

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR
IN THE
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE
OF
CORK CITY
1820-1899

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Leicester
by
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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| BRGA | <u>Bakers' Record and General Advertiser</u> 1889-90 |
| CBS | Crimes Branch Special (Reports) 1887-1900 |
| CC | <u>Cork Constitution</u> 1820-1900 |
| CDH | <u>Cork Daily Herald</u> 1850-1899 |
| CE | <u>Cork Examiner</u> 1841-1899 |
| CMC | <u>Cork Mercantile Chronicle</u> , 1832-35 |
| CMI | <u>Cork Morning Intelligencer</u> 1821 |
| CSORP | Chief Secretary's Office, Registered Papers 1850-1900 |
| CSORP.OR | Chief Secretary's Office, Registered Papers, Outrage Reports, 1832-1849 |
| Hansard | <u>Hansards' Parliamentary Debates</u> , Third Series, (London 1830-) |
| JCHAS | <u>Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society</u> |
| LRTV | <u>Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator</u> 1889-90 |
| PP | Parliamentary Papers |
| SOC | State of the Country Papers 1800-1832 |
| SR | <u>Southern Reporter</u> 1820-1850 |

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INTRODUCTION

In 1844 Cork was described by an English visitor as 'a pork and butter salting provincial'.¹ The description was quite accurate, summing up as it did Cork's economic position as centre of the provision and butter trade of the south of Ireland, and the city's peculiar local pride. Local pride is still a feature of Cork today, and the citizens still have that peculiar brand of wit and humour which the German visitor, J.G. Kohl noticed in 1843. Corkmen, he then noticed, were

Rather sharp. They like to make themselves merry at other people's expense, and are distinguished from all the other Irish by a peculiar, keen, ironical humour. They soon discover anyone's weak side, and are merciless in the use of their keen but cutting sarcasms.²

In 1737, Cork was described as the ~~Second~~ city of the United Kingdom,³ and in the years immediately preceding the Act of Union of 1800 the city had looked forward to even greater prosperity in a closer relationship with England. The Union was seen as a means whereby the trade and commerce of the city would be further expanded. Thirty years later, one disillusioned local merchant recalled the optimistic hopes of the Cork business sector in the pre-Union days:

Cork was to be especially and peculiarly favoured: warehouses were to be erected and stocked with all descriptions of goods to be made up in the country. The fleets destined for the east and the west were to take in their assorted cargoes here. It was destined, in the illusive anticipation of the period, to rival Liverpool. We were to have a naval depot and an arsenal - wet and dry docks were to be constructed - ships of war were to be built and launched from our shores, and our fine harbour was to be the constant rendez-vous of the British fleet.⁴

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1. James Johnson, *A Tour in Ireland with Meditations and Reflections* (London, 1844), p. 140.
 2. J.G. Kohl, *Travels in Ireland* (London, 1844), p. 95.
 3. Alexander the Coppersmith, *Remarks upon the Religion, Trade, Government, Police, Customs, Manners and Maladys of the City of Corke* (Cork, 1737; Tower Books Reprint, Cork, 1974), p. 1.
 4. *Pilot*, 10 Dec., 1830.

During the course of the nineteenth century Cork failed to achieve this ambition of becoming the first city of Ireland. Belfast's phenomenal growth far outpaced that of any other Irish urban centre,¹ and Dublin remained indisputably the second city of the country. Cork was, by 1900, third city of Ireland, a position which it still retains today.²

In some ways, nineteenth century Cork was a classic Victorian city in the English sense. Its population was sizeable, it possessed a charter and long-established civic government, and its upper and middle classes had a strong sense of civic pride. Like many English cities, too, acute poverty and squalor prevailed among the lower classes; local government was introspective and represented only a limited section of the population; labour was emerging but slowly from the position of a violent and subversive movement to one of respectability; and towards the end of the century the geographical structure of the city was altering, sprawling expansion at the suburbs being accompanied by depopulation of the central parts.³ ~~By~~ unlike contemporary English cities, Cork's population was declining. By 1901 it was some 6% less than it had been in 1841, and some 24% less than it had been in 1800. As Table I suggests both the male and female population shared this decline during the latter half of the

-
1. F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland since the Famine (Glasgow, 1976), pp. 61-2; in 1841, Belfast's population, at 75,000, was smaller than that of either Dublin or Cork. By 1901, Belfast's population had reached c. 348,000, to Dublin's 290,640, and Cork's 76,000.
 2. Census of Population, Ireland, 1971 (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1971); Northern Ireland General Register Office, Census of Population, 1971 (HMSO, 1971). 1971 population as follows: Belfast - 362,082; Dublin - ~~175,434~~ 567,866; Cork - 122,146; Limerick - 55,912; Waterford - 29,842.
 3. Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (Penguin Books, 1968), passim.

century, but though the overall decline among females was greater than among males, by the end of the century women still outnumbered men by some twelve percent.

TABLE 1¹

Population of Cork City, 1800-1900

| | 1800 | 1820 | 1830 | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 |
|---------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Males | | | 36254 | 35489 | 39040 | 37509 | 36847 | 37663 | 35427 | 35787 |
| Females | | | 43860 | 45231 | 46692 | 42612 | 41795 | 42461 | 39918 | 40333 |
| Total | 100000 | | 80114 | 80720 | 85732 | 80121 | 78642 | 80124 | 75345 | 76122 |

As the population of nineteenth century Cork declined, the occupational structure of the city gradually changed. The number of general unskilled labourers decreased steadily; the number of men employed in the building trade rose slightly; the shopkeeping sector remained fairly stable; and there was a steady decline in the manufacturing sector, with a corresponding rise in the numbers of the transport sector. Table 2 based on the occupational classification favoured by a recent demographic historian,² traces the changes in the main occupational areas in Cork between 1840 and 1900.

-
1. Census of Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1831-1901; John Carr, The Stranger in Ireland (London, 1805), pp. 414-5, calculated the population of Cork city as being between 100,000 and 120,000.
 2. W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation' in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), Nineteenth Century Society (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 191-253; Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the study of Social Data.

TABLE 2¹

(i) Proportion of Males employed in each Occupational Sector in Cork City (1840-1900), as percentage of total occupied male population

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Agriculture | 9.99 | 7.94 | 3.64 | 3.74 | 3.98 | 3.15 | 2.86 |
| Mining | 0.07 | 0.37 | 0.03 | 0.10 | 0.12 | 0.10 | 0.18 |
| Building | 7.95 | 6.81 | 6.73 | 7.10 | 7.79 | 8.53 | 9.17 |
| Manufacture | 40.88 | 27.23 | 22.88 | 23.67 | 19.14 | 19.57 | 19.15 |
| Transport | 1.60 | 8.37 | | 10.77 | 10.76 | 14.33 | 15.29 |
| Dealing | 10.29 | 10.51 | 9.31 | 10.75 | 11.22 | 11.95 | 11.47 |
| Industrial Service | 18.50 | 27.56 | 31.32 | 25.81 | 25.59 | 18.51 | 23.22 |
| Public Serv. & Professions | 3.63 | 3.86 | 13.72 | 10.15 | 14.15 | 14.48 | 15.69 |
| Domestic Serv. | 4.16 | 3.81 | 2.63 | 2.03 | 2.59 | 3.06 | 2.30 |
| Indefinite | 3.36 | 3.14 | 1.51 | 5.77 | 4.76 | 6.70 | 0.66 |

(ii) Proportion of Females employed in each Occupation Sector in Cork City (1840-1900), as percentage of total occupied female population

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Agriculture | 0.42 | 1.63 | 0.22 | 0.39 | 0.11 | 0.21 | 0.26 |
| Manufacture | 30.89 | 41.10 | 26.54 | 21.08 | 21.93 | 24.94 | 28.09 |
| Transport | | | | | 0.07 | 0.16 | 0.10 |
| Dealing | 13.68 | 16.23 | 17.75 | 14.85 | 11.85 | 14.14 | 19.01 |
| Industrial Service | 0.99 | 1.60 | 1.92 | 1.49 | 0.77 | 1.02 | 0.25 |
| Public Serv. & Professions | 2.39 | 3.10 | 3.08 | 2.49 | 2.83 | 5.29 | 7.76 |
| Domestic Serv. | 49.19 | 48.14 | 43.62 | 39.86 | 57.27 | 40.00 | 41.87 |

1. Census of Ireland, 1841-1901.

This table¹ indicates that the main area of female employment during the entire century was domestic service. In the manufacture sector, the next greatest area of female labour, dressmaking and tailoring, provided much employment. Over one in every five working women was a dressmaker or tailoress, one out of every two working women was a domestic servant, and between one in seven and one in five working women were employed in the dealing sector, as shopkeepers, huxters, or shop assistants. From the 1870s onwards more women entered the business world, and the numbers employed as clerks and office workers rose. But these were in the minority, and by 1900 over 89% of all Cork working women were still employed in manufacture, dealing or domestic service.

TABLE 3²

Main Areas of Female Employment within the Manufacturing Sector,
Cork City, 1840-1900

Each Area expressed as percentage of the total manufacturing sector

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Glue & Tallow | 0.43 | 0.21 | 0.45 | 0.45 | 0.05 | 0.53 | 0.12 |
| Fur & Feathers | 0.34 | 0.19 | | 0.19 | 0.05 | | 0.03 |
| Hair & Bristle | 1.17 | 1.68 | 0.98 | 1.44 | 1.35 | | 0.80 |
| Woodworkers | | 0.09 | 0.08 | 0.16 | 0.19 | 0.62 | 0.12 |
| Furniture | 1.46 | 0.07 | 1.15 | 0.77 | 0.67 | 0.89 | 1.21 |
| Paper | 0.06 | 0.15 | | 0.19 | 0.54 | 0.65 | 1.24 |
| Woollens | 1.21 | 3.97 | 3.67 | 0.61 | 0.57 | 1.88 | 1.21 |
| Cotton & Silk | 7.06 | 0.72 | 0.60 | 5.40 | 1.29 | 1.27 | 0.37 |

1. Figures for the period before 1841 are unsatisfactory. The 1831 census lists total numbers employed in agriculture and manufacture in the city, showing agricultural workers as 8% of the population, and workers in manufacture as 17%. But these figures are not subdivided for male and female employment.
2. Tables compiled from the census figures, Census for Ireland, 1841-1901.

TABLE 3 (Contd)

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flax & Hemp | 0.97 | 1.23 | 0.29 | 5.24 | 1.29 | 1.27 | 0.37 |
| Lace | 0.75 | 2.11 | 4.36 | 0.29 | 0.24 | 0.59 | 0.50 |
| Dyeing | 0.43 | 0.07 | 0.17 | 0.16 | | | |
| Textiles, total | 10.42 | 8.10 | 9.09 | 11.70 | 9.18 | 10.63 | 13.09 |
| Dress, shoes | 83.55 | 87.58 | 85.45 | 81.30 | 79.38 | 74.46 | 69.80 |
| Baking | 1.75 | 1.36 | 1.92 | 1.43 | 1.56 | 2.50 | 3.37 |
| Tobacco | 0.34 | 0.28 | 0.43 | 0.26 | 0.62 | 1.55 | 1.73 |
| Bookbinding | 0.14 | 0.15 | 0.46 | 0.61 | 0.86 | 2.05 | 2.13 |
| Unspecified | | 0.15 | | 3.77 | 5.11 | 5.20 | 8.11 |
| TOTAL NUMBERS IN MANUFACTURE | 3483 | 5353 | 3463 | 3130 | 3715 | 3555 | 3232 |

The first active recruitment of women into the field of manufacturing industry outside the tailoring trade took place in the years immediately after the Great Famine of the 1840s. The Irish Manufacture Movement of 1850-52, one of a series of attempts to revive Irish industry during the nineteenth century,¹ concentrated largely on the establishment of domestic industries among the female population of Irish urban and rural areas. These domestic industries among the female population included the making of lace, embroidered goods, artificial flowers, nets, and knitted articles. The number so employed rose sharply during the early 1850s, accounting for the sharp increase in the size of the female manufacturing sector in 1851.² But the success of the domestic industry revival was transient. By 1861 the numbers employed in the

1. See below, pp. 40-142.

2. See above, Table 3.

manufacturing sector in Cork city had fallen from over five thousand to over three thousand. The most lasting success in advancing female employment was not in domestic manufacture but in the factory-based textile industry. A number of large-scale textile factories had already existed in the Cork area in the eighteenth century, but many of these had declined in the 1780s.¹ In 1850 the first move was made to set up a flax mill in the Cork region, and thereafter a number of textile factories sprang up in quick succession.² By the mid-1860s there were ten textile factories within a ten-mile radius of Cork, operating largely on female and cheap boy labour.³ Gradually other factories came into being - tobacco factories, clothing, footwear and match factories, each employing between fifty and two-hundred individuals.⁴

Though the number of women employed in manufacture remained far lower than the number of men thus employed, it was clear that in certain sectors of manufacturing the male labour force was being displaced by lower-paid female labour. Certain trades, principally the bookbinders, cabinet makers, tailors and shoemakers, complained of the influx of women who undercut wages and operated as sweated labour.⁵ But the

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1. William O'Sullivan, The Economic History of Cork from the earliest times to the Act of Union (Cork, 1937), pp. 186, 191-2.
 2. CE, 11, 13, 18, 20 Dec., 1850; 23 Nov., 1853; 10 July, 1866.
 3. Thom's Almanac and Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, 1860, p. 699; 1865, p. 831 (Dublin).
 4. ibid.; CE, 14 Jan., 1867; 3, 28 Dec., 1869; 11 Dec., 1876; PP, 1893-4, lxxxiii, Pt I, p. 20; PP, 1899, lxxxiv.
 5. The following figures, based on census data, show the male share of the workforce in these trades during the course of the nineteenth century:

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Tailoring | 26.70 | 20.26 | 20.30 | 18.44 | 14.70 | 16.40 | 16.40 |
| Cabinetmaking | 81.04 | 93.31 | 86.97 | 87.65 | 83.22 | 81.65 | 76.92 |
| Shoemaking | 82.87 | 78.45 | 75.86 | 88.91 | 85.42 | 84.16 | 85.00 |
| Textiles | 63.03 | 45.83 | 39.77 | 27.67 | 29.48 | 24.70 | 18.23 |
| Bookbinding | 85.71 | 71.43 | 61.90 | 64.00 | 44.44 | 29.89 | 33.01 |

change-over from skilled male labour to unskilled female labour was most evident in the textile trade. In 1831, there were 463 male handloom weavers in Cork city. By 1851 there were only 158, and by 1871 numbers had fallen to 25. Between 1841 and 1901 the percentage of men employed in the textile trade fell from 7.7% to 2.2%, while the proportion of females employed in the industry rose from 10.42% to 13.09% over the same period.

TABLE 4¹

Main Areas of Male Employment within the Manufacturing Sector in
Cork City, 1840-1900

Each Area expressed as percentage of the total manufacturing sector

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Machinery | 2.26 | 0.23 | 1.96 | 5.99 | 5.41 | 5.28 | 6.95 |
| Tools | 0.63 | 0.62 | 0.83 | 0.61 | 0.67 | 0.31 | 0.23 |
| Shipbuilding | 1.30 | 2.96 | 3.42 | 2.50 | 2.13 | 1.34 | 1.24 |
| Iron & Steel | 6.16 | 6.57 | 8.43 | 7.95 | 7.74 | 7.20 | 4.85 |
| Copper, tin, lead | 2.11 | 3.74 | 2.79 | 2.50 | 2.93 | 2.99 | 2.77 |
| Gold, Silver | 0.37 | 0.50 | 0.27 | 0.49 | 0.69 | 0.67 | 0.84 |
| Earthenware | 0.43 | 0.03 | 0.11 | 0.14 | 0.04 | 0.18 | 0.14 |
| Coals & Gas | | 0.13 | 0.83 | 0.36 | 0.76 | 1.78 | 2.24 |
| Chemicals | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.66 | 0.05 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.26 |
| Furs & Leather | 3.55 | 4.31 | 1.51 | 2.46 | 2.15 | 2.25 | 1.00 |
| Glue, tallow | 0.90 | 1.20 | 1.03 | 0.90 | 0.67 | 0.91 | 1.38 |
| Hair, bristle | 0.97 | 1.27 | 1.07 | 1.10 | 0.76 | 0.76 | 0.44 |
| Woodworking | 12.26 | 13.93 | 15.88 | 13.90 | 15.44 | 12.29 | 10.56 |
| Furniture | 3.07 | 3.92 | 4.86 | 3.47 | 4.09 | 4.66 | 4.36 |
| Carriages, etc. | 3.10 | 2.79 | 4.93 | 5.03 | 4.23 | 5.48 | 6.41 |
| Paper | 0.62 | 0.77 | 0.49 | 0.54 | 0.29 | 0.18 | 0.44 |
| Floorcloth | | 0.17 | 0.20 | 0.07 | 0.08 | 0.08 | |
| Woollens | 1.55 | 1.47 | 0.61 | 0.54 | 0.70 | 1.14 | 0.58 |
| Cotton & Silk | 3.23 | 1.72 | 2.40 | 0.88 | 1.16 | 0.25 | 0.02 |
| Flax, hemp | 1.54 | 1.97 | 0.36 | 1.56 | 1.07 | 1.18 | 1.40 |
| Lace, thread | 0.05 | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.05 | | 0.07 | 0.02 |
| Dyeing | 1.30 | 0.97 | 0.10 | 0.34 | 0.27 | 0.36 | 0.19 |

1. This table is based on the figures available in the Census Returns, 1841-1901. Such figures are far from foolproof. In most years, occupational classifications included dealers as well as manufacturers, and no distinction is made between labourers and skilled workers, e.g. 'Iron and Steel' probably includes foundry labourers as well as ironfounders.

TABLE 4 (Contd)

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Textiles, total | 7.67 | 6.14 | 3.52 | 3.37 | 3.20 | 3.00 | 2.21 |
| Dress, shoes | 28.72 | 32.11 | 30.79 | 24.36 | 24.77 | 22.14 | 19.91 |
| Sundries, dress | 0.16 | 0.32 | 0.39 | 0.30 | 0.34 | 0.60 | 0.35 |
| Food preparation | 0.43 | 1.09 | 0.83 | 1.22 | 1.48 | 0.78 | 1.31 |
| Baking | 3.24 | 8.52 | 6.49 | 6.98 | 7.90 | 7.38 | 7.58 |
| Drink preparation | 0.38 | 1.32 | 1.17 | 2.52 | 2.37 | 5.66 | 5.04 |
| Smoking | 0.35 | 1.32 | 1.49 | 4.93 | 1.38 | 0.71 | 0.65 |
| Watches, toys | 0.80 | 0.94 | 0.99 | 1.42 | 1.36 | 1.58 | 3.08 |
| Printing & Books | 1.80 | 2.86 | 3.76 | 4.24 | 4.92 | 6.11 | 5.50 |
| Unspecified | 0.51 | 3.46 | 1.27 | 2.98 | 3.96 | 5.60 | 10.26 |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL NUMBERS IN MANUFACTURING SECTOR | 8106 | 5986 | 5905 | 5562 | 4470 | 4485 | 4289 |

For men in nineteenth century Cork, the main areas of employment were manufacture, building, general labour, shopkeeping and (as the century passed) transport. As Table 4 suggests, the decline of the number of men employed in manufacture was one of the principal changes in Cork's occupational structure over the period 1840-1900. In 1840 over 8,000 men had worked in manufacture, and by 1900 this had fallen to just over 4,000. On the other hand, there was a ten-fold increase in the numbers employed in the transport sector during the same period. In 1840 just over 300 men worked in transport, but following the progressive expansion of the railway system,¹ and the development of the Cork tramway system in the late 'nineties, over three thousand men worked in transport in 1900. As this expansion in the transport sector was reflected countryside, it was no coincidence that the great new union of the twentieth century was called the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.²

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1. In 1834, six miles of track were opened between Dublin and Kingstown: by 1849 there were 360 miles of track in Ireland, and by 1912 there were 3,403 miles. Lyons, op. cit., p. 58.
 2. The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was established in 1909.

The number of men in different occupations rose and fell at different rates during the course of the century, as Table 5 below suggests. The high number of shoemakers was characteristic of every Irish town. In 1840 shoemakers accounted for one-eighth of the male manufacturing workers in Cork, and as late as 1900 one in every ten men working in manufacture was a shoemaker. For much of the century, the trade second to the shoemakers in numerical strength was the coopering trade. The coopers had close links with Cork since the expansion of the provision and butter trade in the eighteenth century,¹ but their numbers fell steadily as the years passed. In 1830 the coopers were seven-hundred strong, but by the early twentieth century they numbered less than three-hundred, their decline mirroring the city's decline as a centre of the butter and provision trade.

The decline of a trade was not immediately reflected in a fall in the number of its members. The death-knell of the local domestic textile trade had already been sounded in the 1820s,² yet it was not until the 1860s that the last handloom weavers disappeared. Similarly, the nailors' trade had fallen into decline in the 1860s, but not until the early 1900s did their numbers plummet, and the same was true in the case of the corkcutters and ropemakers who, in spite of the contraction of trade, were still in existence until the early twentieth century. This lag between the decline of trade fortunes and the disappearance of those engaged in the trade was principally due to the

1. William O'Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 165-70.

2. See below, pp. 264-81.

TABLE 5¹

Numbers in Principal Skilled Trades, Cork City, 1831-1901

| | 1831 | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Farriers | | 3 | 24 | 34 | 27 | 28 | 32 | 43 |
| Printers | | 116 | 143 | 181 | 191 | 189 | 227 | 184 |
| Engineering | | 183 | 142 | 116 | 333 | 242 | 232 | 298 |
| Coachmakers | | 76 | 68 | 147 | 158 | 161 | 139 | 179 |
| Saddlers | | 140 | 99 | 117 | 97 | - | 81 | 76 |
| Shipwrights | | 91 | 153 | 166 | 111 | 74 | 44 | 43 |
| Builders | | 51 | 47 | 47 | 48 | 59 | 156 | 212 |
| Carpenters | | 603 | 500 | 645 | 603 | 522 | 612 | 586 |
| Masons | | 241 | 324 | 300 | 256 | 250 | 284 | 214 |
| Stonecutters | | 98 | 114 | 117 | 116 | 154 | 93 | 98 |
| Slaters | | 150 | 125 | 123 | 90 | 50 | 60 | 35 |
| Plasterers | | 101 | 49 | 55 | 88 | 121 | 111 | 135 |
| Plumbers | | 259 | 226 | 282 | 301 | 102 | 146 | 201 |
| Painters | | | | | | 247 | 276 | 341 |
| Cabinetmakers | | 218 | 175 | 227 | 142 | 124 | 129 | 120 |
| Weavers | | 325 | 160 | 113 | 25 | 7 | 7 | - |
| Hatters | | 98 | 63 | 56 | 37 | 26 | 18 | - |
| Tailors | | 748 | 551 | 635 | 543 | 484 | 457 | 425 |
| Shoemakers | | 1398 | 1216 | 1078 | 702 | 590 | 510 | 425 |
| Bakers | | 253 | 367 | 353 | 348 | 322 | 290 | 274 |
| Ropemakers | | 109 | 90 | | 64 | 34 | 23 | 14 |
| Tobaccoworkers | | 20 | 63 | 77 | 140 | 106 | 254* | 216* |
| Tanners | | 288 | 258 | 89 | 137 | 96 | 101 | 36 |
| Brushmakers | | 45 | 59 | 55 | 39 | 25 | 25 | 11 |
| Coopers | | 725 | 551 | 638 | 564 | 442 | 397 | 275 |
| Blacksmiths | | 316 | 231 | 322 | 273 | 213 | 172 | 147 |
| Nailors | | 131 | 105 | 98 | 78 | 49 | 23 | 7 |
| Sawyers | | 163 | 173 | 172 | 95 | 65 | 55 | 93 |

fact that members of dying trades lived on for many years in their local area, the older men, particularly, being unable to find other means of livelihood. Moreover, a certain number of boys continued to enter even dying trades, so that as late as 1900, three ropemakers and two cork-cutters in the city were less than twenty years of age, and had obviously

1. Census of Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1831-1901.

* This number includes tobacconists, i.e. sellers of tobacco, as well as tobacco twisters.

entered the trade during the previous decade.¹ Though the decline of numbers in a trade was generally a symptom of falling fortunes in that trade, the numerical strength of any trade was not necessarily a symptom of buoyancy. In most cases numerically strong trades were dogged by low wage rates and high unemployment. The shoemakers and coopers, the most numerous class of tradesmen in the city, were also the most wretched, while the numerically weak farriers were a much more healthy trade with a fairly strong bargaining position and reasonably steady wages. The more numerous the members of a trade, the greater the competition for available employment and the availability of cheap labour and potential strikebreakers. The baking trade, a relatively numerous body, was particularly prone to incursions by blacklegs and non-union men, and consequently successive campaigns for improved conditions in the trade failed miserably.² Similarly, the shoemakers were noted for their lack of union organization, their low wages, and their wretched living conditions. Shoemakers consistently headed the list of skilled men admitted to the Cork Workhouse, followed by tailors, bakers and coopers.³

The size of working establishments within each trade also helped to determine its degree of organization and the quality of its labour relations. The concentration of a large number of workers within one establishment generally (though not invariably) fostered unionization and an accompanying labour assertiveness. Thus in the shipyards -

1. Census for Ireland, 1901, Munster, City of Cork.

2. See below, pp. 144-5; 332-42.

3. See below, pp. xxxviii-xxxviii.

which in the 1860s each employed between three-hundred and eight-hundred men - the skilled and unskilled workers alike were particularly assertive, and the Cork shipyards became noted for the frequency of labour disputes.¹ The local tobacco-twisters who by the 1870s worked in a factory employing some two-hundred men, had their own union in the late 1860s, and the brewery workmen, concentrated in establishments employing between three-hundred and five-hundred men, had been unionized by 1889.² On the other hand, other factory-based workers failed to make any progress in unionization during the course of the century, either because the employers concerned were adamantly opposed to unionism, or because the workers, being unskilled, were easily replaced if they struck for any reason. From the early 1870s onwards, strikes among factory-based workers in the city were relatively common, but in most cases they failed utterly. Or, if they succeeded initially, the strikers' gains were quickly eroded, wage rises being cut back and strike leaders dismissed. Not until the 1890s were many of the big concerns in the city unionized. Then the local railways, together employing over 500 men, the three bacon curing factories, employing 450 men, and the gas works, employing between eighty and one-hundred men, were unionized.³ But the general labourers of the city and the majority of dockers and waterside men, employed either

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1. See below, pp. 328-32. Numbers employed fluctuated sharply with the availability of work. This was particularly true later in the century, when numbers employed in a shipyard could fall to twenty in a slack period, and rise to over 150 when a contract was secured. PP, 1895, xcii (211), pp. 114-5, 260; 1896, lxx, Pt I (441), pp. 110-111, 228; 1896, lxxv, Pt I, pp. 28-9; 1897, lxxx, Pt I (1), pp. 128-129; CC, 28 Jan., 1890.
 2. Sean Daly, Cork: A City in Crisis (Cork 1978) pp. 191, 312; PP 1897 xcix (275) pp. 132-33.
 3. CE, 19, 27, 28 Feb., 18 Mar. 1890.

on a casual or sub-contracting basis, were not effectively organized until the advent of Jim Larkin's union in 1909. Thus concentration of numbers in a single establishment could speed up unionization, but it did not always do so. The longest established unions in Cork were found among the craft trades, whose employment milieu was the small workshop rather than the big business concern or factory. The coopers, whose trade society was prominent in the life of the city since the mid-1700s, usually worked for master coopers employing between ten and forty men, and most of the brewery, distillery and Butter Market work was done in these outside workshops. In the building trades, where unionism was assertive at least as early as the 1820s, there was still less concentration of the workforce within one establishment. Early in the century individual master slaters and master carpenters ran their own workshops,¹ but by the 1870s the more prosperous masters had expanded their businesses to become builders. From the early 1870s onwards, the number of builders and contractors in the city rose dramatically, to meet a rising demand for house building. The social background of the new builders - many of them obviously small speculators - was obscure, but it seems that their origins were humble, for their rate of literacy was considerably lower than it had been among the established builders of previous decades.² By the 1890s there was a clear line of

1. CC, 7 Feb., 1829; 9 Mar., 1834; CE, 9 June, 1845.

2. Census of Ireland, 1871-1901: The number of builders in Cork city rose from 59 in 1871 to 101 in 1891, and to 167 in 1901. At the same time literacy among builders dropped from 100% to 65% between 1881 and 1891, rising again to 79% by 1901.

demarcation between the small builders and the big builders who formed the local Master Builders' Association. The bigger builders each employed as many as twenty carpenters, the same number of masons and plasterers, and almost twice that number of builders' labourers. But because of the seasonal nature of the industry, numbers employed fluctuated sharply, and in bad weather up to sixty percent of the workers in the building trade were idle. In other sectors of the building or related trades, the small sub-contracting master remained in business into the twentieth century. The plumbers and painters worked (as they still do) for individual master plumbers or painters employing an average of five men each.¹

The engineering industry in Cork was small-scale but thriving. Like the shipbuilding industry, with which it was closely connected, it included within its workforce a wide range of skilled and unskilled labour. Among the skilled men the Amalgamated Society of Engineers catered for the millwrights, turners, and fitters, while the boiler-makers and ironfounders each had their own union.² In each of the bigger foundries of the city, up to forty skilled men worked beside a further 120 unskilled foundry labourers - a badly paid and constantly disaffected body.³

Among the bakers, tailors, shoemakers and cabinetmakers, the small master system co-existed for many years with the rising large-scale establishments. During the course of the century the number

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1. PP, 1894, lxxxi, Pt I, pp. 42, 63, 65; 1895, xcii, pp. 82-3; 1897, lxxiv, pp. 20-21; 1898, lxxxviii (423), pp. 20-21; Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour, Group C; PP, 1892 (c. 6795 - vi), Pt II, Group C, Vol. II (cited hereafter as Royal Commission on Labour, C, 1892), Qs 16969.
 2. These unions were the Friendly Society of Ironfounders and the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders.
 3. PP, 1896, lxxx, Pt I, pp. 104-5, 228; Friendly Society of Iron-Founders' Annual Report, 1890; See below, pp. 180-82; 299-300; 382-83.

of master bakers in the city averaged between fifty and sixty, but as late as 1890 only three of these were really largescale employers, and the majority ran their concerns on fewer than ten men. A typical small bakery of 1850 employed ten individuals, including four bakers, two apprentices, two labourers and two women.¹

In the small bakeries conditions improved little between 1820 and 1900. Many bakehouses in this class were simply ordinary dwelling houses converted into bakeries by small struggling employers. These premises were over-heated, dirty, and never visited by a factory inspector. Moreover, as late as 1892 men working in such establishments received no overtime pay, though they worked up to eighty hours a week.²

In the cabinetmaking trade the workforce in different establishments varied from six to forty men, many of whom were highly skilled in producing work of a splendid artistic quality.³ But as the century passed the trade fell progressively into the hands of sweated outworkers, and by 1900 the local cabinetmakers' union had collapsed.⁴ In shoemaking, the outworking system had prevailed since early in the century, with a consequent weakness of unionization among the journeymen of the trade.⁵ In the tailoring trade outworking became more common from the 1850s on, as the introduction of the sewing machine facilitated the employment of unskilled female labour. By the end

1. CE, 11 Nov., 1850.

2. CE, 22 Nov., 1858; Royal Commission on Labour, C, 1892, Qs 17042-6.

3. Some of this work is still to be seen in the form of carved statues, altars and confessionals in the Cork city-centre Church of Ss Peter and Paul.

