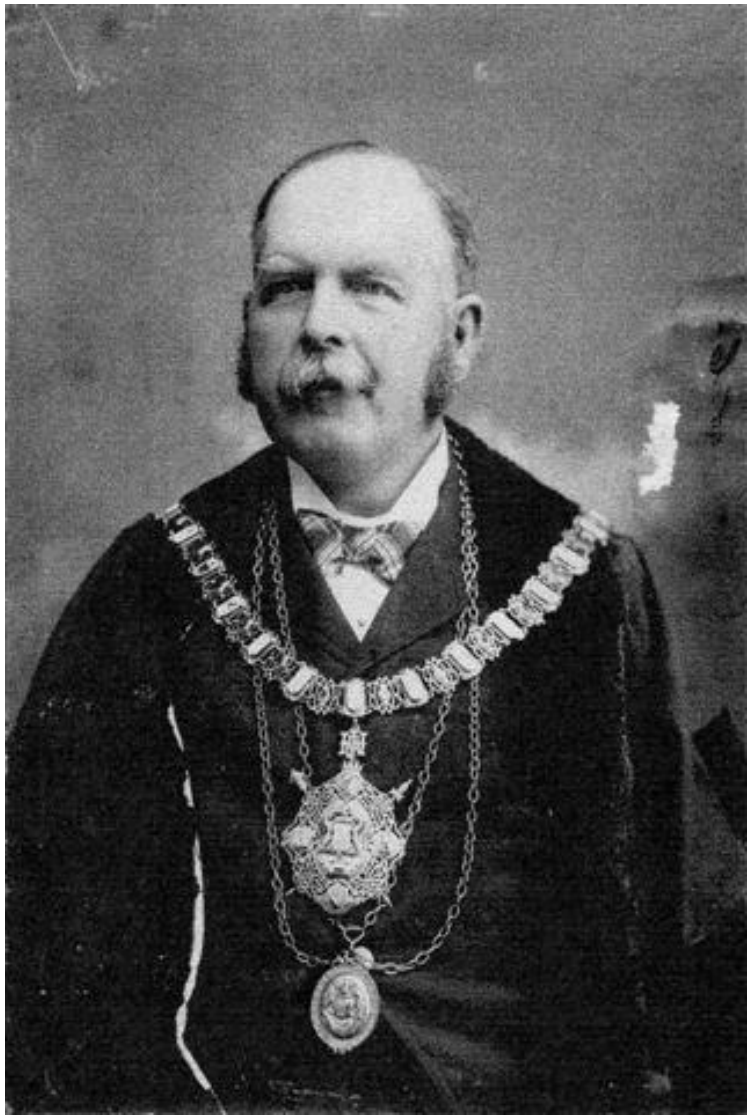
1907 Postman's Conference in the Wellington Hall of the YMCA



1890s: Renumeration or revolution?

- Board of Trade noted in 1896 that most industrial disputes settled by arbitration.
- Sir James Henderson (right), Lord Mayor, said in 1898:

  ‘Belfast was…an Elysium for working men…they had large steel and iron ship-building…the linen industry…and…the largest rope manufacturing establishment in the world’



‘Defence not defiance’

- Craft unions largely co-operated with employers as their workers had relatively high wages.
- They could bargain more effectively and wanted to protect the status and position of their members



Socialist revolution

- Many of the ‘new’ unions had a strong socialist belief
- James Larkin, National Union of Dock Labourers developed an interest in socialism and became a member of the Independent Labour Party in 1893.
- In 1909, Larkin established the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union.
- 1910: committed socialist James Connolly, became involved in in the ITGWU.



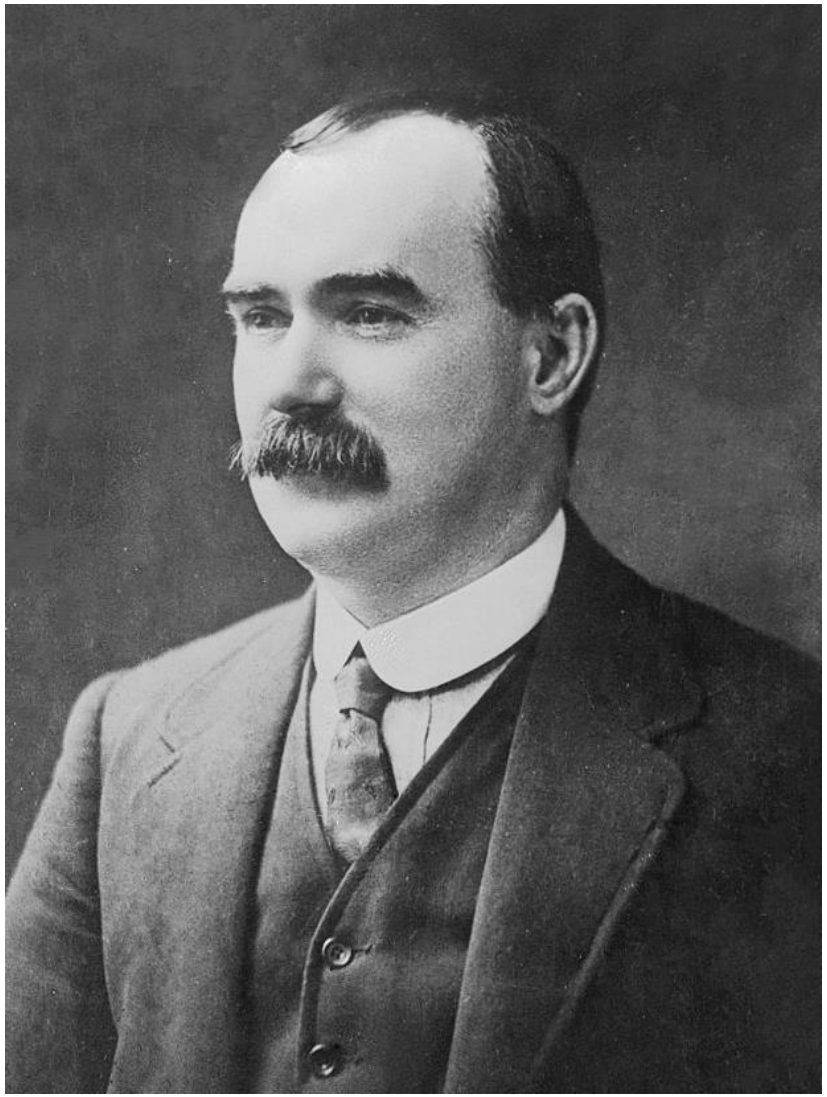
James Connolly, ‘To the Linen Slaves of Belfast

Written to support the textile strike of 1913.

“Many Belfast Mills are slaughterhouses for the women and penitentiaries for the children. But while all the world is deploring your conditions, they also unite in deploring your slavish and servile nature in submitting to them; they unite in wondering of what material these Belfast women are made, who refuse to unite together and fight to better their conditions.”

Irish men have proven themselves to be heroes in fighting to abolish the tyranny of landlordism. Irish women fought heroically in the same cause. Are the Irish working women of Belfast not of the same race?”

Called for linen industry to be under Sweated Factories act and increase of 3d per hour.



Old vs new: competition for members

During the linen workers strike of 1911, when James Connolly opened a women's section of his union, which he named the Irish Textile Workers' Union of which Mary Galway was president.

She clashed with Connolly at a debate at the Belfast Trades Council. She accused him of poaching members, while he retorted that the York Street millworkers had little faith in her readiness to back them.



Third wave - collectivisation

- Unions coming together as ‘national’ entities to lobby for common objectives.
- Small unions joined together into larger ones.



LONDON TRADES' COUNCIL.

REPEAL OF THE CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT.

TO TRADE SOCIETIES,

AND ALL ORGANIZED BODIES OF WORKMEN.

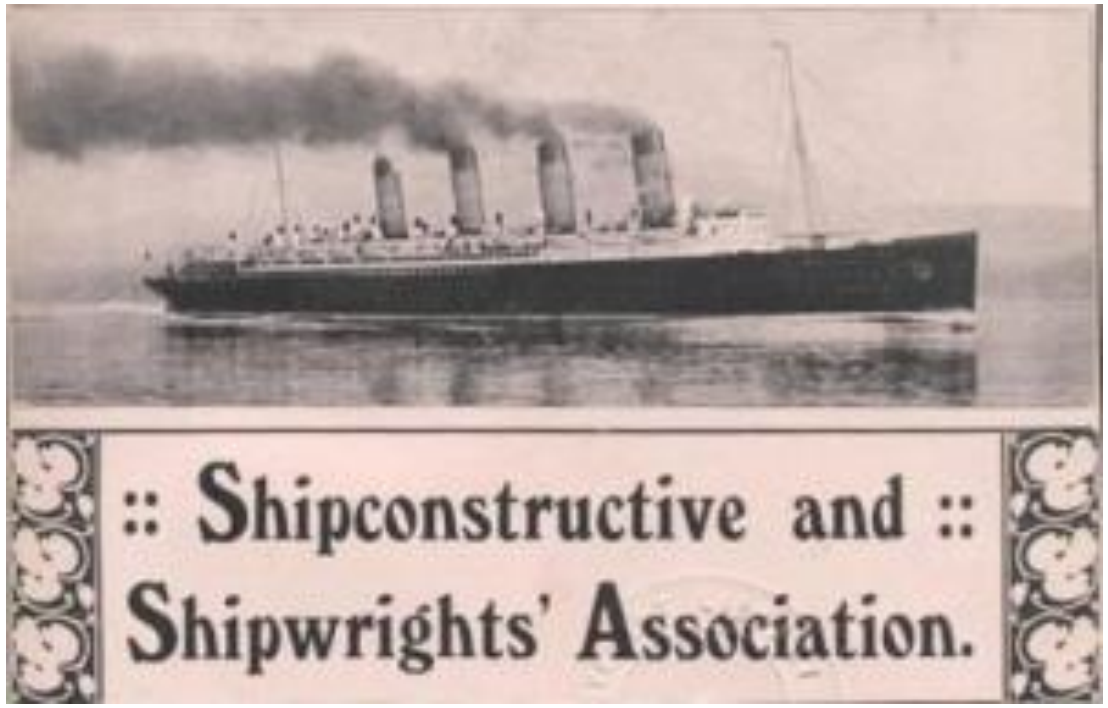
LONDON

TRADES' DEMONSTRATION

Whit-Monday, June 2nd, 1873.

Ship Constructors' and Shipwrights' Association

- 1882 - the Associated Society of Shipwrights was formed from 18 local shipwrights' societies. It later changed its name to the Associated Shipwrights' Society. Between 1882 and 1908 more independent societies joined.
- 1908 - it changed name to the Shipconstructive and Shipwrights' Association after several major amalgamations including the Amalgamated Society of Drillers and Cutters in 1910.
- 1913 - the name was changed again to the Ship Constructors' and Shipwrights' Association.



Belfast Trades Council

- Founded in 1881, Belfast trades council was the biggest and best in Ireland with, in 1897, fifty-six affiliates and 17,500 members; Most of its affiliates were small, local unions representing skilled workers.
- Involved in the Irish Trades Union Congress (ITUC) from its foundation in 1894.
- By 1897, it was the largest trades council in Ireland, representing 17,500 members in 56 affiliates, and that year, it sponsored six successful candidates for the Belfast Corporation
- by comparison, Dublin had 12,000 members, and Cork had 2,000.



Irish Trades Union Congress

- Founded in 1894 to represent recognised trades (i.e. skilled workers)
- Dominated by small craft unions – especially carpenters, printers, tailors.
- 1898 organisations that were not considered ‘trades’ were excluded.



Why form the Irish Trades Union Congress?

- Irish unions had little say in the British TUC
- Wanted an independent Irish voice for workers
- Earlier attempts to form a federation failed twice
- William Walker told Belfast trades council, ‘It seems to be a canon of the amalgamated that ‘no Irishmen need apply’.



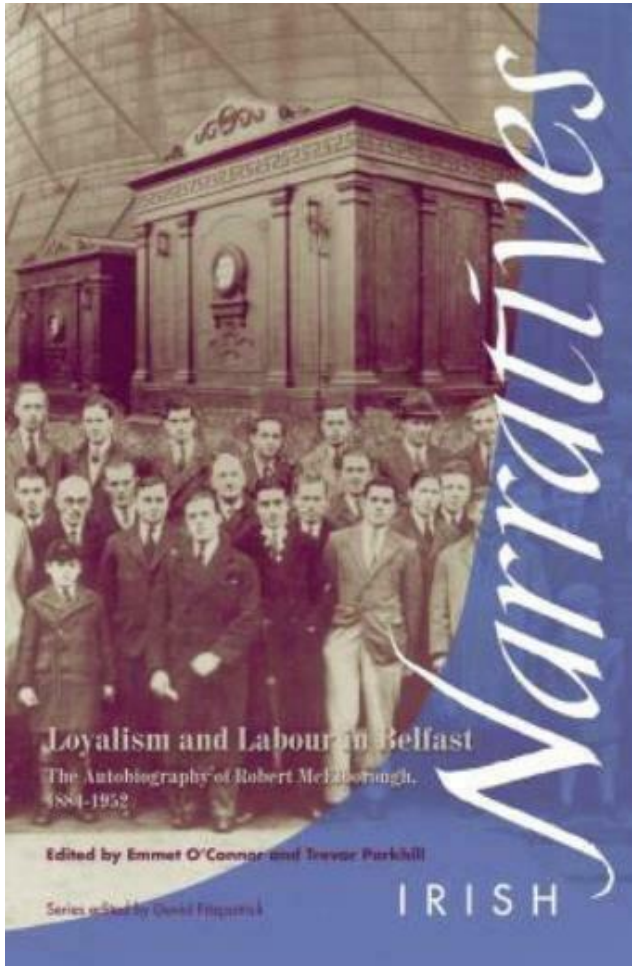
Political organisation of the ITUC

- Early issues discussed as the congress included the 8 hour day and manhood suffrage.
- Calls for nationalisation were initially defeated, but were passed in 1898.
- Some delegates favoured establishing a political fund but leaders had informal links with the Irish Parliamentary Party.
- Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress established in 1912.



Life of an activist: Robert McElbourogh

- Autobiography of Robert McElbourogh.
- Worked for city council as tram conductor and gas fitter.
- Union man who recounts a series of petty victimisation as an activist to organise low paid workers.



Political rise of the labour



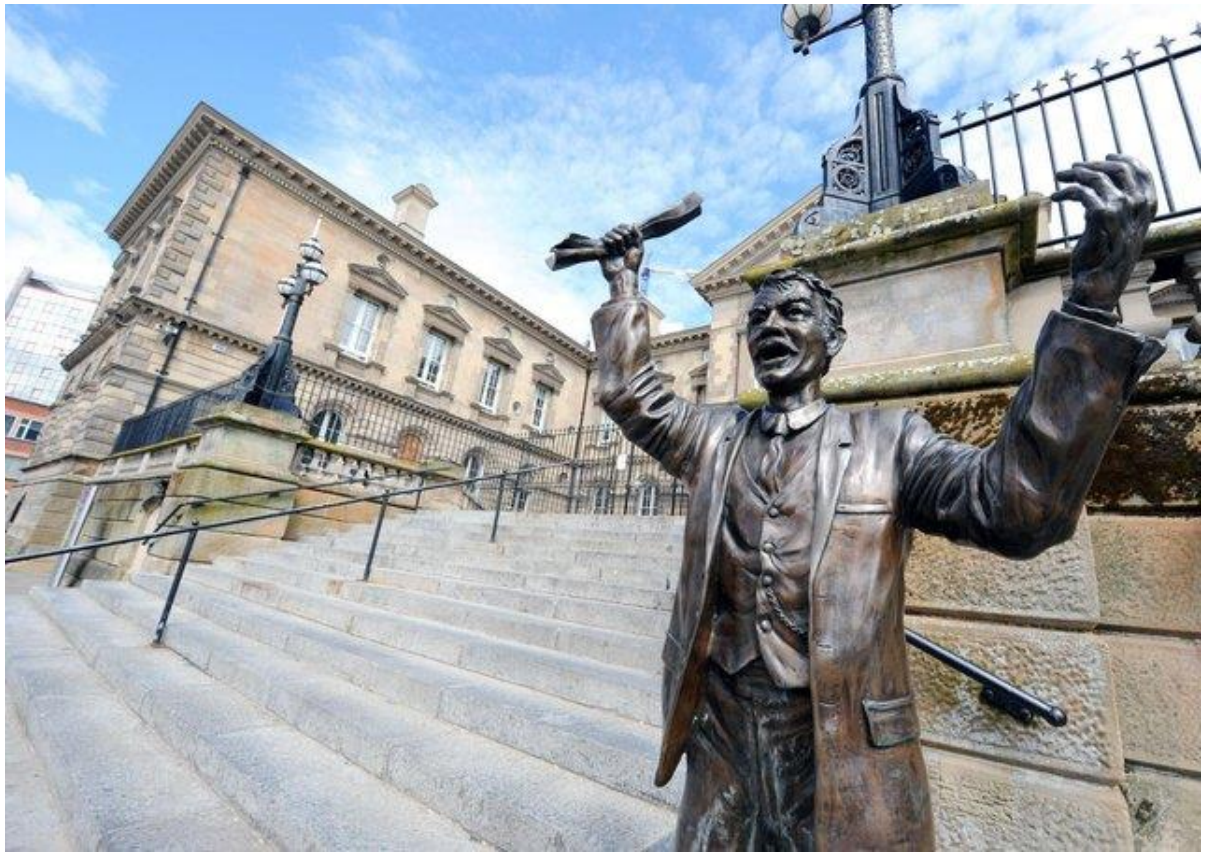
Independent Labour Party

- Founded in 1892, year before the official founding in Bradford.
- TUC conference held in Belfast in September 1893.
- 10,000 people marched to Ormeau Park (right) and held a demonstration there – the biggest display of labour unity in the city.
- However, ILP had problems in establishing an effective party and holding outdoor meetings.



Opposition mounted

- ILP open air meetings in spring and Summer of 1895 met with opposition and protest; RIC protection was necessary.
- They fought the ‘Battle of the Steps’ at the Customs House when trying to hold outdoor meetings.
- For example, September 1895: Disturbances took place at Queen’s Square and Victoria Street in connection with meetings of the Independent Labour Party. Patrick Scullion was summoned for riotous conduct while the Trades Union Procession was passing through Gt. George’s Street. He was fined 40 shillings plus costs.



Why the opposition?

- ILP in England backed Home Rule; many working class people in Belfast associated ILP with Home Rule.
- For example, 1893, Will Thorne, of Gas Workers' Union wore a sash with union colours – white, red, green – which he was persuaded to take off before addressing the crowds at Ormeau Park.



Who attacked the meetings?

- In 1893, anti ILP protesters were complaining about the 2nd Home Rule Bill.
- In 1895, may well have been people associated with the Belfast Protestant Association (Remember St Clements!).
- PCA was against socialism which they saw as ungodly, and ILP was connected to Home Rule.



Why did Labour not make an impact in Belfast?

- Labour politics had an associations with being pro-Home Rule
- Dominance of Home Rule as an issue in people's lives
- Establishment against labour movement e.g. Catholic Church, employers, Unionist parties



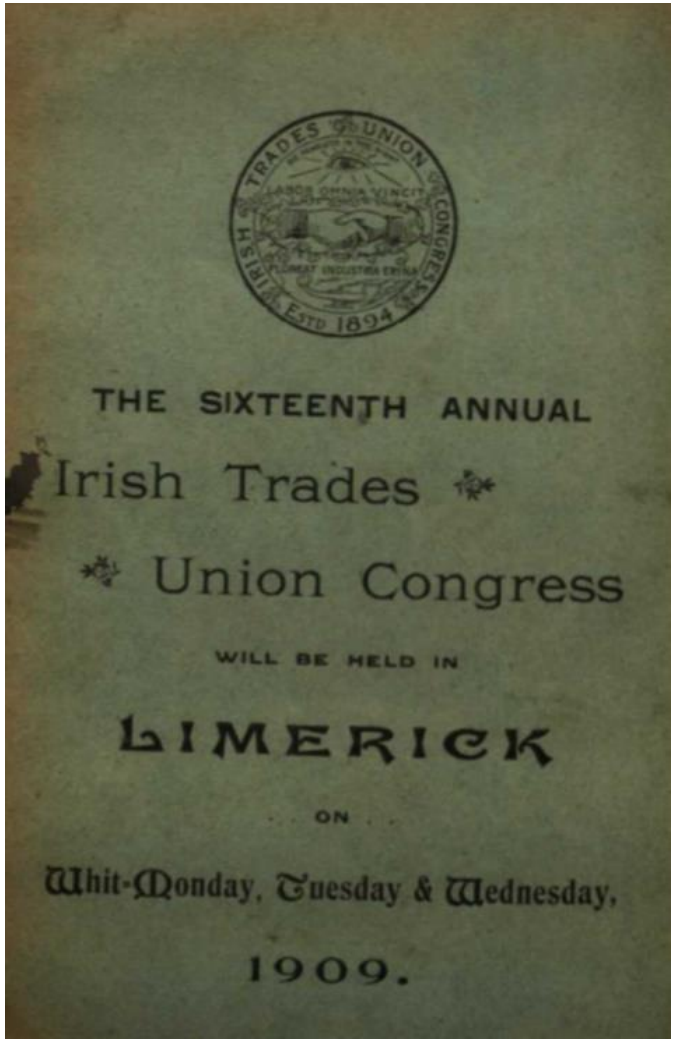
Labour and Home Rule





Position of Irish Trades Union Congress, 1894

"Like the Imperial Parliament, the [British] Congressional machine has become overladen with the multifarious duties and interests committed to its care…they cannot be expected to understand the wants of a community largely agricultural, nor can we hope that they would, so to speak, cut their own throats, by assisting in reviving the languishing manufactures of Ireland"



ITUC remained 'non political' in 1890s/1900s

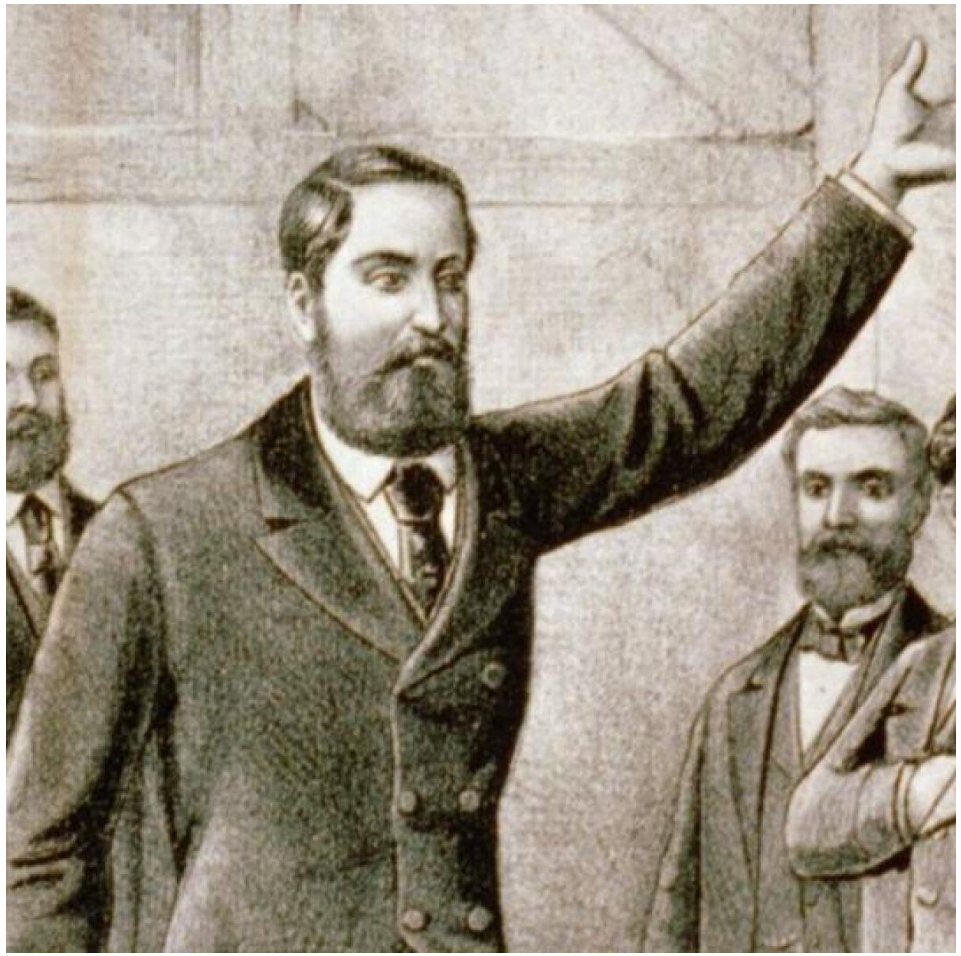
Several reasons:

1890s the Parnell Split (right) in the IPP

Aimed to copy British TUC and was industrial rather than a political body

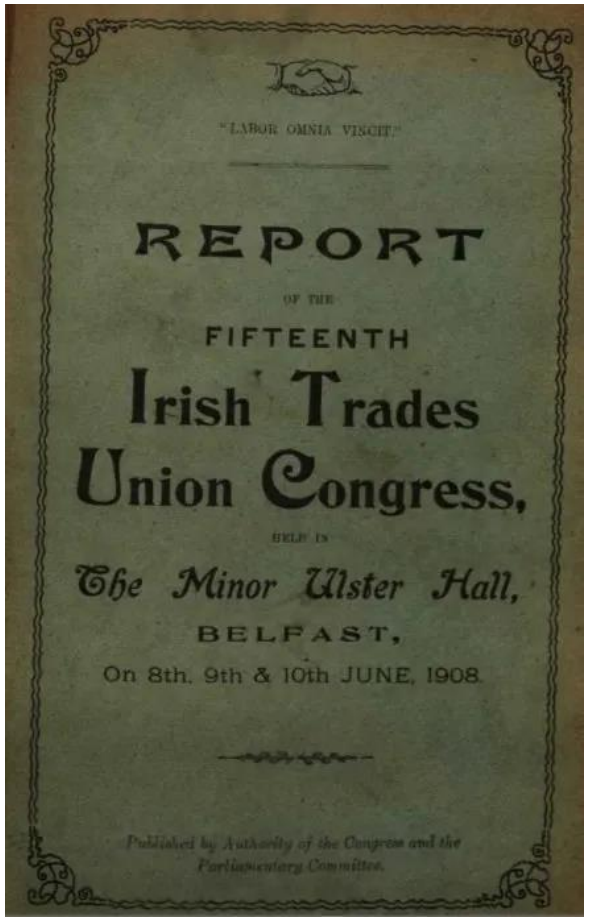
In the 1900s, it dithered about setting up a political representation for fear of isolating the Belfast representatives (i.e. don't talk about Home Rule).

However, Belfast only sent 22% of reps to annual congresses from 1894-1914.



Waiting for home rule…

In 1912, the president of the Irish Trades Union Congress Michael O'Lehane told its delegate conference that: "When such altered circumstances obtain, trades unionism in Ireland will, for the first time, take its natural place in the community, and I, for one, am convinced that that will be no mean place."



ITUC adopts Home Rule (slowly and quietly), 1910s

Two factors made this happen:

- Jim Larkin and his Irish Transport and General Workers Union persuaded the ITUC to establish an Irish Labour Party
- Home Rule seemed imminent and labour representation would be needed in the new assembly.



Position of the Belfast Trades' Council

- 1886: Alexander Bowman, Secretary of the TC, forced to resight for supporting Home Rule.
- 1897: All six candidates of the BTC put forward for the Corporation were, according to the BNL "on a platform which has more to do with the interests of trade unionism than with the interest of any political party"



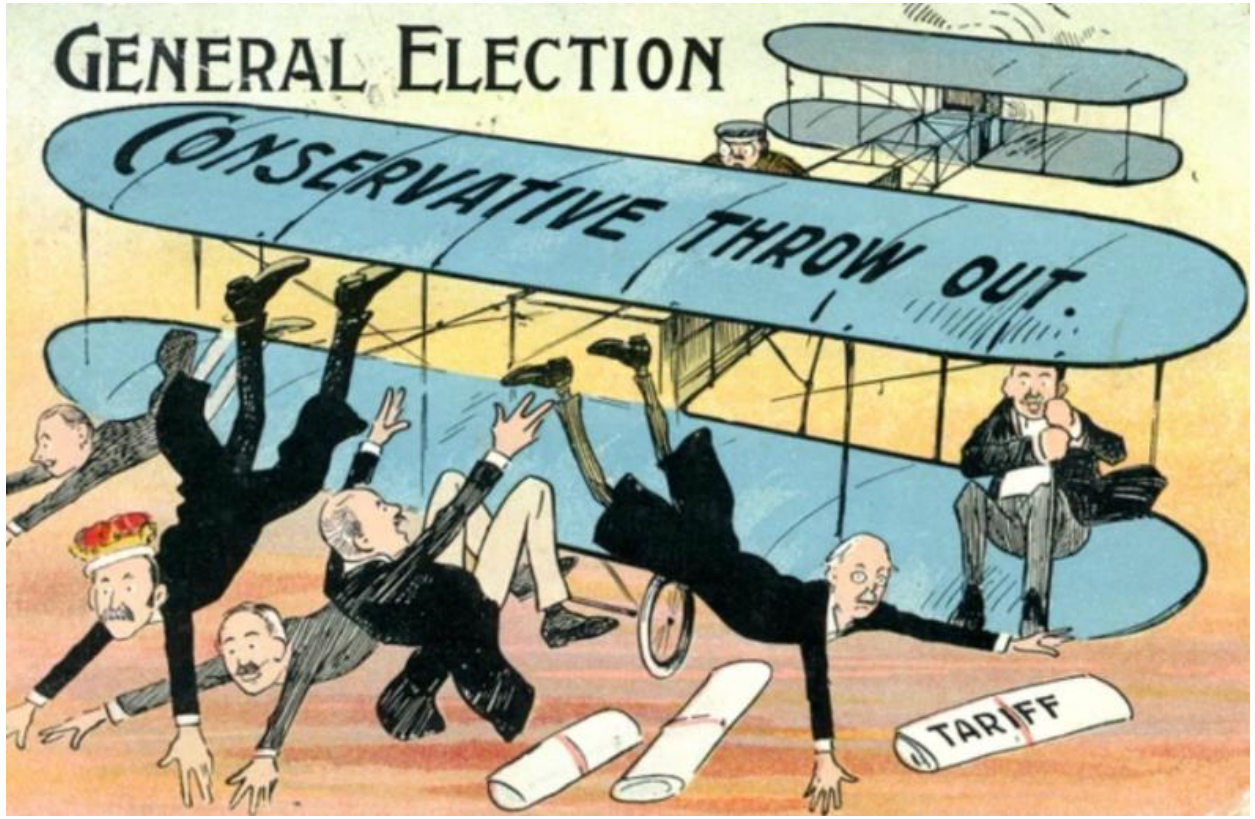
William Walker's influence

- Walker was a trade unionist and unionist (right).
- 1908: William Walker persuaded the BTC to affiliate with the Labour Representation Committee.
- His argument in his pamphlet The Irish Question was:
  - Critical of Unionists and Nationalists for their obsession with constitutional ideas.
  - The point was good government, and this was most likely to come from the Labour Party at Westminster.
  - Therefore, what better way of strengthening the Union than by joining a British party?