4. CE, 23 Oct., 1850; See below, pp. 193-94.

5. See below, pp. 174-75; 321-26.

of the century, while the bigger master tailors employed up to fifty men, the smaller masters employed a maximum of fourteen men, and relied heavily on the labour of sweated outworkers.¹

Small masters were often the most determined foes of unionization among the journeymen of their trades. In the baking trade, ex-union members who had attained the rank of masters, were reputedly the worst transgressors of union rules, employing non-union labour and paying minimal rates of wages - all in the cause of economy.² The same was true in the shoemaking, tailoring and cabinetmaking trades - areas in which a man could with very little capital, set up as a small master, and make his business economic by employing cheap and sweated labour. In late nineteenth century London a man required as little as from one to three pounds to set up in the furniture or footwear trade.³ In Cork the situation was apparently the same, for between 1890 and 1914, of all the manufacturing trades in the city, the tailors, shoemakers and dealers, bakers and cabinetmakers appeared most frequently in the bankruptcy court.⁴

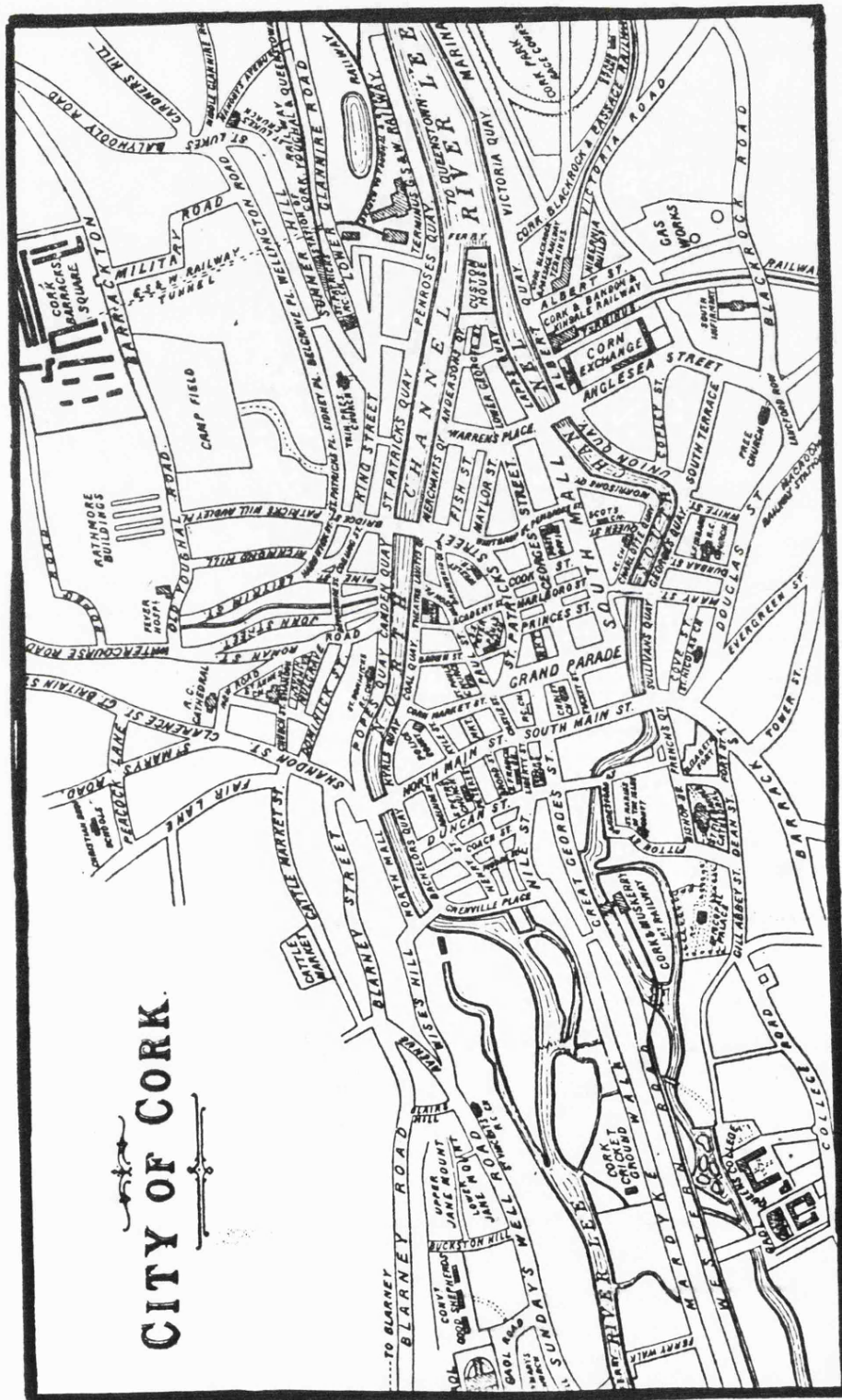
The liabilities of these bankrupt small masters varied between four-hundred and three-thousand pounds, yet the largest sum any one of them had on hands was thirteen pounds. One man had thirteen shillings

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1. PP, 1894, lxxxix, Pt I, pp. 42, 75; CE, 23 Aug., 1892; 10 June, 25 Aug., 1892.
 2. CE, 5 Jan., 1882; 29 June, 1893.
 3. Gareth S. Jones, Outcast London: a study in the relationship between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford, 1971), p. 31.
 4. Cork Bankruptcy Court Records, 1890-1916, Index: Bankrupts in the Cork manufacturing sector, 1890-1916, were as follows:
Tailors & Clothiers, 13; Bootmakers, dealers, 11; Cabinetmakers, dealers, 4; Tanners, 2; Coachbuilders, 2; Hatters, 2; Plumbers, 2; Manufacturing jeweller, 1; Tweed manufacturer, 1; Cooper, 1; Tinsmith, 1; Printer, 1; TOTAL 46.

and eightpence on hands, but most had nothing. Those with bank accounts had overdrafts of from ninety to fifteen hundred pounds, but many had never had a bank account. Some became bankrupt through inheriting bad debts from fathers or brothers in the business. Others blamed depression in their particular branch of trade. But the failure of a great number was apparently due to their initially entering business without sufficient capital, or to their complete lack of business ability.¹ Some men entered as masters trades of which they had no previous experience. One such case was Michael Downing, a baker who became bankrupt in 1896. Returning from America in 1881 on money raised in a Cork loan office by his sister, he joined her in business as an old clothes dealer. Earning from twenty to thirty pounds a week in the business, he saved sufficient money to set up as a master baker in 1892, but became addicted to drink, squandered his money, and appeared in the bankrupt court four years later.² Other bankrupt masters in this list were four of the most noted employers of non-union labour in the local tailoring trade, men who relied largely on sweated female labour because they could not afford to pay union rates.³

The gradual expansion of factory-based industry in the city in the latter half of the century had begun to concentrate the labour force in larger units and to substitute semi-skilled and unskilled labour for the skilled craft workers. But there was little alteration

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1. Cork Bankruptcy Court Records, 1892/27A, 28A, 31A, 45A.
 2. *ibid.*, 1896/84.
 3. *ibid.*, 1897/17; 1906/230, 247; 1912/303; See below, pp. 342-49. The masters involved were William Day, Denis Lehane, Denis O'Flynn and Patrick J. Sugrue.



MAP 1: Street Plan of Cork City, 1891. (Guys' Directory of Munster 1891)

in the traditional location of industry within the city. Not until the mid-twentieth century was Cork affected by industry's move from city centre to peripheral industrial estates, and the traditional street location of the various trades continued unbroken through the nineteenth century. Tanning, even in its declining days, maintained its traditional location along the Watercourse Road, and the factory-based textile industry of the post-Famine era was appropriately sited in Blackpool, an area long associated with the domestic weaving trade of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Even today, Sunbeam, one of Cork's largest textile concerns, is located in Blackpool.

The coachmaking and cabinetmaking establishments of the city clustered mainly in the south-western part, in Grattan Street, Duncan Street, Coach Street and Devonshire Street, while coopering was associated with the northern part of the city, on the slopes round the Butter Market. Glovemaking, though almost extinct by 1900, still held its traditional location in Cock-pit Lane, and shoemaking of the higher class centred in Old Georges' Street (now Oliver Plunkett Street) and Great Georges' Street (now Washington Street).

Residential patterns within the city showed a similar continuity. The working classes, skilled and unskilled alike, concentrated in the lanes and alleys of the city centre, and on the northern and southern slopes around Shandon Street and Barrack Street - still well-established working class communities. Since the late 1700s there had been a tendency on the part of the more prosperous of the business and professional sector to move out to new and elegant detached villas



xix-a

MAP 2: Street Plan
of Cork City,
1976.

outside the built-up area.¹ From the mid-nineteenth century the move towards the suburbs was followed by the lower ranks of the monied classes - prosperous master tradesmen, bank officials, and minor manufacturers, who took up residence in solid and impressive terraced housing being built from the late 1860s on.² Most of these terraced houses today serve as flat accommodation, guest houses and offices, while the detached suburban villas of the merchants and higher professionals have been taken over as hotels, schools, hospitals, and houses of religious communities. Working and middle class Cork today live in the more modest terraced housing of the city perimeter, in corporation housing built in the years since 1886, and in suburban houses springing up since the 1950s.

The religious structure of nineteenth century Cork was predominantly Catholic. Over 83% of the population were Catholics, some 12.5% were members of the Established Church, and 2.5% were Methodists or Presbyterians, while 2% belonged to other faiths.³ The Protestant working class had been contracting since the late eighteenth century,

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1. Henry Inglis, *A Journey Throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834* (London, 1836), Vol. 2, p. 185, speaks of the Cork upper classes' "passion for country houses", and Slater's *National Commercial Directory of Ireland, 1846* (Manchester, 1846), p. 184 commented on the fine scenery around Cork - "a circumstance which causes the number of respectable private dwellings within the city to be comparatively few - the merchants and professional portion of the inhabitants generally availing themselves of the salubrity and convenience of the suburbs for places of residence."
 2. Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to enquire into the Boundaries and Municipal Areas of Certain Cities and Towns in Ireland PP, 1881 (c. 3089-II), L. 65, pp. 231, 237, 251.
 3. Census for Ireland, Munster, City of Cork. The religious structure of the city in the years between 1871 and 1891 appears as follows:

| | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Catholics | 83.52 | 84.24 | 83.83 | 84.21 |
| Est. Church | 12.37 | 12.64 | 13.03 | 12.32 |
| Dissenters | 2.47 | 2.41 | 2.31 | 2.21 |

so that by the mid-nineteenth century the Protestant population of the city was very much an upper class. In 1871, when the first detailed figures of the city's religious structure were made available, the medical profession, the banking service, the magistracy, the army and the ranks of the landed proprietors and those classified as 'gentlemen' were largely Protestant. The civil service, the police, the legal profession, the insurance and the business sectors were also strongly Protestant, and several of the large-scale business concerns in the city were in Protestant hands.¹ But in the rank-and-file of the individual trades and unskilled occupations, the dominance of Catholics was apparent. Generally, the less skilled the occupation, the greater the proportion of Catholics, so that, as Table 6 indicates, the general labourers, dockers, carters, and tanners were predominantly Catholic, while the printers and engineering workers had a sizeable proportion of Protestants in their ranks. This was partly due to the fact that the printers and engineering workers had close relations with English-based unions, and consequently were more likely to attract English-born Protestant members into their ranks.² On the other hand, there are indications that until the mid-nineteenth century some trades without any English connections, like the coopers, shoemakers and weavers, had a relatively large Protestant membership. This was apparently due to the survival of the seventeenth and eighteenth

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1. Census of Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1871-1901. Report of the Select Committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill; PP, 1877 (198), xvi, Qs 4581-21. The Protestant-owned businesses were the Steam Packet Company, the Cork Docks Company, the tobacco factories, Dukes and Ogilvies jam factories, Gouldings' Fertilizer manufactory, and Beamish and Crawford's brewery.
 2. See below, pp. 196-98.

centuries skilled Protestant working class whose upper stratum had formed the basis of the city guilds.¹ Well into the nineteenth century the names of the city's master coopers included many Protestant surnames,² and perhaps the most striking throwback to the period of the Protestant-dominated guilds was the number of coopers registered as freemen in the city electorate as late as 1835.³

TABLE 6⁴

Religious Structure of Main Skilled and Unskilled Occupations,
Cork City, 1871 - 1901.

| | <u>1871</u> | | | <u>1881</u> | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------|------|-------------|-------|------|
| | RC | EC | Dis | RC | EC | Dis |
| Farrier | 88.89 | 11.1 | - | 89.29 | 10.71 | - |
| Printer | 71.73 | 25.65 | 2.62 | 63.49 | 33.3 | 2.65 |
| Machinemaker | 72.3 | 16.22 | 7.09 | 83.58 | 10.45 | 5.97 |
| Coachmaker | 84.81 | 14.56 | 0.63 | 85.09 | 9.94 | 3.11 |
| Saddler | 82.47 | 13.40 | 2.06 | 88.66 | 9.28 | 2.06 |
| Shipwright | 86.49 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 93.55 | 4.84 | 1.61 |
| Builder | 77.08 | 14.58 | 6.25 | 77.97 | 20.34 | - |
| Carpenter | 91.87 | 6.63 | 0.83 | 95.82 | 3.38 | 0.64 |
| Mason | 99.6 | 0.4 | - | 100.0 | | |
| Slater | 96.67 | 3.03 | - | 94.0 | 6.0 | - |
| Plasterer | 94.32 | 5.68 | - | 97.52 | 2.48 | - |
| Plumber | | | | 81.37 | 14.71 | 2.94 |
| Painter | 81.06 | 15.61 | 3.32 | 89.88 | 9.72 | - |
| Cabinetmaker | 81.69 | 17.61 | 0.70 | 83.06 | 14.52 | 2.42 |
| Weaver | 84.0 | 12.0 | 4.0 | 85.71 | 14.29 | - |

1. Richard Caulfield, The Council Book of the Corporation of the City of Cork, 1609-1800 (Cork, 1878), pp. 260, 266, cites the rules forbidding the admission of Catholics to the city guilds.
2. Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory of Ireland, 1856 (Manchester, 1856). Master Coopers' names include: Cotrell, Deyos, Dixon, Phair, Marsh, Maybury, Paul and Stammers.
3. People's Press, 17, 24, 31 Jan., 7, 14, Feb., 1835: from a total identified electorate of 2,181, the coopers had a total of 80 electors - the highest representation for a single skilled occupational group. Significantly of these 80 coopers, 47 voted Tory (a typical Protestant vote) and 33 voted liberal.
4. Table compiled from figures in Census of Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1871-1901. RC = Catholic; EC = Established Church; Dis = Dissenter.

TABLE 6 (Contd)

| | <u>1871</u> | | | <u>1881</u> | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------|------|-------------|-------|-------|
| | RC | EC | Dis | RC | EC | Dis |
| Hatter | 86.49 | 10.81 | - | 88.46 | 11.54 | - |
| Tailor | 92.82 | 5.71 | 1.10 | 94.83 | 3.51 | 1.03 |
| Shoemaker | 83.73 | 14.7 | 1.05 | 87.12 | 11.36 | 1.19 |
| Ropemaker | 96.88 | 3.13 | - | 94.12 | 5.88 | - |
| Baker | 93.0 | 4.48 | 0.56 | 96.0 | 2.48 | 1.24 |
| Tobacco maker | 98.50 | 1.12 | - | 95.0 | 5.0 | - |
| Tanner | 100.0 | - | - | 100.0 | - | - |
| Brushmaker | 89.74 | 10.26 | - | 72.0 | 24.0 | - |
| Cooper | 93.44 | 6.03 | 0.53 | 91.86 | 7.92 | 0.23 |
| Blacksmith | 94.87 | 2.93 | 0.73 | 94.84 | 3.76 | 1.49 |
| Nailor | 94.87 | 3.85 | - | 89.8 | 10.2 | - |
| Sawyer | 97.87 | 2.11 | - | 87.69 | - | 12.31 |
| Labourer | 99.14 | 0.76 | 0.04 | 99.18 | 0.82 | - |
| Average for total population | 83.52 | 12.37 | 2.47 | 84.24 | 12.64 | 2.41 |
| <hr/> | | | | | | |
| | <u>1891</u> | | | <u>1901</u> | | |
| | RC | EC | Dis | RC | EC | Dis |
| Farrier | 90.63 | 9.38 | - | 95.35 | 4.65 | - |
| Printer | 70.7 | 30.23 | 4.41 | 72.28 | 20.11 | 6.52 |
| Machinemaker | 77.21 | 17.21 | 5.58 | 74.78 | 11.07 | 12.79 |
| Coachmaker | 83.45 | 12.23 | 2.88 | 86.59 | 9.5 | 3.35 |
| Saddler | 83.95 | 9.88 | 4.94 | 93.3 | 2.67 | 2.67 |
| Shipwright | 97.56 | 2.44 | - | 97.14 | 2.86 | - |
| Builder | 97.44 | 1.92 | 0.64 | 97.17 | 2.83 | - |
| Carpenter | 95.42 | 4.25 | 0.16 | 96.93 | 2.39 | 0.17 |
| Mason | 98.94 | 0.06 | - | 100.0 | - | - |
| Slater | 98.3 | 1.66 | - | 97.14 | 2.94 | - |
| Plasterer | 90.1 | 9.91 | - | 96.3 | 2.96 | 0.74 |
| Plumber | 76.03 | 17.81 | 5.48 | 81.09 | 14.93 | 2.98 |
| Painter | 89.86 | 9.78 | - | 91.79 | 7.0 | - |
| Cabinetmaker | 87.6 | 11.63 | 0.78 | 87.5 | 11.67 | - |
| Weaver | 100.0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Hatter | 94.4 | - | - | 100.0 | - | - |
| Tailor | 92.34 | 3.94 | 2.19 | 94.12 | 2.59 | 1.88 |
| Shoemaker | 86.86 | 10.98 | 1.57 | 91.57 | 6.51 | 1.20 |
| Ropemaker | 94.74 | - | 5.26 | 100.0 | - | - |
| Baker | 87.93 | 9.31 | 2.76 | 91.61 | 6.93 | 0.73 |
| Tobacco maker | 96.77 | 3.23 | - | 91.67 | 8.33 | - |
| Tanner | 100.0 | - | - | 95.24 | 4.76 | - |
| Brushmaker | 72.0 | 24.0 | 4.0 | 72.73 | 27.27 | - |

TABLE 6 (Contd)

| | <u>1891</u> | | | <u>1901</u> | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------|------|-------------|-------|------|
| | RC | EC | Dis | RC | EC | Dis |
| Cooper | 96.98 | 3.02 | - | 96.36 | 2.91 | 0.36 |
| Blacksmith | 95.35 | 4.65 | - | 95.24 | 4.76 | - |
| Nailor | 95.65 | 4.35 | - | 100.0 | - | - |
| Sawyer | 94.55 | 3.64 | 1.82 | 91.4 | 3.23 | 4.3 |
| Labourer | 98.21 | 1.73 | 0.06 | 98.42 | 1.52 | 0.06 |
| Average for total population | 83.83 | 13.13 | 2.31 | 84.23 | 12.32 | 2.21 |

Nineteenth century Cork, though its population hovered between 75,000 and 80,000, was a relatively small and intimate society where, in public matters, personalities were frequently more important than politics.¹ Public men found it advisable to court the good will of the city populace which, though it had no voice in politics, could render most unpleasant the career of an unpopular local public man. Election time was the city populace's opportunity to voice their support or dislike for a local politician, and as the degree of excitement at elections showed, the opportunity was not wasted.² National issues like Repeal, Home Rule, parliamentary and land reform did, of course, form the basis of local Cork politics, yet such issues were frequently overshadowed by questions of purely local significance. In 1845-6, for example, while the imminent break between Daniel O'Connell and Young Ireland dominated the national scene, Cork was rocked by a largely local conflict over the political composition of

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1. This is still largely true today, when the Cork-born Taoiseach (or Prime Minister) of the Republic gets a huge personal vote in his native city.
 2. Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on the Cork Election, 1852; PP, 1852-3, (521), xi, (528), xi; Q 511794; Sean Daly, Cork: A City in Crisis (Cork, 1978), pp. 42-3.

the Cork Harbour Board.¹ Moreover, the several successive 'Irish Manufacture Movements' in the city, though part of a country-wide campaign, were geared to advancing the local industry of Cork rather than the industry of Ireland as a whole. Such movements were really Cork Manufacture Movements, and 'importation' from Waterford, Dublin and Limerick was considered as great an injury to local trade as was importation from England.²

The strong localism of Cork society was reflected in the composition of trade unionism in the city. English-based amalgamated unions had taken root in Cork as early as 1830, and by 1895 over 70% of all union members in the city belonged to amalgamated unions. But many amalgamated unions had a long and bitter struggle for survival, for they were strongly opposed by the entrenched local societies. Even when the principle of amalgamation was accepted in Cork, the spirit of the rank-and-file union members remained predominantly local.³ This spirit of localism was not unique to Cork. In Dublin the local carpenters did all in their power to frustrate the establishment of a branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners in the city.⁴ In a sense, the localism of Cork and Dublin indicated the strength of the local trade societies which, well

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1. Maura Murphy, Repeal and Young Ireland in Cork Politics, 1830-50 (M.A. Diss., University College, Cork, 1975), pp. 100-102.
 2. Cork Coopers Minute Book, 19 June, 1895.
 3. See below, pp.207-09 ; 363-65.
 4. Dublin Branch Minute Book, Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1884-90.

established in their own cities, tried to close their ranks to all outside interference in their rules and employment opportunities. In the eyes of such local trade societies, the broad principle of amalgamation threatened to throw a secure local labour market open to the competition of non-local men. On the other hand, weak trade societies, both in the cities and the county towns, looked on amalgamation as a chance to strengthen their position and open up new areas of employment in other centres. Much study has yet to be done on the history of trade unionism in Limerick, Waterford, Drogheda and smaller Irish towns before we have an accurate picture of the spread of trade unionism, and particularly of amalgamated trade unionism, in nineteenth century Ireland. The records of the amalgamated unions show that a great number of small Irish towns were unionized (albeit temporarily) from England during the course of the nineteenth century,¹ and concentration on the large urban centres of Dublin, Belfast and Cork can give but a partial picture.

Of the four main Irish urban centres of the nineteenth century - Dublin, Cork, Belfast and Limerick - Cork has the lowest survival rate of municipal and trade union records. Historical study in Ireland generally was dealt a fatal blow by the burning of the Four Courts in Dublin in 1922, when irreplaceable historical records, including all original nineteenth century census material, was destroyed. But Cork's historical records had already been decimated before the Four Courts' destruction. In 1890 the city Court House in Cork was

1. See below, pp. 192-209.

accidentally burned, and many municipal records destroyed. Most of the salvaged material was eventually transferred to the City Hall, and when this building was burnt in 1920, the destruction of local records was largely complete. To the accidents and destruction of history must be added the Irish public's failure to preserve historical documents. An exhaustive visitation of local Cork firms and businesses in search of company records yielded little. The two main exceptions are the city breweries and distilleries whose records have long since been deposited in the local archives,¹ but in many other firms records have been lost or destroyed.

Trade union performance in the preservation of records has not been much better. The records of the Cork Trades' Council which was founded in 1881, date only from the 1920s. Of the thirty trade unions which operated in Cork in 1900, the records of only four have so far come to light. Those of the coopers, printers, and plumbers have been deposited in the Cork Archives, and those of the masons are preserved in union hands. To these must be added the minute book of the master tailors, preserved by Mr. Tommy Gibbs, South Main Street.

In cases where local unions fused with English-based amalgamateds, much valuable information is available in the monthly and annual union reports, kept either in union headquarters or in the Modern Records Centre in the University of Warwick, the London School of Economics, and the Bishopsgate Institute. In many ways, these printed reports which concentrate on financial matters give more information than the

1. The records of Beamish and Crawford's Brewery and those of the Cork Distilleries Company are now deposited with the Cork Archives Council.

often hurriedly written minutes of the local trade societies. In the latter case, much depended on the dedication and articulateness of the individual secretary, and the quality of the minutes fluctuated with the ability of the secretary. In some cases, it is true, written minutes give detailed and colourful accounts of discussions and disputes within a trade society, but generally the minutes were as cut-and-dried as possible, and they consequently give far less information than might be hoped. The loss of the trade council records in particular, though much to be regretted, is not as serious a loss as it might be, for the local press gave far more detailed reports of the weekly meetings than one could expect to find in written minutes. Moreover, the press recorded fully all disputes within the council - disputes which a secretary might ignore or conceal.

The newspapers, both local and national, are of vital importance in the study of any aspect of nineteenth century Cork. The development of the style, format and frequency of publication of the nineteenth century Cork newspaper is in itself indicative of the changes in society during the period. The typical newspaper of 1820 catered for the upper classes. It was small, expensive, gave little local news, and filled its columns with foreign news poached from other papers. The paper of 1900, on the other hand, was at least twice the size of that of 1820. It was cheaper, it mixed local, national and foreign news, and it catered mainly for the business interests of the city and for the ordinary working man.¹ After 1860

1. In 1828 the Cork Constitution cost sixpence; in 1900 the same paper, much increased in size, cost a penny.

the city newspapers, which had previously been published three times weekly, were published daily. During the 1880s an extra Saturday supplement was added, containing stories, poetry, and articles of general interest. By the early 1890s the papers had increased in size from four to eight pages, and there appeared a new evening paper - the Evening Echo - to cater specially for the working man. A large number of short-lived local newspapers had appeared between 1800 and 1850, but thereafter the number stabilized. The Cork Daily Herald and the Cork Examiner catered for the liberal, nationalist and Catholic sector of the population, while the Protestant unionist sector patronized the Cork Constitution. The Herald ceased publication in 1900,¹ and the Constitution in 1922,² but the Cork Examiner is still very much alive today. It is in fact the only Irish daily newspaper published outside Dublin and Belfast, and by catering for a Cork readership it reflects the strong localism which had been so evident in the city in the nineteenth century.

The growth of the press in the nineteenth century both reflected and fostered the general rise of literacy. In 1841 some 52.8% of all men in Cork, and 34% of all women claimed to be fully literate. By 1901 these figures had risen to 76% and 72% respectively.³ Consequently, though none of the local newspapers of 1900 could claim to have been strongly pro-labour, their treatment of trade unionism and social issues was very different to what it had been one-hundred

1. William O'Brien Papers, Ms 15,700, N.L.I., Minute Book of the Irish Republican and Socialist Party, 2 Aug., 1901.

2. CC, 22 July, 1922.

3. Census of Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1841-1901.

years, or even fifty years, previously. Newspapers of the period 1820-50, reflecting the social beliefs of the day, denounced trade unionism as illegal, subversive and self-defeating. The newspapers of 1900, though far from sympathetic towards the more aggressive unionism, regarded trade unions generally as vital and beneficial elements in society. The weekly publication of trade council proceedings was in itself ample proof of the change in press and public opinion towards organized labour.

Just as the newspaper reflected the growing acceptance of labour organization, so too it hastened the politicization of the city's working people. In the early 1830s the high level of illiteracy and the high cost of newspapers had put a great proportion of the city's working classes outside the range of press influence. In the earlier years of the century the labourer or tradesman gleaned his political ideas from public meetings and from the popular street ballads of the time. In 1832 a local Cork radical claimed that public meetings

are necessary. Newspapers are too high-priced for the great mass of our people to read them ... it is, therefore, only through the instrumentality of such meetings ... that they can be taught what is beneficial for them, and instructed how to attain it.¹

Though the public meeting and the popular patriotic song continued to be of vital importance in moulding the political opinions of working people as late as the 1880s,² the newspaper was fast taking over.

1. CMC, 16 July, 1832.

2. Maura Murphy, 'The Role of the Ballad Singer and the Seditious Ballad in Nineteenth Century Ireland - Dublin Castle's View', Ulster Folklife, forthcoming 1979.

The reading of the Nation newspaper in the homes of the people and in the growing number of political reading rooms in the cities and towns, helped to spread the ideas of Young Ireland in the 1840s.¹

In the 1860s the ideas of Fenianism were propagated through the medium of the revolutionary Irish People and the increasingly popular patriotic song-books.² Similarly, the land war of the 1880s owed at least some of its popular support to the extensive coverage given to it by the local and national press - a point acknowledged by the Castle authorities in their harassment of newspaper owners and personnel in the late 1880s.³

The detailed political news in the nineteenth century press makes it one of the most valuable political records for the local historian. Nationalist political organizations of the nineteenth century left relatively few records. The papers of the Repeal Association of the 1840s are scanty and unsatisfactory. The Land League's central or local records are not available. And there is no large collection of papers dealing with the Home Rule Association. Most documents of a political nature were not, in fact, housed in the headquarters of the associations concerned, but remained in the hands of individual prominent members, and it is to these personal collections that the researcher looks for information. Thus, the correspondence collections of national figures like Daniel O'Connell and William Smith O'Brien, and of local Cork public men like Richard

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1. Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, PP, 1867-8, (280), xiv, Q 174.
 2. Mary Leo, The Influence of the Fenians and their Press on Public Opinion in Ireland, 1863-70 (M. Litt. Diss., Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), pp. 18-20, 34.
 3. CSORP, 1887, 19670, 19948, 19544, 22628.

Dowden,¹ provide our best insight into the constitutional politics of the period 1830-60. For the period 1860-1900 the correspondence of the two William O'Briens, and of James F.X. O'Brien,² are the main sources for the internal workings of the Home Rule Movement and the land agitation. Unfortunately, though letters from both Michael Davitt and Parnell are included in these collections, there are not available any large independent collections of these men's own correspondence. This closes the door on a large section of later nineteenth century political, agrarian and labour history, since both Davitt and Parnell were closely involved in such matters between 1880 and 1900. From the viewpoint of the student of local Cork politics, the loss is particularly unfortunate. Parnell was MP for Cork City from 1880 to 1891, and no doubt his correspondence would include much valuable information on local politics. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the local labour historian, the dearth of correspondence collections is slightly less regrettable, for even where these do exist, they pay remarkably little attention to trade union and labour matters in the city. The voluminous correspondence of William O'Brien (1852-1928), which covers the period from 1870 to 1928, scarcely refers to the growth of labour strength in the city or to the political role of the local trades council. This might be taken as an indication that the trades council played no political role in the city, yet we know from newspaper coverage and

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1. Richard Dowden, Vinegar Manufacturer, Radical-Repealer and Unitarian, was one of Cork's most prominent men during the 1830s and '40s. His collected letters and ephemera are preserved in the Cork Archives.
 2. William O'Brien, MP, (1852-1928), Home Ruler, land reform agitator and anti-Parnellite. William O'Brien (1881-1968) prominent trade unionist and opponent of Jim Larkin. James F.X. O'Brien (1847-1905) Fenian and later MP for Cork.

from one isolated comment by O'Brien himself,¹ that the organized trades' political support was considered indispensable by local politicians.

The main disadvantage of the correspondence collections of individual political men is that they concentrate largely on personal matters and on the headquarter problems of administering countrywide organizations. Developments at local level are largely ignored, and when they are covered the emphasis is again on administrative problems rather than on the activities, opinions and social background of the rank-and-file. Moreover, nineteenth century Ireland, unlike contemporary England, saw published very few working class autobiographies which open a window on the political and social life of the artisan and labourer. Ireland's substitute for the working class autobiography was the political man's reminiscences. Such works were published increasingly from the 1870s onwards, particularly by those who had been prominent in the underground revolutionary movement - O'Donovan Rossa, Michael Davitt and Joseph Denieffe.² Though such works had all the disadvantages of political propaganda, they were written by men closely involved in a largely working class political movement, and they therefore help to illustrate the rank-and-file role in political movements in a way which existing correspondence collections cannot do.

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1. William O'Brien Papers, Ms. 13427 (N.L.I.), William O'Brien to James F.X. O'Brien, 7 Aug., 1897.
 2. Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, Rossa's Recollections (Irish University Press Reprint, Dublin, 1972); Joseph Denieffe, Personal Recollections of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (New York, 1906); Michael Davitt, Davitt's Prison Journal (Irish University Reprint, Dublin, 1972).

But the local newspaper remains the most valuable source for the study of local political involvement. From the time of O'Connell the local liberal press gave extensive coverage to all facets of the constitutional nationalist movement, regularly publishing reports of election speeches and meetings of various political bodies, descriptions of political demonstrations, and lengthy editorials on items of current interest. Thus over a period of some seventy years, a patchwork of historical information was built up in the local press. And because Cork had three regular newspapers published concurrently, the exaggerations, omissions and biases of one can be balanced by reference to the others. Because of both its close involvement in constitutional nationalist politics and the high standard of its reporting, the Cork Examiner generally proves the most satisfactory source of political information. But because the Examiner strongly opposed militant nationalism, and because the secret nature of militant nationalist organizations did not lend itself to press coverage, the newspaper is not the best source for this particular aspect of politics. Information here is provided by the records of the central administration in Dublin Castle.

Since the late 1790s Dublin Castle had gleaned information on disturbances and seditious activities in Ireland through the medium of magistrates, military officers and informers. When the police was set up in 1814 and reconstituted in 1836,¹ the Castle had an additional local source of information, and the increasing efficiency

1. Seamus Breathnach, The Irish Police Force from Earliest Times to the Present Day (Dublin, 1974), pp. 24-5, 31, 36.

of communications between the Castle and the police from 1830 onwards is evidenced by the growing volume of correspondence in the Castle files. These communications dealt not only with routine matters like police appointments, salaries and discipline, but with all crime of a social and political nature. Robberies, murders, arson, rape, and forgery were staple crimes of the period, but the most dominant type of crime was that connected with agrarian disturbance. A certain amount of data on the activities of trade unions appears in the Castle files, but it is greatly overshadowed by the volume of reports on agrarian crime. In fact, references to 'illegal combinations' in the Castle files generally apply to agrarian societies rather than to town-based trade unions - a fact which itself suggests that however great the upheaval caused by trade combination in nineteenth century urban Ireland, it was considered far less dangerous to society than the agrarian combinations of the countryside.

Castle coverage of subversive political activities in the country grew in volume in the late 1840s, when information was received on the formation and composition of the separatist republican Confederate Clubs.¹ But it was in the 1860s, when the Castle's intelligence department was reorganized, that detailed and largely reliable information was collected on the growing Fenian movement both in Dublin and in the provinces. Spies and informers had always been a problem for Irish underground movements, but they prove a boon to the historian, for from their information can be pieced together the local developments

1. See below, pp. 125-29.

of Fenianism. Indeed, the absence or inefficiency of spies in the nationalist movement at any given period leaves the historian without vital information. It is indicative of the increasing efficiency of the Castle's intelligence system that we know far more about the Fenians (a secret organization) than about the open revolutionary Confederate Clubs of twenty years previously.

The Castle struck a further blow at revolutionary nationalism and performed a further service to the historian when, in 1887,¹ it set up the Crimes Branch Special to deal particularly with agrarianism and subversive nationalism. This department kept a close check on individuals connected with the Land League and the revolutionary underground, and though its records are not as detailed as we might wish, they reveal a hidden political framework which would never be visible through study based solely on press reports.

An equally continuous source of information on social conditions in Cork from 1850 onwards is the series of local Workhouse Registers. Every individual admitted to the Workhouse was entered on the register, with details of his age, occupation, address, state of health, and date of admission and discharge. The Workhouse served not alone as the last refuge of the destitute, but also as a free lodging house for vagrants or poor travellers, many on their way to the emigrant ship. It also provided short-term medical attention for minor injuries, cut or broken limbs, sores or bruises. The people using the Workhouse's medical and lodging facilities stayed only a few nights in the institution and then passed on. Even those staying for longer

1. Crime Branch Special, Chief Secretary's Office, 1887-1900.

terms usually left after a few months, having recourse to the house in the coldest winter months and leaving again when warmer weather returned. As the register comments show, all those seeking refuge in the Workhouse were unquestionably the poorest section of the population. Yet, because of the several functions which the Workhouse served - hospital, dispensary, free lodging - as well as that of refuge for the destitute, simple enumeration of the numbers of each occupational class admitted is not a foolproof indication of the level of destitution within that class. Thus, though the high representation of shoemakers and tailors among the Workhouse inmates indicates that poverty was particularly rife in these trades, it is also obvious that as these trades were among the most numerous in the city the large number of their members in the workhouse simply reflected their general numerical strength. Moreover, to derive meaningful information from the Workhouse admission figures, a detailed study of the age, health, material condition, and duration of stay of each individual admitted - a task which would in itself constitute a major research project. In view of these difficulties, detailed enumeration of the Workhouse admissions was carried out for only five years, 1853-4, 1862-3, and Jan.-June, 1888. From this small sample it emerged that skilled tradesman representation among workhouse admissions was proportionately low. Tradesmen accounted for between five and nine percent of all admissions, while the remaining ninety percent were vagrants, labourers, and women with children. Organized trade societies, in fact, prided themselves on their ability to keep their members out of the workhouse, and considered it a major insult if accused of allowing their older

members to seek refuge in that institution.¹ Table 7 shows the numbers of each trade admitted to the workhouse in the five years, 1855, 1856, 1862, 1863, 1888. This table does give some indication of the poverty rate among the trades concerned, but because it makes no distinction between unionized and non-union men, it gives no indication of the ability of different trade societies to support their unemployed or superannuated members.

TABLE 7²

Numbers of Each Skilled Trade admitted to Cork Union Workhouse

| | Jan.-Dec. 1855 | Jan.-Dec. 1856 | Jan.-Dec. 1862 | July-Dec. 1863 | Jan.-Dec. 1888 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Bakers | 36 | 37 | 51 | 31 | 26 |
| Boilermakers | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Bricklayers | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Bookbinders | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Blockmakers | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Broguemakers | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | - |
| Brassfounders | 1 | - | 2 | - | - |
| Basketmakers | 3 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| Brushmakers | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Bootclosers | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Curriers | 6 | 13 | 15 | 5 | 1 |
| Chandlers | - | 3 | - | - | - |
| Carpenters | 14 | 22 | 43 | 24 | 42 |
| Clogmakers | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| Coopers | 23 | 28 | 81 | 17 | 43 |
| Cabinetmakers | 3 | 4 | 16 | 6 | 7 |
| Cutlers | 3 | - | 1 | 1 | - |
| Gunsmiths | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Hatters | 5 | 3 | 9 | 4 | - |
| Engineers | 3 | - | 4 | 7 | 7 |
| Harnessmakers | 4 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 5 |
| Hosiers | 1 | - | 1 | - | - |
| Masons | 18 | 7 | 18 | 20 | 26 |
| Matmakers | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - |

1. CE, 24 Mar., 1887.

2. Cork Union Workhouse Admission Registers, 1850-90.

TABLE 7 ((Contd))

| | Jan.-Dec. 1855 | Jan.-Dec. 1856 | Jan.-Dec. 1862 | July-Dec. 1863 | Jan.-Dec. 1888 |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Nailors | 15 | 12 | 51 | 15 | 16 |
| Painters | 13 | 12 | 32 | 11 | 31 |
| Paperstainers | 3 | 2 | 8 | 3 | - |
| Polishers | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Printers | 3 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| Pipemakers | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| Shovelmakers | 3 | 3 | - | - | - |
| Skinners | 1 | 3 | 3 | - | - |
| Stonecutters | 4 | 5 | 12 | 8 | 19 |
| Shipwrights | 4 | - | 2 | 2 | - |
| Shoemakers | 79 | 74 | 177 | 50 | 84 |
| Sawyers | 12 | 12 | 35 | 14 | 6 |
| Slaters, Plasterers | 6 | 9 | 14 | 11 | 13 |
| Smiths | 13 | 14 | 55 | 22 | 19 |
| Tobacco Spinners | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | - |
| Tailors | 48 | 24 | 110 | 42 | 40 |
| Tinworkers | 6 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 5 |
| Tanners | 1 | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| Umbrella- makers | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Victuallers | 5 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 3 |
| Weavers | 17 | 26 | 47 | 18 | 2 |
| Woolcombers | 4 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Wireworkers | 2 | - | - | 2 | 4 |

An equally valuable source for social and economic local developments in nineteenth century Cork is the long series of reports issued by royal commissions and parliamentary committees. Covering subjects as diverse as poverty, housing, licensing laws, trade unionism and election politics, many of these enquiries provided a forum of expression for individuals whose opinions would otherwise have been lost to posterity. For instance, the labourers and tradesmen giving evidence to the Poor Enquiry of the early 1830s¹ belonged to the in-

1. Royal Commission on the State of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, First Report, Appendix C, 1836 (35), xxx.

articulate masses whose voices were otherwise publicly heard only as hecklers at public meetings or in the dock or witness box in the police court and the assizes. And the tradesmen who appeared before the Royal Commission on Labour in the early 1890s, though far more articulate than their counterparts of sixty years previously, were given by that commission a far wider forum for their opinions than that usually accorded them in the local press.

In the pattern of source availability for this study of organized labour in nineteenth century Cork, the newspaper emerges as the single most valuable source. This is not only because it is the source with the greatest continuity, but because more than any other source it reflects the day-to-day life of the city in all its aspects. Trade union records, political correspondence, police reports and parliamentary enquiries are, of course, indispensable, for they fill in details which the press does not give. But they cannot equal the newspaper's capacity to paint the city's ordinary social, political and economic life as contemporaries saw it. In an age before radio and television, the press was the main propagator of public opinion. Asa Briggs has defined the newspaper of the nineteenth century as

extremely effective propaganda agencies focusing attention on local issues and through competitive rivalry stimulating the development of articulate opinions.¹

In nineteenth century Cork, the news hoardings outside the press offices were the main focus of public attention when public events like major parliamentary divisions, elections, or criminal trials were in progress,

1. Asa Briggs, op. cit., p. 24.

and even today the Evening Echo boys do a brisk trade when any event of local importance occurs.

Statistics for population, wages, housing, and trade union membership in nineteenth century Cork, no less than those for other places, must be taken with caution. Census figures are not very reliable up to the 1850s, and because of the destruction of the Irish census schedules in the burning of the Four Courts, there is no way of checking the printed tables. Moreover, baptismal and marriage registers, particularly for the city's Catholic parishes, are disappointing sources. They give neither the occupation nor (in many cases) the address of the parties concerned. In checking occupations, one turns constantly to the trade directories of the time, and the disadvantages of this source are well known.¹ Not until the 1860s is there a surviving continuous series of directories for Cork city, and even where the series is complete duplication of common names, insufficient details of address, and concentration on the main streets and businesses of the city to the exclusion of the smaller ones, detracts from the value of the directory as a statistical source.

Calculation of wage rates, hours of labour and trade union membership is similarly hampered by the absence or non-continuity of trade union records. Yet the figures that are available are probably quite accurate,² based as they are on information drawn from a cross-section of sources - union records, parliamentary papers and press reports.

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1. David Page, 'Commercial Directories and Market Towns', in Local Historian, 11, 1974, pp. 85-8.
 2. See below, pp. 151-60.

Most tables in this study have been compiled from so wide a range of sources that it has been considered impractical to list each source separately, and in such cases a very brief indication of sources has been considered adequate.

Nineteenth century Cork saw a threefold development in the life of the local working classes. Firstly, a gradual improvement in the standard of living was reflected in improved housing and rising wages, without a corresponding rise in prices. Secondly, labour organization, particularly among the skilled trades, emerged from the position of a violent and subversive movement to one of 'hard-hatted respectability'.¹ Thirdly, the political role of the working man gradually increased. In 1830 scarcely two in every one-hundred men had the parliamentary franchise, and one in every hundred had the municipal franchise. By 1900, eighteen out of every one-hundred men had both the parliamentary and municipal franchise. Still more significant was the rising prominence of the working man in the field of separatist revolutionary nationalism, a development particularly noticeable from the early 1860s onwards. But the culmination of political development among the Cork working classes was the emergence in 1899 of a labour group which contested the first municipal election under the Local Government Act of 1898.

Unionization, politicization and the improvement of living standards occurred not alone in Cork, but in all major Irish towns during the nineteenth century. This study of nineteenth century Cork traces the

1. Charles McCarthy, The Evolution of Trade Union Organization in Ireland, 1894-1960 (Ph.D. Diss., Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), p. 5.

growth of trades unionism among skilled and unskilled workers. The progress of wage increases and the improvement of working conditions, together with the alterations in the local occupational structure due to the decline of certain trades and occupations and the emergence of others. It also deals with the rise and fall of various constitutional and militant nationalist movements in Cork city, and attempts to relate the growth of such movements to the economic condition of the city's working men. It will be seen that economic distress generally fostered political discontent, and that nineteenth century Cork workingmens' participation in movement like the Repeal Association or the Fenian Brotherhood was as much a response to economic depression as an expression of belief in nationalist principles. But support for nationalism was not simply a reaction to economic distress: it was based on a genuine ideological belief in the right of Ireland to some form of political independence. The fact that such a belief was seldom clearly articulated and frequently imperfectly understood does not in the least detract from the sincerity with which it was held. Even today party and political loyalties, at least in Ireland, are frequently based less on rational judgement than on personal and traditional family loyalties, and this was no less true of nineteenth century Cork.

The apparent absence of rational judgement in political matters is perhaps best illustrated in this study by the Cork trade unions' flirtation with nationalism. Always anxious to parade their nationalist loyalties, the trades spent large sums on organizing demonstrations in support of nationalist politicians, contributed towards the erection of national monuments, and frequently allowed their meetings to become areas for political debate.

This nationalist involvement was partly due to individual workingmens' personal commitment to nationalism, but it was also due, particularly pre-1850, to workingmens' susceptibility to extraneous political pressure - from landlords, employers, and fellow workmen.¹ As the century passed, however, it became more common for organized working men to openly and consciously subordinate nationalism to economic advancement. Criticism of the Land League and of local nationalist town councillors in the 1880s and '90s was the logical consequence of this change of commitment.² Yet this apparent change of attitude was neither complete nor clear-cut, for while the Cork trades of the late nineteenth century periodically declared themselves to be more committed to trade unionism than to nationalism, they still wished to see themselves as the local strongholds of national principles, and enthusiastically participated in political demonstrations when the occasion presented itself.

Though the threefold development in living standards, labour organization and political participation is basically accurate, it cannot be taken as a steady and inevitable development. Understanding of, and commitment to, national politics ebbed and flowed as the century passed, and individual stances on the political question were frequently equivocal. The same ambiguity was evident in attitudes to trade unionism. Skilled tradesmen declared themselves committed to the elevation of labour as a class, yet they remained bitterly opposed to the improvement of the working conditions of the unskilled, and rival

1. See below, pp. 65, 108, 126.

2. See below, pp. 394-402; 434-41.

unions within the same craft frequently fought by fair means and foul to exclude one another from the labour market. Even within individual trade unions there grew up rival factions more concerned to gratify personal ambitions rather than to further the interests of the union as a whole.¹

Perhaps the history of nineteenth century Cork's working classes would be clearer if we could isolate economic from political issues. But in the Irish context this is impossible, for during the nineteenth century the question of Ireland's political position provided fodder for interminable debate. A modern historian,² concluding that 'Irishmen are obsessed by history' quotes the whimsical comment by the Fenian John O'Leary -

Most events of the present day have their ultimate roots in the far-away past; most Irish ones being more or less easily traced to the Norman Conquest of Ireland, and by a little ingenuity led back to St. Patrick, or even to the flood'.

Workingmen in nineteenth century Cork, whenever they rationalized their political beliefs, usually resorted to the arguments of history, though usually tracing their misfortunes to a more recent event - the Act of Union of 1800. Throughout the century the decline of trade and the continuing problem of unemployment continued to be blamed on the Act of Union - and this although it was becoming increasingly clear that the old handicrafts which employed some 20% of the adult male population of the city were doomed by the rise of mechanization and not by Ireland's political dependence on England.

1. See below, pp. 207-09; 362-65.

2. Edward Norman, A History of Modern Ireland (Pelican Books, 1973), p. 10.

Because the nineteenth century was a period of intense political activity as well as of slowly maturing labour organization, it seemed appropriate to divide this study into alternate chapters on political and trade union matters. Material in these chapters overlaps, but then so did political and economic developments in nineteenth century Ireland. This study of nineteenth century Cork labour and politics cannot stand in isolation. Already, detailed studies of Dublin and Belfast working class politics in the periods 1820-50 and 1886-1910 are in progress or have reached completion, and a major study of the development of twentieth century Irish trade unionism has more recently appeared.¹ Cork has not hitherto formed the basis of a general examination of nineteenth century labour, but since the writing of this particular study began a major work has been published on Cork labour developments between 1870 and 1872.² It is much to be hoped that further detailed studies of this type will appear in the future, so that the present general survey of nineteenth century Cork labour will be supplemented, deepened and corrected by the findings of other researchers.

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1. Charles McCarthy, The Evolution of Trade Union Organization in Ireland, 1894-1960 (Ph.D. Diss., Trinity College, Dublin, 1976),
 2. Sean Daly, Cork, A City in Crisis (Cork, 1979), Vol. I. This volume covers 1870. Volume II, covering 1871-2, is expected to appear in 1980.

CHAPTER I

THE ACTIVITIES AND PROBLEMS OF THE CORK TRADE SOCIETIES,
1820-50

The history of trade unionism in Cork dates back at least to the mid-eighteenth century, when the attention of the House of Commons was drawn to the existence of

several unlawful combinations kept up by and amongst the workmen and artificers in the several trades and manufactures of the ... city of Cork, to the great detriment of the trade of the said city.

These trade unions organized pickets, destroyed tools and machinery, and otherwise penalized masters and journeymen working against society rules. In answer to a petition by the employers of the city, parliament enacted that any Cork tradesman involved in unlawful trade combination should 'be imprisoned not above six months, whipped in public, and released only on giving recognizance of good behaviour for seven years'.¹

It is not clear when exactly the different trade societies of Cork came into existence, but at least eight unions dated from the period 1750-1800. The coopers, tailors, masons, paperstainers and the carpenters were organized between 1760 and 1775, while the cabinetmakers', bootmakers', shipwrights', and stonecutters' societies came into existence in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. The bakers had been organized by the early years of the nineteenth century and the printers dated their society's establishment to 1806.²

In these early years, disputes between the organized trades and the masters and employers of the city periodically came to the public

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1. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (New York, 1925), pp. 40-42; Andrew Boyd, The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions (Tralee, 1972), p. 14.
 2. Sean Daly, Cork: A City in Crisis (Cork, 1978), App. A, pp. 281-310.

notice: early in the nineteenth century, the master bakers complained of active combinations among their journeymen, while conflicts between master and journeymen shoemakers were reputedly so frequent that by 1808 the masters had recourse to the 'Document' which required each journeyman, as a precondition of employment, to renounce all connection with trade combination.¹

The journeymen coopers, growing in strength with the rising importance of the Cork Butter Market and provision trade in the late eighteenth century,² were among the most belligerent trade societies of the city: in the early 1770s a harassed Cork provision merchant, writing to a customer, complained of the coopers' activities:

I have now got the eighty hogsheads of tallow for your account, and shall expect your orders to ship them; it may be the more necessary as our journeymen coopers have published a silly notice that they will not head any casks of tallow larger than a tierce, after the 25 March, in opposition to which and several other resolutions which they would impose on us, the merchants have joined together, and we hope to make them repent of their folly; but as they are such a villainous pack, it would be better to have the tallow shipped, lest₃ they should take it into their heads to do mischief ...

Again in 1802, the journeymen coopers, in answer to the master coopers' refusal to raise wages to the level paid in Dublin, Waterford and Limerick, organized a boycott of the masters and issued notices that

being determined not to engage themselves to their employers, /they would/ work for any merchant that would wish to make or trim his own casks - or for any person (though not a cooper) who, having a mercantile connection, would wish to enter into that most lucrative branch of trade.⁴

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 883-5.
 2. William O'Sullivan, An Economic History of Cork from the Earliest Times to the Act of Union (Cork, 1937), pp. 154-62, 256-279.
 3. Letter Book of a Cork Merchant, Richard Hare; (Cork Archives, Ms. U 259), Hare to Messrs Fry, Tripp & Co., 11 Feb., 1772.
 4. Cork Mercantile Chronicle (cited hereafter as CMC), 1 Oct., 31 Dec., 1802.

The Use of Violence by Trade Societies

The early 1820s saw an eruption of violent trade union activity in Cork city, an outbreak extending to several trades, convulsing the city in a wave of outrages and acts of destruction. This sudden outbreak was largely due to unemployment which in Cork city itself and in the surrounding region created an atmosphere conducive to public disturbance. In 1817, distress had been so great among the poor of the city that several food riots had occurred,¹ and in 1818 it was reported that almost two hundred unemployed carpenters in the city were on the borders of starvation.² In 1822 Parliament was petitioned to relieve distress in the Cork region, distress due to the foreign competition which had crushed the local linen and sail-cloth industry, the heavy import duties on Baltic timber which had put a number of timber merchants out of business with a resulting rise in unemployment among the carpenters of the city, and the decline of the local shipbuilding industry since the 1780s which had thrown the shipwrights and dockside labourers out of work.³

It was at this time that the local newspapers, alarmed by the spread of violence in the city and by a fierce anti-tithe agitation which convulsed the rural areas,⁴ began to report the prevalence 'for some time past' of combination among the city trades. At the Quarter

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1. State of the Country Papers (cited hereafter as SOC), 1817; 1835/15.
 2. British Museum, Add. Mss. 38270, f. 450.
 3. Cork Petition to Parliament re. unemployment in Cork city, 1822 (Cork Archives).
 4. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Disturbances in Ireland, 1825 (20) vii, 1; Minutes of Evidence taken before a Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the State of Ireland, 1825 (181, 521) ix, 249(27).

Sessions of January 1821, the Recorder denounced the activities of the local trades who, it was widely believed,

formed a kind of federal union; they did not meet or legislate by their representatives, but they assembled together in great force in the middle of the night; they bound the peaceable, orderly, quiet and ... starving people, compelling them to obey wicked leaders, and to swear not to exercise that strength that Providence had given them for the support of themselves and their families, unless upon terms which the employer could not afford to give.¹

A year later, this 'spirit of insubordination' was as strong as ever, extending even to the tradesmen of the suburbs. Combination was vigorous among the coopers, nailors and building trades, outrages on persons and property were committed by the bakers, sawyers, wheelwrights and tailors, and order was maintained in the city only through the presence of the military.²

In 1826 further dissatisfaction was created among the tradesmen of Irish towns by the assimilation of the Irish and English currencies, which resulted in the reduction of one penny in the shilling in the nominal value of wages. There was a consequent upsurge of trade union activity in Cork: the tailors of ten establishments in the city struck successfully to maintain the wage paid since 1810 without the nominal reduction resulting from the currency assimilation.³ The bootmakers made the same demand, but with less success than the tailors. One master, Hugh Lanphier of Great George's Street, conceded the journeymens' demand, which meant that the price of boots

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1. Cork Morning Intelligencer (cited hereafter as CMI), 16 Jan., 1821.
 2. CMI, 16, 18 Jan., 8 Feb., 13 Mar., 12, 26 May, 19 June, 1821; Freeholder (cited hereafter as FH) 12, 21, 29 June 1822; SOC 1822: 2344/5, 2345/81.
 3. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 310.

rose by twenty pence and the price of shoes by eight pence a pair. But the other four major master bootmakers in the city refused the demand, and replaced the striking journeymen with strikebreakers.¹

Little or no violence accompanied these strikes, nor was there any recorded violent combination activity in any other trade in the immediate aftermath of the currency assimilation. But in 1828, violence again erupted, and the mayor deemed it necessary to call a meeting of the prominent city employers to discuss 'the present dreadful system of combination amongst the tradesmen in this city'. This new outbreak was apparently a delayed reaction to the currency change and the wage changes which accompanied it. The employers attending the mayor's meeting bitterly denounced the city brewers and distillers who, by so readily conceding the wage demands of their workers in 1826 had encouraged the employees in other city concerns to make similar demands. The most dissatisfied of all the city trades were the coopers and the building trades. Several master coopers' stores were burnt by disgruntled journeymen, and the masters aggravated the bitterness of the situation by importing Wexford-made casks into the city. In the building trade, several buildings in course of construction by employers obnoxious to the unions had been demolished, and the master builders considered the situation to be so far beyond remedy that they made very little effort to suppress the combinations.²

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1. Southern Reporter (cited hereafter as SR), 10, 12, 15, 19, 24 Jan., 1826.
 2. CMC, 13, 15 Feb., 31 Mar. 1828; Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, Outrage Reports (cited hereafter as CSORP.OR), 1828: C/10.

Violence was the hallmark of the trade unionism of the late 1820s and 1830s. And, though alarmist press reports of the time may have exaggerated the picture, there is no doubt that generally the trade unionists of the decades before 1840 relied more on heavy-handed methods than did those of later decades. This was particularly true of the trade unions of Dublin. There the removal of the protective tariffs on imported manufactures, the slump in the textile trade both at home and in Britain, and the complications of the currency assimilation led to widespread distress and a sharp rise in trade union outrages.¹

Table 8² gives the frequency of assaults connected with combination in Cork city between 1830 and 1850, information on combination activities in the 1820s not being sufficiently complete to form the basis of a table.

TABLE 8

Assaults connected with Combination, Cork 1830-1850

| | | | |
|------|----|---------|---|
| 1830 | 4 | 1837 | 1 |
| 1831 | - | 1838 | - |
| 1832 | 1 | 1839 | - |
| 1833 | 14 | 1840 | 2 |
| 1834 | 16 | 1841-3 | - |
| 1835 | 8 | 1844 | 2 |
| 1836 | 1 | 1845-50 | - |

In Cork, as in Dublin,³ the greatest outbreak of violence occurred in the early 1830s. This sudden outbreak was unexpected. Strikes

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1. Feargus D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity: Opinion and Organization, 1820-1850 (Unpublished thesis for M.A. Degree, N.U.I., 1968), pp. 26-29.
 2. This table is based on the number of combination outrages reported in the Cork local press, 1830-50, and in the files of Dublin Castle for the same period.
 3. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 27.

among the building trades and coopers in 1830 had been marked by isolated acts of violence,¹ but there had been nothing to compare with those of 1828 or 1833. In the latter year the mayor, faced with the new disruption of the city, complained that a few unpaid peace officers and eight armed bridewell turnkeys were the only force at hand to deal with a situation in which

our city, hitherto so peaceable, has become lately, and yet is, almost every night, greatly disturbed by persons calling themselves 'the Union of Trades', who assemble by night, break into the houses of tradesmen not belonging to their illegal body, and beat and otherwise illtreat them, so as in several cases to endanger life. They have also committed many outrages by breaking the windows or otherwise damaging the houses of citizens and traders who venture to employ persons contrary to the will of the combinator, and these offences are now become so frequent and alarming that we much fear murders may be committed.²

This wave of unrest took the form of strikes among the sawyers, shoemakers, and ironfounders, with attacks on persons and property by the coopers, tailors, carpenters, cabinetmakers and bakers.³ During 1834 the wave of violence continued with greater intensity,⁴ causing the local press to conclude that the trades of Cork were immune to the law, even the newly-formed constabulary force (set up specially to combat the violence of the trades) coming under attack from the combinator.⁵

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1. Cork Constitution (cited hereafter as CC), 27 Apr., 29 May, 1, 6 June 1830.
 2. CSORP, 1833: 5859.
 3. CC, 18 June, 11 July, 7, 30 Sept., 9, 12, 16, 21, 30 Nov., 3, 7, 10, 28 Dec., 1833.
 4. CC, 11, 16 Jan., 1, 4, 6, 15 Feb., 22 Mar., 3, 8 July, 2, 9 Aug., 6, 8, 11, 13, 18, 29 Nov., 1834.
 5. CSORP.OR, 1834: 506/4; CMC, 30 June 1834.

Although contemporaries believed that the presence of the constabulary helped to considerably reduce the rate of combination outrage in Cork city from late 1834 on, the difficulty of procuring individuals as witnesses in combination cases reduced the force's effectiveness. Scarcely a year after the introduction of the constabulary, a new wave of trade union violence broke out in the form of vitriol throwing. This method of attack was particularly favoured by the bakers and sawyers, and, to a less extent, by the cabinetmakers.¹ A wage dispute among the journeymen bakers in September 1835, in which a master baker's brother was seriously burned with vitriol, brought matters to a head. Informers, themselves involved in the outrage, helped the police to unearth the guilty parties within six months. Two men were capitally convicted, but though the numerous appeals for mercy resulted in the commutation of the sentence to one of life transportation, the discovery and conviction of those involved put an end to vitriol throwing for a number of years. In 1842, one isolated case of a vitriol attack did occur, and a number of journeymen sawyers who had planned and carried out the attack on a local sawmill owner were transported for life.²

The violent activities of the journeymen were blamed in the 1820s and 1830s on the influence of the supposed 'Union of Trades' - a body reputedly having jurisdiction over, and organizing the activities

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1. CC, 7 Feb., 31 Mar., 5, 10, 12, 19, 22, 31 Mar., 7 July 1835; CMC, 21 Sept., 1835; CSORP.OR, 1835: 6/6, 7; Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 282-30.
 2. CE, 2, 4, 9, 11, 14, 28 Mar., 11, 15, 18, 22, 27 Apr., 13, 27 May, 6, 15, 20 June, 5, 19 Aug., 1842.

of all the trades of the city. The existence of a similar Union of Trades in Dublin has long been a matter of debate. In the early 1820s, witnesses before Select Committees on Unlawful Combination gave conflicting accounts of the existence of such a body, and historians still disagree on the subject.¹ In the case of the Cork Union of Trades, the same uncertainty exists, though contemporaries never doubted its existence. In 1821 it was claimed that the trades 'formed a kind of federal union', only the cotton and linen weavers being outside this federation.² In 1822 a Cork correspondent to Dublin Castle complained that

the great source of mischief here, as in Limerick and in most large towns, is what is called a Union of Trades: it is carried on by meetings and clubs which assist the promotions of the conspiracies as the present, at once the means of receiving and of circulating their plans ...³

In 1828, reference was made to the 'general body of combinatorers' to which the coopers alone did not belong.⁴ In 1830, when attempts were made to reduce wages in the building trades to three shillings a day, measures to prevent the reduction were reputedly discussed at a meeting of the 'general body of the trades' and three years later it was claimed that the committee of the 'union of trades' had set a minimum wage for all artisans.⁵

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1. Boyd, op. cit., pp. 28-9; Clarkson, op. cit., p. 112. Report from the Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, PP 1824(51) v, 1-589; Report from the Select Committee on Combination Acts, 1825 (417)(437) iv, 499, 565.
 2. CMI, 16 Jan., 1821.
 3. SOC, 1822: 2344/5.
 4. CMC, 15 Feb., 1828.
 5. Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel (cited hereafter as LEPCS), 26 Feb., 1830; CC, 16 Nov., 1833.

It is possible that in the latter two cases the umbrella committees referred to were committees of the building trades rather than committees directing all the trades of the city. Yet, though there is little evidence that such a general committee of the trades existed, co-operation between the different trade bodies of the city was sufficiently well co-ordinated to suggest that there was indeed some general directing body. In 1833, when some journeymen bakers were sentenced to transportation for a combination outrage, a well-organized deputation of tradesmen, one from each trade society in the city, waited on the two city MPs to procure their intervention on behalf of the convicted men.¹ Moreover, there was apparently close contact between individual members of different trade societies, many of whom lived in close proximity to each other in the crowded lanes and alleys of the city slums. Such ordinary day-to-day contact between neighbours could help to strengthen trade unionism in the city, and it seems that at least some trade union recruitment was done not by the officers of the unions but by tradesmen who saw to it that their neighbours in other trades joined the relevant trade society. Thus, a sawyer charged in 1834 with illegal combination described how he had first been brought to his society rooms for enrolment by a neighbour who was a member of the ropemakers' union.²

Moreover, the combination outrages in Cork in the 1820s and 1830s were, like those in Dublin, perpetrated through inter-union connivance. In 1824, the Select Committee on Combination was told how the Dublin

1. CMC, 13, 18 Dec., 1833; CC, 13, 19 Dec., 1833.

2. CC, 22 Apr., 1834.

trade societies used the unemployed men of other trades to carry out attacks on men breaking society rules. This was equally apparent in the trade union attacks in Cork, particularly in the early 1830s. In Dublin the tailors had figured prominently in assault cases, for they were 'a numerous body, and more unemployed, and therefore more ready to be had'.¹ Likewise in Cork, the tailors, together with the numerous and distressed bakers, sawyers and cabinetmakers, all took leading parts in attacks on masters and strikebreakers in trades other than their own.²

By the late 1830s and particularly by the 1840s, combination outrage had declined: sporadic violence broke out among the shoemakers, coopers and tailors in the early '40s,³ but by 1846 violence had virtually disappeared from the activities of the Cork trade societies. With this decline of combination violence, no more was heard of the Union of Trades. The violence of the Cork trade societies was seemingly due to their connection with the Union of Trades, though it is still not clear whether this connection existed only in the minds of frightened observers, or whether it had an existence in reality. Even if the Union of Trades really did exist its composition remains unclear: its jurisdiction may have extended not over the entire body of the city trades, but over certain trades like the bakers, tailors, sawyers and cabinetmakers, which particularly favoured violent action in the achievement of their objectives. A

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1. Clarkson, op. cit., p. 119.
 2. CMI, 18 Jan., 8 Feb., 1821; CC, 28 Dec. 1833, 11 Jan., 3 April, 2 Aug., 1834, 19 Sept., 1835.
 3. CE, 28 Aug., 1843; CC, 25 Apr., 1844, 10 May, 1845.

recent study of Cork trade unionism suggests that this was indeed the case, and that the composition of the Union of Trades varied from time to time.¹ On the other hand, the Union of Trades may have consisted not of entire trade societies, but only of those society members who favoured violent action, while other members of the same societies held aloof. There is some evidence that this was the real nature of the Union of Trades. The local Slaters' Society, for example, split in 1834, when some members were reputedly expelled from the parent body because of the 'blackness of their dispositions and the blood-thirsty motives which characterized all their proceedings'. Though the expelled body, in their turn, tried to establish their respectability by denying all connection with the Union of Trades, their protests were too vigorous to be entirely credible.²

Contemporaries attributed violence on the part of any trade to the supposed rowdy nature of the individual members, and certain trades gained the reputation of being more violent than others. The hatters were criticized in 1829 for 'their habits of intoxication and their tendency to combination'³ and in 1840 the officers of the Police Court complained that most of the weekend's drunken brawls were caused by the 'coopers, nailors, shoemakers, abandoned women, etc.' in the lanes of the city.⁴ Accusations of drunkenness continued as an anti trade union theme right through the century: many witnesses before the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland

1. Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 310-311.