BTC's declining power

- Many unionists saw ILP as a Home Rule party.
- Steady fall in affiliations from 63 in 1907, to 40 in 1911, and 32 in 1913.
- Many in the Council saw the Liberal Reforms of 1906-14 as helping labour but the association with the Liberal government made Unionists more anti-labour.



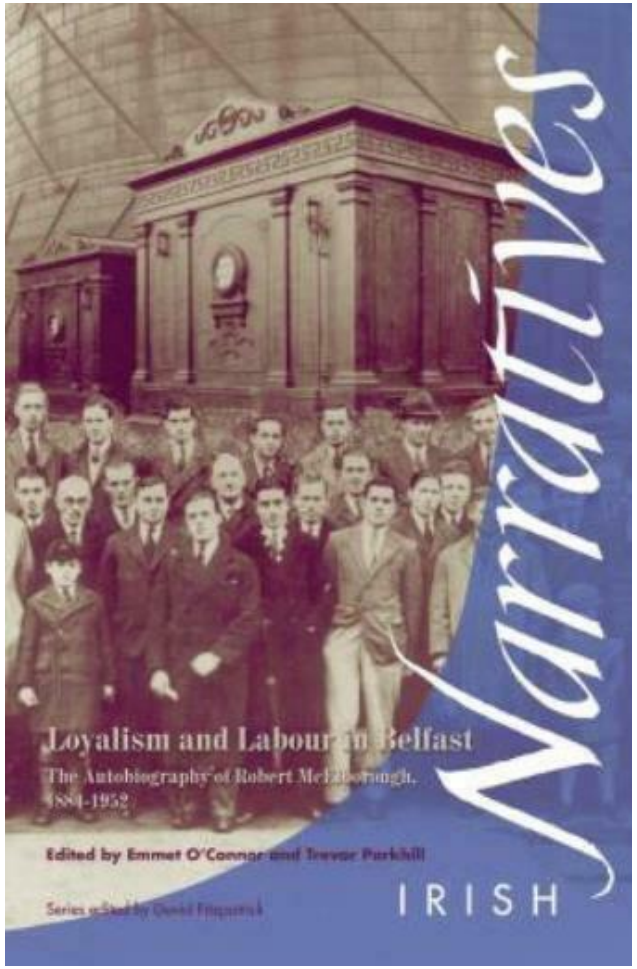
Unionists' fears

- Home Rule would mean 'Rome rule'.
- A Dublin parliament would introduce tariffs and destroy the free trade on which Belfast's international business and prosperity had been built.
- Ordinary working men would lost their work.



For example: Robert McElbourogh: unionist and trade unionist

- Attempted to take a neutral stance but was anti Home Rule.
- Proud of Ulster Scots heritage.
- Belief that TU rights could only be protected by local Belfast based unions.
- He believed that England based unions did not understand their issues (i.e. the impact of Home Rule)



What was the result of Home Rule debate on labour?

- Labour disputes were tinged with Home Rule question.
- Sectarian differences made hard for unions to unite in common cause.
- Many Unionist trade unionists were UUP supporters which may have been against their own interests.
- Home Rule overshadowed the cause of labour

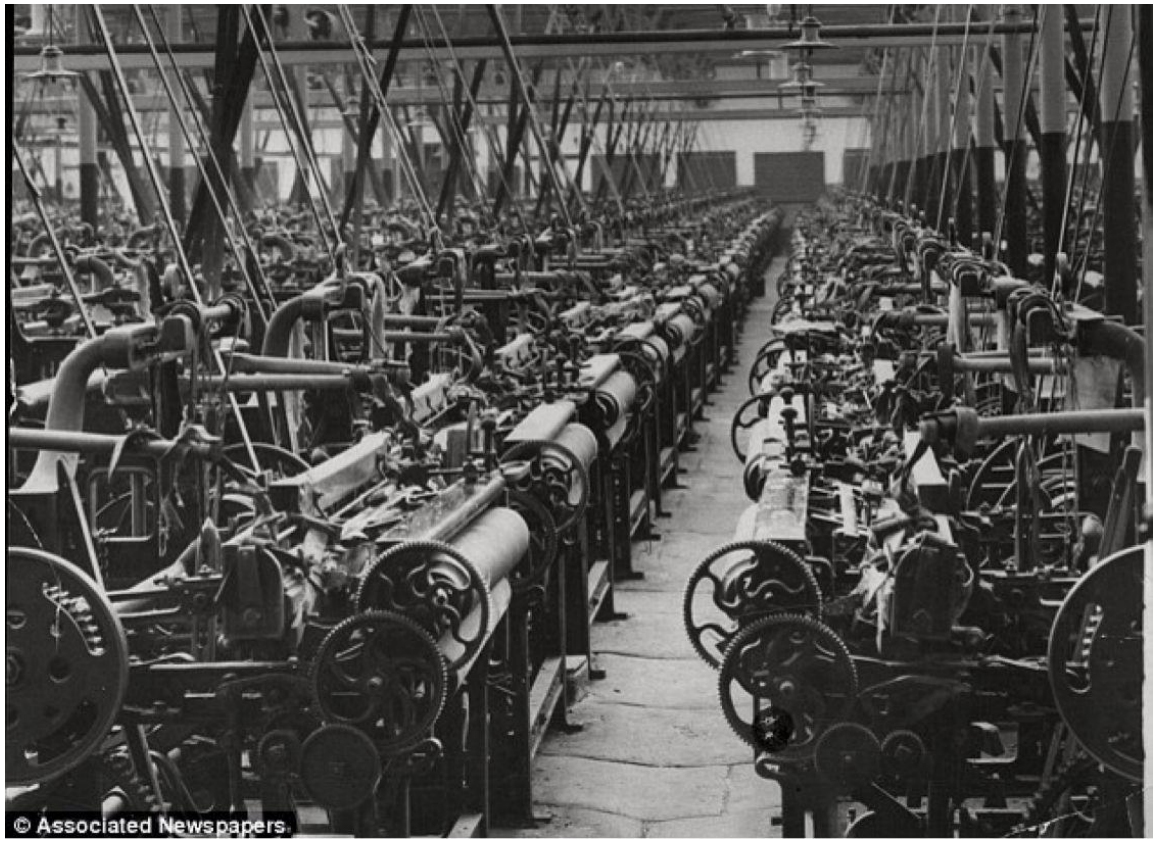




The response of employers to unions

Anti-Union Efforts

- Employers resisted unions and collective bargaining.
- Concerns about labour costs and workplace control
- Employers' use of lockouts during labour disputes.
- Example: The Belfast Dock Strike of 1907 (more later)
- Employers maintaining blacklists of union activists. Hindrance for union members seeking employment



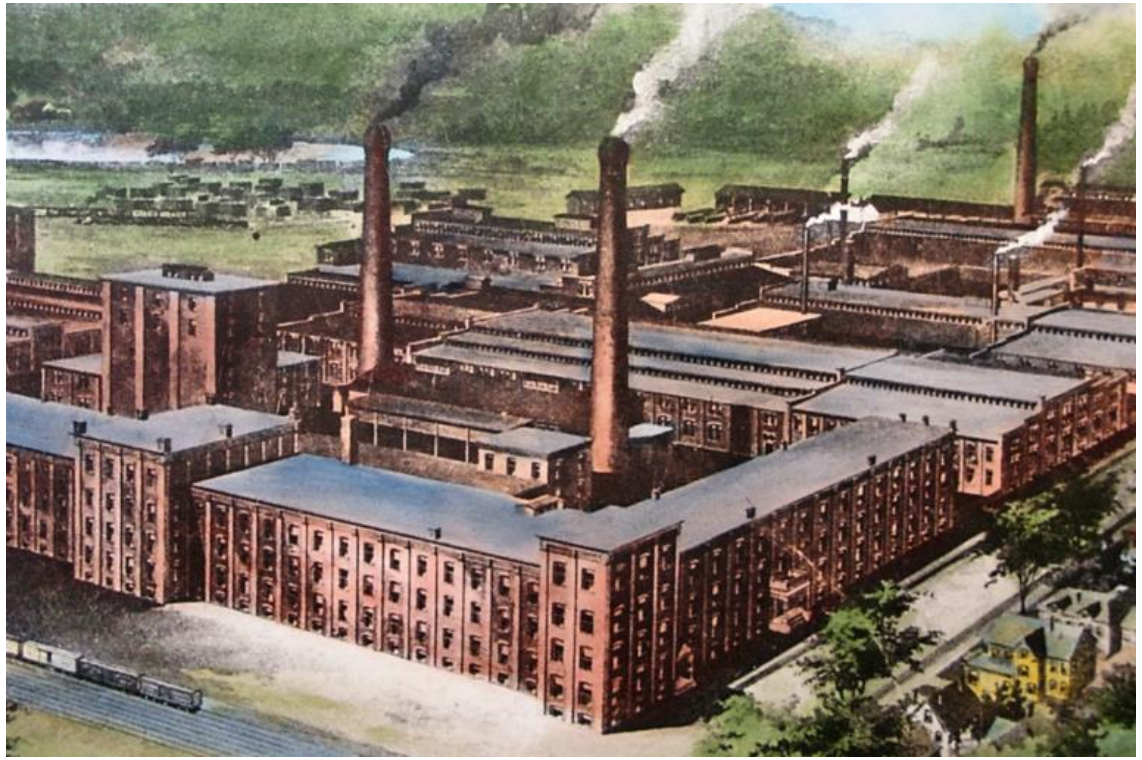
Other actions

- Employers using legal measures against unions. Examples of legal actions against striking workers
- Hiring strikebreakers during strikes. Example: Belfast Engineering Strike of 1919
- Employers using informants to gather information. Informants reporting on union activities



Employers' associations

1. **Advocacy:** They advocated for the interests and concerns of their members, whether those were related to trade policies, regulatory issues, labor conditions, or industry-specific challenges.
2. **Negotiation:** They engaged in negotiations with government bodies, labor unions, and other stakeholders to secure favorable conditions, such as trade agreements, labour agreements, or industry standards.
3. **Networking:** These organizations provided a platform for members to network, share information, and collaborate on common issues. They facilitated communication and cooperation among businesses or individuals within a particular field.
4. **Information Sharing:** They often served as sources of industry-specific information, disseminating knowledge about best practices, technological advancements, and market trends.
5. **Protection of Interests:** One of the fundamental purposes was to protect the interests of their members, which could include economic interests, working conditions, and the overall health of their respective industries.



Employer Associations

1. Belfast Shipbuilders' Association (Late 19th century): Formed to represent the shipbuilding industry in Belfast, this association worked to protect and advance the interests of local shipbuilders.

2. Belfast Chamber of Commerce (1852): An organization established in 1852, the Chamber of Commerce aimed to promote the business and commercial interests of the city, advocating for economic growth and trade.

3. Linen Employers' Association (19th century): This association was founded to represent the interests of linen manufacturers in Belfast, one of the key industries in the city during this period.

4. Belfast Steamship Owners' Association (Late 19th century): Established to represent the shipping and maritime industry, this organization worked on behalf of ship owners and operators in Belfast.

5. Belfast and District Trades Council (Late 19th century): Formed to bring together various trade unions, this council represented the interests of labor and workers in the city, focusing on workers' rights and conditions.

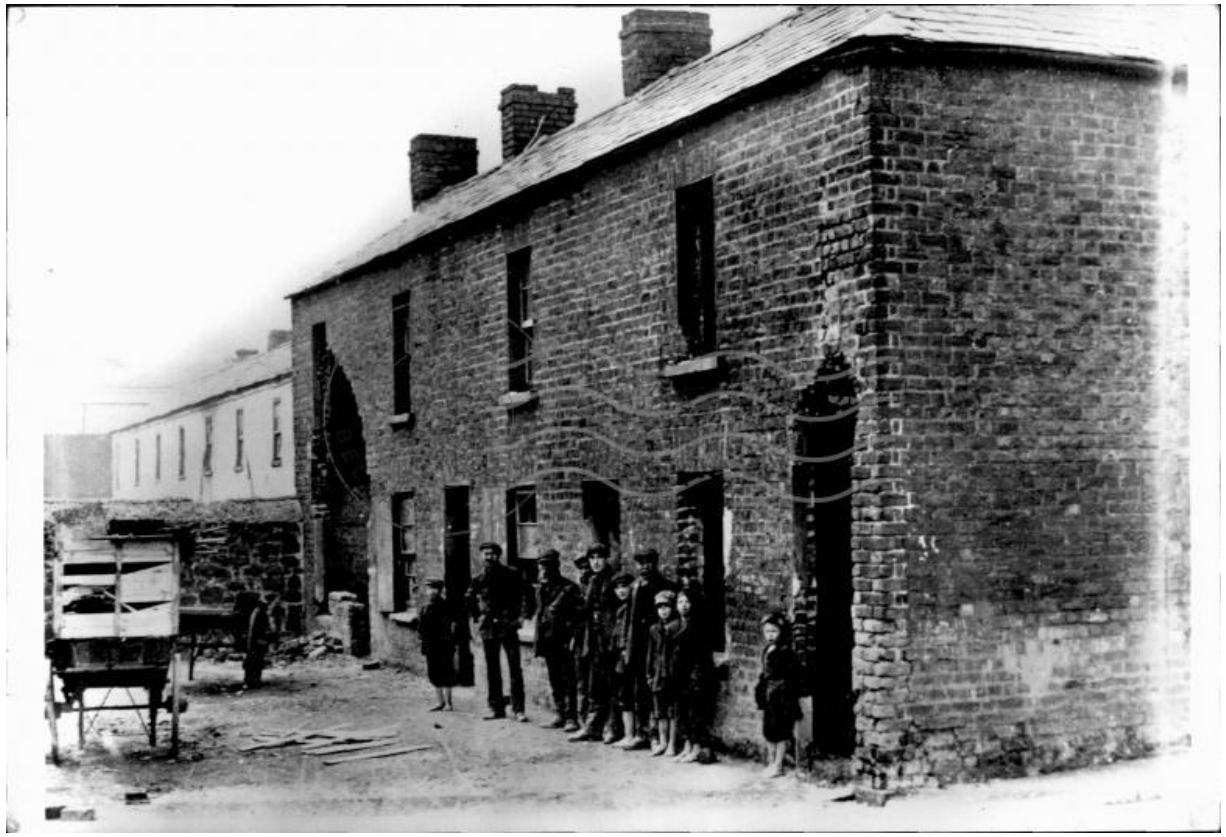
6. Belfast Master Builders' Association (Late 19th century): Representing the construction and building industry, this association was formed to promote the interests of builders and contractors in Belfast.

7. Belfast Jute Employers' Association (Late 19th century): Reflecting the importance of the jute industry, this association represented the interests of jute manufacturers in Belfast.

8. Belfast Flour Millers' Association (Late 19th century): Established to support the flour milling industry in Belfast, this association advocated for the interests of millers.

Housing and Welfare

- Some employers in Belfast built housing for their workers near the factories, known as "company towns." These houses were often of better quality than the workers' previous accommodations. For example, linen manufacturers like the Mulholland family provided housing for their employees in the area around Bessbrook in County Armagh.
- Companies also offered welfare programs, including healthcare services, to their workers and their families. For instance, the York Street Flax Spinning Company in Belfast established a dispensary to provide medical care for its employees.