2. CC, 1, 11, 13 Feb., 1834.

3. CC, 23 Apr., 1829.

4. SR, 21 July, 1840.

in the early 1830s blamed the distress of the Irish artisan on his intemperate drinking habits,¹ and as late as 1870 this theme was repeated by a meeting of master tailors involved in a lockout with their men:

When it was complained that the men could not get sufficient food for their stomachs, it should be remembered that if they kept more whiskey out of them, they could have more food to put into them.²

This decided lack of sympathy for trade unionism was even more apparent in the attitude of the press and in the harsh treatment dealt out in court to men convicted of combination offences. The attitude of an individual magistrate often determined whether a combinator's sentence was light or heavy, and offences committed in pursuit of trade union objectives were more severely punished than the same offences committed outside the trade union context. In 1855, a cooper charged with assaulting five men in a drunken row was fined only ten shillings, though the sitting magistrate - a notorious foe to the Cork trade unions - assured him that had his offence been the result of a combination dispute, the sentence would have been two month's imprisonment.³

In the crowded and squalid city lanes where the majority of labourers and tradesmen lived, grievances affecting a small number of local tradesmen could become the concern of the entire locality and create major public disturbance. In 1822 the peace officers

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1. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, PP., 1836 (35) xxx, First Report, Appendix A, pp. 25, 89, 90, 100.
 2. CE, 11 June, 1870.
 3. CE, 25 May, 1855.

and military interrupted a meeting of three hundred journeymen coopers in the north and arrested ten journeymen coopers, whereupon a huge mob gathered to rescue the captives.¹ Similarly, when in 1840 it was discovered that a number of country coopers had been brought in to break a strike by the local journeymen, the interlopers were attacked by 'a vast number of city coopers, their wives, sons and others' so that the streets surrounding the Butter Market 'soon became the scene of riot and tumult'.²

Though such spontaneous outbreaks of violence were different to the trade societies' attacks on carefully selected individuals, both types of violence had common roots in the trade depression, unemployment and poor living conditions of the time. Table 9 shows the approximate number of combination outrages in each trade in the city between 1830 and 1850.³ The trades highest on this scale were

TABLE 9

Number of Combination Outrages per Trade, Cork 1830-1850

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Coopers | 15 |
| Tailors | 11 |
| Bakers | 7 |
| Cabinetmakers | 6 |
| Carpenters | 5 |
| Sawyers | 5 |
| Chandlers | 2 |
| Tanners | 1 |
| Shoemakers | 1 |
| Sheelwrights | 1 |
| | <hr/> |
| TOTAL | 54 |

1. SOC, 1822: 2435/81.
2. SR, 10 Sept., 1840.
3. This table, like Table I, is based on local newspaper reports and reports to Dublin Castle.

experiencing a high rate of unemployment,¹ and a large fund of idle men was available to take part in combination attacks within their own and other trades. Yet the shoemakers, whose work was never constant, and whose squalid working conditions and low earnings were proverbial,² were low on the outrage scale. Neither trade depression nor an over-stocking of the labour market in themselves explain a trades' recourse to violence. The weavers, the most distressed trade in the city,³ took no part in the outrages of the 1820s and 1830s: as early as 1821, before the textile slump of 1825-26 brought the worst depression, they were commended for remaining unconnected with the actions of the Union of Trades, and by 1830 they were described by the Catholic bishop of Cork as a 'very peaceable but extremely wretched class of men'.⁴ On the other hand, while the weavers of Cork were being praised for their forbearance, those of the county town of Bandon were described as 'evincing a spirit of combination and resistance which has ever been a disgrace', and at the depth of their distress in 1830 they still held meetings to regulate wages and prevent any members from working under price.⁵ The city woolcombers, too, who were as distressed as the weavers, had

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1. See below, pp. 28-30.
 2. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, pp. 27-8. Wages for Cork shoemakers in the early 1830s were between 12s. and 16s. a week, but as work was not constant most mens' income was much lower. The manner of distributing work also militated against regular earnings: 'The work is seldom cut out and ready for them until Tuesday, and then they only receive one pair, so that much time is frittered away'.
 3. See below, pp. 31-32.
 4. CMI, 16 Jan., 1821; CC, 6 Apr., 1830.
 5. SR, 16 Mar., 1826; CC, 10 Dec., 1830; CSORP.OR, 1830: M/68.

still in 1826 an active trade society which enforced regulations to prevent any of the trade working under rate.¹

The rules of most trade societies provided for the protection of their members' means of livelihood and for the peaceful remedy of grievances: the Shoemakers' Society, for example, sought to limit the supply of labour in the trade by allowing only one apprentice to each journeyman, and, like other societies, had a system of fines for those who broke the rules. Yet the shoemaking trade was among the least effectively unionized in the city: of a total of almost 1,400 shoemakers in 1841, scarcely two hundred were society members,² so that there was an immense fund of unorganized labour on which an employer desirous of further weakening the union could draw. In such a situation, the quoting of society rules was unlikely to succeed against a recalcitrant journeyman or a tough employer, and where recourse to the rules failed, the argument of force was tried.

All trade societies, as a preliminary step in dealing with an offending member or master, sent admonitory notices to the parties concerned, and trade committee meetings were largely taken up with the preparation and circulation of such notices. A slater who informed on his fellow-unionists in 1829 explained to the court the purpose and procedure of the trade committee meetings:

1. SR, 9 Nov., 1826.

2. CE, 9 June, 1845. Census of Ireland, 1841.

The object in meeting was to regulate trade and keep up prices. The payment to the Society was four pence a month ... If they wanted to deprive a man of work, they generally wrote a 'strike letter' ... with the trade mark fixed upon it. The members were generally fined for working under price, and ... twenty shillings for not keeping the rules. The price is four-and-a-penny per day, and any man who would work under it would be liable to be fined, and if he resisted, would be struck off work.¹

During the following two decades the slaters continued to regulate their trade in the same way: police raids on their committee meetings in 1834 and 1842 discovered the union officers drawing up warning notices to employers and journeymen who had broken society rules on wage rates, apprentice numbers and non-union labour.² Similarly, a meeting of the masons' committee was surprised in session in 1838, and twenty-eight warning notices to workmen were seized, together with the society account books and brass seal.³

In these particular cases the warning notices were worded with scrupulous politeness, as indicated by one of the slaters' notices of 1834:⁴

Gentlemen, you are requested to withdraw from the employment of Mr. Belcher, as he holds an illegal apprentice, contrary to the rules of the trade ...

Other warning notices, possibly prepared by individuals without union sanction, were much more direct and menacing. These threatening notices, sent by labourers and skilled tradesmen alike, had far more in common with the threatening letters sent by the secret agrarian societies of the rural areas than with the carefully worded notices

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1. CC, 7 Feb., 1829.
 2. CC, 9 Mar., 1834; CE, 9 Sept., 1842.
 3. CC, 24 Nov., 1838; CSORP.OR, 1838: 6/227.
 4. CC, 9 Mar., 1834.

of the city trade societies. Headed not by the trade society crest but by a roughly sketched coffin or skull and crossbones, they were, as the following notice prepared by the labourers in a city iron foundry in 1833 indicates, marked by a low level of literacy and a disarming directness:¹

By the Loyal Helpers of the City:
Daniel Lyons you are where are hereby /sic/
warned not to work in this employment on less a
wise of wages. /sic/ If not, mind the matter.

Others were even more explicit - 'Prepare your coffin or quit Cork'.² Whether crudely or carefully worded, the message was the same: though societies generally enforced their rules by the imposition of fines,³ offenders frequently refused to pay. In such cases, the only effective action possible for the trade society was one of violence, usually taking the form of an attack on the house or person of the offender.⁴ A classic example of step-by-step union harassment of a recalcitrant member took place in 1829 in the case of the Slaters' Society. A new committee was elected early in 1829, and as was usual, the new officers examined the society's books to check the expenditure of society funds by the previous committee. On discovering that the funds had been spent entirely on food and drink and that no more money remained in the chest, the new committee heavily fined the former officers. The stewards were required to pay two pounds each, and the other committee men one pound each. One steward, William Strettle,

1. CC, 10 Dec., 1833.

2. CC, 10 Dec., 1833, 2 May, 1844.

3. CC, 9 Mar., 1834; Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, First Report, Appendix C, pp. 27-30.

4. CC, 21 Nov., 1833.

refused to pay the fine, whereupon the next stage of coercion was applied, the society successfully calling on Strettle's employer to dismiss him. Still Strettle refused to pay the fine, and the third stage was tried: a number of men were sent by the society to attack Strettle's house and break his windows, and a notice chalked on his door warned him that the next step would be an attack on his person:

If you don't come in the morning and attend on the committee, we will call again and serve you out ...

Before his callers returned to implement the third stage of their plan, Strettle sought police protection, and three of his supposed attackers were arrested and committed to prison for nine months, with six months on the treadmill.¹

Strettle's case was certainly only one of many, and it reached the headlines only because he chose to bring it to the attention of the police. Attacks of this sort, as in Strettle's case, were usually made on journeymen: employers who refused to comply with society demands were less amenable to heavy handling, and it is significant that of the 56 recorded cases of combination violence in Cork between 1830 and 1850, only twelve were directed against the persons or property of employers. Where personal attacks against employers did occur, however, they were no less violent than those aimed against journeymen. During a tailors' strike in 1833, one of the proprietors of Keane and Turnbull's tailoring establishment was waylaid by a crowd of from fifty to one hundred men, dragged from his carriage, and beaten until he agreed to 'never again oppose the Union of Trades'.² In 1842, one of the proprietors of the Cork Steam Saw

1. CC, 7 Feb., 1829.

2. CC, 28 Dec., 1833.

Mills was blinded with vitriol for his introduction of machinery into the industry and the consequent displacement of a great number of hand sawyers.¹ This incident, occurring at a time when the majority of the city trades had renounced all violent action in pursuit of their demands, was not the work of isolated individuals, but was planned by the committee of the sawyers' union, who also organized parties to destroy stocks of timber cut by the new steam mills.² The campaign merely turned public opinion against the sawyers, and it did nothing to prevent further mechanization in the trade, but the violence and desperation with which it was carried out showed that in making a last stand against the phasing out of their means of livelihood, the members of a trade, backed by a strong committee, were willing to use any means in their power.

In dealing with a recalcitrant employer, the strike was the trade society's alternative to personal violence. Between 1830 and 1850, the local press and the local police authorities together recorded a total of twenty-one strikes in Cork, ten in the 1830s and eleven in the 1840s. If the incomplete nature of press coverage of trade union news is taken into account, it can be assumed that the actual number of strikes was in reality much higher, but the rough estimate of twenty-one strikes, listed in Table 10, suffices to show the pattern of labour unrest in the city from year to year.

1. CC, 7 Feb., 1829.

2. CC, 28 Dec., 1833.

TABLE 10¹Frequency of Strikes in Cork City, 1830-1850

| | | | |
|-------|----|-------|----|
| 1830 | 1 | 1840 | 3 |
| 1831 | 1 | 1841 | - |
| 1832 | 2 | 1842 | - |
| 1833 | 2 | 1843 | 2 |
| 1834 | 2 | 1844 | 1 |
| 1835 | 1 | 1845 | - |
| 1836 | - | 1846 | 1 |
| 1837 | 1 | 1847 | 2 |
| 1838 | - | 1848 | 1 |
| 1839 | - | 1849 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 10 | TOTAL | 11 |

Hostile contemporary observers made no distinction between the motivation of strikes and combination outrages: both means were, it was believed, directed towards the same end - the raising or maintaining of wage rates and the restriction of employment opportunities to the members of local trade societies.² This belief, though correctly assessing the purpose of contemporary trade unionism, failed to take account of a definite difference between the aims of strikes and the aims of combination outrage. Outrage, it is true, was frequently resorted to where strikes had failed,³ but an examination of the recorded strikes and combination assaults of the period suggests that the two methods had different roots. Strikes were preventive or remedial, assaults and outrages were punitive. Thus, the majority of strikes during the 1830s and 1840s were directed towards the raising of wages or the prevention of wage cuts, while

1. Table compiled from newspaper and police reports, 1830-50.

2. CSORP.OR, 1833: 5859.

3. CC, 25 May, 1, 5 June, 1830; 8 July, 1834.

the majority of assaults in the same years were perpetrated against strikebreakers, union members who had transgressed the rules, or employers who had acted against the trade society's interests.

TABLE II¹

Motives for Strikes and Combination Assaults, 1830-50

| | Strikes | Assaults |
|--|----------|-----------|
| - Wage grievances | 14 | 1 |
| - Punishment of blacklegs, Non-union men, rule breakers | 3 | 38 |
| - Objection to employment of too many apprentices | 2 | 2 |
| - Opposition to machinery | - | 3 |
| - Demarcation disputes | 1 | - |
| - Attacks on police | - | 1 |
| - Objection to heavy workload | 1 | - |
| - Unspecified | <u>-</u> | <u>11</u> |
| TOTAL | 21 | 56 |

The distinction between the motives of strikes and assaults must not, however, be overstressed. The wages issue which gave rise to so many strikes, and the problem of non-union and blackleg labour which prompted many assault cases, were closely related. Non-union labour was used by economizing masters to undercut city wage rates, and the main objective of the trade societies - the maintenance of wage levels - was attainable only by excluding non-union men from the city work-force.²

1. Table compiled from reports in CC, CMC and police reports.

2. CC, 9 Aug., 1834; CE, 9 Sept., 1842.

Wage Rates and Unemployment

The question of wage regulation had always been a matter of dispute between the masters and journeymen of the different trades, but it became particularly vexed when the recognized local machinery for wage regulation broke down in the mid-1820s. This machinery first came into operation in the mid-eighteenth century, when Parliament, alarmed by the growth of trade unions among the Cork city artizans, decided that

the yearly ascertaining the wages to be paid to the several artificers in the ... city of Cork would in a great measure tend to prevent unlawful combinations among such artificers.

It was therefore enacted that the local Justices of the Peace should ascertain at the Easter Quarter Sessions each year, in the presence of the Recorder or his Deputy,

what wages or sum of money every mason, carpenter, slater, cooper, or other artificer shall take and be paid by the day or by the certain denomination, piece or parcel of work, or job, either with or without meat and drink, during the year following.

If wages higher than those arranged by the Justices were accepted, they were to be forfeited, half to the funds of the House of Industry and half to the prosecutor, and the offending artisan was to be imprisoned for not more than three months, while if the wages were not paid, double value was recoverable.¹

Up to the early 1820s this manner of wage regulation was carried out in the Quarter Sessions Court following consultation between the

1. Clarkson, op. cit., pp. 40-42: Act for Regulation of the City of Cork, 11 & 12 Geo. III, c 18.

magistrates, the masters of the respective trades, and the journeymen. Such settlements were far from impartial. The original act had, in an effort to safeguard the journeymens' interests, included a proviso that

the said court of general Quarter Sessions of the Peace shall not ascertain the wages of such artificers at a lower rate or sum than the accustomed prices usually paid in the said City of Cork to such artificers respectively.¹

But the dice was loaded against the journeymen. Though they were ostensibly consulted on the wages issue, they were not entitled, once the settlement had been made, to ask for any rise in wages, though the masters were entitled to force a reduction.² Such settlements were apparently the source of much trouble between employers and men, especially in the coopering trade. In 1802 the journeymen coopers' attempt to raise wages to the Dublin level failed, when the master coopers and the Court confirmed the rate of wages approved by the Sessions of 1800,³ and in 1821 a major strike ensued when the journeymen objected to the wages struck by the court.⁴

But from the early 1820s there was an apparent move away from the 'Court Settlement' of wages, and towards the situation in which masters attempted to regulate wages without reference to the Justices of the Peace, and without even a token consultation with the journeymen. The change was not to the advantage of the journeymen. By 1840 the coopers looked back longingly to the system of twenty years before,

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1. *ibid.*
 2. CMI, 8 Mar., 17, 19 May, 1821.
 3. CMC, 1 Oct., 31 Dec., 1802.
 4. CMI, 15, 17, 19, 29 May, 1821.

and lamented the current lack of legal regulation of wages:¹

'You may talk of your free trade system as you will of the conventional rules', said the journeymens' representative to a meeting of master coopers and butter buyers in 1840 - 'but during the old law there never was so much hardship dealt out to the journeymen as now ... I tell you that the coopers of Cork are an ill-used body of men: they never combine but to get bread for their starving families ...'

In fact by 1846 the journeymen coopers received far less than the Court Prices which they had rejected in 1821, and would have gladly welcomed the payment of even half that rate.²

The cabinetmakers were equally affected by the breakdown of wage regulation: in Dublin, as early as 1801, the journeymen and master cabinetmakers had agreed to a book of prices which stood until 1816, at which time a cut in wages was accepted by the journeymen. Either then or some time later, the Dublin masters adopted the London Union Book of Prices, a payment system framed by a committee of London masters and journeymen, but because of the different exchange rates of the English and Irish currencies, the Dublin journeymen actually worked for four shillings and twopence in the pound less than the London men.³ The situation in Cork seemed similar: the system of wage regulation in the trade before the 1820s is unclear, but in 1822 the master cabinet makers formed a coalition to regulate wages without reference to the local journeymen. In 1824 they followed the Dublin example by adopting the London Union Book of Prices with

1. SR, 15 Sept., 1840.

2. CE, 4, 11 Feb., 1846. The Court Price of 1821 amounted to approximately 20s. a week (CMI, 19 May, 1821). Average weekly earnings in 1846 were from 7s. to 10s.

3. Clarkson, op. cit., p. 75.

a deduction of 15% on the London rate, the scale of payment to rise or fall with the fluctuations of provision prices. This method of payment was most unacceptable to the journeymen, who claimed that it enabled the average journeyman to earn only eighteen shillings to one pound per week - a rate between eight and eighteen shillings lower than that paid in the years before 1816. Moreover, the cabinetmakers claimed, their tools were more expensive, their wages lower, and their working hours longer than those of many other trades in the city.¹

Whatever the grievances of the Cork cabinetmakers in the 1820s, their situation, like that of the coopers, had worsened considerably by the 1840s. Relations between masters and men had deteriorated during the 1830s when several combination outrages took place in the trade.² By 1841, there was 'a great want of harmony' between masters and journeymen, wages had been cut, and even the despised London Book of Prices had been jettisoned so that there was no uniform wage regulation in the trade, and some masters paid much lower rates than others.³

Information on wage rates in the 1830s and 1840s in Cork is far from complete: only the records of the printers, coopers, and some of the building trades give a fairly complete run of wage information for Cork, so that even where wage rate information is available for Dublin, no real comparison between the two centres is possible.

1. SR, 2 Feb., 1826.

2. See Table 9, p.14 above.

3. SR, 27 Feb., 1841.

TABLE 12

Weekly Wage Rates, Dublin and Cork, 1820-1850¹

| | | 1820s | 1830s | 1840s |
|---------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Weavers | Dublin Cork | 25s. | 15s. | 9s. |
| Cabinetmakers | Dublin Cork | 22s. 18s. to 20s. | | |
| Printers | Dublin Cork | | 27s. to 32/6 21s. | |
| Coopers | Dublin Cork | 20s. | 27s. | 20s. |
| Carpenters | Dublin Cork | 26s. | 28s. 18s. to 21s. | 26s. |
| Masons | Dublin Cork | | 20s. | 24s. |
| Slaters | Dublin Cork | 24/6 | 21s. to 27s. | |
| Plasterers | Dublin Cork | 26s. | 18s. | 26s. 20s. |
| Stonecutters | Dublin Cork | | 21s. to 27s. | 21s, and down to 5s. |
| Bakers | Dublin Cork | | 12s. to 18s. | 26s. |
| Tanners | Dublin Cork | 12/6 18s. maximum | 5s. to 8s. | 11s. to 15s. |
| Labourers | Dublin Cork | 5s. to 6s. | 2/6 to 3/9 | 8s. to 12s. |

1. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 168-172; Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, First Report, App. C., pp. 3, 4, 27-8; CMC, 12 June, 1833; People's Press, 16 May, 1835; and further newspaper and police reports.

It does seem, however, that wage rates in Cork lagged behind those of Dublin - a trend which continued right through the century.¹ As Table 12 suggests, the standard weekly wage rates for cabinetmakers were 5% to 10% lower in Cork than in Dublin; the carpenters' rates were 25% to 35% lower; plasterers' rates 20% to 30% lower, and coopers' and tanners' from 33% to 60% lower. These figures suggest that, with the exception of the weavers' case, the wages of trades in both Dublin and Cork tended to remain static or to rise slightly over the period 1820 to 1850. Over the same period 1820-1850, the cost of living in Cork dropped substantially, rising only once, in 1839, to the level of the mid-1820s.² But while falling provision prices and rising wages seem to indicate an improvement in artisans' living standards, the high rate of unemployment in many trades cancelled out these benefits. In fact, theoretical wage rates, such as those shown in the above table, give very little indication of the real income of skilled artisans in the years before 1850, still less of the income of unskilled labourers, whose rate of unemployment was much higher.

How great was the problem of unemployment among the Cork trades? Only the trade societies themselves had any idea of the extent of unemployment in their respective trades, and even their knowledge of the situation applied only to society members, and took no account of the position of non-union men. The trades' close involvement in the problem of unemployment may have caused their accounts to err on the side of exaggeration, but because their calculations of members' income

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1. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 168-172; SR, 19 Sept., 1840.
 2. John B. O'Brien, 'Agricultural Prices and Living Costs in Pre-Famine Cork' in JCHAS, Part I, Vol. lxxxii, No. 235, Jan.-June, 1977, pp. 8-10.

took account of the diminishing effects of unemployment on earnings, they were probably more accurate than any table of theoretical wage rates such as that given above. Thus, though in 1843 the general rate of payment for masons was four shillings a day, the disruption of the trade by bad weather meant that the average mason's earnings fell to about two shillings a day.¹ Similarly, though the daily wage rate for coopers in 1843 was three shillings and fourpence, the erratic nature of employment in the trade caused many men to earn only four or five shillings per week.²

In some cases, tradesmen with a nominally lower rate of wages could, if their employment were constant, be better off than those on a higher wage scale whose earnings were subject to the fluctuations caused by weather conditions and public demand. The bakers, whose weekly wage rate varied from twelve to eighteen shillings during the 1830s, described themselves some years later as 'one of the most moderately paid class of artisans in this city' at a time when the better-paid and better organized building trades were petitioning the public boards of the city to provide employment on public works to relieve distress in their trade.³

The average earnings of the different Cork trades, as calculated by their respective trade societies appear in Table 13.

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1. CE, 5 May, 1843.
 2. CE, 20, 22, 25 Sept., 1843; SR, 19 Sept., 1843.
 3. CE, 6, 20 May, 21 Sept., 1846.

TABLE 13¹

Average weekly earnings among the Cork Trades, 1820-50

| | 1820s | 1830s | 1840s |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Weavers | 4s to 5/10 | 3s to 6s | 5s to 6s |
| Hosiers | 16s to 20s | | |
| Nailors | | 7s to 8s | |
| Glovers | 16s to 20s | | 7s |
| Cabinet Makers | | | 15s to 20s |
| Carvers | | 20s | |
| Coopers | | 6s to 7s | 4s to 7s |
| Masons | | | 12s |
| Plasterers | | | 20s |
| Stonecutters | | 21s to 27s | 5s to 21s |

The low rate of weekly income in trades other than the building trades, was due to the high level of unemployment. The absence of a regular check on the state of trade until the Labour Gazette was produced in the early 1890s makes the level of unemployment from year to year impossible to trace with any degree of accuracy. But from contemporary accounts it is obvious that unemployment was serious, and became progressively worse in the years between 1820 and 1850. The manufacturing sector was the chief area of decline, particularly the textile trade. The first signs of the textile slump appeared in Ireland in 1825, and by 1826 the collapse of the local textile trades was reported from centres as far apart as Drogheda, Dublin, Bandon, and Cork itself.² This decline affected not alone the operatives but also the small masters: in 1825 a committee set up in Cork to consider the revival of local industry was told that many small masters in the textile trade had lost their businesses through lack of capital, and were reduced

1. Table compiled from information in CC, CMC, and SR, and in reports of amalgamated unions.

2. SR, 16 Mar., 29 Apr., 9, 16 May, 15 June, 15 Aug., 19 Nov., 1826.

to working as journeymen.¹ In Dublin the textile slump threw some 19,000 workers out of employment in the Liberties;² and in the Cork textile area of Blackpool distress spread among the idle weavers. In May 1826 a mob of starving women and children, mostly the wives and children of the unemployed, marched on the Mansion House, headed by placards proclaiming:

We want employment - Ourselves and our families
are starving.³

So great was the distress that the woollen, cotton and linen weavers and the woolcombers of the city were employed by the local relief committee as stonebreakers at the rate of a shilling a day, which rate had to be cut when the relief funds diminished.⁴ By 1827, journeymen weavers' wages had fallen to between four and six shillings, and a scheme of relief payments and subsidised emigration to England failed to substantially remedy the condition of the trade.⁵ By the early 1830s the situation had declined still further: subsidised emigration schemes were continued⁶ but unemployment still rose, and by February 1830, of the city's 160-plus cotton weavers, from 100 to 150 were idle.⁷ During the parliamentary election of 1832, canvassers on the popular side were told by a woman whose father had been a master weaver on the Commons Road in the northern part of the city:⁸

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1. CC, 5 Jan., 1825.
 2. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 26.
 3. FH, 15 May, 1826; SR, 16 May, 1826.
 4. SR, 15 June, 1826.
 5. SR, 15 June, 4, 9, 11 Nov., 1826; 10, 15, 20, 25 Feb., 1827.
 6. CC, 6, 17 Apr., 1870.
 7. CC, 25 Feb., 1830; CMC, 23 July, 1832.
 8. CMC, 28 Nov., 1832.

I will show you my father's machinery, lying idle, my family in rags; ... the labour of my father's hands, twenty-five years ago, enabled me to carry on ostrich feather in my hat. Our apprentices were then fed like kings; their master is now worse off than a beggar, for he is ashamed to beg ...

Though hardly as destitute as the weavers, the other city trades - those in the building as well as the manufacturing sector - were seriously affected by unemployment in the winter of 1829-30: by mid-1830 the tailors of the city had an average of only three days work per week,¹ the ropemakers were almost all idle,² and a deputation of trades' representatives told the Board of the House of Industry that unemployment in their respective trades had reached the following levels:³

| | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Carpenters | 200 idle | 90% of entire society |
| Cotton weavers | 100 to 150 | 90% |
| Smiths | 80 | 80% |
| Coopers | 450 | 65% |
| Stonecutters | 10 | ? |
| Nailors | 40 to 50 | ? |

The coopers were second only to the textile workers in their level of depression, and their history of aggressive combination deprived them of the public sympathy given to the weavers. While the weavers were being emigrated to the textile areas of England by public subscription⁴

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1. Thomas Sheahan, Articles of Irish Manufacture, or Portions of Cork History (Cork, 1833), p. 187.
 2. CC, 25 Feb., 1830.
 3. ibid.
 4. SR, 4 Nov., 1826; 10 Mar., 1827; CC, 6, 17 Apr., 1830; Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, First Report, App. C, pp. 27-8. Emigration among the weavers had been in progress since about 1810, between which date and 1833 over 4,000 families had left Cork for the manufacturing areas of England. A number of unmarried weavers were shipped to Liverpool in 1826-7, going on from there to Manchester. Though the textile slump in Britain in the mid-20s led to a sharp rise in unemployment there, weavers continued to be sent from Cork in the early 1830s.

the plight of the coopers was ignored, and when in 1830 the trade unsuccessfully petitioned parliament for relief, the local press declared that the coopers' history of violent combination had put them outside the pale of public sympathy.¹ By early 1832 only 200 of the city's 700 coopers were working, and then only for an average of four months per year, with average weekly earnings of less than one-and-sixpence each. Some members of the trade were so destitute that they were, except for a petticoat, completely naked, and they had sent their wives and children to the House of Industry.²

By the early 1830s, Cork trade unions were defensive bodies, geared to maintaining wages and restricting, as far as possible, entry to the local labour market. The violence of the Cork trade unions was, in fact, a symptom of their essentially defensive nature, for recourse to violence was a tacit admission that peaceful means of redress were ineffective in a situation where traditional methods of trade regulation had broken down and where trade union members were greatly outnumbered by the non-union labour force. Violent trade union activity was most common in trades with the highest unemployment rates and in those whose means of livelihood was immediately threatened by mechanization. Such trades (the coopers, tailors and sawyers) were, however, still alive, and their violence was an expression of mixed hope and desperation - a last stand against extinction. But in the case of the weavers, a trade already virtually extinct, violence offered no hope of success, and the trade contented itself with a silent acceptance of short-term public charity.

1. CC, 11, 25 Feb., 30 Dec., 1830.

2. CMC, 21 Jan., 1 Feb., 1832; Census of Ireland, 1831; there were 692 coopers in Cork in 1831.

Neither the violence of the coopers and sawyers nor the fatalism of the weavers did anything to reverse the decline of their respective trades in the late 1820s. But in the early 1830s there emerged a new type of movement for trade revival - a movement in which the journeyman-employer confrontation of trade unionism could be replaced by co-operation. This economically motivated political movement sought the Repeal of the Act of Union of 1800, from which date, it came to be believed, dated the decline of the trade of Cork. Into this new movement entered the city's trade societies, in the belief that trade union activity could be replaced, or at least supplemented by political involvement.

CHAPTER II

THE CORK TRADES IN LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLITICS,
1830-50

Up to the early 1830s the trades societies of Cork apparently played no part in political life. The campaign for Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s received no support from the city's organized trades, though individual tradesmen joined the popular Catholic Association and acted as collectors of the Catholic Rent. During the 1820s, in fact, the only political demonstration of any consequence was that held to celebrate the coronation of George III, in which demonstration the main participants were the city's masonic lodges, corporate officials and local dignitaries. The only trade society participating was that of the journeymen coopers who, with their reputation for violence and disregard for the law, seemed oddly out of place, especially as the Combination Acts were then in force. But on the occasion of the George III celebrations the journeymen coopers' behaviour was sufficiently decorous to merit the praise of the Master Coopers who,

in order to prove the pleasure they experience at the decent, orderly, and well-conducted appearance of the journeymen of their trade, ... directed a very liberal quantity of porter to be delivered to them ...¹

The Repeal Movement of 1830

Neither the coopers nor the other Cork trade societies again appeared in politics until O'Connell's Repeal movement began in 1830.²

1. CMI, 21 July, 1821.

2. This chapter is partly based on material appearing in the writer's M.A. dissertation, Repeal and Young Ireland in Cork, 1830-1850 (National University of Ireland, 1975, pp. 52-75). However, some conclusions in that dissertation have been modified in the present study, e.g. opinions on the relationship between the city's middle classes and the Cork Trades Association have been revised, so that in the present study the Trades Association appears not as an artisan organization but as a movement dominated by small businessmen. Moreover, the present study examines in much greater detail than the M.A. dissertation the motivation and social composition of the local Repeal Association and Confederate Clubs.

Already in August 1830 a number of the trade societies of Dublin had called on Daniel O'Connell to launch the campaign for a repeal of the Legislative Union of 1801 between Great Britain and Ireland,¹ and in September 1830 O'Connell publicly launched the campaign with a series of letters on Repeal in the national and local newspapers.²

The most vocal exponent of Repeal in Cork in 1830 was the Cork Mercantile Chronicle, a newspaper of radical views, which became during the early 1830s the political mouthpiece of the organized trades of the city. In October 1830, the Chronicle editor, Thomas Sheahan, was approached by three city tradesmen - one master and two journeymen - and urged to publicize the idea of holding Repeal meetings in the city.³ Sheahan complied, but the resulting Repeal meeting took a different form to those concurrently held in Dublin. It was a public dinner, modelled on one held by the Birmingham Union some weeks previously. The appeal of the dinner was limited to men with steady earnings (the tickets cost three shillings) and with some pretensions to middle class social niceties as indicated by the presentation of silver medals to the secretary and treasurer of the dinner fund in recognition of their services. The dinner itself was described as 'highly respectable and numerously attended', but more hostile observers saw it as a gathering of the scum of the city, and gleefully repeated rumours that brawls had erupted over a scarcity of punch.⁴

1. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

2. CC, 7, 16 Sept., 1830.

3. Sheahan, op. cit., p. 183. The tradesmen in question were Morgan O'Donovan, an engraver with his own business; Edward Lane, secretary of the journeymen tailors' society; and John Creedon, a journeyman whose trade is not known.

4. Sheahan, op. cit., p. 185; CC, 28 Oct., 23 Nov., 1830; FH, 30 Nov., 1830.

The dinner was largely a trades' affair. Few men of the merchant or large manufacturer class participated, for the dinner had been arranged by a meeting of small masters and journeymen mainly representative of the printers, tailors, coachmakers and stonecutters, and the tickets were distributed through the 'leading men' of each trade.¹ Following the dinner, twenty of the city trade societies held separate meetings to petition for Repeal, meetings similar to those held by the Dublin trades three months previously.² This wave of political activity by the Cork trades was apparently the first of its kind in the city, and was described by the amused Cork Constitution as

a fit of the ague, sweeping through all the trades and professions, down to the very sweeps ... a sort of epidemic which must be allowed to wear itself out, and will not yield to any known prescription.³

The basis for the Cork trades' support for Repeal was entirely economic. Most of the trades which met to petition for Repeal were severely affected by trade depression and unemployment. The shoemakers, glovers and nailors were hit by foreign competition, and piece-rates in these trades had fallen by as much as 50% from their 1800 level.⁴ The building trades, too, had experienced wage cuts and a rising level of unemployment,⁵ and the printers, tailors and hatters were in a period of depression.⁶ Though the depression in the building trade

1. Sheahan, op. cit., p. 184.

2. Sheahan, op. cit., pp. 188-9; CC, 30 Nov., 2 Dec., 1830; FH, 22 Dec., 1830; Kerry Journal, 15 Dec., 1830.

3. CC, 30 Nov., 1830.

4. Sheahan, op. cit., p. 187.

5. CC, 20 April, 1830.

6. CC, 30 Nov., 2 Dec., 1830; 19 Feb., 22 Mar., 1831.

could hardly be blamed on the Act of Union, the manufacturing trades had no doubts of the Union's effects on their fortunes. The resolution passed at the printers' meeting in 1830 reflected the average Cork artisan's expectations of Repeal:

In attachment to our beloved and patriotic monarch, and to the constitution of these realms, we yield to no portion of his Majesty's subjects ... In seeking for our rights we look to no other object than a firm, because a more equitable union of the two countries, by obtaining for Ireland a legislature capable of appreciating her interests and relieving her wants.¹

This was no abstract patriotism. The feeling of loyalty towards the British monarchy, bolstered by the example of O'Connell's reverence for the Crown, was mingled in the trades' minds with hard-headed economic considerations. Repeal was not seen as heralding the political independence of the country, but as providing protection for Irish industry, increasing employment prospects, and opening up more extensive markets for the products of Irish industry, more particularly for the products of Cork industry.