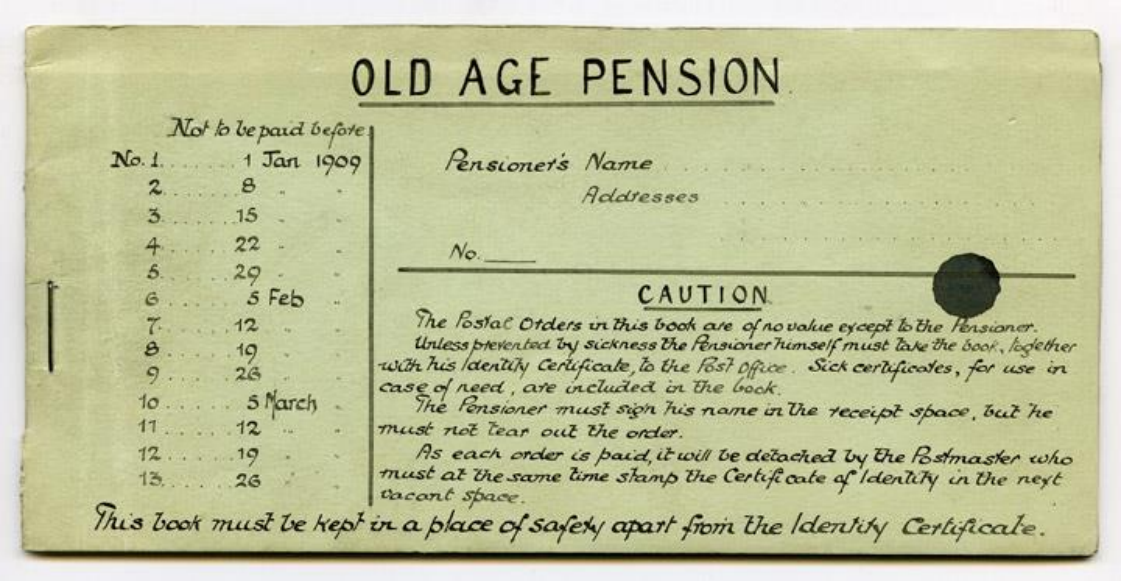
Education and Recreation

- Employers recognized the value of an educated workforce and sometimes established schools for the children of their workers. For example, the Belfast Ropeworks Company opened a school for the children of its employees.
- Companies also invested in recreational facilities and activities to improve the lives of their workers. The example of the Musgrave Channel Works in Belfast, which offered a range of sporting and social activities, including a brass band, showcases this approach.



Pension and Savings Schemes

- Some companies introduced pension and savings schemes to encourage long-term employment and financial stability among their workers. A notable example is the work of Sir Thomas and Sir William Dixon, who were shipbuilders in Belfast. They introduced a contributory pension scheme in the early 1900s for their employees, which was progressive for its time.
- The Ulster Spinning Company in Belfast implemented a savings bank for its workers, enabling them to save a portion of their wages, with the company contributing as well. This approach aimed to promote thrift and financial responsibility among the workforce.



Educational Support

- Besides schools for children, some employers offered adult education programs. The Musgrave Channel Works, for instance, organized evening classes for its workers to improve their skills and knowledge.
- Companies sometimes provided libraries or reading rooms to encourage self-education and personal development among their employees.



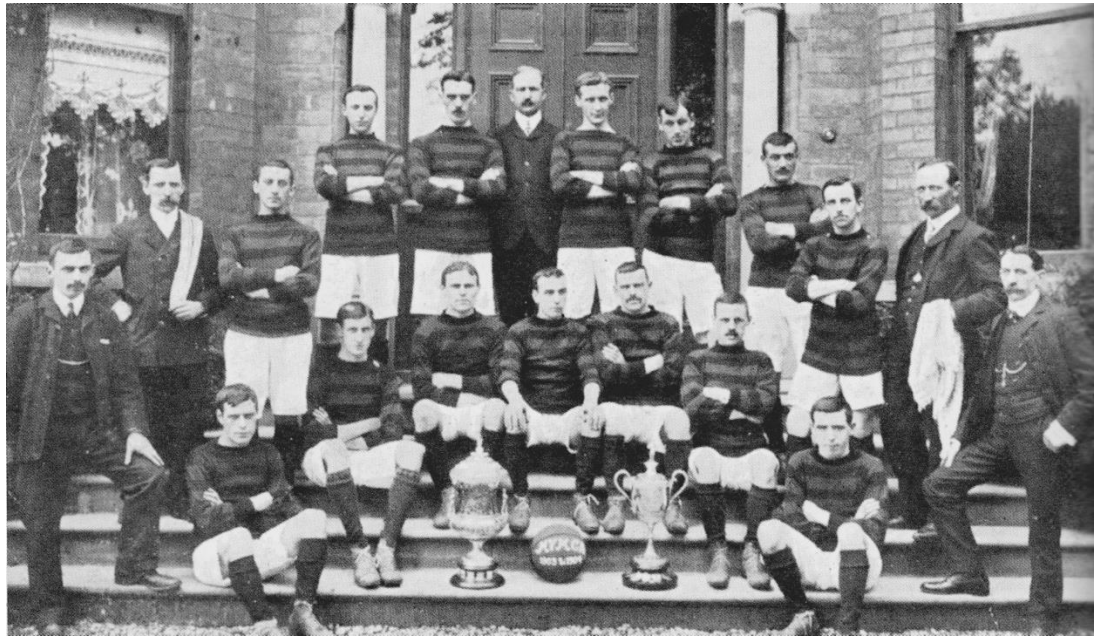
Healthcare Services

- Companies in Belfast occasionally provided on-site healthcare services to their employees. For example, the Belfast shipyard Harland and Wolff had its own hospital and medical staff to attend to the health needs of its workers.
- The Belfast Distillery Company not only provided healthcare but also maintained a pharmacy to offer medicines to employees and their families at reduced rates.



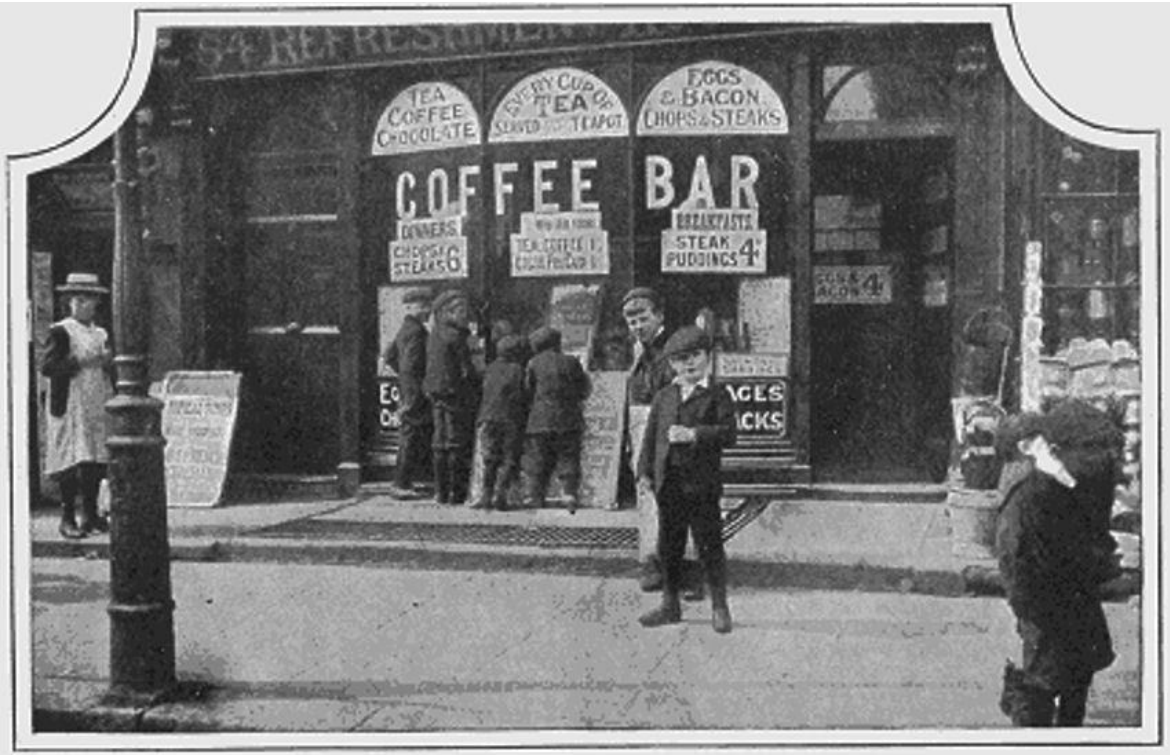
Recreational Facilities

- Employers invested in recreational facilities such as sports fields, gymnasiums, and clubhouses. For instance, the Belfast Rope and Twine Company established a sports club for its workers, providing facilities for various sports and social activities.
- Some companies in Belfast even supported the development of soccer and cricket teams, enabling their workers to engage in sports and compete with teams from other companies.



Employee Cafeterias and Dining Halls

- Industrial employers in Belfast often provided employee cafeterias or dining halls where workers could access affordable and nutritious meals. For example, the Belfast Ropeworks Company operated a dining hall to ensure that its workers had access to wholesome food during their breaks.
- The Ulster Spinning Company also had a cafeteria where employees could purchase meals at subsidized rates, making it convenient for them to have a proper lunch during their workday.



AN APPETISING DISPLAY.

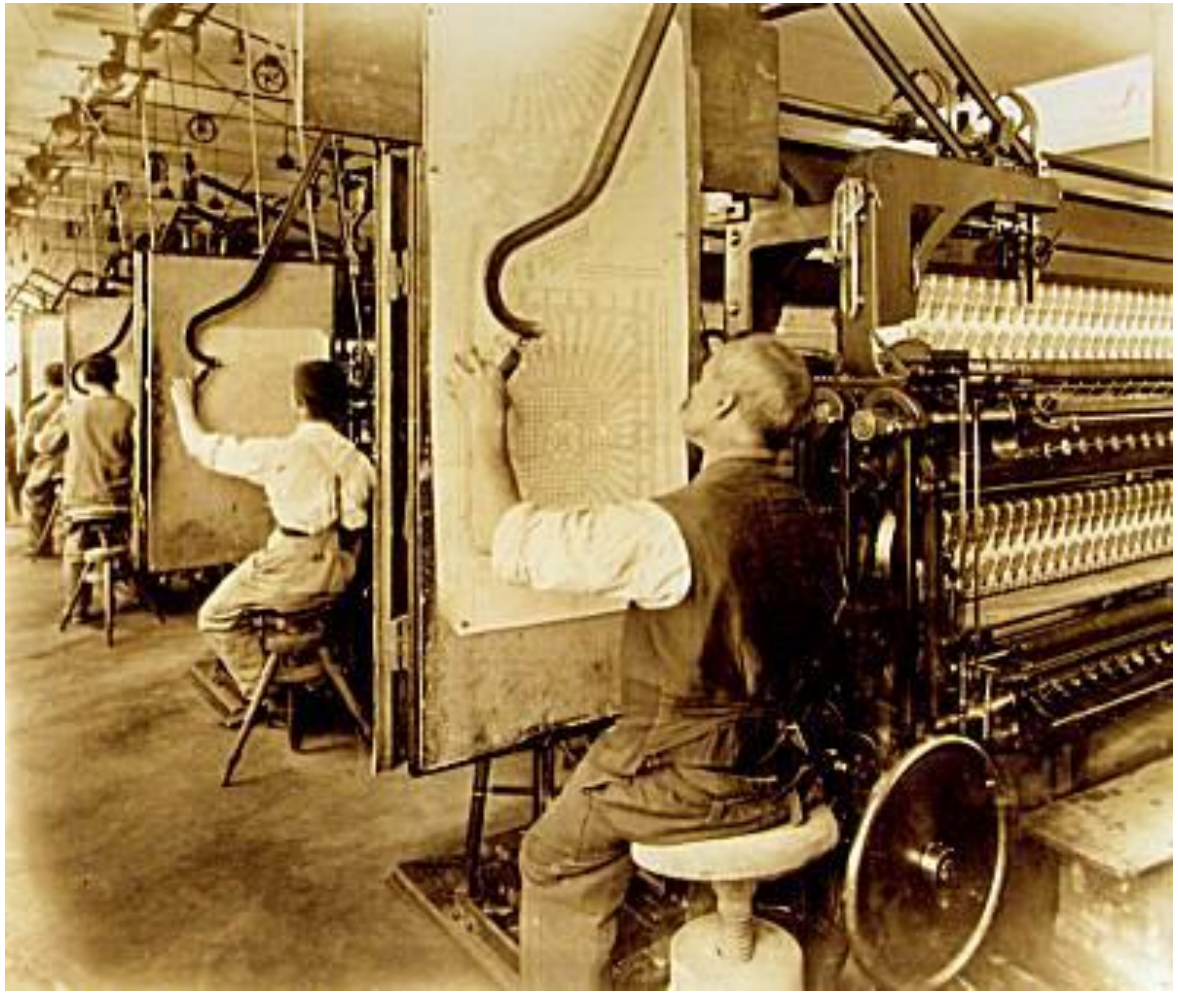
Employee Outings and Social Activities

- Some employers organized outings and social events for their workers to promote a sense of community and well-being. For instance, the Sirocco Engineering Works in Belfast arranged annual excursions and day trips for its employees and their families.
- The Belfast shipbuilding company, Harland and Wolff, organized annual "Wings for Victory" garden parties, picnics, and other recreational events for its workers and their families during World War I.



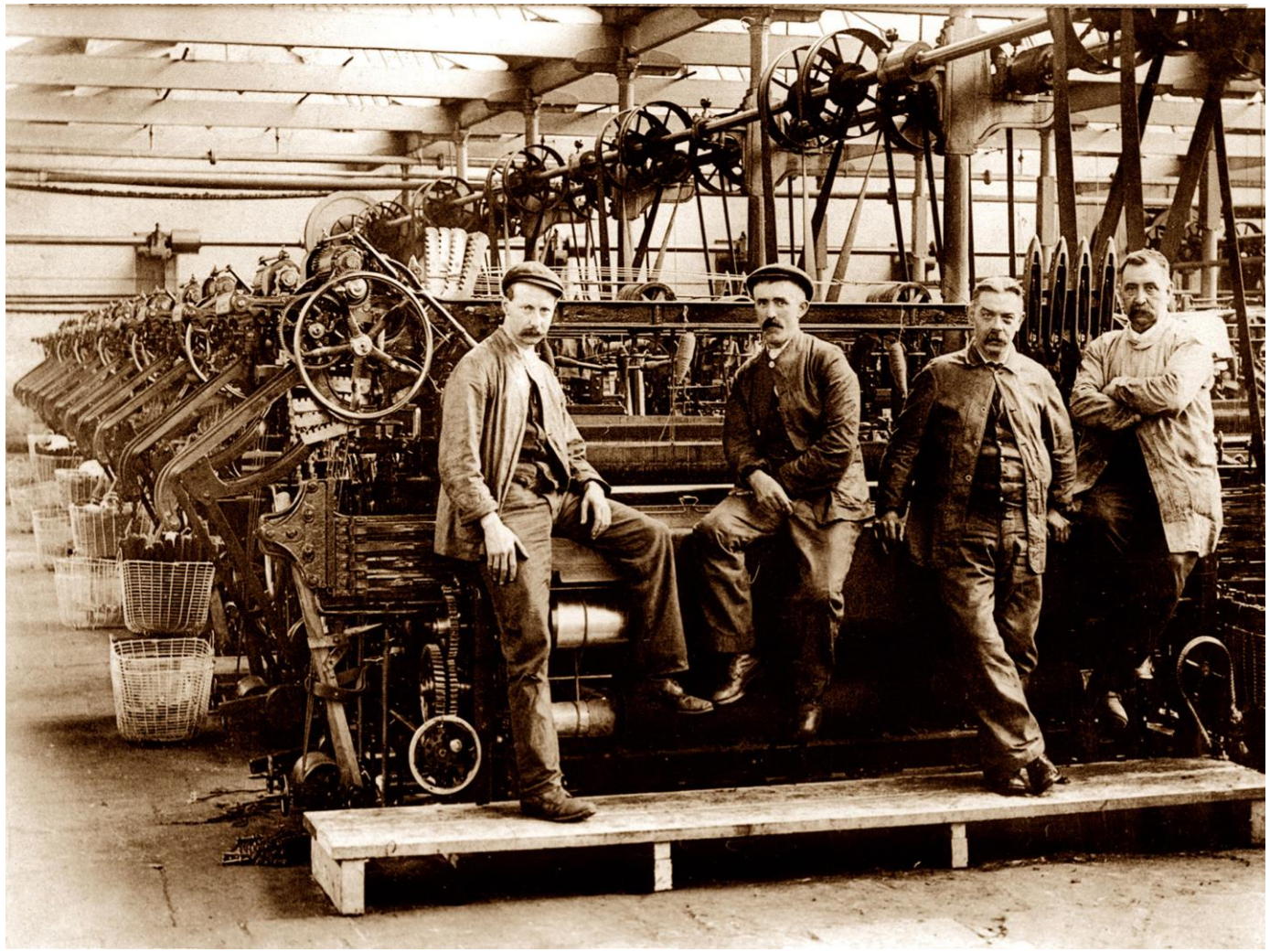
Positive Impacts

1. Improved Living Conditions
2. Access to Education
3. Community and Welfare Support
4. Social and Recreational Activities



Negative Impacts

1. Control and Dependency:
2. Limited Autonomy and Collective Action
3. Unequal Treatment:
4. Potential for Exploitation





The effectiveness of Industrial action
Four cast studies

Strikes in the linen trade, 1870s



Flax Dressers and Roughers

- Flax dressers used a hackle to separate the coarse bit of flax in preparation for the spinner.
- In common with many occupations involving crop dust, flax dressers were prone to developing “Flax Dresser’s Disease” which was essentially chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- The flax hackle was/is essentially a handled board with metal tines, rather like an extremely coarse hairbrush, which separates the flax fibres until they are fine enough to be spun into cloth.
- Male role, 10 to 15% total workforce; skilled role that commanded good salary.

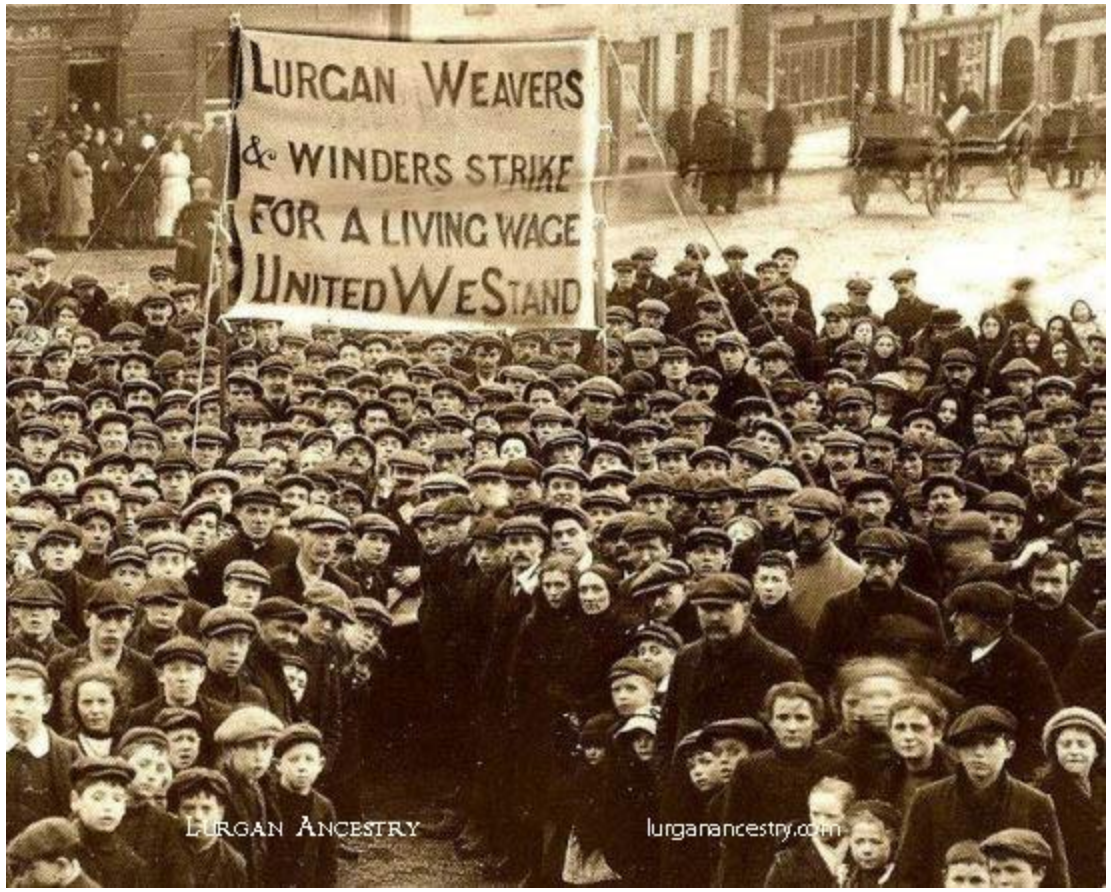


Wages in the linen trade, 1850 to 1906

Wages per week.							
Year	Roughers	Sorters	Preparers	Spinners	Weavers	Reelers	Average wage
1850	–	–	–	–	–	–	5/–
1855	13/–	16/6	4/6	4/9	–	6/–	7/–
1865	15/–	21/–	5/–	6/9	9/–	–	9/–
1875	19/6	25/–	7/6	7/9	–	9/6	11/–
1884	17/6	22/6	7/–	7/6	10/–	–	10/6
1886	18/6	23/6	6/10	8/5	11/6	8/11	11/–
1906	21/8	26/3	9/4	10/5	11/6	11/3	12/–

The strike begins

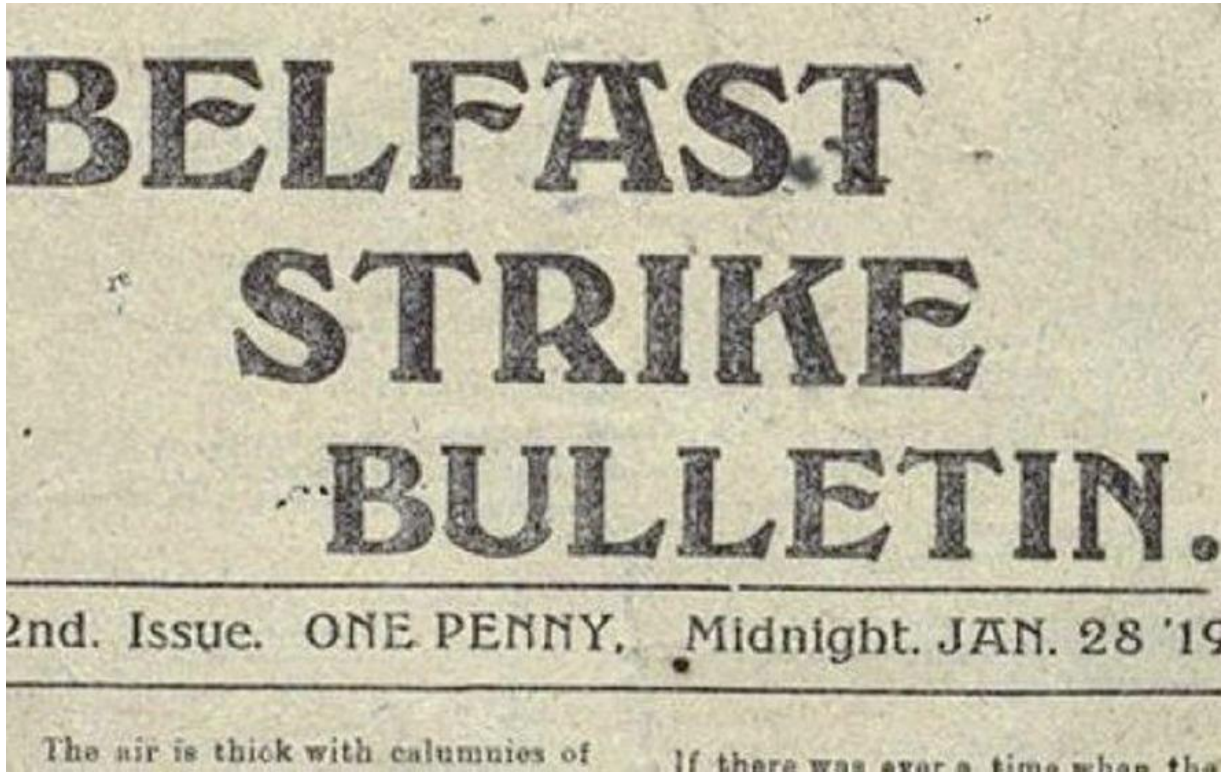
- 13 May 1872: 20k flax dressers ‘left off’ work and went on strike demanding an increase of 4 shillings.
- 20 May: 2.5k workers out including roughers.
- 31 May: In response, Smithfield and Blackstaff Mills locked their workers out.
- 2 June: 17 mills locked their workers out; as many as 30k were locked out.
- 19 June: flax dressers agree to an additional 2 shillings per week and returned to work.



Why strike?

Newsletter wrote in July 1872: 'Glancing back down the vista of the last twenty years, I can note the feudal power of tyrant employer and overlooker pass away year by year, and I had almost made myself believe that employers and workmen had become so sensible to the importance of a mutual interest as no such occurence as a serious strike or - what is worse - a lockout could take place'.

First major strike in 20 years.


BELFAST
STRIKE
BULLETIN.
2nd. Issue. ONE PENNY. Midnight. JAN. 28 '19
The air is thick with calumnies of

Cost of living

'Twenty six shillings a week is barely enough to enable the workman to provide for his wife and family the commonest comforts of life and I do not see why this scanty pittance should be refused to the poor hacklers. They have to serve their time to the trade, just as mechanics have; but these latter, though employed in far healthier and less labourious work ... in no case receive less than 30/- per week’ (Rougher/Flaxdresser Worker in NW, Northern Whig, 15.5.1872)



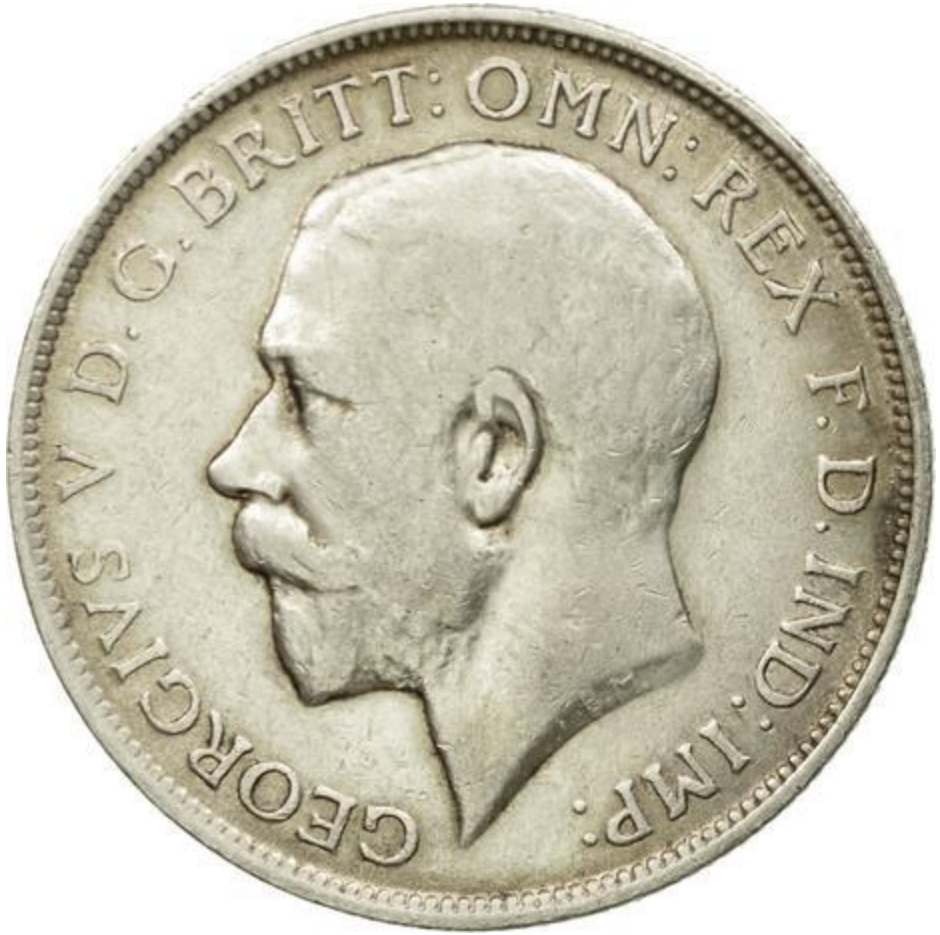
Why strike in the early 1870s?

- Flaxdressers union formed in 1872.
- Trade Unions had legal restrictions lifted.
- Increase in industrial action in early 1870s; 70 strikes in UK in 1870, 130 in 1872.
- Copycat action; many mills followed each other.
- Rise in cost of living
  - Cost of loaf rose 8.5% in one year
  - Beef by 25%
  - Coal by 20%



Workers got 2s but not the 4s they demanded. Why settle?

- In 1870s, linen trade in contraction. US Civil War was over, cotton exports had resumed.
- 1872/3 quantity of linen exported fell.
- Flaxdressers gained little support from other linen workers in less well paid more insecure jobs.
- Flax yield in 1871 was 25 stones/acre, 1872 was 14. Less need for workers.
- Pressure from workers locked out o the mills.



1874 strike

- July 1874: Around 30,000 Belfast millworkers went on strike as the management insisted that there must a reduction in wages.
- There are a number of factors in the employer's argument; firstly that their trading position is reduced and also with the new Factories Act being introduced this will insist on the shortening of labour hours.
- As the strike continued, men and women travelled to Scotland and England to seek work.
- Arbitration was attempted in the strike but either side gave no ground.



Strike concludes

- August 1874: The mill strike in Belfast continued with the workers standing firm and in solidarity despite the hardship.
- Shops are continuing to supply these workers with provisions “on trust”. It is believed that over 4000 workers were working in the mills of England and Scotland.
- Some workers trying to return to work through hardship were assaulted at the gates of the mills, and the police intervened.
- September 1874: Millworkers returned to Belfast from other parts of Ireland, England and Scotland after the strike and got their old jobs back. Wages were reduced.





Strikes at Harland and Wolff, 1880s/1890s

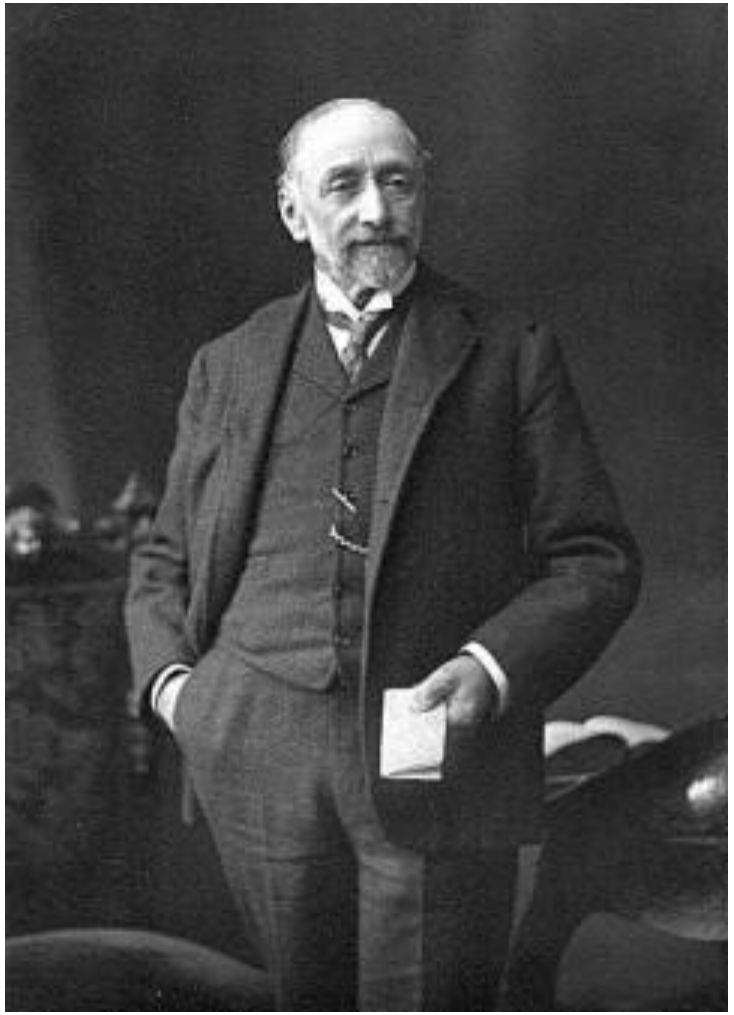
Sir Edward James Harland, 1st Baronet (1831-1895)

- Born in Scarborough; educated at Edinburgh Academy.
- Engineering apprentice at Robert Stephenson and Company in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Moved to Belfast in 1854 to manage Robert Hickson's ship building yard.
- 1861: formed a business partnership with Gustave Wolff.
- Conservative MP, Mayor and councilor.
- Built many famous ships!