Even when O'Connell temporarily abandoned Repeal in late 1830 to concentrate on the issue of parliamentary reform, some trade societies in Cork kept the Repeal question alive. The tailors and hatters continued to agitate for a revival of the campaign, always quoting the trade distress in the city as their driving force.² For many artisans the issues of reform and Repeal seemed identical. When a great public meeting in support of Repeal was held in the city in 1832, the tailors' society, strongly pro-Repeal, attended in force,

1. SR, 2 Dec., 1830.

2. CC, 19 Mar., 1832.

and eloquently spelt out its political opinions by means of 'a large green silk flag, on which was seen a bust of William IV and two angels sounding through trumpets into his ears - Reform - Repeal'.¹

When O'Connell came to Cork on legal business in March 1832, he was met by thirty-one of the city trades in a grand procession. The banners of many trade societies had been either renovated or specially made for the occasion, bearing slogans in favour of Repeal.² Carefully arranged by the trades some time beforehand, the demonstration was an impressive event. Even hostile observers were prepared to admit it was

a most astonishing and very grand spectacle. The trades passed with costly emblems of their respective employments, in regular and most systematic order. From the regularity in which they moved, the numbers could be easily taken, ... The crowds of spectators, taking trades and all, must have been from twenty to thirty thousand. The utmost decorum and regularity was observed throughout - not a single man intoxicated - not a row or disturbance during the day or night ...³

An equally flamboyant demonstration, attended by forty-two of the city trades, took place in June 1832,⁴ but it was not until late in the year that the issue of Repeal assumed lasting importance in Cork politics. Significantly, when Repeal did become a major political issue in the city, its revival was directly connected with the attempted recussitation of the decaying trades of the city.

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1. CMC, 19 Mar., 1832.
 2. CMC, 12, 16, 19 Mar., 1832.
 3. Diary of Otto Travers, Mar., 1832.
 4. CMC, 25 June 1832.

The Irish Manufacture Movement in Cork, 1832

In mid-April 1832, the European cholera epidemic reached Cork, within five months claiming over one thousand victims, mainly from among the 20,000 people registered as 'distressed or destitute' in the city.¹ Though relief committees, established on non-political and non-sectarian lines, helped to mitigate the sufferings of the cholera victims, it was obvious to contemporaries that cholera was less a cause than a side-effect of distress in the city, and that private charity was at best a temporary expedient. A meeting of officers of health in the north city parish of St. Mary Shandon decided that a more far-reaching plan was required, which, by reviving the city's declining manufacturing industries would promote employment among the destitute and enable them to better their own condition.² A meeting of householders of the St. Mary Shandon parish, attended by men from all parts of the city, launched the Irish manufacture movement in Cork. This meeting, and similar meetings in the four other city parishes, led to the establishment of parochial associations of householders interested in the revival of local manufacture.³ The five parish associations eventually amalgamated to form the Cork Irish Manufacture Association.⁴

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1. CC, 19 Apr., 15 June, 1 Sept., 1832; CMC, 16 July, 1832; Sheahan, op. cit., p. 215; See below, p. 255.
 2. CMC, 9 June, 1832; CC, 14 Apr., 1832; N.U. Cummins, Chapters of Cork Medical History (Cork, 1957), p. 82.
 3. CMC, 13, 20 June, 13 July, 1832. The four other city parishes were St. Anne Shandon, Holy Trinity, SS. Peter and Paul, and SS. Nicholas and Finbarr.
 4. CMC, 19 Nov., 1832.

This Cork manufacture movement, the direct local response to the city's experience of cholera, was one of a number of parallel movements throughout the country. Waterford had been the first to initiate such a movement early in June 1832, followed within a few weeks by Cork, and later by Clonmel, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Limerick and Dublin.¹ If the Cork movement was influenced by that of Waterford, this was never acknowledged by the Cork organizers, who claimed that their action had been inspired by peculiarly local circumstances.² There were, in fact, certain differences between the origins of the Waterford and Cork movements: that of Waterford was apparently initiated by a meeting of the city trades,³ while that of Cork had broader social foundations. The social background of some 80% of those who called the parish meetings to launch the Cork movement can be identified as shown in Table 14.

The eighty-eight unidentified signatures detract from the value of the table, but the impossibility of identifying them in itself suggests that the individuals in question were men of humble social origins - perhaps small masters or journeymen, vintners or shopkeepers. What is certain is that all were householders, and although by 1832 many householders in the city were almost destitute,⁴ this indicates that every man in the lists was, or had been in the past, a respectable and relatively prosperous individual.

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1. Waterford Chronicle, 2, 14, 16, 23, 30 June, 21 July, 1832; CMC, 24 Aug., 3 Sept., 1832.
 2. CMC, 13 June, 1832; Sheahan, op. cit., p. 317.
 3. Waterford Chronicle, 2, 14 June, 1832.
 4. First and Second Reports from the Select Committee on Fictitious Votes (Ireland), 1837-8, xxiii, I, Appendices 9 and 11.

TABLE 14¹Social Background of founders of Cork Irish Manufacture Association

| | Number | Numer as % of total |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Largescale Manufacturers | 107 | 21.75 |
| Master tradesmen | 77 | 15.65 |
| Journeyman | 2 | 0.41 |
| TOTAL MANUFACTURING SECTOR | 186 | 37.81 |
| ----- | | |
| Grocers, Vintners | 70 | 14.23 |
| Merchants | 69 | 14.02 |
| Dealers, drapers | 31 | 6.30 |
| Agents, brokers | 16 | 3.25 |
| TOTAL COMMERCIAL SECTOR | 186 | 37.80 |
| ----- | | |
| Lawyers, doctors, attornies | 13 | 2.64 |
| Clergymen | 10 | 2.03 |
| TOTAL PROFESSIONAL SECTOR | 23 | 4.67 |
| ----- | | |
| Gentlemen | 99 | 1.83 |
| ----- | | |
| Unidentified | 88 | 17.89 |
| ----- | | |
| TOTAL | 492 | |
| ----- | | |

The movement launched by these signatories was therefore a broad social movement which sought the co-operation of 'the clergy, the medical men, the brewers, the distillers, the teachers, the publicans, the victuallers, and the bakers of the city'.² The predominance of

1. CMC, 6 June, 16, 23 July, 1, 8, 29 Aug., 5, 14, 21, 24, 28 Sept., 19 Nov. 1832.

2. CMC, 11 June, 1832.

the manufacturer and shopkeeping class was reflected in the speakers at the first meeting in St. Mary Shandon parish. As well as Thomas Sheahan, editor of the radical Cork Mercantile Chronicle, the speakers included a small distiller, a butter merchant, a skin buyer, a Chandler, a cutler, two vintners, two grocers, and a journeyman cotton weaver. All except one man were employers, or else gained a steady income through the supplying of provisions. The cotton weaver was the exception: the trade he followed was, unlike the occupations of the nine other speakers, based on a manual skill fast being squeezed out by mechanization. Only one other journeyman - a tailor - was involved in launching the Irish manufacture movement in Cork. Thus, while the unidentified rank-and-file may well have included journeymen, it is clear that the leadership of the movement was in the hands of the lower middle-class men, employers and retailers.¹

Very soon after its inception, however, the Irish manufacture movement attracted the journeymen. The real launching of the movement took the form of a great procession of the trades through the city, culminating in a public meeting - a foretaste of the Repeal meetings of the future. Thirty-nine trades amounting to a computed 5,000 men marched in formation, banners flying and bands playing. On their banners figures of economic, political and religious significance reflected the tradesman's ideas of patriotism, local pride and trade loyalty. Out in front the grand banner of

1. CMC, 13 June, 1832.

the procession, described in glowing terms by the Cork Mercantile Chronicle, embodied the trades' hopes for the new movement:¹

It was an immense sheet on which were beautifully painted the genius of Ireland, standing beside the harp in a magnificent and finely diversified country; On her right was a poor, gaunt-looking, ragged and famished artisan, to whom she was represented as stretching forth the hand of relief. On her left, considerably above her level, was the genius of plenty, pouring out her cornucopia, the abundance of the land, wheat, honey, fruit, and every other production of the earth, for which fertile Ireland is celebrated. This figure pointed with the finger of the right hand to a scroll, which was unfolded over the head of the genius of Ireland, and which contained the words - 'The Revival of Irish Manufacture'.

The demonstration, though naive and romantic in its hopes, did produce one practical result. It prompted the trade societies to form an association of their own - the Cork Trades Association for the Encouragement of Irish Manufactures. Intended as a tradesmans' counterpart of the Cork Irish Manufacture Association, the Cork Trades Association was open to subscribers of a minimum of one penny a month, later raised to one penny a week. Subscriptions of more than a shilling were not allowed, a stipulation ensuring that the association would remain predominantly working class. Moreover, the democratic nature of the Association was to be preserved by its pattern of government. The rules of the body were drawn up by a chosen committee representing the different trades' and labourers' clubs in the city, and were subject to approval by the association as a whole.² The response to the new organization was enthusiastic, and three months after its foundation the Cork Trades Association had 1,200 members.³

1. CMC, 25 June, 1832.

2. CMC, 27 June, 18 Oct., 1832.

3. CMC, 24 Sept., 1832.

The social composition of the Cork Trades Association is difficult to pinpoint. Of the claimed 1,200 members, the names of only 77 survive, and the social background of only 58 of these can be identified.¹ Table 15 gives the estimated social composition of the identified membership.

TABLE 15²

Social Composition of the Identified Membership of the Cork Trades Association, 1832-33

| | Numbers | Numbers as % of Total |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Manufacturers | 10 | 12.99 |
| Master tradesman | 9 | 11.69 |
| Journeyman | 7 | 9.09 |
| TOTAL MANUFACTURING SECTOR | 26 | 33.77 |
| Dealers, drapers | 7 | 9.09 |
| Vintners, grocers | 5 | 6.49 |
| Merchants | 3 | 3.90 |
| Agents, brokers | 1 | 1.30 |
| TOTAL COMMERCIAL SECTOR | 16 | 20.78 |
| Professionals, doctors, lawyers | 4 | 5.19 |
| Clergymen | 6 | 7.79 |
| TOTAL PROFESSIONAL SECTOR | 10 | 12.99 |
| Gentlemen | 6 | 7.79 |
| Unidentified | 19 | 24.68 |
| TOTAL | 77 | |

1. No records of the Cork Trades Association survive, and members are identifiable only in the Cork Mercantile Chronicle's regular reports of the association's meetings.
2. CMC, 5, 7, 24 Sept., 17, 19, 24, 26 Oct., 2, 7, 9, 14, 21, 23 Nov., 5, 10, 12 Dec., 1832.

As this table suggests, the Cork Trades' Association did not long remain the sole preserve of the trades. By early 1833 it was described as an association of 'merchants, manufacturers, shopkeepers, mechanics and others',¹ and manufacturers and master tradesmen dominated the leadership of the movement. Yet the Cork Trades Association was not a mere replica of the Irish Manufacture Association. Journeymen were more strongly represented in the leadership of the Cork Trades Association, and the anonymity of the vast majority of the 1,200 members suggests that they were indeed drawn from the working and artisan classes. As late as 1835 the humble social status of the Cork Trades Association meant that its existence was virtually unknown to the majority of the city's merchants,² and although the employer-dominated Irish Manufacture Association also complained of the large-scale merchants' and manufacturers' lack of support, it did not have to defend itself, as did the Cork Trades Association, against allegations of being composed solely of the mob - as the people are tauntingly called - a spouting club, without either influence or public opinion to sustain it.³

The Cork Trades Association and the Irish Manufacture Association remained two distinct bodies, with little over-lapping of rank-and-file membership. The social differences between the two associations were obvious. When John Creedon, the journeyman secretary of the Cork Trades Association, was made an honorary member of the Irish Manufacture Association, he was treated with benevolent condescension

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1. CMC, 13 Feb., 1833.
 2. CMC, 2 May, 1835.
 3. CMC, 11 July, 7 Nov., 1832.

by the members of the latter body. A like sense of social superiority was evident in the attitude of the few Irish Manufacture Association members admitted to the Cork Trades Association.¹

In spite of its relatively humble status, the Cork Trades Association was not marked by any undue sense of social deference, and was unsparing in its criticism of those among the merchant and manufacturing classes who denied it support. This criticism, directed chiefly against the Cork Chamber of Commerce, stronghold of the politically liberal merchants and manufacturers of the city, had elements of a political as well as a social and economic nature. The criticism of the Chamber of Commerce became most vocal when a strong non-tradesman element entered the Cork Trades Association late in 1832, and the Chamber men were severely censured for failing to give the Irish manufacture toast at a public dinner and for ignoring the cause of manufacture revival in the city.² But by this stage the tone of the Trades Association was being set by individuals who were not artisans, and whose main purpose in joining the association was to attack the Chamber of Commerce. In late 1832 the Chamber of Commerce raised its membership fees, and a virulent attack was launched from within the Trades Association. The Chamber was accused of using the support of the people to win Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary reform, and of jettisoning the people once these advances had been won:³

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1. CMC, 8, 17 Aug., 23 Nov., 1832; 18 Jan., 1833.
 2. CMC, 14 Nov., 1832.
 3. CMC, 14 Nov., 1832.

All this accession to influence, rank and office has been carried into effect since the building of the Chamber of Commerce, otherwise called the Temple of Liberty, Freedom and Justice. The people were the great instruments, by their unpurchased suffrages and great patriotism, to raise their brother churchmen to office and power. (hear, hear). The tradesmen, the labourers, and the clerks of from forty to one hundred pounds per year did this great work. And how do you suppose they are about to be rewarded? Why ... an increased annual subscription to the Chamber is looked for, beyond their ability - another way of telling them they are no longer wanted, and the sooner they join the Mortality Society or Knights of St. Patrick the better. The people are told this now that some of the Chamber Gentlemen are at the top of the ladder, lest mechanical awkwardness should affect their nobility ...

Such speeches met with loud applause from the rank-and-file of the Trades Association, but in 1832 the membership fees of the Chamber of Commerce were of little concern to the average artisan or labourer. This particular speech, moreover, was made not by the proverbial 'humble tradesman', but by a distiller who was the immediate landlord of a number of properties on the north side of the city.¹ It was becoming apparent that the Cork Trades Association was being taken over by disgruntled radicals and minor manufacturers as a base from which to attack the liberal merchants of the city.

The chief business of the Trades Association was the promotion of local manufacture. Like the Irish Manufacture Association, it investigated the state of the various trades of the city, and tried to establish among the trade societies the principle of mutual patronage.² But its main concern was for the dying domestic trades - nailors, weavers, hosiers - and like the Irish Manufacture Association, it had no sympathy whatever for those trades which engaged

1. William Ring, distiller: mentioned as the immediate landlord of twenty-one broguemakers on Cork's north side. CMC, 24 Oct., 21 Nov., 1832.

2. CMC, 18 June, 4 July, 14, 19, 21 Sept., 1832.

in violent combination activity. Disturbed by the trade union outrages of the 1820s and early 1830s, the leaders of both the Irish Manufacture Association and the Trades Association took care to portray their movements as a counter-balance to trades unionism and social upheaval. The first meeting of the St. Mary Shandon householders in June 1832 emphasised their wish to 'rescue our unemployed poor from their present destitute and appalling state - a state incompatible with public safety'.¹ Speakers at Irish manufacture meetings constantly denounced combination among tradesmen as 'unjust', 'unfair', and 'unwarrantable'. They exhorted the working classes to 'hold person and property sacred'² and stated clearly the conditions for their continued patronage of the manufacture movement:

We consider ourselves no longer bound to the pledges we now make than while /the workingmens'/ conduct renders them worthy of the protection and support of the wealthier classes, by a total avoidance of unjust combination.³

Though anti-combination speeches were normally liable to arouse a hostile reaction among lower class crowds,⁴ the early euphoria of the Irish manufacture movement prompted the audience to dutifully echo the sentiments of the platform speakers:⁵

When you get employment, you ought not, by any unfair combination, defeat yourselves and destroy your own prospects as well as those of your employer ...
(Cheers, and cries of 'We will not - all we want is work'.)

Meetings of the Trades Association, which had originally been formed

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1. CMC, 11 June, 1832.
 2. CMC, 11, 16, 25, 27 June; 13, 18 July, 1832.
 3. CMC, 16 July, 1832.
 4. CE, 11 Mar., 1842.
 5. CMC, 18 July, 1832.

as a body representing the trade societies of the city, were the scene of similar anti-combination speeches. In early 1833, the leaders of the Association, fearful of being held responsible for the rising rate of violence among the trade combinations, publicly dissociated their organization from such incidents. The Trades Association, it was emphasised,

condemned such outrages: it would sever from its body any man who was proved to have had hand, act or part in them. It was instituted to put them down, (loud cheers) to improve the morals of the people, and it was not to be borne with that its motives should be defamed, that its acts should be calumniated, and that its usefulness should be marred ... (loud cries of hear, hear, hear, and cheers.)¹

The enthusiastic reaction to such speeches makes one doubtful of the Trades Association's claim to represent the trade societies of the city. Were those who applauded the anti-combination speeches themselves involved in violent activities? Or, did the activists among the trade societies shun the Trades Association completely? Did the press report of the Trades Association meetings exaggerate the favourable reception given to speakers? Or had the Association been swamped by masters and minor manufacturers to the complete exclusion of the journeymen?

The Irish manufacture movement of the 1830s was by no means a labour movement in the accepted sense. It was, rather, a movement for the elevation of the working classes of the city to a new level of respectability. The avoidance of combination was but the first step in this ascent, and the artisan was promised that by leading 'a sober and well-conducted life'² he would ensure his own prosperity

1. CMC, 18 Jan., 1833.

2. CMC, 27 June, 1832.

and happiness. Such sentiments were unlikely to appeal to the activists among the coopers, cabinetmakers and others, and the upsurge of combination violence in 1833 proved that to a great number of local tradesmen the message of the Trades Association was totally irrelevant.

The speeches at home manufacture movement meetings were not, however, without some impact, testifying as they did to the presence even at this stage of an embryonic economic nationalism. Just as the trades' banners at the Irish manufacture and Repeal demonstrations of 1832 had expressed the artisans' sense of trade solidarity, local pride and national identity, so did the speeches at home manufacture meetings evoke a similar sense of pride, illfounded or not, in local skills and products;¹

Why is there such a prejudice against Irish hats?
(hear, hear). This is an Irish hat which I wear,
(cheers) and I am satisfied that it is as good a
one as any which I could get from England.
(- 'to be sure it is').

or,

I was brought up in the cutlery business: but what
is done in that trade in Cork? Everything in that
line comes from England. Shame on the Cork people.
In Dublin they at least ask for a 'Reid' or a
'Lamprey', but who in Cork asks for a Cork-made
knife? None. (Shame, shame ...).

The remedy for the decline of local industry depended on each individual's response:

We call upon our fellow-countrymen of all classes and
denominations, and we implore them by their sense of
humanity, patriotism and religious obligation, to come
forward, and by their encouragement of Irish industry,
to redeem their hitherto homicidal neglect of the
poor.²

1. CMC, 13 June, 1832.

2. CMC, 11 June, 1832. Reid and Lamprey were the makers of knives in Dublin.

This strong moral note transformed an economic issue into an almost sacred trust, and this nebulous but compelling spirit of local loyalty and moral obligation prefigured the nationalism of later years. The notion of 'being true to each other', enunciated at the first local manufacture meetings in Cork, was a foretaste of the ideas of Sinn Fein many years later.¹

One of the most significant aspects of the local manufacture movement of 1832 was the public pledge - used repeatedly in the political campaigns of the following two decades, and perfected by Parnell's party in the 1880s. In Cork the first clear demand for a public pledge in support of home manufacture was formulated by the trade societies, when the operative hatters passed a resolution -

We will not purchase any article whatsoever, no matter how insignificant, which is not ... native manufacture, and we request the adoption of this resolution by the various trades, and every well-wisher of his country.²

The Irish Manufacture Association and the Cork Mercantile Chronicle, deciding to crystalize this suggestion into a definite line of action, formulated a written pledge

not to purchase for ourselves or our families any article, but such as are manufactured in Ireland, provided that the same can be procured, and that the goods and articles are rendered to us of good quality, and fair value proportioned to the cost, and at a price no higher than a just remuneration to the seller.³

There were optimistic reports on the extent to which employment opportunity increased once the pledge became popular. Women

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1. CMC, 13 June, 1832.
 2. CMC, 13 June, 1832.
 3. CMC, 20 June, 9 July, 1832.

working in the glove trade were not laid off as was usual in winter. Some forty families on the city's North Side obtained employment through the efforts of the movement's promoters, and two months after the movement had been launched it was reported that every cotton weaver in the city had found work.¹ Yet this success was apparently shortlived, and by early 1833 the movement had virtually disappeared from the newspaper columns. Even while it was at its height some parties cast doubts on its usefulness, asserting that

No particular branch of manufacture was revived, nothing substantial done, though a great deal of noise was made, and the public mind kept long in agitation.²

Yet the real significance of the local manufacture movement lay not in the economic but in the political sphere. The Irish manufacture pledge foreshadowed the Repeal pledge of subsequent years, and the movement's inevitable note of hostility towards English manufacture, though not intended politically, had political results. Speakers' references to 'slop English shoes' and English hats which were 'the merest rags and not worth ten shillings', were but sops to public feeling, but coupled with the oft-recited and partisan accounts of English attempts to crush Irish trade, they hardened whatever anti-English feeling already existed.³

Both the Irish Manufacture Association and the Cork Trades Association had been founded as non-political bodies where men of all creeds and parties could join to promote employment for 'the starving

1. CMC, 17 Aug., 19 Nov., 1832.

2. CMC, 19 Nov., 1832.

3. CMC, 13 June, 1832.

artisan and labourer.¹ The Irish Manufacture Association succeeded in avoiding politics: several Protestant Tories joined the body, and guarded murmurs of approval were heard in the Court of D'Oyer Hundred, the stronghold of the Tory freemen of the city.² Yet, this very success in avoiding politics, much more than the lack of economic achievement, hastened the demise of the Irish Manufacture Association. This was obvious when, in the last months of 1832, political excitement mounted, and the non-party Irish Manufacture Association, losing relevance in a situation where only politically committed bodies could survive, fused with the Cork Trades Association.³ The Trades Association, on the other hand, survived as a distinct body because it allowed itself to drift with the political current of the time. Accepting generally that trade depression dated from 1800, the adherents of the Trades Association denounced the 'accursed ... the infernal ... the horrible Union',⁴ and though this view was a limited one, what was significant was the intensity of feeling with which it was held. The myth of an age of plenty under a native legislature was firmly believed in by men on the verge of penury, and the demands for Repeal became ever more insistent under the pressure of poverty.

At the first meeting to promote Irish manufacture in Cork, ten men had spoken from the platform. Nine of these took pains to avoid any contentious reference to the Union. The tenth man spoke of little

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1. CSORP.OR, 1832: 1657.
 2. CMC, 9 July, 3 Aug., 1832.
 3. CMC, 5 Sept., 1832.
 4. CMC, 13 June, 1832.

else, and he was a cotton weaver, the representative of a dying trade. His speech chronicled the decline of the Cork textile industry, describing how the lace makers, stocking knitters, weavers, winders, spinners, calico-printers, and paper makers, all (in the speaker's opinion) once prosperous trades, had disappeared from the north side of the city and from the village of Blarney. The Cotton weavers of Blackpool had fallen in numbers from thousands to hundreds. English stripes, gingham, calicoes and corduroys had flooded the Cork market, leaving only the check trade to struggle on in the face of increasing English and Scottish competition. The cotton weavers had been reduced by a shilling in the cut in 1831, and the worsted weavers by two shillings the piece. All the blame for this decline was laid not on mechanization or on employers' lack of capital, but at the door of England.¹

No people have ever been so cruelly treated as we have been. Gengis Khan and Temerlane, the great destroyers of the human race, finished their victims at once, and put them out of pain: they did not destroy the industry of unborn generations by perfidious laws. Witness William III's acts against our woollen trade, that we so severely feel at this day. British tyranny is worse than Egyptian bondage. Pharoah ordered the Israelites to make brick without straw - our taskmasters want taxes without trade.

The audience roared back their approval; the next words of the speaker were easily predictable:

God raised up Moses and Aaron for the Israelites after centuries of oppression: so has He raised up Daniel O'Connell and Doctor Doyle for us. We will be no longer the victims of misgovernment. We seek for justice, common justice, and, with the blessing of God we will obtain it ... There is but one measure that can give real relief to the country - the Repeal

1. CMC, 13 June, 1832.

of the Union. (immense cheering). Let our country be ranked once more among the nations of the earth, and be what nature and nature's God intended it should be - free and independent (long continued applause).

Dismayed by such speeches, those wishing to keep the local manufacture movement free of contentious issues, constantly re-iterated its non-political nature.¹ But many members of the Trades Association openly defied the non-political rule of their association by making speeches in favour of Repeal.²

Meanwhile, the manufacture movement in the city was coming under pressure from O'Connell. The local Irish Manufacture Association had sent him, as a token of respect, a piece of trowsers stuff made by a weaver employed through the association's efforts. Cork had heard little of O'Connell since 1831 when, pressed by the journeymen tailors of the city, he had promised he would 'never throw Repeal overboard'. Now he expressed his gratitude for the trowsers stuff, begged to be admitted a member of the Irish Manufacture Association, asserted that he meant to 'stick by the Irish artisan to the last', and exhorted the Cork trades and promoters of home manufacture to join in a new Repeal campaign.³

Two months after O'Connell's appeal, the Cork Trades Association formally rescinded the rule excluding political discussion. The only member objecting to the move was given short hearing, the majority responding enthusiastically to the resolution that

every day's experience proved ... more and more, that no Irish interest could progress independantly of politics; bad laws had ruined Ireland; by good laws

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1. CMC, 9, 11 July, 3 Aug., 1832.
 2. CMC, 27 June, 17 Aug., 1832.
 3. CC, 9 Apr., 1831; CMC, 29 Aug., 1832.

alone could Ireland be ameliorated. (loud cheers).
 ... A general election was at hand; let them aid in
 sending into Parliament men who would give to
 Ireland a legislature of her own. Let them do that,
 and in so doing, they would labour effectually for the
 encouragement of Irish manufactures. (loud cheers).¹

At this moment, the Irish manufacture movement per se had disappeared,
 and the Cork Trades Association, entering the election campaign as
 a pressure group for the local ultra-Repealers, had begun a new
 phase of its existence. The extravagant hopes of regeneration,
 which had animated many supporters of the Irish manufacture movement,
 were now given open political expression and transferred in toto to
 the Repeal campaign:

England has got a feast of liberty and we have got the
 crumbs that fell from her table. It shall not be thus.
 We shall lay the table for ourselves, and spread the
 feast, and sit down and feed full of freedom.²

The Political Involvement of the Cork Trades Association, 1832-40

Enthusiasm for Repeal increased from August 1832, when O'Connell
 called for a Repeal pledge from all candidates in the coming general
 election,³ and as soon as the non-political rule of the Cork Trades
 Association was rescinded, that body joined in the call for two
 pledged Repealers for the Cork city election.⁴ The political
 independence and the aggressiveness of the Trades Association soon
 became apparent when, ignoring O'Connell's approval of the candidature

1. CMC, 17 Oct., 1832.

2. ibid.

3. CC, 21 Aug., 1832.

4. CMC, 17, 19 Oct., 1832.

of the local radical Repealer, Herbert Baldwin, it established an election committee to debate Baldwin's suitability as a candidate.¹

In 1830, Baldwin had unsuccessfully contested the Cork city by-election on the then revolutionary tenet that 'no individual can receive more respectable support than that which comes from the body of the people',² and the Trades' Association's delay in accepting his candidature in 1832 was a surprise. But the truth was that Baldwin's politics, revolutionary in the closed political system of 1830, seemed by 1832 quite moderate. The franchise extension he urged still took property as the criterion of political respectability, his proposed line on tithes involved the compensation of tithe owners, and his attitude to trades unionism was distinctly hostile.³ But the leadership of the Cork Trades Association held very similar views, and the delay in accepting Baldwin was due simply to the association's wish to be - and to be seen to be - independent of all political dictation, even that of O'Connell. Therefore two months passed before the Cork Trades Association election committee accepted Baldwin as candidate, and then only on his submission to a public inquisition regarding his attitude to the tithe and Repeal issue.⁴

The second popular candidate, Dan Callaghan, proved a problem. His career had thus far involved a change from Toryism to support of parliamentary reform in 1830-31, but he had never progressed beyond Whig-liberal politics, and he consistently avoided the Repeal issue. He was hated by the Cork Tories for his desertion of their camp, and

1. CMC, 17 Aug., 19 Oct., 1832.

2. CC, 7 Aug., 1830.

3. CC, 13, 18 Dec., 1832.

4. CMC, 19 Oct., 1832.

distrusted by the radical repealers, but he had the support of the liberal mercantile men in the Chamber of Commerce.¹ The non-tradesman element which had entered the Trades Association in late 1832 were all bitterly opposed to Callaghan, and the Trades Association soon emerged as his most determined opponent. Suggestions by some members of the Trades Association that Callaghan should be invited to stand on the Repeal ticket were quickly crushed by the more radical members who refused to demean themselves by 'going begging for a candidate'.² In fact roles were reversed and the strength of the Cork Trades Association demonstrated when the Chamber of Commerce supporters of Callaghan sent their own deputation to the Trades Association to ask that body to 'accept' Callaghan as second Repeal candidate for the city. A local anti Repealer, Daniel Owen Maddyn,³ described the meeting between the two groups:

Very cool, indeed, was the reception of the deputation; a sarcastic smile of derision was visible on the faces of all the officials in the body of the Trades. They could scarcely conceal their delight at the 'Aristocrats' having been so humbled as to come into their presence, and some of the body bolder than the rest, very plainly expressed their contempt for the deputation and its political principles ... The President of the Trades Association /Francis Bernard Beamish/ was one of the few men of fortune in the body. Rising from his seat with something of affected dignity, he calmly asked the deputation: -

- Who are you, and whence come ye, that seek to have audience with the Trades Association of the City of Cork? Come ye from a public meeting of the citizens assembled by notice, or do ye emanate from any private junto of politicians?

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1. Daniel Callaghan, member of a Cork family of Provision Merchants, M.P. for the city 1830-1849.
 2. CMC, 24 Oct., 1832.
 3. Daniel Owen Maddyn (1815-1859), author, personal friend of Thomas Davis, opponent of Repeal.

- In thus addressing the deputation, the President affected never to have seen the faces of any of the gentlemen before. He appeared not to know that such persons existed in the world, and treated them with a democratic hauteur that galled the unfortunate deputation, whose members had once been used to 'loud cheers', 'thunders of applause', etc...¹

Maddyn's description, though certainly over-coloured, did capture the atmosphere of tension existing between the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades Association. Even the Cork Mercantile Chronicle's more guarded report revealed this tension. The Chamber of Commerce deputation was accused of delaying its plans until the eleventh hour, and its members' speeches were drowned by calls for 'nothing but Repeal'. The Chamber men, indignant at this treatment, were notwithstanding, painfully aware of their now uncertain position as leaders of the popular side in politics. Even Dan Meagher, one of the most forthright and longstanding liberals among them, was at pains to prove his solidarity with 'the People', reminding the Trades that he, too, was a 'seven years' man' - i.e. that he had served his apprenticeship to a trade.²

The intensity of illfeeling between the Chamber and the Trades Association owed much to the personal antipathy of the Trades Association leadership towards Callaghan, but the main differences were political. The men of the Chamber of Commerce were moderate liberals, whose main political exertions so far had been directed towards the achievement of Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform, but whose commitment to Repeal was doubtful. The relative

1. Daniel Owen Maddyn, Ireland and Its Rulers (London, 1844), Vol. iii, pp. 197-8.

2. CMC, 5 Dec., 1832.

speed with which they espoused Repeal in 1832 was attributed by Maddyn to opportunism and 'the pressure of a great democratic force':

One day they were for Union with England, and on the next they were for Repeal, and nothing but Repeal. On the morning of the day before Mr. Callaghan publicly announced his intention of becoming a Repealer, a commercial gentleman left the Quay of Cork on a trip of pleasure to Cove, which is a few miles below the City. On walking into the Chamber of Commerce upon his return at dinner-time, he was astonished to find forty or fifty gentlemen that he had left Anti-Repealers, had, in the interval, become reconciled to a dissolution of the Union - all because 'even Mr. Callaghan is going to turn a Repealer.'¹

Though Maddyn's caustic pen and his antipathy to Repeal rendered suspect much of what he wrote, subsequent events bore out the general truth of his account. Though Callaghan spoke for Repeal and tithes abolition on the hustings, his proposer and seconder frankly declared their ignorance of both these issues and happily recommended Callaghan on his past performance as a parliamentary representative, though it was well known that Callaghan had recently been loud in his support for the Union and Church Establishment.²

The Cork Trades Association, on the other hand, was the centre of the city's radicalism and Repeal enthusiasm. The election pledge which the association demanded of Baldwin and Callaghan included Repeal, abolition of tithes, triennial parliaments, extension of the franchise to £5 householders, the ballot, popular election of grand juries and municipal officers, abolition of slavery, and abolition of stamp duties on the press. Both candidates, following the meeting between the Trades Association and the Chamber of Commerce,

1. Maddyn, op. cit., p. 200.

2. CC, 18 Dec., 1832.

submitted to a Trades Association interrogation on their attitude to these points. Their agreement to the pledge earned them the joint support of the Chamber and the Trades Association.¹

The result of the 1832 election was an easy victory for the two Repeal candidates for which the Cork Trades Association claimed full credit, organizing an elaborate trades' demonstration and triumphal chairing of the successful candidates.² But the real influence of the Trades Association in directing the election is far from certain.