Gustav Wilhelm Wolff (1834-1913)

- Born in Hamburg, emigrated to England in 1849.
- After serving his apprenticeship in Manchester, Wolff was employed as a draughtsman in Hyde, Greater Manchester, before being employed by the shipbuilder Edward Harland in Belfast as his personal assistant.
- In 1861, Wolff became a partner at Harland's firm, forming Harland and Wolff. Outside shipbuilding.
- Wolff served as a Belfast Harbour Commissioner.
- He also founded the Belfast Ropeworks, served as Member of Parliament for Belfast East for 18 years and as a member of the Conservative and Unionist Party and Irish and Ulster Unionist parties.



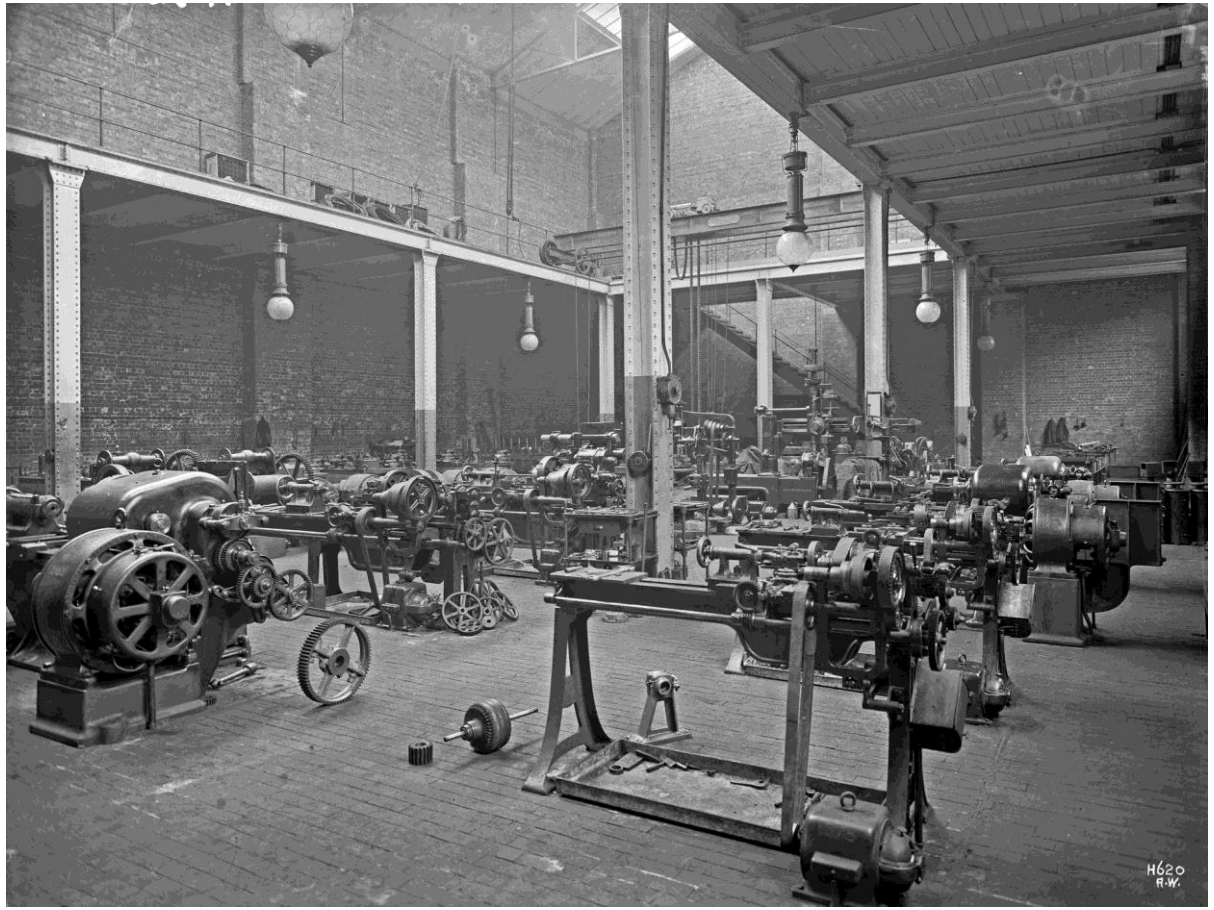
1880s: headlines from the newspapers

- October 1880: There are no vessels in Dufferin or Spencer docks at the present, leaving 500 labourers out of work. 200 workers in the Harland & Wolff yard are on strike for more pay. Workers at Harland & Wolff Shipyard have returned to work following a strike.
- May 1882: The strike at Harland & Wolff has been settled, and workers have returned to their jobs.
- March 1884: The boilermaker's strike at Harland & Wolff has been settled, with the men returning to work for seven percent less wages.
- September 1884: Riveters who have been locked out of Queen's Island Shipbuilding Yard for three weeks have returned to work
- January 1885: The riveters at Harland & Wolff shipbuilding yard have been locked out due to a work to rule.
- May 1887: The strike in the shipbuilding trade is continuing.
- August 1888: Messrs. Harland & Wolff have locked out 5000 workers from the shipbuilding yard in a dispute over pay rises.
- September 1888: The lockout of workers in a wages dispute at Harland & Wolff continues.



1895 Strike

- Three thousand engineers and their assistants working in Harland & Wolff's shipyard went on strike to demand higher wages.
- The shipyards employed 12,000 in Belfast and were one of the main sources of employment for adult men.
- With a constant influx of migrants into Belfast from the surrounding countryside, employers could easily replace the unskilled and semi-skilled workers. This section of the workforce found it very difficult to negotiate better wages and conditions with their employers and they received significantly less pay than skilled workers.



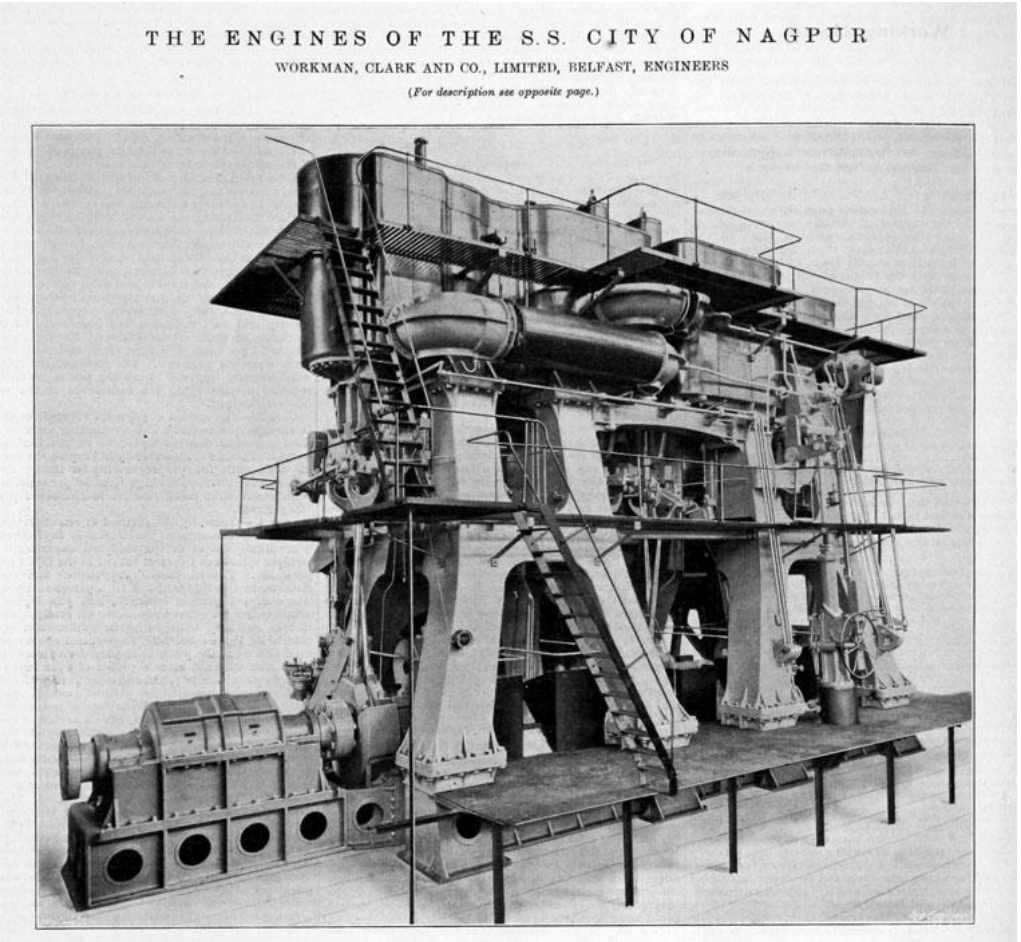
Action and failure

- The strike of 1895 took place in Belfast and in Clydeside (Glasgow). In Belfast, the management of the shipyards refused to concede to the majority of the strikers' demands.
- The strike ended in December with failure for the unions, the employers did not give in and their workers were forced to return to work



Dangers of industrial action

January 1896: Ann Loughlin was charged with threatening to murder her infant child to commit suicide at 66 Brownlow Street. She deposed she had said this because the child's father gave no money for its support. A man claiming to be her husband said he was a stager at Messrs. Workman Clark & Company but had been out of work for fifteen weeks because of the engineer's strike. He promised to care for his wife and child and the prisoner was discharged.

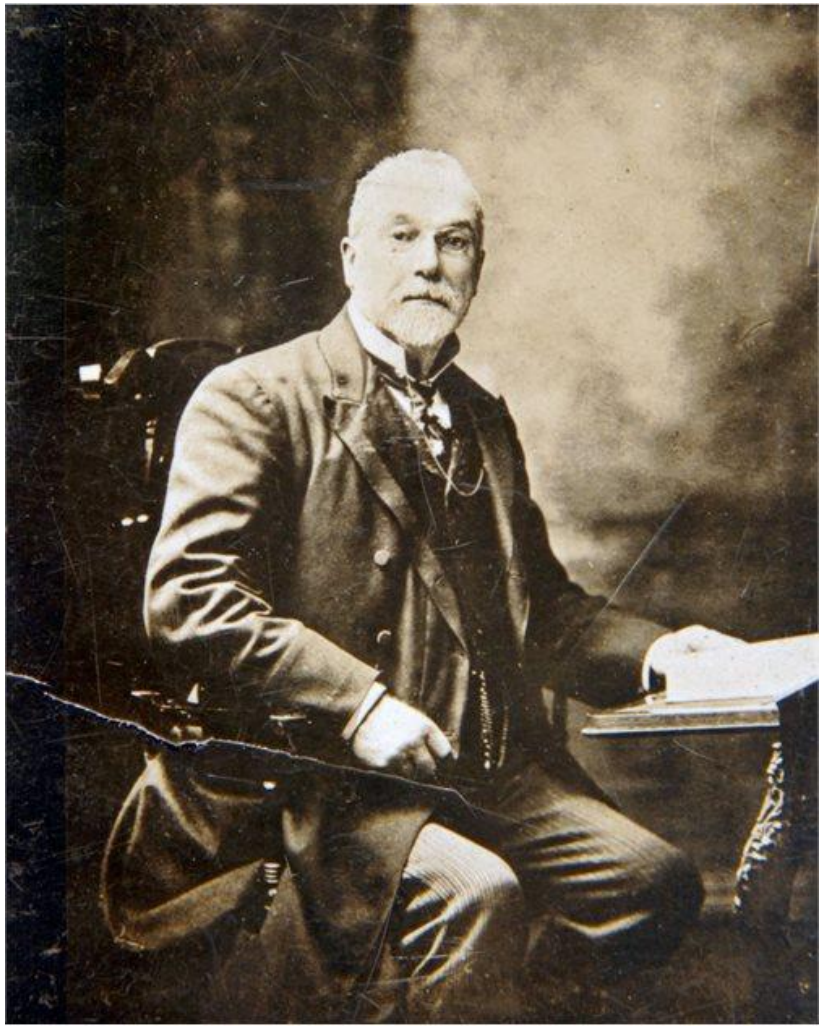


Dockworkers' strike, 1907



Thomas Gallaher (1840-1928)

- Thomas Gallaher was born in Templemoyle, Co. Londonderry in 1840. At the age of 15, he was apprenticed in a firm specialising in importing tea and tobacco.
- He quickly picked up the basics of the trade and in 1857 started his own one-man business hand-rolling tobacco and selling it from a cart.
- His success, ambition and drive soon led him to open premises and in 1863 he moved to Belfast on Hercules St and later settled at the well known York Street site.
- Gallaher made his first journey across the Atlantic to America to buy his own tobacco leaf in the 1870s.
- Tom Gallaher's forceful personality and his shrewd grasp of all aspects of the industry earned him the title of 'Tobacco King'. Tom Foster, a former employee, recalls that it was a regular Saturday lunch-time practice for the old man to fill his pockets with twists of tobacco which he handed out to the unemployed men who usually gathered outside the factory. At the same time, of course, he cursed them roundly for being idle.
- Source: https://www.nmni.com/story/gallahers-tobacco#1



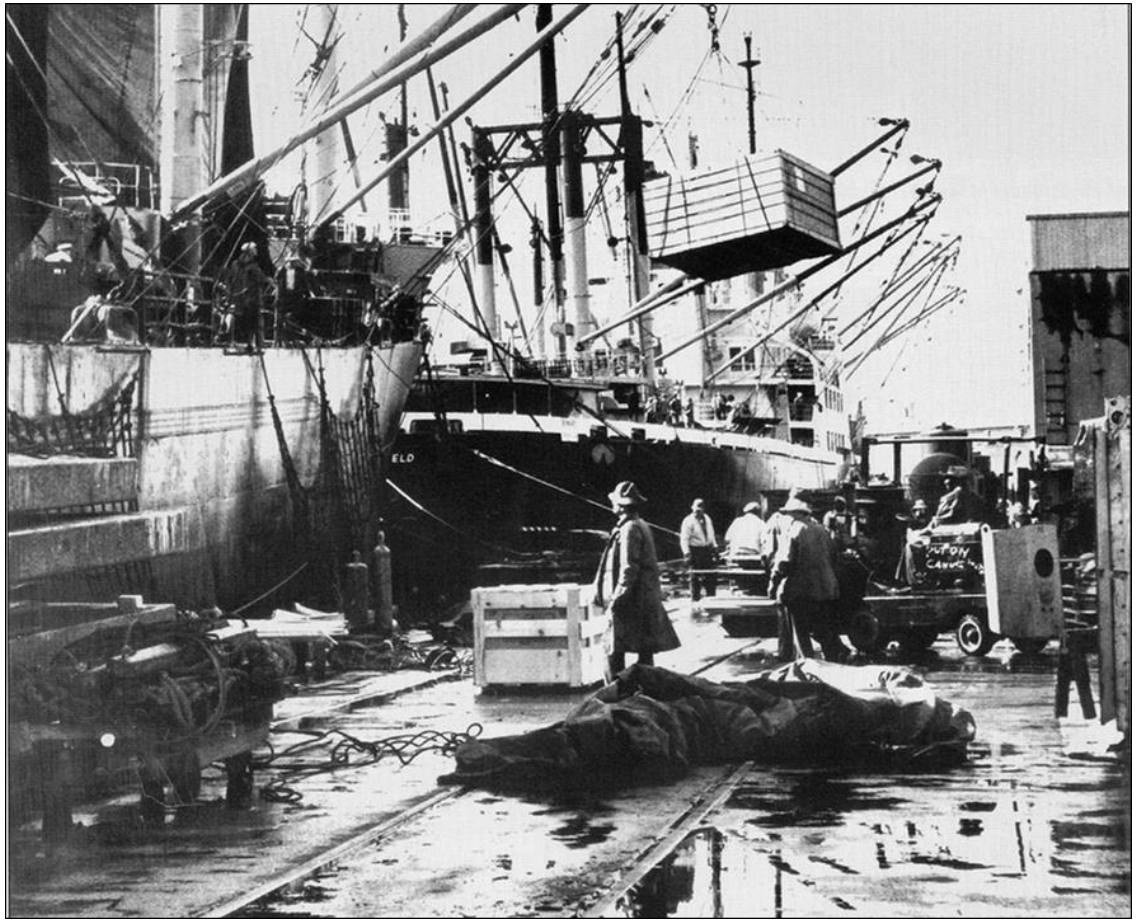
National Union of Dock Labourers

- Formed in Glasgow in 1889.
- Moved its headquarters to Liverpool within a few years and was thereafter most closely associated with Merseyside.
- 21,296 members in 1907.