The Trades claimed to have controlled two different but connected aspects of the election - the choice of candidates and the mobilization of the electorate. In the matter of choosing candidates on the Repeal side the Trades Association did play a part. The special election committee - a body of modest social origins, consisting of representatives of each trade and labourers' society in the city together with the leadership of the Trades Association - succeeded, against considerable odds, in securing election pledges from the two popular candidates. Its freedom from outside interference was demonstrated by its delay in supporting Baldwin and its triumph in forcing the Chamber of Commerce to consult it regarding Callaghan's candidature. On the other hand, the Trades Association did not really choose the candidates: Baldwin had already been approved by O'Connell when the Cork Trades Association vetted his candidature, and the association's distrust of Callaghan did not enable it to totally reject his candidature while the Chamber of Commerce was behind him. The real power of the Trades Association remained

1. CMC, 12 Dec., 1832.

2. CMC, 26, 31 Dec., 1832; 2 Jan., 1833.

untried while it refrained from totally rejecting a candidate and putting forward one of its own choice. It was significant that a barely-formulated plan of putting forward the Trades Association president, Francis Bernard Beamish, in place of Callaghan was soon forgotten.¹

The election pledges, intended to guarantee a candidate's compliance with popular demands, was also used by the Trades Association in mobilizing the electorate. The pledge, properly used, could pressurize electors and non-electors alike to work for the Repeal side. The electorate, extended by at least 44% following the 1832 Reform Act,² was still very restricted, and included relatively few artisans. In 1835 it was claimed that of the 3,000 tradesmen in the city, scarcely 500 had the vote.³ Thus, a man's vote was not his own: he held it on behalf of those who were not enfranchised. This, at least, was the contention of the Trades Association:

You who have votes, an awful trust now devolves on you. Behold the unemployed labourer at the 'Change', see the unemployed, and perishing tradesman at the 'Square'. Stand on any of the Bridges, North or South, and count the multitude of barefoot females that pass them. Electors, the vote which you have you hold... in trust for the good of the People.⁴

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1. CMC, 19 Oct., 1832.
 2. CC, 8 July, 1830; PP, 1830 (522) xxi, 321; PP, 1833 (177) xxvii, 289. The strength of the electorate in 1830 was uncertain. Mainly a freeman electorate, it was 'supposed to number' between 2,500 and 3,000. After the 1832 Reform Act it increased to 4,322, a figure which included 2,152 ten-pound householders.
 3. This number tallies closely with the numbers in the poll-book of the 1835 election, in which voters in the manufacturing and building sectors accounted for 544 of the total 2,545 names. But it is not clear how many of these 544 voters were journeymen and how many were masters and manufacturers. People's Press, 17, 24, 31 Jan., 7, 14 Feb., 1835. See below, p. 71.
 4. Sheahan, op. cit., pp. 224-225.

The acceptance of bribes at election time was therefore a crime against one's neighbour, and the prevention of bribery - and, of course of anti-Repeal voting - was not just a matter for the individual but for the popular side as a whole. The Cork Trades Association claimed its purpose was to

protect the morals of the people, and /to stand/ as a saving shield between their consciences and the fatal and corrupting influence of gold and bribery.¹

It therefore took upon itself the role of supervisor of the electors, enlisting the help of the trade and mortality societies of the city in securing a repeal pledge from voters and non-voters alike.

Delegations were sent to the different trade societies, which sent back returns of their members who had pledged themselves to support the Repeal candidates, either by voting for them or by 'encouraging' others to do so. By late October 1832, twenty-five trades, including nailors, stonecutters, cotton weavers, broguemakers and coopers had pledged themselves in favour of Repeal, and some twenty-five other trades were to be persuaded to do likewise.²

The certainty with which a trade society secretary could report on the members' political intentions suggests close-knit bonds within the community of the trade. But it also shows how ruthless the group could be towards those of its members who did not conform politically. Three nailors refusing to vote for the Repealers were, with the approval of the Trades Association, ostracized by the rest of their trade.³

1. Day Papers, Cork Archives, DP. 3/42.

2. CMC, 24 Oct., 1832.

3. CMC, 24 Aug., 1832.

Thus, while the Tory side blamed the Catholic clergy for coercion of voters,¹ it was obvious that in the city, at least, the clergy were less likely to pressurize a voter than were his fellow-tradesmen, his employer, or his immediate landlord. Such pressure, which the Trades Association roundly condemned when exercised by Tory landlords in the rural areas, it was quite prepared to accept when exercised on behalf of the popular candidates. Thus, the Association welcomed the announcement that the O'Keeffes, a family of distillers, had secured a Repeal pledge from forty-seven of their city tenants. A prominent Cork Trades Association member, William Ring, another distiller, pledged the vote of his twenty-one tenants, most of them broguemakers, in the same way.² Moreover, while landlords in the rural areas regarded their tenants' voting behaviour as directly influencing their right to hold a lease,³ (an attitude which the Trades Association purported to despise), there was a similar connection in Trades Association thinking between a city workingman's vote and his right to secure employment. This was obvious when, in the aftermath of the 1832 election, the Trades Association decided to present medals to those who had voted for the Repeal candidates, not just as a mark of appreciation for patriotic behaviour, but because 'possession of such a medal would be an introduction and a recommendation to the poor tradesman or labourer that sought employment'.⁴

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1. Maura Murphy, 'Repeal, Popular Politics, and the Catholic Clergy of Cork, 1840-50', in J.C.H.A.S., Vol. lxxxii, Jan.-June, 1977, pp. 39-48.
 2. CMC, 24 Oct., 21 Nov., 1832.
 3. CC, 18 July, 1837.
 4. CMC, 23 Jan., 1833.

Canvassing through the medium of trade and labourers' societies, and by means of deputations to the Catholic clergy and to the residents of the different areas of the city, the Cork Trades Association listed the names of all voters pledged to Repeal. Some 1,450 voters had been pledged by polling day.¹ As the 1832 poll book does not survive, there is no way of checking either the effectiveness of the Trades' Association's hold over the electors, or the social composition of the electorate. The numbers polled showed that the Trades' Association's favourite, Baldwin, received slightly fewer votes than their enemy, Callaghan. This was chiefly due to personal squabbles between the two candidates, and to rumours spread by Callaghan's supporters in the Chamber of Commerce that Baldwin had made a secret alliance with the Tory candidate.² During the months following the election, the Trades Association and the Chamber of Commerce patched up their differences and co-operated in investigating allegations of persecution of Repeal voters. They also made sporadic attempts to revive the Irish manufacture movement.³ But the ill-feeling between the two bodies continued. The rumours spread by the Callaghanites against Baldwin were not forgiven, and Baldwin's election was seen by the Trades Association less as a triumph over the Tories than as a victory over the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber men were accused of failing to attend at the registration booths before the election, and were denounced as 'pretenders to patriotism', 'false friends of the people', and 'Dan-servatives'.

1. CMC, 20, 24 Oct., 21, 28 Nov., 14 Dec., 1832.

2. CMC, 24, 26 Dec., 1832; SR, 20 Dec., 1832.

3. CMC, 1, 6 Feb., 1833.

When the election was over and Baldwin returned, the Trades Association declared that they

had beaten down the Aristocracy, and the worst of all Aristocracies - the Catholic Aristocracy. (loud and prolonged cheering.)¹

The Trades Association continued as mouthpiece of the local radical Repealers, organizing petitions against slavery, coercion, stamp duties and trade restrictions, and campaigning for Repeal.² More important, the association took upon itself the role of watchdog over the parliamentary behaviour of the two city representatives. Describing itself as 'the guardian of the rights of the great majority of the /city/ electors',³ it called for 'vigilant censorship on the acts of public men', and on at least three occasions called the two city MPs to task for what it considered neglect of their duties. Callaghan was the greater offender: by mid-1833 the Trades Association was complaining that he had failed to attend parliament for important debates on tithes and corporation reform, and called for an explanation of his behaviour.⁴ It was indicative of the influence of the Trades Association at this time that Callaghan considered it prudent to send an explanation of his non-attendance.⁵

Early in 1833, O'Connell called for an assembly of his parliamentary supporters to be held in Dublin to discuss Repeal and other matters of concern to Ireland. This meeting, known as the National Council, was

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1. CMC, 14 Nov., 26 Dec., 1832.
 2. CMC, 1, 13, 15 Mar., 12 Apr., 12 June, 1833; 30 Jan., 11 July, 13 Oct., 1834; 8 Apr., 1835.
 3. CMC, 14 Jan., 1833.
 4. CMC, 12, 14 June, 1833.
 5. CC, 4 Mar., 1834; CMC, 3, 12 Mar., 1834.

seen by the Cork Trades Association as an event of major importance, and the two city MPs were called on to attend. Again, the two city representatives complied with the association's demand.¹ But the council proved a disappointment: O'Connell prevailed on those attending not to press the Repeal question to a division in parliament, and the Trades Association, ever anxious for a parliamentary debate on the issue, began at last to suspect that O'Connell, who had jumped on their Irish manufacture bandwagon when it suited him, was now about to desert them.² Their suspicions were confirmed and their hold over the city MPs demonstrated when Baldwin wrote back frantically to look for advice on further action:³

Mr. O'Connell has in the most unqualified manner declared his resolution not to countenance the discussion of the question /of Repeal/ this session - and I strongly suspect the majority of the Irish patriotic members will concur with him in this matter. What will the Trades Association say? And how am I to act in this dilemma? I should wish to hear speedily from my Repeal friends in Cork; I do confess Mr. O'Connell has not adduced a single argument to convince me of the correctness of his judgement on this point ... I am not prepared to submit without the instructions of my constituents to that effect ...

Though the members of the Trades Association were at pains to deny any antipathy towards O'Connell, their chagrin was evident. Baldwin was instructed to support Feargus O'Connor's motion in favour of a Repeal motion, and he instantly complied.⁴ But Dan Callaghan, now safely installed in St. Stephen's, proved less amenable to the Trades

1. CMC, 9, 14, 24 Jan., 1833; CC, 24 Jan., 1833.

2. CMC, 29 Aug., 1832.

3. CC, CMC, 13 June, 1833.

4. CC, CMC, 15 June, 1833.

Association's instructions, and in a typical effort to please all parties he stayed away from the voting altogether. He did redeem himself considerably by voting for O'Connell's long-delayed and totally unsuccessful Repeal motion in April 1834, and by making on that occasion a Repeal speech which filled fifteen columns of Hansard, but it had not gone unnoticed that he had not voted in a single parliamentary division between January 1833 and April 1834, and his political laziness was to become a point of contention between the Trades Association and the Chamber of Commerce.¹

In the general election of 1835, the break-down of confidence between the Trades Association and the Chamber became more apparent. While the Chamber liberals dominated the scene, the Trades Association was conspicuous by its absence, and the Association was itself disrupted by an internal quarrel over Baldwin's suitability as a candidate.² With the decline in the Trades Association's influence, the prominence of the Repeal issue also declined. The anti-tithe campaign raging in the county during the early and mid 1830s, and the 'tithe massacre' at Gortroe in Co. Cork³ ensured that the dominant note on the popular side during this election was an anti-tithe one.⁴ Repeal, though mentioned in the speeches of the popular candidates, was only of peripheral interest, not just because it had been squeezed out by the tithe issue, but because O'Connell's recent 'Lichfield

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1. Hansard, 3, 1833-4, xv-xxiii; 1834, xxiii, 127; CC, 4 Mar., 1834; CMC, 3, 12 Mar., 1834.
 2. CC, 2 Dec., 1834; 13, 17 Jan., 1835.
 3. At Gortroe, near Carrigtwohill in East County Cork, a number of persons were killed while resisting the collection of tithes.
 4. CC, 3, 10, 13, 15 Jan., 1835; CSORP.OR, 1835, 166/17.

House Agreement' with the Whigs would have been jeopardized by any emphasis on the divisive Repeal issue.¹

The election proved a victory for the Tory candidates who were, however, subsequently unseated by a parliamentary enquiry which found their side guilty of 'running bucks' - i.e. polling voters in respect of houses which they no longer occupied.² Baldwin and Callaghan were then returned to parliament, and the representation of Cork city remained in liberal hands until 1849.³ The initial defeat of the popular side was a shock; it indicated that the careful organization of the voting force, which had paid dividends in 1832, had been neglected. Though O'Connellism was probably as strong as ever among the unenfranchised populace, its weaknesses at electorate level had been exposed. An examination of the poll book for the election shows, moreover, that the popular side's support among enfranchised tradesmen was not as strong as they would have wished to pretend.

1. CC, 13 Jan., 1835.

2. CC, 17 Jan., 1835; Angus MacIntyre, The Liberator (London, 1965), pp. 92-3; First and Second Reports of the Select Committee on Fictitious Votes, PP., 1837-8, xxiii, I, Qs. 2832-7, 3783-5.

3. CC, 2, 16, 18, 23, 30 Oct., 10, 13 Nov., 1849.

TABLE 16¹

Occupational Background of Popular and Tory Voters
in the Cork City Election, 1835

| Occupational Group | Popular | Tory | Total |
|--------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Agricultural | 246 | 78 | 328 |
| Mining | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Building | 51 | 50 | 103 |
| Manufacture | 217 | 220 | 441 |
| Transport | 13 | 2 | 15 |
| Dealing | 302 | 179 | 486 |
| Banking | 28 | 17 | 45 |
| Labourers | 100 | 45 | 147 |
| Professional | 59 | 184 | 246 |
| Domestic Service | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Gentlemen | 61 | 317 | 380 |
| Identified | 1,085 | 1,096 | 2,181 |
| Unidentified | 181 | 184 | 365 |
| TOTAL | 1,265 | 1,280 | 2,545 |

As this table suggests, the Tories drew most of their support from among professionals and gentlemen of independent means - this preponderance of Tories among these classes was an established fact, and their voting pattern is no surprise.² Neither is it surprising

1. People's Press, 17, 24, 31 Jan., 7, 14 Feb., 1835; this newspaper, a shortlived local weekly of radical opinions, published the poll for the 1835 election. The original poll books do not survive. Discrepancies in totals in this table are accounted for by the omission of small numbers of electors who split their votes between popular and Tory candidates. The votes of other electors are rendered illegible by the tattered condition of the issues of the People's Press.
2. The Glanmire Ward of the city, the Tory stronghold in Municipal Elections, was described in 1852 as 'a ward in which almost all the electors are gentlemen: it is one of the most respectable localities in the city of Cork, and where the people of business reside'. Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on the Cork Election, 1852, PP, 1852-3 (521) xi, (528) xi, Q. 5468.

that in the agricultural sector over 75% of the votes went to the popular candidates: the voters in this class were rural dwellers, inhabitants of the city liberties which stretched eight miles into the surrounding countryside. Most of these voters were 40s. freeholders, a class of voters which had been allowed survive only in constituencies classified as 'counties of cities'. In the rural constituencies such voters had been disfranchised at the passing of Catholic Emancipation, and their continued right to vote in elections in 'counties of cities' was strongly objected to by the Tory side, because, as the 1835 poll proved, they tended to vote solidly for O'Connell.¹

The surprise area in the poll of 1835 was that of the building and manufacturing sectors, whose votes were quite evenly divided between popular and Tory candidates. It was over this sector that the influence of the Cork Trades Association might be expected to be strongest, since it was from this sector (manufacturers, master tradesmen and journeymen) that the Association's leadership came, yet this sector's votes were quite evenly divided between popular and Tory candidates. This indicates that the influence of the Trades' Association had either declined since 1832 or had never been as great as claimed and, moreover, that the number of electors among the Trades' Association membership and its allied trade societies was very small indeed.

1. PP, 1837-8, xi, I p. 16. Unregistered Papers (State Paper Office, Dublin Castle), 1832/448: in 1832 the Common Council of Cork objected to the inclusion of the liberty voters within the city electorate, for such persons were 'in all respects similarly circumstances with those who reside in the county of Cork', and their inclusion in the city electorate would 'expose them to the temptations of which their ignorance and necessities would probably make them victims, and would be calculated to defeat the anxious desire of Parliament to lessen the expense and secure the purity of election'.

Precisely because of the near-defeat of the popular side, the 1835 election proved a springboard for the re-organization of that side in the city. The liberals of the Chamber of Commerce formed the Cork Franchise Association to supervise and facilitate the future registration of liberal voters and prevent any possible Tory comeback.¹ The Cork Trades Association, too, seeing its lack of influence during the election, set out to improve its standing and to give itself a wider appeal among the Cork public.² Some members of the association were alarmed at the rising rate of trade union outrage in the city,³ and feared that they might lose their now tenuous influence if they were coupled in the public mind with the 'Union of Trades'. To clearly distinguish the Cork Trades Association from the trade unions, these members proposed changing the name of the body to the 'People's Society'. As indicated, the Trades Association was not an exclusively tradesman body, but a broader social group with political rather than economic aims, and the proposed name of 'People's Society' would probably have been more accurate than that of 'Trades' Association'. But the change of name was not carried through and the body remained the Trades Association for at least another decade. Yet the attempt to broaden the appeal of the association was not abandoned, and when plans were set on foot to build a new meeting place for the association, the new

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1. Report of the Cork Franchise Association (Cork, 1836), Cork-printed pamphlet, Library of University College, Cork. For the difficulties involved in the registration of electors, see Return of Registration Places in Co. Cork, PP 1834, xlii, 575, and First and Second Reports on Fictitious Votes, PP, 1837-8, xviii, I, Qs. 55, 90, 1234, 5535-6.
 2. People's Press, 2 May, 1835.
 3. See above, Chapter I.

building was appropriately named the People's Hall.¹

The People's Hall had a dual function: it would serve as a centre in which the various trades' and labourers' societies in the city could hold their meetings, and it would provide accommodation for the Trades' Association's public meetings and functions. The Trades' Association spokesmen stressed the social, moral and educational aspects of the project, insisting that in the new Hall the reading room and library would have pride of place, and trying to harness the support of the nascent temperance societies of the city by painting a picture of the 'cheerful sobriety and easy order' which this new facility would establish among the city's working classes. But the real object of the hall was political - 'extension of civil rights' among the working classes. The Hall would serve in this capacity as

one of the great means of obtaining and securing for every man, however humble, his rights as a citizen. The first of these rights is a voice in the appointment of those who make laws; without such a voice, a man has not his due share of political power. It is one of the leading objects with those who project the People's Hall, many of them in possession of the franchise themselves, that this Hall shall be instrumental in obtaining for all, that which they themselves enjoy. The Hall will bring the honest elector and the unrepresented thousands together. With the power of knowledge and the strength of union ... these will render the elective franchise (even limited as it is) the means of sending into parliament men who will not fail to procure a vote for every man who contributes to the public revenue, and may be called upon to die for his country.

The People's Hall would thus serve as the centre of popular politics,

1. People's Press, 2 May, 1835.

and as 'an every-day school for the People', where the public would be instilled with

correct notions of measures, local and national, to enable them to estimate ... the characters of public men - to respect the honest and efficient - and to defeat or discard the corrupt.¹

These objectives, though capable of interpretation in a purely anti-Tory spirit, were in fact directed against what the Trades Association considered the ineffective and watered-down radicalism of the Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, the reference to 'the characters of public men' was obviously directed against Dan Callaghan, whose parliamentary record was a constant source of grievance in the Trades' Association ranks. The People's Hall, therefore, was part of the Trades' Association's attempt to undermine the political supporters of Dan Callaghan, and to provide within the local context a wider democratic organization than that provided by the socially exclusive Chamber of Commerce. The Hall was to be the property of all who subscribed sums of one shilling or more, each of whom would share in the trusteeship - an obvious attraction to politically conscious working men who did not possess the municipal and parliamentary franchise which they considered their right. But those subscribing less than a shilling had no share in running the Hall for the Trades' Association radicals still took property as the criterion of political responsibility, and their Hall was envisaged not as a forum for mob politics, but as a miniature replica of that restricted democracy which they admired.²

1. CSORP.OR, 1835, 63/6.

2. CSORP.OR, 1835, 63/6.

The mercantile liberals in the Chamber of Commerce were quite aware that the People's Hall project had been framed in a spirit opposed to their political beliefs. They were not prepared to allow the establishment of a rival institution under their noses, and opposed it by the most effective means possible - by withholding financial aid. Without the subscriptions of the mercantile men, the People's Hall project lay fallow for two years. When the subscription list was eventually opened in 1837, the pattern of subscriptions mirrored the political fragmentation within the popular side in Cork. Though the Trades' Association was fortunate enough to secure for the Hall fund a £200 surplus from the 1837 city election fund,¹ the remaining subscriptions came from a very limited group. Over 70% of the money donated or lent to the Hall fund came from two individuals connected with the mercantile and brewing interests - William Crawford and Francis Bernard Beamish, M.P. A further 24% came from thirteen individuals - Catholic clergymen, manufacturers, merchants and independent gentlemen. The remaining 6% came from four of the city trade societies - tailors, bakers, coopers and saddlers.² This list is probably incomplete. Already in 1835 several trade societies, including victuallers, cork cutters, weavers and shipwrights, had subscribed to the Hall,³ and the carpenters had offered their services free in the Hall's construction.⁴ But trades'

1. Day Papers, DP II, 1837, p. 57; 1839, p. 95.

2. SR, 14 Dec., 1839.

3. People's Press, 4 July, 1835.

4. CSORP.OR, 1835, 6/63.

subscriptions were not sufficient to finance the project, and while the vast majority of mercantile men stood aloof,¹ the People's Hall had to struggle against severe financial difficulties.

The apparent lack of interest in the Hall was, moreover, a reflection of the changing tenor of popular politics in Cork from 1835 on. O'Connell's alliance with the Whigs was mirrored at local level in the growing co-operation between county whigs, erstwhile Repealers, anti-tithe agitators, and Chamber of Commerce liberals.² To facilitate this alliance with 'all the influential noblemen and gentlemen of the county' the democratic catch-calls of the previous five years were dropped from the speeches of public men. No more was heard of those appeals to 'the People', so beloved of the anti-tithe agitators and city radicals in previous years, and Repeal disappeared completely from the popular platforms. The trades and the Trades' Association had also abandoned Repeal and when the Lord Lieutenant visited the city in 1835 and 1836 they joined the Chamber of Commerce in preparing an address and an elaborate demonstration of welcome for the noble visitor.³

But though the Trades' Association and the Chamber of Commerce were united in their withdrawal from Repeal, the underlying hostility between the two bodies continued. In the late 1830s there was an open confrontation between the Trades' Association and the Southern Reporter, the local organ of the Chamber. Since early 1836 the

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1. Many prominent merchants and manufacturers who had given sums from £20 to £200 to the election fund of 1837, and very generous contributions to the O'Connell Tribute, gave nothing towards the People's Hall. SR, 20, 22 July, 1837; CC, 17 Nov., 1835, 18 Dec., 1838.
 2. SR, 22 Mar., 19 Apr., 1836; 27 Apr., 1837.
 3. People's Press, 1 Aug., 1835; SR, 9, 14 July, 1836; CC, 5, 12 July, 1836.

Trades' Association had been deprived of a mouthpiece, because the Cork Mercantile Chronicle had collapsed following the death of its editor, Thomas Sheahan.¹ The Trades Association had therefore to rely for publicity on the Southern Reporter. On more than one occasion the Trades' Association complained that the 'so-called liberal press' had failed to do them justice in its columns, refusing to publish their advertisements, omitting reports on their meetings, and failing to give adequate coverage to the parliamentary activities of their champion, Herbert Baldwin. So effective was the Southern Reporter's cold shouldering that the Trades' Association was forced to send its advertisements to the editor of the Tory Cork Constitution, whose political principles it abhorred, but who published its notices without question.²

The local squabble between the Trades Association and the Southern Reporter soon assumed wider implications. An apparently long-standing hostility between Herbert Baldwin and Redmond O'Driscoll, editor of the Reporter, was brought to a head in May 1837 in a petty personal quarrel, blown to mammoth proportions by the local press. The situation was aggravated by the fact that O'Driscoll was working closely with Daniel O'Connell in furthering the Whig Alliance in Cork, and by insulting O'Driscoll, Baldwin also insulted O'Connell. Moreover, Baldwin had already annoyed O'Connell in 1833 by publicly contradicting him in the House of Commons,³ and in 1837 he further alienated O'Connell

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1. Gibson, History of the County and City of Cork (London, 1861), ii, 296.
 2. People's Press, 1 Aug., 1835; CC, 1 Aug., 1835; 6 June, 1837.
 3. O'Connell Correspondence, v, letter 1996. O'Connell to Fitzpatrick 26 July, 1833. O'Connell had complained that he was being unfairly reported in the British press, and Baldwin had retorted that he had nothing to complain about.

by attacking Garret S. Barry, MP for Co. Cork and a favourite of O'Connell, for his failure to vote in parliament on the Canada question.¹ This criticism of Barry was considered to be unjustifiable: the Canada question had no relevance for the voters of Co. Cork, and Barry had otherwise proved himself a most conscientious representative.² Baldwin's attack on Barry was seen by the county liberals, by most of the Chamber of Commerce men, and by O'Connell himself as decidedly impudent, and rumours spread that Baldwin had been asked to resign his seat in parliament.

The Trades' Association immediately sprang to Baldwin's defence, cheering for that staunch radical who 'did not change in every wind', while some voices in the audience added significantly - 'not like Callaghan'. Moreover, the Trades' Association did not exempt O'Connell himself from the range of its criticism. Asserting that Baldwin had been victimized because 'he was not the pet of certain people', one exasperated Trades Association member declared that 'Dr. Baldwin had as much right to remark on the conduct of a representative as had Daniel O'Connell' - an irreverence which was greeted by loud and prolonged cheering. O'Connell was out of favour with the Trades Association not so much because he had abandoned Repeal but because he had insulted Baldwin, whom the Association considered to be their own special representative.³

1. SR, 6 May, 1837; CC, 6 June, 1837.

2. O'Connell Correspondence, v, letter 2017, O'Connell to William Fagan of Cork, 20 Oct., 1833, described Barry as 'a prime good voter, and unaffectedly right on all occasions'.

3. CC, 6 June, 1837.

When Baldwin did eventually announce his intention to retire, both he and the Chamber of Commerce liberals insisted that his reasons for so doing were purely personal, and that there was no question of his having been pushed out of the representation of the city. The Trades' Association, however, remained convinced that Baldwin had been ousted by the liberal elite,¹ and though they were considerably mollified by the selection of their president, Francis Bernard Beamish, as the new popular candidate, it was obvious that he had been chosen not as a representative of the Trades' Association, but in his capacity as a wealthy and influential commercial man.²

The question of Repeal was scarcely mentioned in the election which followed in 1837.³ Cork politics had become less radical since O'Donnell's alliance with the Whigs in 1835. The Trades Association, so vocal in its Repeal fervour up to 1834, abandoned the subject in favour of discussions on the Poor Law, tithe commutation and municipal reform.⁴ Their complete lack of political adventurousness was summed up in their reaction to Chartism.

Chartism made little headway in Ireland generally. Some moves were made to set up Chartist groups in Dublin, Waterford, Belfast, Newry and Drogheda, but with relatively little success. In the country towns of the midlands there were reports of the presence of Chartist emissaries, but their efforts apparently bore no fruit.⁵

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1. CC, 4, 6 July, 1837; SR, 6 June, 1837.
 2. CC, 20 July, 1837; SR, 18, 20 July, 1837.
 3. SR, 18, 20 July, 1837; CC, 20, 22 July, 1837.
 4. SR, 28 Aug., 3 Nov., 1838; CC, 30 Aug., 8 Nov., 1838.
 5. Boyd, op. cit., p. 45; CSORP.OR, 1841: 1/13323; 9/9445; 11/15869; 15/399, 449; 16/14919, 14825, 18661-3; 19/17517; 22/3945-6; 29/14093; 1842: 1/979, 2219.

Unsuccessful as these Chartist missionaries were, they were sufficiently active to attract the attention of the police, who hurriedly sent reports to Dublin Castle on their movements. In Cork there was not a single report of Chartist activity. The only exponent of the movement in the city was Joseph Hayes, a distiller and a fiercely individualistic member of the Chamber of Commerce. Though his pro-Chartist speeches horrified the Chamber of Commerce and drew a few cheers from the crowd attending the People's Hall, the leaders of the Trades Association (established since 1838 in the People's Hall) frowned on Hayes' opinions, and the interest of the rank-and-file was not sufficiently strong to form the basis of a Chartist group.¹

When, a few years later, the Irish Universal Suffrage Association, a Chartist-lined body based in Dublin, canvassed support in Cork, the reception was equally frigid.²

The apparent lack of interest in Chartism in Cork demands explanation. Feargus O'Connor had been immensely popular in the Cork region both before and during his spell as MP for Co. Cork in the early 1830s, and he had been warmly supported by the Trades Association when, in spite of O'Connell's cautiousness, he had pressed for a parliamentary debate on Repeal in 1834.³ O'Connell's opposition to Chartism, and Irish respect for O'Connell's opinion are generally cited as reasons for the failure of Chartism in Ireland,⁴ O'Connell himself claimed the credit for 'keeping/ Ireland free from this pollution', and had in fact praised the 'loyal demonstration' by

1. SR, 12, 14 Mar., 1839; FH, 8 Mar., 1839; Northern Star, 23 Mar., 1839.
2. CE, 8, 13 Sept., 1841.
3. CC, CMC, 13, 15 June, 1833; 3, 12 Mar., 1834.
4. Arthur Mitchell, Labour in Irish Politics, 1890-1930 (Dublin, 1974), p. 13.

a gang who broke up a Chartist meeting in Dublin.¹ There was no need for such tactics in Cork, yet loyalty to O'Connell does not sufficiently explain the absence of vocal Chartist sympathisers in the southern city. While veneration for O'Connell was strong in the city, individual groups periodically expressed reservations about his judgement. The Cork Examiner and the Chamber of Commerce liberals sometimes disagreed with O'Connell and refused to submit to his attempts at political dictation.² The Cork Trades Association had not submitted silently to his criticism of Baldwin in 1837. And the trade societies had been disillusioned by O'Connell's stand against a strike by local tanners in 1833.³ Moreover, rising prices and scarcity of potatoes in the years 1839-42 produced a degree of lower class distress which might have been expected to foster support for Chartism.⁴ So remote was Chartism from the Cork political scene that the local press and the local police could confuse the Chartist movement with the Anti-Corn Law League. When the latter body tried to set up a working class base in England in opposition to Chartism, Cork was unaware of the development. When the League's travelling lecturer, J.J. Finnigan, visited Cork in 1841, he was described in a police report to the Castle as 'a Chartist delegate sent over to

1. Boyd, op. cit., pp. 44-5.

2. Pilot, 23 Sept., 1836; CC, 16 May, 1844.

3. CC, 18 Nov., 1834; CSORP.OR, 1834; 1206/17, 34. In 1834 the local tanners, to the number of three-hundred, turned out for shorter hours and higher wages. They were replaced by country labourers, and when they appealed for support to O'Connell, then visiting the city, he merely condemned their 'ingratitude' for their good wages.

4. J.H. Treble, 'O'Connor, O'Connell and the attitudes of the Irish Immigrants in the North of England, 1838-48' in The Victorians and Social Protest: A Symposium, ed. J. Butt and I.F. Clarke (Newtownabbott, Devon, 1973), pp. 53-5.

enflame the people' - and this at a time when the Chartist Northern Star was the most bitter opponent of Corn Law Repeal.¹

The main reason for the absence of Chartism from Cork is most likely to be found in the social and economic structure of the city. In contemporary England, Chartism was reputedly strongest in single-industry towns like Manchester, and in centres of decaying domestic industry, like Leicester.² Cork was not a single industry town: it had few labour intensive business concerns and its manufacturing trade was dispersed among many small workshops.³ Cork approximated more closely to the model of a centre of decaying domestic industry, for by the later 1830s its textile trade was practically extinct, many of its weavers had emigrated to the textile towns of England, and the attempted Irish Manufacture revival had done little to check the process of decline. But Chartism made no appearance among the distressed weavers of the Cork suburbs of Glasheen and Blackpool, principally because the progress of trade decay had gone too far to allow any hope from such a movement. Trades too depressed to become involved in active trade unionism were unlikely to place their hope in Chartism and the main, though misguided, hope of the Cork weavers was emigration to the textile centres of England. The attitude to Chartism of exiled Irish weavers lies outside the scope of this study. Recent research has begun to challenge the belief that the Irish formed the backbone of Chartism in English cities,⁴ and there is no evidence

1. CSORP.OR, 1840: 6/12849, 16225; 1841: 6/8473.

2. Asa Briggs, Chartist Studies (London, 1959), pp. 3-10.

3. The survival of the small workshop in Cork trade is discussed in more detail in Maura Murphy, 'The Economic and Social Structure of Nineteenth Century Cork', forthcoming in Historical Studies, 1979/80.

4. J.H. Treble, op. cit.

presently available to show that Cork weavers espoused in Britain the radicalism they had failed to adopt at home.

If the Cork weavers' disinterest in Chartism was out of character, that of the other local trades was less surprising. In England the small-workshop milieu which fostered close relations between masters and men, generally discouraged the growth of Chartism. In such a milieu, the class tensions fostered by the large-scale factory system and by the outworking system, were less likely to occur, and the prospect (however remote) of a journeyman becoming a master of his own small workshop would discourage among the journeymen any wish for radical social change or disturbance.