The docks in 1907

- 3,100 dock labourers of which 2k were ‘spellsmen’ doing spells of casual irregular work.
- Catholic men dominated the deep-sea docks
- Protestants worked in the cross channel docks.
- Deep sea docks more dangerous than channel docks.
- 75% of the carters and 60% of dockers were Protestant.

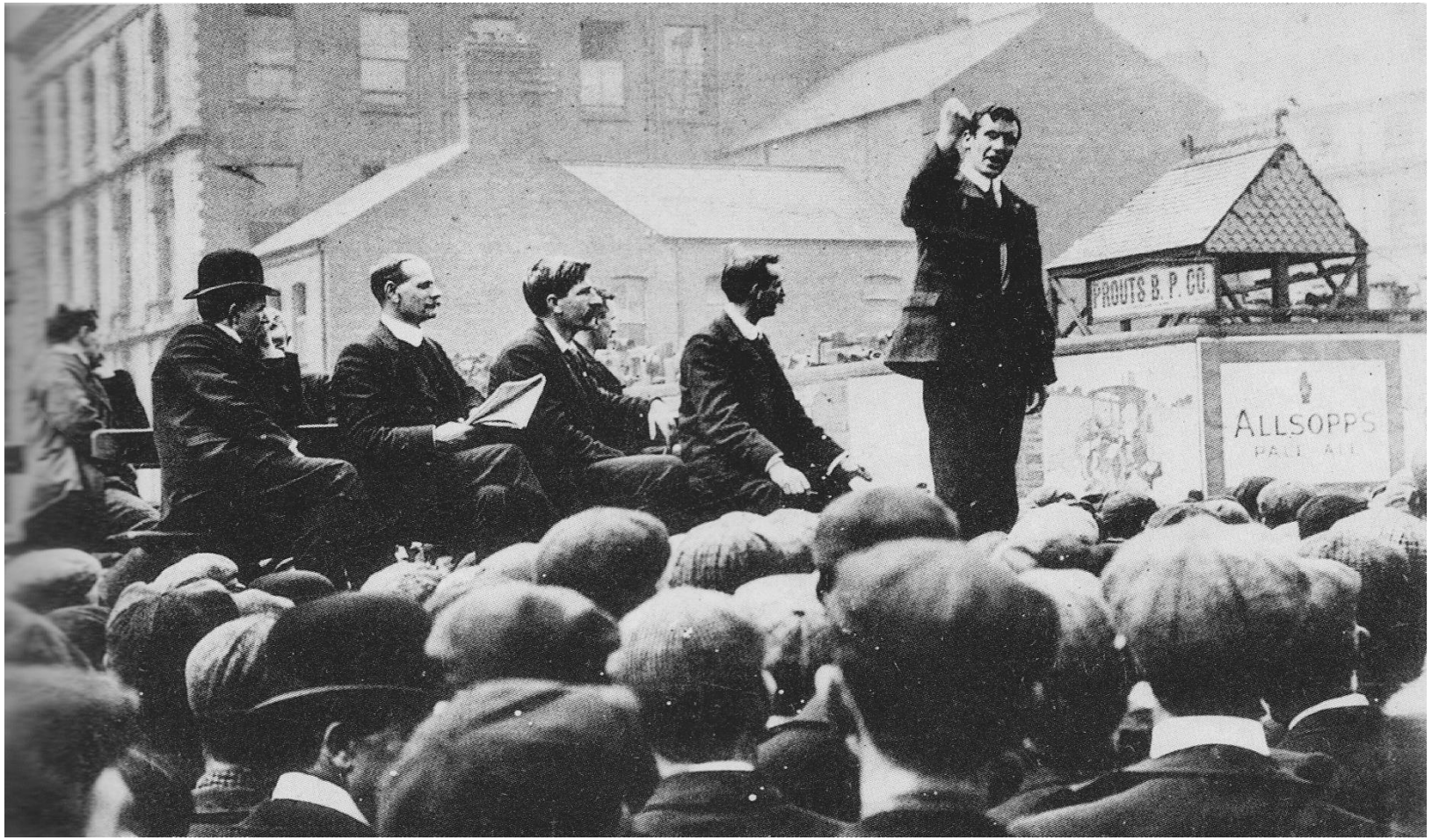


James Larkin (1874-1947)

- Born to Irish parents in Liverpool.
- Worked as a docker and sailor aged 14.
- 1903, dock foreman and was a member of the Independent Labour Party.
- Gained a job at the NUDL as an organiser and sent to Belfast to organise the city's dock workers.
- His efforts help increase NUDL membership from 2k in April 1907 to 4.5k in May.

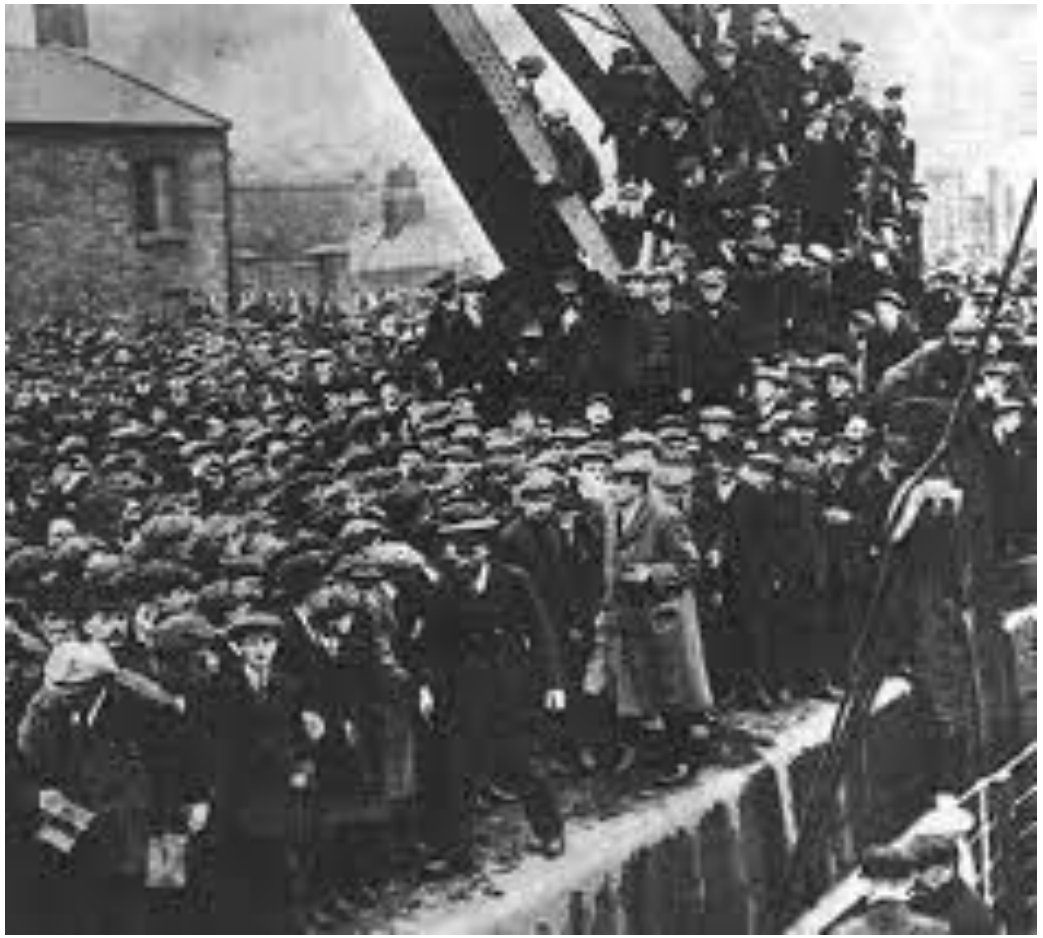


NUDL rally – importance of the spoken word



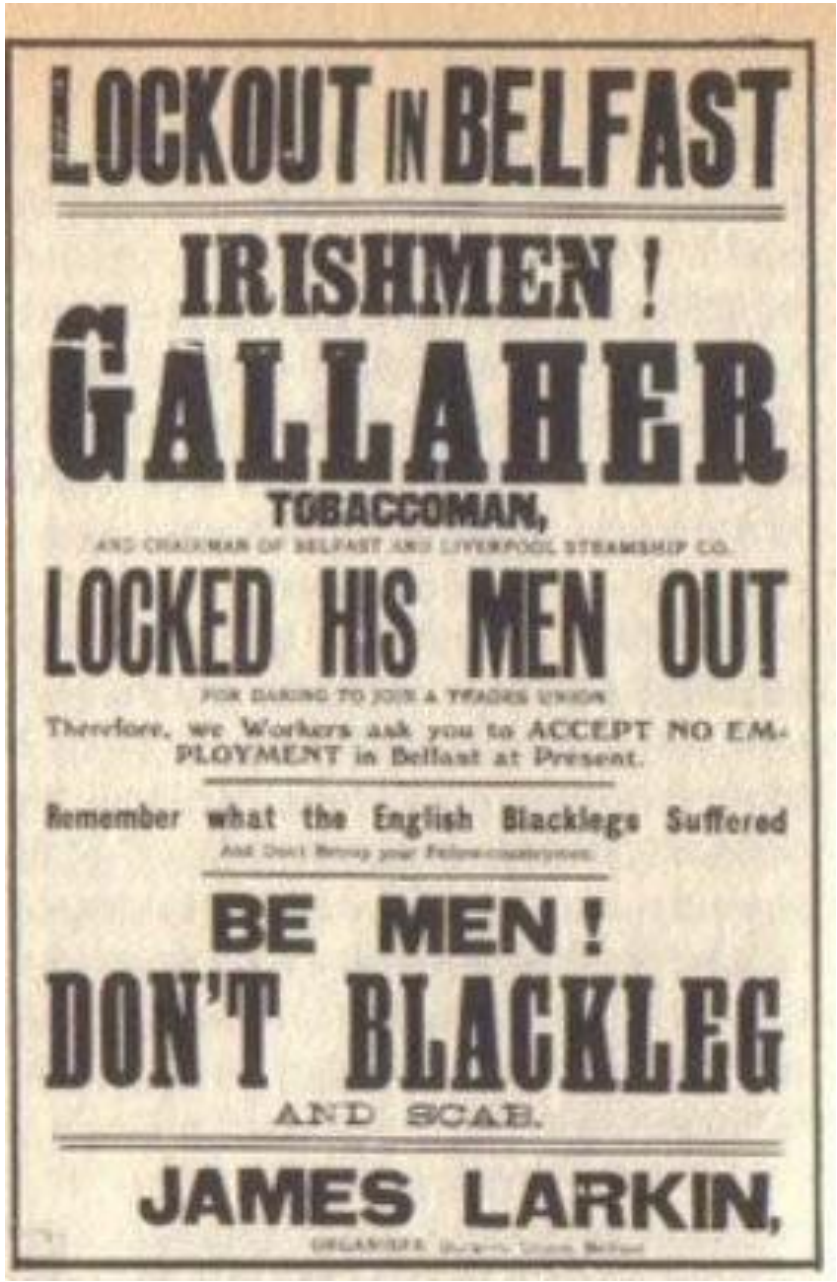
Summer of 1907: industrial unrest

- April: walk-out by non union members at Samuel Davidson's Sirocco Engineering Works workers demanding higher wages. The union members amongst Sirocco's employees were promptly sacked and the rest of the workers were each obliged to sign a document pledging not to join a trade union.
- Workers at coal merchant Samuel Kelly walked out after union members were dismissed.
- May: workers on the *SS Optic*, owned by the Belfast Steamship Company went on strike refusing to work alongside non union members.



Employers reaction

- In response to the strikes, Thomas Gallaher, owner of Gallaher's Tobacco and chair of the Belfast Steamship Co, and Sam Kelly made plans.
- They had brought in 'blackleg' workers to replace those on strike.


LOCKOUT IN BELFAST

IRISHMEN !

GALLAHER

TOBACCOMAN,

AND CHAIRMAN OF BELFAST AND LIVERPOOL STEAMSHIP CO.

LOCKED HIS MEN OUT

FOR DARING TO JOIN A TRADES UNION

Therefore, we Workers ask you to ACCEPT NO EMPLOYMENT in Belfast at Present.

Remember what the English Blacklegs Suffered

And Don't Betray your Fellow-countrymen.

BE MEN !

DON'T BLACKLEG

AND SCAB.

JAMES LARKIN,

ORGANISER, Liberty Hall, Belfast.

Counter reaction

- Workers returning to SS Optic found themselves locked out, their work being done by the ‘blacklegs’.
- ‘Blacklegs’ intimidated by NUDL members to leave their jobs.
- Gallaher then sacked 7 workers for attending a meeting held by Larkin.
- 1000 female tobacco workers went on strike for a day at Gallaher’s factory in solidarity.
- Gallagher refused to recognise the NUDL and had blackleg workers working on Donegall Quay with military and RIC protection.



June 1907: strike escalates

- Coal heavers and dockers from other companies went on strike.
- By end of June 3,000 dockers were on strike, including 300 from the cross-channel companies.
- NUDL demanded wage increase, union recognition and better conditions.
- Daily meetings of 5k-10k held at Customs House.
- Gallaher and other business leader refused.



July: sympathy action grows

- Carters on railway company quays refused to transport goods unloaded by ‘blackleg’ labour.
- The carters employed by the 60 companies of the Master Carriers Association joined the action.
- Joint protests held by 100,000 Protestant and Catholic dockers and carters.
- Much violence directed against ‘blackleg’ workers who were housed on a ship on the Lough.



BELFAST STRIKE.—Motor Vans delivering Goods in the Principal Streets of the City under Police Escorts.

Police mutiny

- 19 July 1907: Constable William Barrett refused to sit next to a ‘blackleg’ worker on a traction engine; he was suspended.
- 300 policemen went on strike in sympathy.
- Around 70% of the RIC in Belfast joined the strike refusing to help ‘blacklegs’.



August: Martial Law

- 1 August: martial law declared.
- Lord Mayor requests military support.
- Nine warship in Lough.
- 28 August: strike over,



Why did it fail?

- NUDL financially crippled through 10s strike payments; union forced to negotiate, leaving other unions isolated.
- Dissident policemen moved out of Belfast.
- Rioting on the Falls Rd in Mid Aug resulted in two Catholic workers being shot by the army.
- Sectarian tensions returned; unionist press said that Protestant workers had bourne the brunt of the hardship for the strike.



Sectarian divisions re-established

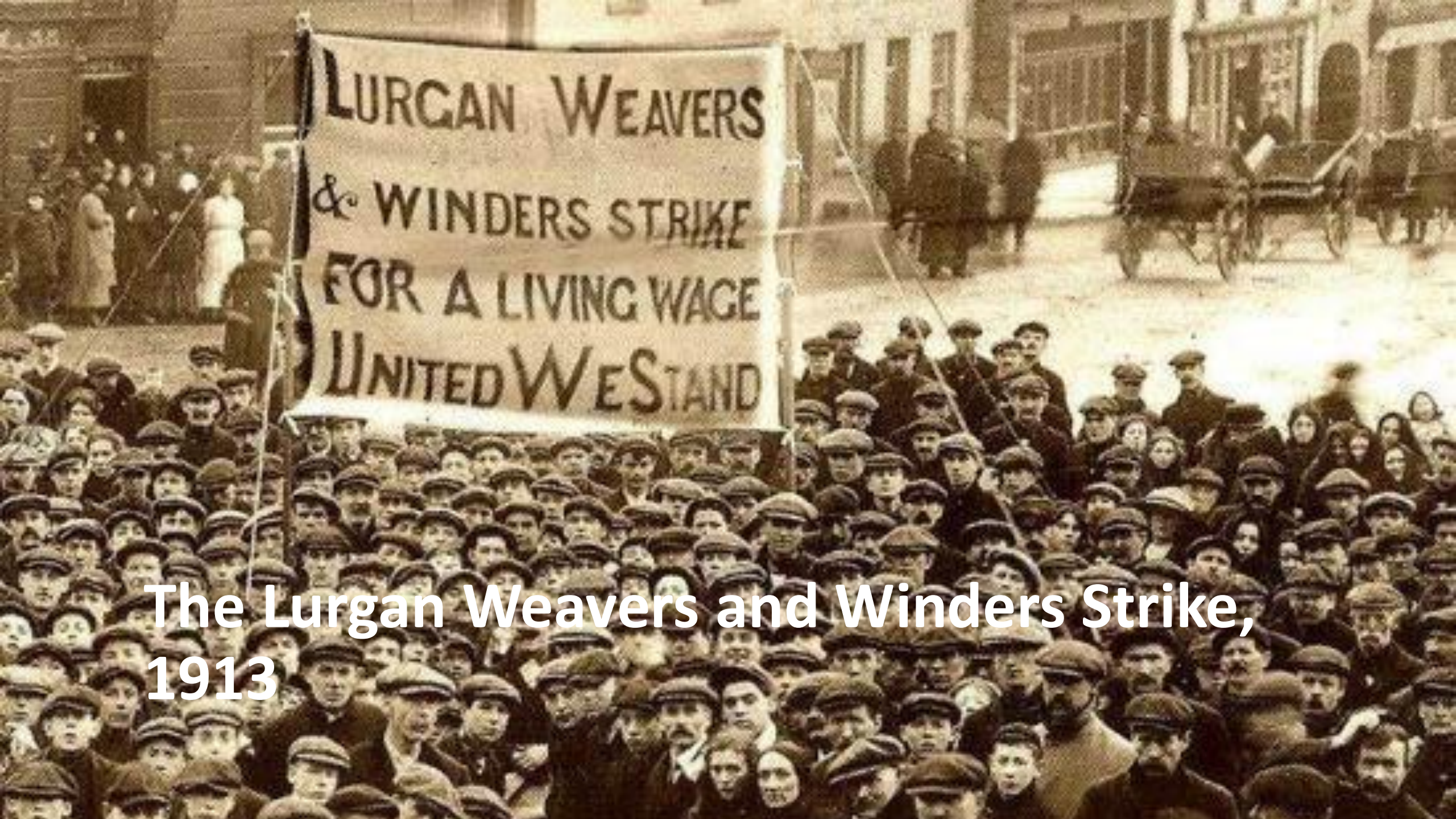
- Frederick Crawford wrote to a friend: "what a blessing all the rioting took place in the Catholic quarter of the city. This branded the whole thing a nationalist movement".
- Colonel Frederick Hugh Crawford, a staunch Ulster loyalist, Crawford is most notable for organising the Larne gun-running which secured guns and ammunition for the Ulster Volunteers (UVF) in 1914



Legacy

- Formation of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (ITGWU)
- Union membership increased amongst Catholic workers in Belfast
- Many saw the strike as a ominous portent of future woes.
- Roman Catholic Cardinal Michael Logue (right) warned his flock that "socialism as it is preached on the Continent, and as it has commenced to be preached in these countries, is simply irreligion and atheism".





The Lurgan Weavers and Winders Strike, 1913

Background

- Lean period in early 1913 for many Lurgan families.
- Approximately half of Lurgan's population dependent on linen industry.
- Weavers and Winders' demands: increase wages by a farthing per yard.
- Manufacturers' refusal to meet demands.
- Growing need for representation.



Industrial Action

- Strike initiated by the Lurgan Weavers and Winders.
- Majority of workforce involved in the strike.
- Public support for the strikers.
- RIC deployed to anticipate unrest.



Ballot Results

- Official results of the ballot: 1,060 in favor of accepting masters' terms.
- 385 in favor of rejection.
- 139 not voting.
- 103 papers unreturned.
- Workers deferring return to work until Monday morning.



Impact of the Strike

- Weavers and Winders receiving financial support.
- Offer to compromise with the manufacturers.
- Majority of strikers accepting masters' terms in a ballot.
- Winders' decision not to resume work until yarn quality guaranteed.
- Review of the situation by masters.



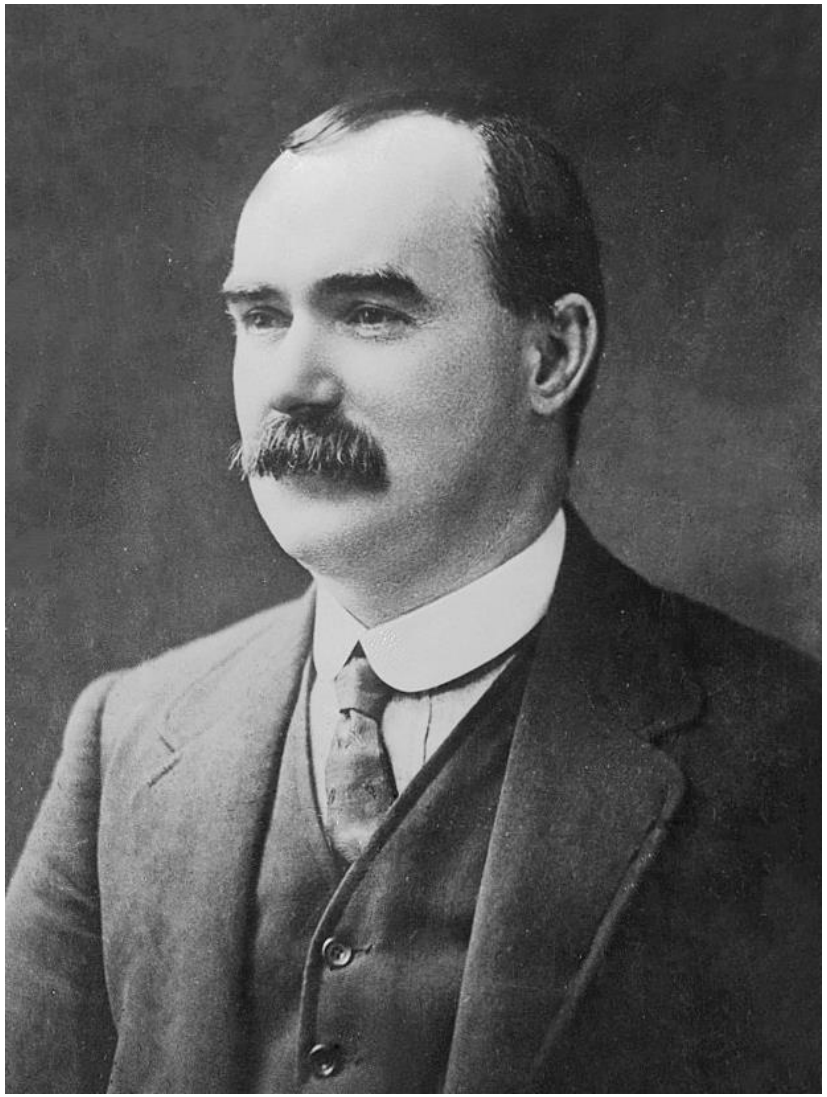
James Connolly, ‘To the Linen Slaves of Belfast’

Written to support the textile strike of 1913.

“Many Belfast Mills are slaughterhouses for the women and penitentiaries for the children. But while all the world is deploring your conditions, they also unite in deploring your slavish and servile nature in submitting to them; they unite in wondering of what material these Belfast women are made, who refuse to unite together and fight to better their conditions.”

Irish men have proven themselves to be heroes in fighting to abolish the tyranny of landlordism. Irish women fought heroically in the same cause. Are the Irish working women of Belfast not of the same race?”

Called for linen industry to be under Sweated Factories act and increase of 3d per hour.





Power to the workers? The impact of the Labour movement in Belfast

How representative were unions?

1900:

- 9 unions represented 5,000 workers in the linen trade out of a workforce of 65,000.
- 70,000 trade unionists in Ireland – out of some 900,000 wage earners – and at least seventy-five per cent of them were in British-based unions.



WW1 drove union membership

Name of trade union	Female membership at end of year				Percentage increase 1914–1917
	1914	1915	1916	1917	
Flax Roughers and Yarn Spinners	180	200	164	2,270	1,161
Portadown Textile Operatives	134	96	92	1,581	1,080
Lurgan Hemmers, Veiners and General Women Workers	408	450	1,000	2,000	390
Textile Operatives of Ireland	1,327	1,297	1,108	4,553	243
Dublin International Tailors, Machiners and Pressers	0	28	48	69	146
Ulster Weavers and Winders	294	250	280	550	87
Dublin Biscuit Operatives[1]	729	894	1,255	1,190	63
Government Workers of Ireland	35	35	31	52	49
Irish Drapers' Assistants	1,413	1,443	1,461	1,471	4
Irish Post Office Clerks	600	600	600	616	3
Total	**5,298**	**5,293**	**6,039**	**14,352**	**170.9**

How effective were they?

- November 1870: The strike of the Belfast quay labourers was brought to a satisfactory and amicable termination. At a meeting of steamboat agents it was agreed that the increase of 2s per week should be granted. The men on strike returned to work as soon as they became aware of this agreement
- July 1873: The carpenters of Belfast struck for an advance of wages. They demanded 1/2d per hour advance, which was equal to 2s 3d per week. The majority of employers refused to agree to the terms demanded
- 1872: Strike by linen workers only gained half their pray rise.
- 1892: Strike by linen-lappers failed when all were dismissed and they were replaced by women and machines.
- 1895: Engineers' Strike at Harland and Wolff failed.
- 1907: dockers' strike largely failed.



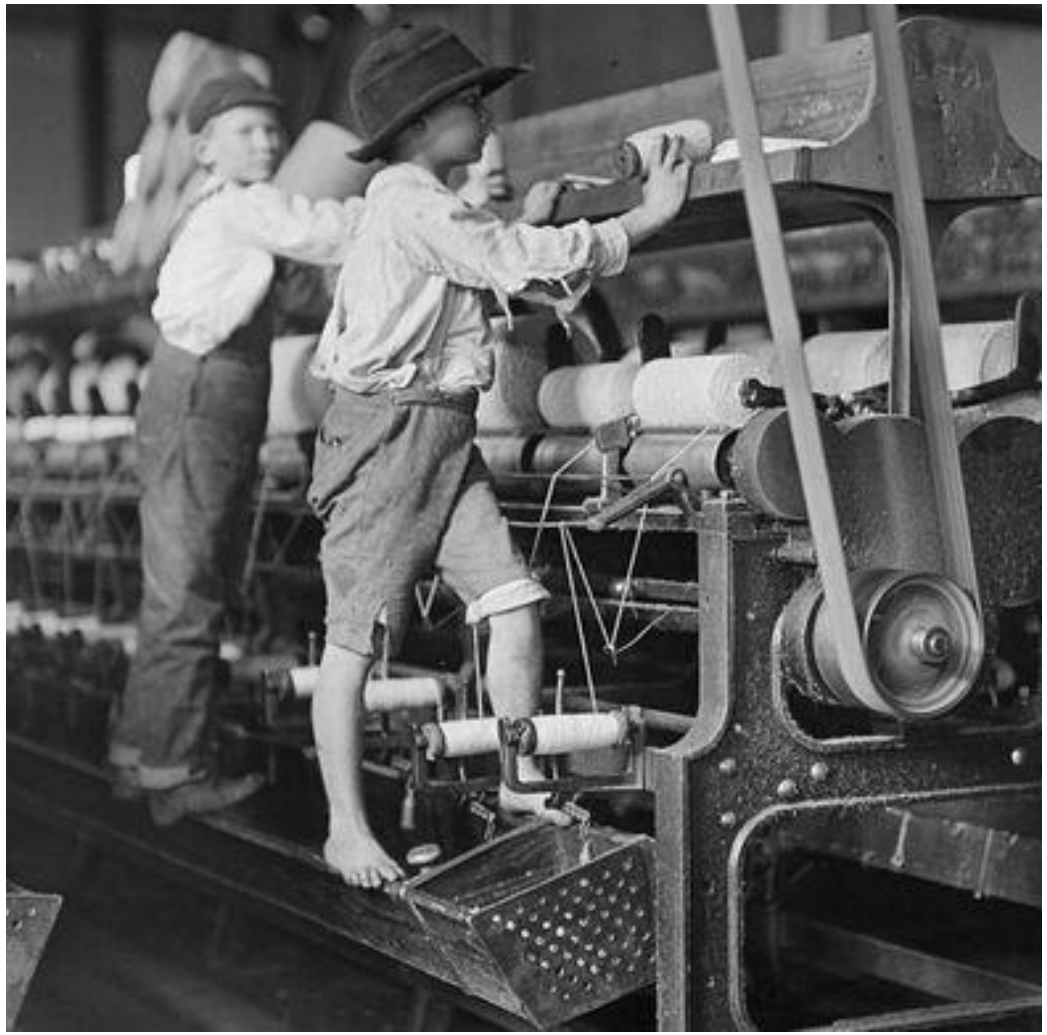
Soft power: Mary Galway (1864-1928)

- Born in Moira, County Down to Catholic family. One of five daughters. Moved to Belfast, all the family were linen workers. Mary started work aged 11.
- Joined Textile Operatives Society of Ireland, which was formed in 1893.
- Elected onto the executive of Belfast Trades Council in 1898 and that year she and Lizzie Bruce represented the textile operatives as delegates to the fifth annual congress of the Irish Trade Union Congress.
- The textile operatives were the only female representatives on Congress for the next fifteen years.
- Mary president of Textile Operatives Society of Ireland in 1907 during linen workers strike.
- In 1907, she became the first woman on the Irish Trade Union Congress National Executive, becoming its first woman Vice-President in 1910.



Mary Galway: achievements

- In 1911, she attended a new Advisory Trade Committee for Ireland as a workers' representative.
- Credited with playing a central role in banning the system of half-timers, whereby children divided their week between the factory and the school, and in reducing the working week by seven hours to forty-eight hours.



Committee of the Irish Co-operative Women's Guild, York Street Branch,



Questions?