Moreover, the popular expectations of Chartism in Britain were transferred in toto, in the Irish context, to Repeal of the Union. In the 1830s the popular street ballads of Ireland and the widely believed 'prophesies' of Pastorini and Colmcille forecast in relation to Repeal the same age of plenty which the English masses foresaw in the attainment of the Charter. Even among more politically articulate members of the population, the economic promises of Repeal rendered superfluous any reference to the Charter, for Repeal was the cure for all ills:

If we have a Repeal of the Union, there would be no Union of Trades, but every man who would be willing to work would be sure of procuring employment, and on satisfactory terms. ¹

1. Sheahan, op. cit., p. 187.

But as the 'thirties passed, popular interest in Repeal dwindled. The euphoric expectations of 1832 faded as O'Connell and the leadership of his movement abandoned Repeal in favour of reform within the structure of the United Kingdom. By the early 'forties Cork's lack of interest in Chartism might have been gratifying to O'Connell had it not been equalled by the general lack of interest in Repeal. When he set out to revive the Repeal movement in 1840 he received very little encouragement in Cork, where the prevailing apathy was described for him by the city's only apparent Chartist sympathiser, Joseph Hayes:

I may say that there is great indisposition on the part of the people who may be called the middle classes to join in agitation for the Repeal. This is chiefly grounded on the conviction that its attainment is impracticable ... and I would feel altogether at a loss where to point for the material of an effective agitation. We have no lawyer now amongst us who will speak a word on the subject ... the second branch of the legal profession is equally disinclined. There are offices for public prosecution, clerkships of the peace and of the Crown to be occasionally given away, and a repealer solicitor, nay, a solicitor attending political meetings distinct from elections, - will be as far from fitting one of them as Yorick's head was from fitting a mitre. And writing of mitres, how are the clergy affected? Almost to a man withdrawn from Repeal, at least the secular order of that body. The Trades are no longer in any force here. They have not the leaders who formerly gave effect and weight to their association. Some few of them of the best capacities have obtained situations through Beamish, and of course they are hors de combat. In fact, a process of corruption has been going on through the instrumentality of place-giving, and whenever a member of the family has been started for public employ, the whole division of kindred deem it necessary to eschew Repeal, lest of its embarrassing the speculation. It is true these observations do not apply to the humble classes of the people. They have never tasted nor do they expect to taste the fruits of public employ, and they will be as ready to hurrah for Repeal as ever, if the occasion of any public meeting shall offer in connection with it. If you were

here and called a meeting, a house large enough to contain your apparent adherents could not be procured. When you would have gone away, away also would go the steam of Repeal.¹

The Irish Manufacture Movement, 1841-42

In 1839, the cost of living in Cork, which had been rising slowly since 1835, reached its highest point since the mid-1820s.² Though the rising living costs would not greatly affect tradesmen on a regular income, it proved disastrous to those of the workforce, both skilled and unskilled, whose employment and earnings were erratic. Hunger riots broke out in the city in 1839, and 1842 and 1843, during the lean summer months between the exhaustion of the previous year's potato supply and the ripening of the new crop. Public relief works were set up and all those who could so afford were asked to abstain from potatoes, so that the supply would meet the needs of the poorer classes.³ Even that portion of the population whose income and means were normally sufficient, had begun to feel the pinch of rising prices. In 1838, the Governors of the House of Industry, making a public appeal for funds, explained that,

a deficiency of means among those classes from which the poor at their own houses used to receive relief, prevails unhappily, to such a degree as to increase the number of applicants for admission to the House of Industry.⁴

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1. O'Connell Correspondence, iv, letter 2734, Joseph Hayes to O'Connell, 14 Aug., 1840. Francis Bernard Beamish, president of the Trades Association, had been elected MP for Cork city in 1837. SR, 18, 20 July, 1837.
 2. John B. O'Brien, op. cit., p. 9.
 3. CC, 1, 11, 20 June, 1839; CE, 10 June, 1842; 27 Apr., 1843; CSORP.OR, 1842: 6/10409.
 4. CSORP.OR, 1838: 280.

Following the decline of the Irish manufacture movement of 1832, and the collapse of the Cork Mercantile Chronicle in 1836, there was no local newspaper or organization to publicise the conditions and grievances of the local trades. Not until the upsurge of severe distress in the early 1840s, therefore, did the issues of trade decline and unemployment receive further public attention. The workforce in the manufacturing sector of the population had risen by over 35% since 1831,¹ but the fortunes of the different trades had not improved. By 1840, over 50% of the city's bootmakers were idle and large numbers of the trade had entered the Workhouse. Of the city's 272 glovers, mostly women, over 200 were unemployed. Only 10% of the city's 98 male hatters were working, and the hosiers, once 400-strong, now numbered only 12, of whom 14 were utterly destitute. Cotton and worsted weaving continued to give some degree of employment to over 400 individuals, but the expense of the raw material and the lack of modern equipment and proper working facilities threatened to put many out of business.²

Among those outside the clothing and textile trades, the cabinet-makers were particularly distressed. The total numbers in the trade had in fact risen by over 20% between 1831 and 1841,³ but the number of unionized men had fallen by over 60% since the early years of the century. Seventy of the former 100 society men had emigrated, half

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1. Census of Ireland, 1831, 41. In 1831, some 5,000 males worked in Manufacture in Cork; in 1841, over 8,000 worked in Manufacture. The figures in both these censuses, particularly those in the 1831 census, are not fully reliable.
 2. SR, 9 Mar., 10 Apr., 9 May, 1841; CE, 8, 13 Dec., 1841. Most seavers in Cork worked in small rooms in slum tenements or in wretched cabins in the suburbs.
 3. Census of Ireland, 1831, 1841. There were 172 cabinetmakers in Cork in 1831, and 218 in 1841.

of them to London, and by 1842 only thirty society men remained in Cork, of whom less than 20 were employed.¹

The coopering trade, which had provided such examples of destitution in the early '30s, had suffered a further decline by 1841. This trade's decline, which dated from 1814, was hastened by the competition of the American salted provision trade, and by tariffs imposed in 1842 on imported cask timber. The decline was felt equally by the coopers of other Irish towns and by those of Great Britain. By 1844 the coopering trade in London which had formerly provided employment for 1,500 men now gave only part-time work to 500.² In Cork the once 700-strong coopers' society had fallen to 350, of whom over 60% were idle. Though the standard wage rate was twenty shillings per week, many men, because of the casual nature of their employment, earned an average of two-and-sixpence per week. It was felt both within and outside the trade that the only feasible solution was the emigration of at least 160 men to North America.³

The sawyers were being driven out of employment by the introduction of steam-driven saw mills, while the bakers, whose trade had suffered when the Navy's biscuit contract was moved from Cork to Plymouth, spent £140 in 1841 alone on the emigration of a number of unemployed members. Distress began to make itself felt even among many tradesmen hitherto well paid: unemployment rose among the stonemasons in 1841, and in 1843 the carpenters set up a fund to emigrate idle

1. SR, 9 May, 1841; CE, 30 Dec., 1842.

2. CE, 20 May, 1844, 6, 27 Jan., 1845. Hansard 3, 1844 lxxiv, 1259-69; lxxvi, 133, 1560-62.

3. SR, 9 May, 1841; CE, 6 July, 1842; 20 May, 1844; 6, 27 Jan., 1845.

men and their families to Australia.¹ The worst distress, however, was still the dying textile trades and the clothing and coopering trades, and it was predictable that when a new move was made to revive local industry in the early 1840s, these trades gave it most support.²

Early in 1840 a new movement to promote Irish manufacture was launched in Dublin, taking definite shape by December of that year as the Operative Board of Trade, an organization of tradesmen concerned with self-help, and rigidly excluding political discussion.³ This body wrote to the Cork trade societies, urging them to work for the revival of local manufacture, and impressing on them the need to keep proceedings free of political debate.⁴ Already the question of Irish manufacture revival had been mooted by the Cork Trades Association in the People's Hall and at public meetings.⁵ The Cork trade societies, responding to the Dublin letter, asked the mayor to call a public meeting on the subject of manufacture revival. This meeting, supported by men from all political groups, but dominated by those of the O'Connellite side, led to the foundation of the Cork Board of Trade.⁶

The Board of Trade was clearly a non-artisan body. It was composed, in the words of its secretary, of 'forty gentlemen of the first respectability, wealth and commercial intelligence in the city',⁷

1. SR, 1, 9 May, 1841; CE, 2, 11 Mar., 12 May, 1842; 1 Dec., 1843.

2. SR, 27 Mar., 1841.

3. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

4. Pilot, 11 Dec., 1840; CE, 17 Dec., 1840.

5. CC, 11 Apr., 1841; Day Papers, DP 56/7.

6. SR, 13 Feb., 1841.

7. *ibid.*

and the trade societies were not involved. Initially only four operatives co-operated with the Board by sending in reports on the state of their respective trades, and though by May 1841 reports had been furnished by the bakers, brassfounders, shoemakers, hosiers, weavers, cabinetmakers, hatters, glovers, coopers, ironfounders and tanners,¹ relations between the trades and the Board were never very cordial. Like the Irish Manufacture Association of 1832, the Cork Board of Trade of 1841 was an employers' body, as was evident in the way it dealt with the grievances of the operative tradesmen. Grievances among the operative stonemasons were waved aside,² and little hearing was given to the operative cabinetmakers' complaints of wage cuts and the lack of a standard wage rate in the trade.³ The journeymen coopers' claims that their trade was being injured by the importation of country-made firkins into the city was similarly sidestepped. Ostensibly this was because such matters did not come within the jurisdiction of the board, but in reality, it was due to the fact that a number of the Board's most prominent members were themselves butter merchants who used imported firkins and who were currently involved in stamping out the journeymen coopers' resistance to such importation.⁴ In their dealings with the operative hatters, the Board showed even more clearly how wide was the gap between their objectives and those of the operative tradesmen. The Board had

1. SR, 13, 20, 27 Feb., 9 Mar., 10 Apr., 15 May, 1841.

2. SR, 1 May, 1841.

3. SR, 27 Feb., 1841.

4. SR, 15, 19 Sept., 1840; 9 Mar., 1841.

suggested that a joint-stock hat manufacturing company be set up; the operative hatters agreed to co-operate and submitted a list of prices to the Board for approval. The price list was agreed to, but the hatters' society with a long-standing rule against female labour because of its tendency to undercut wages refused to work with women. The Board of Trade were dismayed by this attitude. They welcomed the injection of female labour for the very reason that the journeymen opposed it, and they 'did not think that the hatters would have any objection to work with women, in order to cheapen labour'. This naive hope was ill-founded. The hatters refused to co-operate and the joint-stock company plan was scrapped.¹

The unbridgable gap between the operatives and the Board of Trade prompted the operatives to set up their own parallel organization. Already in March 1841, a number of tradesmen from the north side of the city had formed the Mallow Lane Board of Trade - a facsimile of the Dublin Operative Board, and based in the same locality in Cork which had given birth to the Irish manufacture movement of 1832.²

Though the newly established Cork Examiner, a newspaper combining ultra-Catholicism with intense Repeal fervour and loyalty to O'Connell,³ gave the trades and the frequenters of the People's Hall more publicity than had the Southern Reporter, it gave little

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1. SR, 15 May, 1841. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, First Report, App. C., pp. 27.
 2. CE, 8 Dec., 1841; SR, 27 Mar., 1841.
 3. The Cork Examiner, whose proprietor, John Francis Maguire, was prominent in Cork politics from the early 1840s until the mid-70s, was first published on 31 August, 1841.

enough publicity to the proceedings of the Mallow Lane Board of Trade. This was because the Mallow Lane Board was a more humble assembly than the employer-dominated Cork Board of Trade, drawing its representatives from the trade societies of the city. By December 1841 the Mallow Lane Board had some 700 members representing seventeen of the city trades - a small enough representation in a city with some forty organized trades and a total manufacturing population of over 8,000.¹ Nine of the trades represented can be identified: shoemakers, woolcombers, bakers, tailors, worsted weavers, cotton weavers, hatters, coopers and cabinetmakers - all, significantly, distressed trades. The Board received little support from the building trades, which generally considered themselves independent of the fortunes of the manufacturing sector.²

The Mallow Lane Board was not strictly confined to operative tradesmen: of the twenty-four artisans most prominent at its meetings, seven can be identified as small masters - two shoemakers, a book-binder, a worsted manufacturer, a collar-maker, a baker and a glover. Of the remaining seventeen, ten were journeymen - three weavers, a cabinet maker, a shoemaker, a hatter, a cooper, a tailor, a baker and a woolcomber. The seven unidentified men were presumably journeymen, whose names would not be included in the trade directories of the time.

The Mallow Lane Board proved a hardier growth than the employers' Board of Trade. The latter body's funds were running low, and by

1. Census of Ireland, Province of Munster, City of Cork, 1841.

2. CE, 3 Jan., 1842.

mid-1841 the kitty was empty. Moreover, the general election of July 1841 and the prospect of local elections under the Municipal Reform Act diverted the attention of many members into politics and away from the issue of home manufacture.¹ The Mallow Lane Board also faced financial difficulties,² but it battled on longer, claiming by late 1841 that its membership had reached 3,000. In reality, the number of artisans in the body was nearer 1,000, the balance of 2,000 being accounted for by the inhabitants of the rural parishes of Blarney and Whitechurch, recruited en-masse by their parish priest, Rev. Mathew Horgan.³ As in 1832, clerical support for the Irish manufacture movement was conspicuous by its absence, and the support of Fr. Horgan, and his eventual assumption of the presidency of the Mallow Lane Board, gave a much needed prestige to the undertaking.⁴ Fr. Horgan was prominent, together with the Cork Examiner proprietor, John Francis Maguire, and a journeyman cabinet-maker, Frank Looney,⁵ in urging the Board's adoption of an Irish manufacture pledge similar to that taken by the Cork Trades Association in 1832.⁶

There were, however, in the Irish manufacture movement of the early 1840s certain characteristics which had been absent from that of the previous decade. Since the earlier movement, two important

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1. SR, 24, 26, 29 May, 12 June, 6 July, 1841.
 2. CE, 17 Aug., 1842.
 3. CE, 8 Dec., 1841.
 4. CE, 17 Dec., 1841, 3 Jan., 11 Apr., 25 May, 1842.
 5. Frank Looney was still active in 1864, when he helped to form the United Trades Association, a shortlived trades council. See below, p.
 6. CE, 17 Dec., 1841, 11 Apr., 1842.

and totally unrelated developments had occurred which had profound effects on the condition and the thinking of a large proportion of the working classes in Ireland. These two developments, both originating in 1838, were Fr. Mathew's temperance movement and the Irish Poor Law. Fr. Mathew's movement had swept the country in the late 1830s and early '40s with a success which amazed contemporaries, who described it as 'the greatest moral revolution ever known'.¹

To many men on the popular side in politics, and particularly to those who looked forward to a revival of O'Connell's Repeal movement, the moral force lessons of the temperance movement could be applied in the sphere of politics. To these men the temperance movement was

an analogy and an example which illustrates most happily the force, the power, and the glorious triumphs of popular determination.²

Those involved in the Irish manufacture movement, even more than those seeking the Repeal of the Union, saw close parallels between their movement and the efforts of Fr. Mathew. As his efforts had improved the moral welfare of the individual, so the efforts of the manufacture revivalists would improve the material welfare of the community. Thus the Irish manufacture pledge was consciously referred to as the 'second pledge' - the follow-up to the temperance pledge - and the Mallow Lane men were reminded that

the great moral foundation is laid in the temperance movement. Found your pledge on it, and call Repeal to your assistance. Let them go hand in hand together, as they are the cardinal virtues of Irish freedom and happiness.³

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1. CE, 30 May, 1842.
 2. CE, 3 Jan., 1842.
 3. CE, 11 Apr., 1842.

The second major influence on the Cork Irish manufacture movement of the early '40s was the growth of popular resentment against the Poor Law, and against its local embodiment, the Cork Union Workhouse.¹ This resentment was felt in many quarters. The disgruntled rate-payers who were, by 1842, paying tenpence in the pound towards city rates and poor rate, complained bitterly of the financial burden of the Poor Law.² The Poor Law Guardians of the local union complained of the flooding of the city workhouse by rural paupers whose native unions escaped the cost of supporting them, and who then became a burden on the city Guardians and ratepayers.³ An anti-English note entered the issue when opposition grew towards the English-based Poor Law Commissioners whose authority was regarded as unwarranted interference in local affairs, and who were reputedly

sacking the country to the amount of £67,000 a year - aliens to the country, who knew nothing of its localities, much less of its people ... /and who earned/ enormous salaries, extracted from the wretchedness and industry of the people.⁴

The most bitter opposition to the Poor Law came, however, from those who felt most directly threatened by the Workhouse. Among this group were the members of the distressed city trades. The Mallow Lane Board of Trade which included in its membership numbers of this class was loud in its denunciation of the Poor Law. To these men, the threat of the Workhouse was direct and personal:

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1. Lyons, op. cit., pp. 78-9; The English Poor Law was extended to Ireland in 1838. The country was divided into 'unions', in each of which a workhouse was established.
 2. CE, 6 July, 1842.
 3. SR, 2 Mar., 1841.
 4. *ibid*.

I simply ask you - who are the present inmates of the Cork Union Workhouse? Broken-down and broken-hearted tradesmen for whom there was no alternative but that horrid refuge or starvation.¹

This description was probably more emotional than accurate. The registers of the Cork Workhouse for the early 1840s do not survive, but those of the years from 1850 onwards show that the vast majority of Workhouse inmates were labourers, vagrants, and women with their children. Tradesmen were decidedly in the minority, and though certain badly-organized trades like shoemakers and tailors were strongly represented in the Workhouse, most artisans would appear to have avoided that institution as much as possible.²

In the early '40s, however, the threat of the Workhouse seemed real enough, and it was made more immediate by the local effects of the enforcement in England of the Law of Settlement.³ This law, by stipulating that destitute persons could receive relief only in their union of origin, provided for the shipping back to Ireland of Irish-born paupers who would otherwise prove a burden on English poor law unions. Crowds of such displaced persons, lately shipped back through the port of Cork, went no further than the city, where they swelled the already existing destitute population. The Mallow Lane Board members, seeing in these destitute creatures images of what they themselves might become, berated the Poor Law which allowed their countrymen to be

1. CE, 3 Jan., 1842.

2. See above, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

3. SG, and E. O. Checkland, The Poor Law Report of 1834 (Pelican Books, 1974), pp. 272-84.

shipped back from England and thrown upon the streets.
After they had spent the best part of their lives
enriching England, they were sent as mendicants home.

At the Board's meetings, anti-English speeches were made, which
echoed the sentiments of the Irish manufacture movement of the
previous decade:

Where the sword and the faggot, the scourge and the
gibbet could not effect sufficient desolation,
comprehensive enough to glut the rage of England and
fill up the measure of Irish woe, there did the cool,
methodical malignity of the laws step in to wither
what the sword had spared ... England has been our
curse, and to here we owe our misery.¹

The anti-Poor Law theme was dominant in the Mallow Lane Board's
attempt to establish in the city an Irish Manufacture Mart. This
mart would supply cost-price cotton to the impoverished weavers of
the city and provide facilities for the display and sale of locally
produced textiles, footwear, gloves, and furniture.² Modelled on
the marts established in Dublin by the Operative Board of Trade,
this scheme also envisaged the provision of moderate loans to small
manufacturers to enable them to buy machinery for the modernization
of their trade, and the appointment of an instructor to teach more
modern techniques to the weavers.³ Funds for the Cork mart were to
come from public subscriptions which it was hoped would amount to
£1,000. But the mart project was badly supported and lack of funds
proved a constant problem.⁴ Though the apathy of the trades themselves,
and particularly their failure to give financial aid, contributed

1. CE, 3 Jan., 1842.

2. CE, 30 May, 1842.

3. CE, 20 Dec., 1841; D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 84-7.

4. CE, 20 Dec., 1841; 11 Apr., 1842.

largely to the failure of the mart, the disappointed Mallow Lane Board preferred to blame the city's middle classes, and particularly the reformed town council, whose members were accused of deserting the trades in their hour of need.¹

Following the Municipal Reform Act of 1840, a new town council was elected in 1841.² Initially highly popular, this new body soon fell from favour, and by early 1842 it was coming under fire from two main quarters - from the tradesmen of the Mallow Lane Board of Trade, and from the radicals of the People's Hall. The relationship of the People's Hall with the Mallow Lane Board was unclear. The Mallow Lane Board met in its own rooms and not in the People's Hall, and this suggests that the two bodies were, and wished to remain, quite distinct. But the one trait common to the two bodies was their hostility towards the new town council. Since its foundation in 1838 the People's Hall had become the centre of radicalism in the city, thus continuing the role of the Cork Trades Association. Unlike the Mallow Lane Board, the People's Hall was not an exclusively artisan body, but a body with a broader social basis, whose leading lights included artisans, shop assistants, clerks, a manufacturer, a merchant and a barrister. The rank-and-file of the Hall included a large number of ratepayers - mostly men from the shopkeeping class - city pawnbrokers, tobacconists, vintners and grocers. This was the

1. CE, 19 Jan., 18 Mar., 11 Apr., 1842.

2. M. Murphy, 'Municipal Reform and the Repeal Movement in Cork, 1833-44', in J.C.H.A.S., Vol. lxxx, 1976, pp. 1-12.

class of men who formed the backbone of the anti-Ministers' Money campaign in the city,¹ and who, as £10 householders, were newly enfranchised under the Municipal Reform Act of 1840 and most assertive in guarding their newly found privileges. The most vocal members of this group came, like the tradesmen of the Board of Trade, from the traditionally working class and ultra-patriotic areas on the city's North Side - Shandon Street, Mallow Lane, and Blarney Lane.² Immediately after the first municipal election under the reform act, in an attempt to keep the town council in the hands of the ratepayers and out of the power of a clique within the Chamber of Commerce, this group formed the Cork Burgess Association, which for some time harassed the town council by acting as watchdog over all its proceedings.³ The Burgess Association and the general membership of the People's Hall attacked the town council on several issues. The council majority had failed to support the campaign against Minister's Money; it had consistently refused to give financial assistance to the Hall; and it proved unwilling to involve itself in the Repeal campaign when that gathered momentum in 1842.⁴

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1. Minister's Money was the urban equivalent of tithes, but was levied on dwelling houses instead of land. Collected twice yearly, it was the main support of the parochial clergy of the Established Church. Resented by the Catholic population, it nonetheless roused less violent feeling than the tithe issue in the rural areas.
 2. Report of the Select Committee on Ministers' Money, Ireland, PP. 1847-8, xvii, Qs. 369; CE, 1 Dec., 1841.
 3. CE, 21 Oct., 12 Nov., 1 Dec., 1841; 12 Aug., 9 Sept., 1842; M. Murphy, 'Municipal Reform and the Repeal Movement in Cork, 1833-44', in J.C.H.A.S., Vol. lxxxix, 1976, pp. 10-12.
 4. CE, 3 Feb., 1 June, 1846; Report of the Select Committee on Ministers' Money, Qs. 46-7; M. Murphy, op. cit., pp. 12-16.

While the People's Hall took the initiative in organizing the Repeal Association in the city from 1840 on, and denounced the Town Council for its inaction, the Mallow Lane Board attacked the Council for neglecting the Irish manufacture revival. But the Mallow Lane men paid no attention to the Repeal issue. They had seemingly adopted the Dublin Operative Board's non-political stand, and they actually blamed the failure of the manufacture movement on the undue attention paid by public men to the Repeal question. They were not themselves anti-Repealers, but they denied that

a man could be a Repealer if he did not support Irish manufactures. The man who pledged himself to wear nothing but Irish manufacture was the true Repealer, for he brought back the money and trade to the country ...
/The promoters of home manufacture/ would do more good to the country than any political movement could do ...¹

In Dublin the Operative Board of Trade had, during the first two years of its existence, received very little attention from the political leaders on the O'Connellite side. But suddenly in late 1841, O'Connell stepped in, and, determined to use all available organizations to further Repeal, caused the Operative Board to be swallowed up by his own recently formed Repeal Board of Trade. From then on, the Dublin Board, despite some members' protests, simply echoed the politics of the Repeal Association. The Irish manufacture marts in the city were used for the collection of the Repeal Rent, the Board's funds petered out, its meetings were cancelled during the elections of 1842, and by late 1843 the Board had disappeared for good.²

1. CE, 11 Apr., 1842.

2. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 82-91.

Developments in Cork lagged some twelve months behind those of Dublin, but events in the southern city closely paralleled those in the capital. In spite of opposition within the body, the Mallow Lane Board moved closer to political involvement when the Repeal campaign got under way in 1842. The anti-English feeling fostered by opposition to the Poor Law, combined with the insistence of O'Connell and the People's Hall Repealers that Irish manufacture could prosper only under a native parliament, drove the Mallow Lane Board into the Repeal net. In late 1842, following the fate of the Cork Trades Association of 1832 and that of the Dublin Operative Board of Trade in 1841, the Mallow Lane men admitted that

the men of Cork were behind other places, but they would let the world see it was not the fault of the operatives, for all they wanted were leaders.

At a meeting of 300 artisans belonging to the Mallow Lane Board, it was decided to convert the Irish manufacture mart in the North Main Street into a Repeal Room and to replace the Mallow Lane Board by a Repeal Board of Trade.¹ Once again as in 1832 Repeal had swallowed up Irish manufacture.

The Cork Trades and the Repeal Movement and Trade Depression, 1843-46

Though the People's Hall continued to regard itself as 'the cradle of liberty' in Cork, and to claim financial and moral support from the trade and mortality societies of the city,² it was in fact becoming more and more a centre for the burgess body, and there were indications

1. CE, 28, 30 Dec., 1842.

2. CE, 8 Sept., 5 Nov., 1843.

of a widening gap between it and the trade societies. Though the trades had contributed towards the building of the hall and were consequently entitled to a share in the trusteeship,¹ their role in running the Hall was, by 1842, minimal. Besides, though it had initially been hoped that the trade societies would use the Hall facilities for their committee meetings instead of meeting in public houses, the trades apparently had no desire to change.²

When the Mallow Lane Board of Trade reconstituted itself as the Cork Repeal Board of Trade, the trades involved in the Board sought to keep their identity distinct from the Repealers of the People's Hall. They formed their own 'Operative Repeal Association' and turned the Manufacture mart in the North Main Street into a Repeal meeting room 'for the use of the working classes'. The Operative Repeal Association maintained its separate identity until mid-1843, but its activities were never publicized, and after 1843 it apparently collapsed or lost its separate identity within the expanding Repeal movement in the city.³

The Cork Trades Association which had faded into the background once it had helped to establish the People's Hall in 1838, was still in existence as a separate body in the mid-forties.⁴ But this had never been an exclusively artisan body and by the early 1840s the trade societies had ceased to identify with it. The Cork trade societies, therefore, regarded themselves as separate from other social and political groupings in the city, and jealously guarded

1. See above, pp.

2. CSORP.OR, 1836; 6/193; CE, 9 Sept., 1842.

3. CE, 19, 28, 30 Dec., 1842; 17 May, 1843.

4. CE, 30 July, 1845.

their right to this separate identity. Hence their aloofness at this time from both the Cork Trades Association and the People's Hall. They were, moreover, quick to complain when they felt their political opinion was not being given due weight and protested vociferously when, in 1843, they were not consulted regarding the organization of a Repeal demonstration in the city. Their complaint was taken sufficiently seriously by local public men to ensure them a voice in organizing the next such event in 1845.¹

Though the few operatives prominent in promoting the Repeal movement in Cork claimed that the trades were the backbone of Repeal enthusiasm in the city,² the reaction of individual trade societies to the revived Repeal movement of the 1840s is unclear - far less clear than that of the Dublin trades at the same period. While the Dublin trade societies held many meetings to demand Repeal,³ no such meetings were recorded among the Cork trades in the early '40s. It is uncertain whether the absence of reports on such meetings in Cork was a symptom of trades' disinterest or of inadequate press coverage. Since the trade societies themselves praised the newly-founded Cork Examiner for paying attention to their interests,⁴ it seems unlikely that inadequate press reporting accounted for the apparent absence of trades' Repeal meetings in the city. Trades' apathy - already apparent in relation to the local manufacture movement - was the more likely explanation. The absence of trades' repeal meetings in Cork

1. CE, 17 May, 1843; 19 May, 1845.

2. CE, 30 Dec., 1842.

3. D'Arcy, op. cit., 68-9.

4. CE, 28 Dec., 1842.

in the early '40s contrasted sharply with the position in the early and mid-30s, when several such meetings had been held,¹ and it seems that the Cork trades tired of the Repeal idea sooner than did the trades of Dublin.

The Repeal Rent, modelled on the Catholic Rent of the 1820s,² is generally considered the barometer of Repeal enthusiasm in the 1840s. Recorded payments to the Rent, however, reveal relatively little of the political attitudes of the Cork trades. The Rent payments of the Dublin trades, recorded week by week in the Pilot newspaper, totalled £319 in 1840 and over £600 in 1844 - an indication of rising Repeal enthusiasm even after the Clontarf debacle.³ There is no similar financial record of Repeal popularity among the trade societies of Cork, from whom the total Repeal Rent subscriptions over the period 1840-46 amounted to a mere £54.12s.⁴

The mode of collection of the Repeal Rent in Cork was different to that in Dublin. In Dublin the Rent contributed by any trade society was forwarded to the Repeal Association in the name of that trade, and acknowledged in the columns of the Pilot as a trade society subscription. This distinction between trade society and individual subscriptions was facilitated by the fact that some trade societies had their own Repeal Wardens, who forwarded the Repeal Rent from that

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1. CC, 30 Nov., 2 Dec., 1830; 19 Feb., 9 Apr., 1831; Kerry Journal, 15 Dec., 1830; FH, 22 Dec., 1830; CMC, 18 Apr., 1834.
 2. The success of the Catholic Rent of the 1820s had been due to its provision for contributions by the poor. The minimum weekly contribution of a farthing was within the reach of the masses, and the sense of participation which this gave to the peasantry and urban poor ensured that O'Connell's movement became a popular one in the truest sense.
 3. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 71, lvii, lviii.
 4. See Appendix I.

trade society to Repeal Association headquarters.¹ In Cork, though a few artisans, mainly masters, collected the Repeal Rent within their own trades,² it seems that no Repeal Wardens were appointed from among the rank and file of the trade societies. The Wardens, all 'active and intelligent men of patriotism', chosen from within the Burgess body, were mainly manufacturers, merchants and retailers. Seven artisans were included in the list of 69 wardens in 1841, but these were all master tradesmen - men of sufficient importance to appear in the trade directories of the day.³ With the possible exception of William Ellis (stonecutter), these men were appointed as ordinary Repeal Wardens, and had no special connection with the societies of their respective trades. Thus, in the absence of Repeal Wardens of their own, the trades paid their Repeal Rent through the general Repeal Wardens, their payments were included in the general subscription totals from the city wards, and were not acknowledged as separate trade society contributions.

At irregular intervals, however, the subscriptions of some of the Cork trade societies were transmitted separately to the Repeal Association, and from these recorded figures the strength of trade society financial support for Repeal can be tentatively calculated. Though individual artisans sometimes paid the full £1 membership fee to the Repeal Association,⁴ trade society members generally paid the

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1. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 68; Jacqueline Hill, The Role of Dublin in the Irish National Movement, 1840-48 (Ph.D. Diss., Leeds University, 1973). Of the 180 wardens in Dublin, 160 came from among the provision, clothing, luxury and service trades.
 2. Pilot, 16 Dec., 1840.
 3. Pilot, 7 Apr., 1841.
 4. Pilot, 2, 16 Dec., 1840.

shilling subscription of 'associate members'.¹ Taking each trade society's contribution to the Rent, and calculating at the rate of one shilling per man per year, the Cork trade societies' membership of the Repeal Association between 1840 and 1846 appears as follows:

TABLE 17

Number of Repeal Associates among the Cork Trade Societies,
1840-1846²

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Victuallers | 140 |
| Tailors | 140 |
| Stonecutters | 110 |
| Barbers | 107 |
| Bakers | 105 |
| Coopers | 46 |
| Hatters | 44 |
| Cotton Weavers | 43 |
| Cabinetmakers | 35 |
| Basketmakers | 20 |
| Tobaccotwisters | 20 |
| TOTAL | 810 |

The proportion of paid-up Repeal associates in a trade society depended on a number of factors. In some cases the financial condition of a trade society's members determined the contribution to the Repeal Rent: thus, the coopers and weavers, subject to severe trade distress and unemployment, could spare little for Repeal, and there were relatively few Repeal associates in their ranks. Yet, other trades with a high unemployment rate were regular subscribers to the Rent: the tailors and the bakers, whose unemployment level had risen to 25% in 1846,

1. Pilot, 16 Dec., 1840.

2. Pilot, 9 Nov., 2, 11, 16 Dec., 1840; 30 June, 18 Aug., 1843; 15 Nov., 1844; 3 Jan., 5, 19 Dec., 1845.

had a large number of paid-up Repealers among their members, and were renowned for their 'zealous exertions' in the cause of Repeal.¹ There is no obvious reason for the difference between the response of the tailors and bakers and that of the coopers and weavers, but the explanation may lie in the attitude of individual trade society officials and employers within the respective trades. A zealous trade society Repealer could persuade his fellow members to subscribe towards the cause, and the available figures show that some, at least, succeeded in doing so. But trade society members could tire of extra demands on their purses. Later in the century when similar demands were made on trades society men for the cause of Parnell and Home Rule, initial generosity was followed by grumbling and evasion of payment, and trade society officers found it difficult enough to collect even routine trade union dues without looking for political subscriptions. There is no reason to believe that the trade society members of the 1840s were any more generous - or gullible - than those of the 1880s and '90s.² A trade society official had, in fact, less opportunity of extracting Repeal subscriptions from the tradesmen than had the individual employer. There is evidence that the O'Connell Tribute,³ which was paid annually

1. CE, 23 Aug., 1843; 6 May, 1846.

2. Belinda Loftus, Marching Workers (Arts Councils of Ireland, 1978), p. 30. In 1904, one of the Masons' Delegates complained of the expenditure on the St. Patrick's Day Parade. He felt it '... would be throwing away £10 for the purpose of putting a green sash around his neck, and it was too Irish ...'.

3. The O'Connell Tribute was an annual collection taken up all over Ireland as a public demonstration of appreciation for O'Connell's work for Catholic Emancipation and as an effort to reimburse him for his loss of practice as a barrister following his election to parliament in 1829.

between 1829 and 1845, was collected from working men not by their trade society officers, but by their immediate employers.¹ The same trend is noticeable in the Repeal Rent collection of the 1840s when the subscriptions of the basketmakers and the stonecutters were forwarded not by their trade societies but by two individual employers.²

But political inertia was not an inevitable consequence of trade depression. In fact, while financial support for Repeal tended to decline with the advent of trade depression, moral support rose in inverse proportion. The entire basis for trade support for Repeal was economic, and popular orators enforced this economic nationalism by equating the Union with trade depression and its Repeal with trade revival. They described the 'rags and poverty with which the trades were covered, owing to the want of employment - a consequence of the Union',³ and the trades, though unwilling to subscribe their shillings, were ready to believe in the Repeal panacea. The enthusiastic trades' participation in the political demonstrations of the 1840s⁴ was the most tangible sign of the artisans' belief in Repeal. Though their subscriptions to the Repeal Rent were scanty, they were willing

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1. CC, 10 Nov., 1840; 19 Nov., 1844; CE, 6 Dec., 1844. The anti-Repeal Cork Constitution frequently alleged that the wages of those working for Repealer employers were cut in Tribute week, and the sum deducted given towards the Tribute: in 1840 the Constitution quoted a local's opinion; 'I was witness now to as great a piece of barbarity as ever you heard of - sixpence a week stopped from poor labourers earning only 4/6d a week. Sure, if the people wanted to give the man O'Connell anything, they ought to leave it to themselves!'
 2. Pilot, 16 Dec., 1840.
 3. CE, 24, 26 April, 1843.
 4. CE, 21 May, 1843; 9 June, 1845.

to spend considerable sums on decking themselves out appropriately in public demonstrations. The Repeal Association in Dublin was remote and irrelevant and the payment of the associate's shilling apparently annoyed the individual artisan who would prefer to see his money spent locally:

Why should I give a shilling, when it goes to Dublin,
and I never hear of it again? There are large staffs
kept up in Dublin, and my shilling is thrown away
amongst them.¹

Money spent on a local Repeal demonstration was a different matter. The individual artisan and the trade society to which he belonged could, in such a demonstration, display their trade solidarity and patriotism, vie with other societies for the most impressive turnout, and - equally important - have an enjoyable day out. Even those trades which, for the remaining 364 days of the year, complained of hard times and low earnings, could muster an impressive display on the occasion of a Repeal demonstration. In 1845 the Coopers' Society, whose members' earnings had fallen to a weekly average of seven shillings, could afford an elaborate tableau for the occasion of O'Connell's visit to Cork. The Cork Examiner was deeply impressed:²

In spite of a thousand misfortunes, this once prosperous Irish trade mustered nearly two-hundred strong. They had several banners, and a large handsome platform, on which under the shadow of a tree were two youths, one an African, the other a member of the trade, clad in green, and bearing marks on his hands emblematic of the captivity of 'Young Ireland'. Young Africa wore a banner with the words 'Free', while Young Ireland had a similar one with the words 'A Slave Still'. Next was borne their fine banner, with the

1. CE, 19 Dec., 1842.

2. CE, 9 June, 1845.

arms of the trade richly executed, and the motto -

'Prosperity may attend the integrity of our Cause'.

The members next followed, each wearing a rich scarf, decorated with orange and green, and the Repeal button.

They also bore blue wands with gilt lance tops.

When Young Africa came before the Liberator, he addressed him as follows:

'Illustrious Liberator, I thank you for your great assistance in making my father free'.

The Liberator bowed, accepting the compliment. Then Young Africa drew the attention of the Liberator to Young Ireland in chains, and with the most expressive eloquence and emphasis, pointing to the captive, repeated the well known words of Moore -

O, where's the slave so lowly,
Condemned to chains unholy,
Who, could he burst
His bonds at first,
Would pine beneath them slowly'.

Young Ireland who, in a supplicating, desponding manner, with his shackles exhibited, knelt before the Liberator, as soon as Young Africa had repeated the above lines, burst his chains at the command of the Liberator, and brought them back to town in triumph, exhibiting them as he went along, and the vast multitude proclaimed their delight at his freedom by shouts that rent the air. This was a most interesting spectacle.

Whatever the acute embarrassment of the two apprentices who took part, the coopers' tableau illustrated the average artisan's enthusiasm for Repeal, enthusiasm which, however, lasted only as long as no financial demands were made. Then, as Joseph Hayes had explained to O'Connell in 1840, 'the steam of Repeal'¹ vanished, and the trade societies returned to their everyday function of maintaining wages, keeping out non-union men, and supporting their sick and unemployed members.

1. See above, p. 85.

The Rise of Militant Nationalism, 1846-48

During 1845 and 1846 the long-standing antipathy between the Cork People's Hall on the one hand and the Chamber of Commerce and town council on the other came to a head. The People's Hall, as stronghold of the die-hard Repealers of the city, demanded that all men elected to the city's public boards should be pledged Repealers. This principle of the Repeal pledge had been accepted by both the Chamber of Commerce and the town council, but in 1845 and again in 1846 a majority of the councillors approved the election to the Cork Harbour Board of several non-Repealers. The People's Hall considered this to be a direct violation of the council's Repeal commitment, and while the Chamber of Commerce supported the Council's action, the Hall decided to weed out all those lukewarm on the Repeal issue. The Hall's honorary president and vice-president, both members of the town council majority, were forced to resign in an atmosphere of much bitterness.¹ Meanwhile, the Repeal Association in Dublin had split. O'Connell quarrelled with some of his younger followers over the Colleges' Bill and the theoretical question of the justification of force in politics. In July 1846 O'Connell brought matters to a head by presenting to the Repeal Association a set of resolutions which rejected the use of force except for self-defence in extreme necessity. Unable to accept these resolutions, the dissidents, by now known as 'Young Ireland' withdrew from the Association.²

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1. M. Murphy, 'Repeal and Young Ireland in Cork, 1830-50, pp. 90-94, 112.
 2. F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (Glasgow, 1971), pp. 105-108; Kevin B. Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal (London, 1965), pp. 80-93.

In Cork the quarrel between Old and Young Ireland was complicated by the hostilities between the People's Hall on the one hand and the alliance between the town Council and the Chamber of Commerce on the other. Though Young Ireland was slow to make progress in the city, the first Cork secessions from the Repeal Association were made by the membership of the People's Hall.¹ The seceders in the city included, together with the pawnbrokers, shopkeepers, minor manufacturers and clerks of the Hall, a number of young barristers and professional men educated at Trinity College, Dublin. These men were a new element in Cork politics: they had been personal friends of Thomas Davis and the Nation writers and were enthusiastic exponents of cultural revival and, some years later, of militant nationalism.²

The tension between Old and Young Ireland in Cork came to a head in the 1847 general election, fought out less on the issues dividing O'Connell from the Seceders than on those dividing the town council from the People's Hall. The People's Hall, now closely connected with the Seceders in the city, tried unsuccessfully to enforce a Repeal pledge on the popular candidates, and the election, uncontested by the Tories, degenerated into a bitter personal confrontation between the Chamber of Commerce favourite, Dan Callaghan, and the People's Hall choice, William Fagan.³ The election, however, brought the Seceders before the Cork public, and when a local branch of the

1. CE, 21 Aug., 14, 16 Sept., 25 Nov., 1846.

2. Chief among the Cork seceders were Denny Lane (barrister), Michael Joseph Barry (barrister) and Charles D. Murphy (student).

3. M. Murphy, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-112.

Irish Confederation¹ was set up in September 1847, the People's Hall became its headquarters.²

It is not clear how the trade societies of the city reacted to these events. The Cork Trades Association, however, which had been subsumed in the People's Hall and whose activities got no newspaper coverage since the late 1830s, reasserted itself on the side of Old Ireland. Under its O'Connellite secretary, Cornelius Carver (master bookbinder), the Cork Trades Association broke away from the People's Hall and took with it the statue of O'Connell which had stood in the Hall since its opening.³ Because the Cork Trades Association had never been an exclusively artisan body, its stand cannot be cited as proof that the trade societies generally sided with Old Ireland. But it is true that Old Irelandism was strong among the Dublin trades,⁴ and when a meeting of the Cork Irish Confederates was disrupted by an infuriated O'Connellite mob, the vigour with which individual artisans denied any trades' involvement in the attack suggests that the Cork trades were generally regarded as O'Connellites, and were therefore anxious to clear themselves of charges of riotous behaviour.⁵

The Cork artisans generally appear to have given little support to the local Confederate Desmond Club in the early days of its

1. The seceders from the Repeal Association set up their own organization, the Irish Confederation, in January 1847. Denis Gwynn, Young Ireland and 1848 (Cork, 1949), pp. 98-113.
2. CE, 10, 13, 22 Sept., 1847.
3. CE, 15 June, 1847; SR, 14 Mar., 1848.
4. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 73.
5. CE, 22 Sept., 1847.

existence. The most prominent members of the Desmond Club were not artisans but professional men, small manufacturers and a large number of the shopkeeping class¹ - all men of comfortable means, the valuation of whose property, either owned or rented, varied between £6 and £84, and some members had an interest in up to three separate dwellings or premises.² The club soon became worried by its limited appeal, and deemed it necessary to add the names of a few working men to the committee - as a token of the club's democratic aspirations. Soon a few tradesmen, embarrassed by the honour conferred on them, were taking the chair at club meetings and making speeches which, however, the press did not deem worthy of publication.³

The real function of the Desmond Club at this stage, in fact, was less political than cultural and educational, seeking to bring the teachings and philosophy of Thomas Davis and the Nation to the people of Cork. To this end were organized lectures and discussions on Irish culture, industry and resources, and the club's reading room was well stocked with local, national, and some London newspapers and

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1. CE, 13 Sept., 1847: of the 45 named club members, the occupations of 29 can be identified. These were 3 barristers, 2 timber merchants, 2 builders, 2 grocers, 3 wine merchants, and one each of the following: tanner, building material dealer, glue manufacturer, printer (master), pawnbroker, trimming merchant, apothecary, brush manufacturer, ironmonger, paper maker (master), tobacco manufacturer, butter buyer, baker, clerk, hardware dealer, publican, gentleman.
 2. Griffith's Valuation, Borough of Cork (1852).
 3. SR, 15 Feb., 7, 30 Mar., 1848. The tradesmen recruited by the Club committee were Michael Murphy (operative shoemaker); John Maguire (operative cooper) and Eugene McCarthy (operative shoemaker).

periodicals.¹ The impact of this educational scheme was, of course, limited to the membership of the club and to those who chose to read the reports of club proceedings in the local nationalist press. To this extent, the club was simply preaching to the converted, and had none of that popular appeal which the orators at the public meetings of the Repeal campaign had won. There is no evidence that the trade societies of the city paid any heed to the Desmond Club's cultural propaganda, nor was there any recorded trades' reaction to the club's attempts, through the agency of a member who was a small paper manufacturer, to launch yet another Irish manufacture movement in the city.² Whatever anonymous artisans it numbered among its rank-and-file, the Desmond Club's leadership had little sympathy with the spirit of combination which motivated the operative trade societies. Its attempted Irish manufacture revival was marked by the anti-combination note characteristic of the similar movements of 1832 and 1841. The journeymen tailors, for example, were urged to submit to an impending wage cut and to 'win the confidence of /their/ employers' by their reasonable behaviour.³

Yet such sentiments sounded less incongruous in the mid-forties than they had in the early 'thirties, for in the interval the general

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1. CE, 6, 20 Oct., 6, 20, 31 Dec., 1847; United Irishman, 12 Feb., 1848: the newspapers and periodicals available in the reading room were: the Daily News; Douglas Jarrold's Newspaper; Packet; Limerick Reporter; Peter Carroll's Register; Dublin University Magazine; Cork Magazine; Hewit's Journal; Douglas Jarrold's Magazine; Sharpe's London Magazine; North American Review; Builder; some northern newspapers, the Cork Examiner; Cork Constitution; Southern Reporter; and, most important of all, the Nation.
 2. CE, 21, 30 Apr., 10, 24 May, 20 Dec., 1847.
 3. *ibid.*

tenor of Cork trade union activity had changed. The violence of the combinations of the 1830s had well-nigh disappeared and by the early '40s, 'respectability' had become the keynote to Cork trade union activity. In this the Cork trades were no different to those of Dublin which, following the violence of the 'thirties, became aware in the early 'forties of the need to regain the public sympathy which they had lost through violence.¹ The anti-night work campaign of the Dublin journeymen bakers and the wage strike by the city's tanners were conducted in the early '40s in a strictly peaceful manner, and were presented to the public as campaigns for social justice rather than narrow trade issues.² In 1842 the parallel Cork Bakers' campaign against night work, sparked off by the example of the Dublin men,³ was run on the same lines. It was initiated by a petition to Parliament and supported by many prominent citizens, including Rev. Theobald Matthew, the Apostle of Temperance.⁴ The respectability of the campaign, like that of the concurrent Irish manufacture movement, was enforced by the temperance theme. This theme, inconceivable in the trade union activities of the 1830s, reflected the wide influence of Fr. Matthew's temperance movement, not alone in Cork city but throughout the entire country. The bakers' previous failure to abolish night work was blamed on drunkenness, and hope was placed in the enlightenment of the present, when, in the words of the bakers' secretary, 'temperance and good will preside

1. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 64.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 93-119.

3. CE, 13 July, 1842.

4. CE, 13 July, 26 Aug., 2, 5, 21 Sept., 18, 25 Nov., 1842.

at our council ... and bid us rely on the justice, wisdom and humanity of parliament'.¹

The local press's praise for the 'deserving and industrious but overworked journeymen bakers for the temperate manner in which they report their grievances and seek for redress' was ample proof that the bakers had abandoned violent action.² But such temperate methods failed to achieve the desired objective. Though meetings between masters and journeymen led to the temporary abolition of night work, the intransigence of a minority of masters and the decline of public support for the operatives led to the collapse of the campaign. As in Dublin, night work was resumed within three months and it continued a grievance in the baking trade until the end of the century.³

In spite of the failure of the anti-night work campaign, the bakers generally did not resume their previous violent activities. Their avoidance of outrage and their support for the Repeal movement in the mid-'40s caused the Repeal Association, no friend of trade combination, to describe them as 'a most respectable body of men'.⁴ In 1846 the secretary of the bakers' society, with a by now characteristic unctiousness, expressed the hope that

our city be not again disgraced by those illegal combinations which were too prevalent heretofore

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1. CE, 25 July, 1842: The bakers' society, whose members had frequently been involved in the combination outrages of the 1830s had, in 1836, to save the life of a member convicted of outrage, entered into a pledge against all violent action in the future.
 2. CE, 13 July, 1842.
 3. CE, 2, 5, 14, 21 Sept., 5, 14, 17, 19 Oct., 7, 18, 25 Nov., 1842.
 4. CE, 23 Aug., 1843.

and as an example to other trades he pointed out his own fellow society members as

humble men, doing our duty to our country, and endeavouring to maintain a respectable standing for our society ...
/which is/ held together by the bonds of benevolence ...¹

The cabinetmakers who, like the bakers, had been most prominent in the combination outrages of the 1830s, had been sufficiently pacified to earn the description - 'this most deserving body of our local trades'.² Since the early 1820s the journeymen cabinetmakers' working day had been one hour longer than that worked by other trades,³ and in 1845 they sought a reduction in hours to put them on a par with the other city trades. Their request was carefully worded to suit their new image of respectability, pointing out that their long working hours

deprived /them/ of an ... opportunity of participating in the scientific and general improvements of the day.

When the majority of masters conceded the reduction in hours, they were assured that this

act of benevolence /would/ ... be repaid tenfold in diligence and good feeling ... /and that/ the hour gained from severe toil /would/ not be spent in idleness or dissipation.⁴

Even the coopers, a far more aggressive trade than the bakers, and who consequently received far less public sympathy, were at pains to point (not altogether accurately) that they had too, since the early 1840s, avoided all violent combination.⁵ A major strike conducted

1. CE, 6 May, 1846.

2. CE, 31 Oct., 1845.

3. SR, 2 Feb., 1826.

4. CE, 31 Oct., 10, 12 Nov., 1845.

5. CE, 18 Sept., 1843, 4 Feb., 1846.

in 1843 against the flooding of the city by country-made firkins was conducted on clearly 'respectable' lines, with an extensive use of letters to the press to rouse public support for their campaign against the powerful butter buying interest.¹

Moreover, local trade societies were now sufficiently established as legally accepted organizations to employ attorneys to advise them on the framing of their society rules. Some of the Dublin trade societies had, as early as 1824, employed lawyers to state their case in a trade dispute,² but in Cork no similar instance of union employment of a legal man was noted until 1842, when the Slaters' and Plasters' body employed an attorney to draft their rules. The same attorney successfully defended a number of union members when they appeared in court on a charge of illegal combination.³

Moreover, the violent energies which had previously characterized trade unionism, were now channeled into a different area - that of militant nationalism. Not since the rise of the United Irishmen in the late eighteenth century and the Emmett Rising of 1803 had there been mooted in the field of Irish politics the idea of a separatist republican nationalism, to be achieved, if necessary, by physical force. In 1848 the secession of John Mitchel and his fellow militants from the ranks of the Irish Confederation, together with the democratic euphoria produced by the February Revolution in France, had once again pushed forward in Ireland the idea of militant

1. CE, 18, 25 Sept., 6 Oct., 1843.

2. D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

3. CE, 9 Sept., 1842.

separatism. In Cork, from early 1848 on, the enthusiasm generated by the 'bloodless revolution' in France led to a greater concentration on political topics in the Desmond Club, and to a greater artisan involvement in the activities of the local Confederates. Though the leadership's personnel did not change, the meetings of the club began to attract more attention among the tradesmen and working classes of the city.¹ The courting of working class support was in keeping with the rising tide of revolutionary and democratic fervour on the continent. On the Irish scene, and in Cork itself, the enthusiasm for armed revolt grew among the Confederates. One of the moderates of that body, Michael Joseph Barry, complained early in 1848 of the emergence of an excessively 'levelling and ultra-democratic spirit' in the Desmond Club.² But Barry himself was largely responsible for spreading revolutionary ideas among local Confederate sympathizers. Early in 1848 he and another Confederate had taken over the Southern Reporter, transforming that respectable and cautious Old Ireland organ into a violent exponent of revolution.³ The democratic spirit noted by Barry increased in the early months of 1848, and the Confederate organization in Cork extended its popularity. The Confederate Desmond Club, in an effort to increase its public appeal and to effect a reconciliation with the more sympathetic Old Irelanders in the city, dissolved itself to form a new body called, in keeping with the spirit of the times, the Citizen's Club.⁴

1. SR, 18, 30 Mar., 2 May, 1848.

2. Smith O'Brien Papers, Ms. 442 N.L.I., Letter 2374, Barry to Smith O'Brien, 22 Feb., 1848; SR, 7 Mar., 1848.

3. M. Murphy, Repeal and Young Ireland in Cork, pp. 117-121.

4. SR, 20 Apr., 1848.

Significantly, the first move by the club's promoters was to seek the support of the hitherto uninvolved trade societies of the city. Contact was made through Michael Murphy, journeyman shoemaker, one of the few artisans already active in Confederate circles. The response of the trades was encouraging. The Old Irelanders in the trade societies promised their co-operation, and continuing harmony was ensured when the statue of O'Connell, removed from the People's Hall by the Old Irelanders when the Confederates had first taken over, was restored to its old position.¹ The meeting to set up the club was 'for the most part a trades' meeting', and though the spokesmen of the club were the same individuals who had dominated the former Desmond Club, the trade societies were given for the first time a real voice in the organization's direction. Of the thirty-one places on the committee, twelve were held by representatives of the trade societies, and it was claimed that the first 800 members of the club were drawn mainly from the ranks of the trades. The trades which sent delegates to the committee were the bootmakers, hatters, nailors, painters, tailors, coopers, slaters, shipwrights, broguemakers, paperstainers and victuallers.²

The sudden swing of the trades from the constitutional Repeal agitation of the early '40s to the militancy of 1848 is not easy to explain. The most obvious reason was that until the establishment of the Irish Confederation there had been no alternative political movement to O'Connell's Repeal campaign, and in gravitating towards

1. SR, 14 Mar., 1848.

2. SR, 30 Mar., 20 Apr., 1848.

the militants the trades merely echoed the general democratic and nationalistic enthusiasm of the day. But there were also definite economic reasons: the Irish Confederation was founded in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine of 1845-47, which produced among the rural lower classes a prostration and despair preventing any effective revolutionary organization. Distress among the city artisans was, on the other hand, sufficiently acute to foster disaffection, but not severe enough to produce political inertia. During the 1840s there was no decline in poverty in Cork city, and by the middle of the decade the effects of the famine in the rural areas were being felt in the city. Destitute country dwellers flooded the city and food prices rose.¹ At the height of the famine in early 1847, an average of 400 deaths occurred weekly, and a report to the Castle painted a gloomy picture:²

Notwithstanding the laudable exertions of the /city's charitable/ societies, the number of deaths are very lamentable. Thousands of destitute people fled from the country to the city during the winter and spring months, and cast themselves on the charity of the citizens, whose benevolence ... is almost unbounded. Early in the month of February last, many of them began to die, and having no friend or relative to assist them, and there being no Board of Health or other machinery in operation to have them interred, many of them remained unburied ...

By January 1847 the cheapest grade of quartern loaf cost tenpence - one penny more than the highest price in 1825,³ - and the increase in price caused much distress among the working population:

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1. CC, 5 Jan., 3 Aug., 4 Nov., 7 Dec., 1847. In mid-1847, potato prices rose from c. 4½d to 1s. per 21 lb weight, and in December of that year they rose further to 1/3 per weight.
 2. CSORP., 1847: Z/495.
 3. John B. O'Brien, op. cit., p. 6; CE, 13 Jan., 1847.

Labouring men in full employment, who, previous to this increase, were too proud to associate with starving mendicants, are now glad to receive relief from the societies which have been lately established for the distribution of soup ...¹

When, owing to the huge influx of paupers into the city, the Cork Work House was temporarily closed, a meeting of the citizens was held to discuss the situation. At that meeting, one speaker's assertion that unemployment was not serious among the city's native artisans, drew a storm of protest from the tradesmen present. One man in the body of the hall declared that 'All the trades in the city are idle', and a journeyman cooper in the gallery stood up to declare that 200 of his 350-strong trade society were idle, while another man claimed that only three members of the 40-strong Painters' Society were employed. All in all, it was stated, over 1,000 native Cork tradesmen were idle, without counting any of the paupers and country labourers who had lately come into the city.²

There was in fact a direct connection between a trade's rate of unemployment and its support for the rising nationalist-democratic movement. The Coopers' Society, with almost 60% of its members idle, was most strongly represented in the Citizens' Club, some 200 members subscribing to the funds. Of the 40 unionized painters (over 90% idle) 30 joined the club. The 18-strong Society of Paperstainers, only three of whose members had been fully employed in 1846, had twelve members in the Citizens' Club.³ The other trades

1. CE, 13 Jan., 1847.

2. CE, 25 Jan., 1847.

3. CE, 31 Dec., 1847. The average amount of work per each individual paperstainer in 1846 had been seven months per year.

enrolling in the club - shipwrights (80 club members), bootmakers (31), broguemakers (28) and hatters (12) - were, with the possible exception of the shipwrights, experiencing severe trade depression and high unemployment.¹

These figures account only for those who enrolled in the Citizens' Club on its first meeting night. Subsequent trade society adhesions to the club are not recorded, but when Thomas Francis Meagher visited the city in May 1848, at least thirteen trades marched out to greet him,² and the trade society representation in the Citizens' Club had become sufficiently strong for the Cork Constitution to confuse the club with the 'Union of Trades'.³

From early April 1848, the expectations of revolution increased. When the Citizens' Club met at the People's Hall, the lectures on Irish history and culture were abandoned in favour of discussions on military organization and tactics. Rifle clubs were formed among the city's tradesmen, labourers and clerks; young men carrying guns passed openly through the streets; and the manufacture and sale of pikes went on briskly.⁴ When Thomas Francis Meagher came to Cork he was given a tumultuous welcome. A great demonstration of the trades, bearing tricolours of green, white and orange, and the trades banners they had carried in the O'Connell demonstration of 1845, took

1. CE, 31 Dec., 1847; SR, 22, 25 May, 1848.

2. SR, 2 May, 1848.

3. CC, 3 Apr., 1848.

4. CC, 4, 11, 13, 18, 20 Apr., 1848; CSORP.OR, 1848: 6/397, 405, 424, 447, 464, 489, 505, 574.

up with enthusiasm Meagher's dramatic calls for action:¹

From the soul of the country, thus animated and exulting, will spring up apostle after apostle, martyr after martyr, and the missionaries of this glorious gospel of nationality. The nation that is determined upon winning its liberty will not miss a few men, because in the many there will be a reproductive energy, which will triumph ... over all penalties. Cherish these sentiments, persevere in them, and there will be a spirit today saying 'Yes, we will arm'. (Voices - yes, yes ...).

Though some of the more timorous spirits withdrew at this stage from the Citizens' Club, the enthusiasts sought to extend its influence by forming affiliated district clubs in the city and rural areas.²

The real catalyst in the formation of these district clubs was the arrest and conviction of John Mitchel in May 1848. The earliest district clubs were seen by the hostile Cork Constitution as 'Mitchel Rescue Clubs' and the clubbists' own avowed object was 'to release Mitchel and repeal the Union'.³ In these clubs the tradesmen and working classes of the city and of the county towns came into their own. By late July 1848, there were seventeen Confederate Clubs in Cork city, with an estimated total membership of over 4,000.⁴ The rank-and-file included clerks, shop assistants, labourers, dealers, publicans and artisans. Though there were no recorded connections between the clubs and the trade societies, there were indications that some trades like the shipwrights had their own clubs. The

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1. SR, 2 May, 1848: The trades marching in the demonstration were the shipwrights, sawyers, bootmakers, plasterers, smiths, carpenters, broguemakers, tailors, nailors, masons, hatters, bakers, paperstainers, 'and many others'.
 2. SR, 23, 30 May, 1848.
 3. SR, 9, 20, 23, 30 May, 1 June, 1848; CC, 3, 6 June, 1848.
 4. Limerick Reporter, 11 July, 1848.

mercantile assistants, too, whose representation in the movement was reputedly quite strong, had their own club.¹ But it seems that the clubs generally were of a mixed occupational composition. The basis for organization was locality rather than trade, and the shipwrights dominated the John Mitchel Club only because that club was based in the riverside locality of Glanmire, where a large number of shipwrights lived. Similarly, 'clerks and tanyard porters' formed the greater part of the membership of the Wolfe Tone Club in Blarney Lane, an area near the Butter Market and the tanning establishments of the Watercourse.² A more typical example of the mixed club was the Oliver Bond Club in Barrack Street. The committee of this club included a timber merchant, corn buyer, clerk, gardener, and a journeyman shoemaker, other identified members of the club being a publican, a sawyer, a shoemaker, and three carpenters.³

In Cork, as elsewhere, the club leadership was largely drawn from the propertied middle class. In some cases leaders were actually employers of the men forming the rank-and-file of their club: the Hegarty Brothers, extensive tanners, headed the Wolfe Tone Club in which the tanyard porters predominated.⁴ In other cases, the club leader was a relatively prosperous man, influential in the Burgess Association, and often the immediate landlord of several residents in his locality, some of whom probably joined their landlords' club. Such a leader was Bernard Sheehan, (pawnbroker); president of the

1. SR, 30 May, 1848; CC, 25 July, 3 Aug., 1848.

2. CC, 6 June, 1848.

3. CSORP.OR, 1848: 6/866.

4. CC, 6 June, 1848.

Dalcassion Club in Shandon Street, he was the immediate lessor of six separate properties in the Shandon Street area, totalling £55.5s. valuation.¹ Other leaders were simply men of advanced nationalist ideas, unconnected with the locality or day-to-day life of the members of their clubs.² Significantly only one club president can be definitely identified as a trade society member - he was Eugene McCarthy, operative shoemaker, president of the Brian Boru Club.³

These leaders, though adept at inflammatory speechmaking, were slightly uneasy about the enthusiastic revolutionary movement they had set on foot. Already in March 1848 Michael Joseph Barry, whose speeches and newspaper editorials oscillated between sedition and caution, had warned that

a Revolution is like Saturn: it sometimes devours its own children. Patriots, like Frankenstein, by breathing life into an inanimate mass, raise it up, it may be, to be a power which hunts themselves to death.⁴

Even while the Confederate Clubs in Cork city and county were arming and drilling, the leaders still insisted that the clubs were nothing more than 'quiet methodical schools' which would, in the People's Hall tradition,

make the people strong, united, self-relying, and thoroughly known to each other ... fit them for work ... /and/ enable them to fulfil the duties of citizenship.⁵

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1. CC, 27 July 1848. Griffith's Valuation, Borough of Cork (1852).
 2. CC, 27 July, 1848: Other club leaders included Denny Lane (barrister), Michael Joseph Barry (barrister), and Isaac Varian (brush manufacturer).
 3. CC, 27 July, 1848.
 4. SR, 14 Mar., 1848.
 5. SR, 27 June, 1848.

The rank-and-file, on the other hand, were motivated largely by the pressure of economic distress and by an almost blind veneration for John Mitchel. Many members of the Confederate Clubs on the working class North Side were described as being 'in that condition that they could not possibly be worse off',¹ and their motivation, like that of the Chartist followers in contemporary England, was largely a bread-and-butter one. The Confederates of the city clubs combined militant nationalist enthusiasm with the politics of hunger. In their own words, they gave their weekly subscriptions 'to procure arms at any expense', to prevent the exportation of provisions, and 'to rescue the coming harvest from the rapacious grasp of the plundering, thieving and rapacious government.'² In such sentiments the influence of Mitchel was clearly evident, and it was significant that Mitchel remained the hero of the Cork working classes for many years after the local Confederate leaders had fallen from favour or faded completely from the popular memory.³

The proclamation of Cork city and county in July 1848⁴ effectively divided the local leaders from the rank-and-file of the clubs. The leaders, who had been priming the clubs for 'a blow in defense of their country', now developing belated realism or cold feet, exhorted them to 'be tranquil and attempt no violence' and some club leaders resigned immediately.⁵ Initially this did nothing to lessen political

1. SR, 8 June, 1848.
2. CSORP.OR, 1848: 6/866, 889, 949.
3. CE, 28 Jan., 3 Feb., 1874.
4. CC, 6, 25 July, 1848; SR, 18 July, 1848.
5. CC, 27 July, 1848; CSORP.OR, 1848: 6/866.

excitement in the city. The arrest of some leaders had spurred many in the clubs to decide that 'the time had arrived'. Rumours spread that the rising had already begun in Waterford, Kilkenny and South Tipperary, and that the 'people had been victorious'. Guns and lead were stolen in many areas of the city, and threatening letters were sent to individuals who had earned the odium of club members.¹ When news of the Ballingarry affray reached Cork, popular excitement reached its zenith, and preparations for rebellion were made in many of the clubs.

But the excitement soon died away. The arrest of a number of leaders and the emigration of others threw the clubs into disarray, and a show of force by the army and the fleet completely crushed the affair.²

The Irish Manufacture Movement of 1850-52

Yet another movement to promote Irish manufacture was launched in 1850. Dublin made the first move with the establishment in May 1850 of the Essex Bridge Board of Irish Manufacture, a body composed mainly of business men, professionals and manufacturers.³ Some two months later, a similar body was set up in Cork. Communicating with, but independent of the Dublin body, it was called the Cork and Munster Traders' Association, later renamed the Cork Association for

1. CC, 25, 27 July, 1848.

2. CC, 20, 27 July, 5 Aug., 1848; CSORP.OR, 1848: 6/1025-6, 1256.

3. CE, 22, 25, 29 May, 15, 31 July, 5 Aug., 9, 15 Sept., 4 Oct., 18, 27 Dec., 1850.

the Promotion of Irish Manufactures.¹ Like the similar associations of the 1830s and '40s, this was largely an employers' body, and like the earlier movements it concentrated its efforts on reviving the textile and other dying domestic trades. The main area of attention was the gingham trade. This trade, declining steadily since the 1820s, had been revived, paradoxically, during the famine years. In 1845, Rev. William O'Sullivan, a Catholic priest in the city's North Parish, had established the Cork Ladies' Charitable Clothing Society, whose members employed poor women as dressmakers, using only Cork-made cloth. The society extended its efforts in 1847, and within a year the number of gingham, check and calico weavers fully employed had reputedly risen from 20 to 120.² But following this initial success, the movement flagged. Lack of public patronage and the want of modern machinery (the Cork looms were thirty years behind those of Manchester) defeated the revival.³ By 1850, many weavers had emigrated to Manchester, and the sixty gingham weavers remaining in Cork earned scarcely four shillings each for an average 120-hour week.⁴ From the mid-1850s the Cork Traders' Association took up the weavers' cause, helping them through the local publicity it gave them and through its contact with the Irish manufacture movement in Dublin, which in return for Cork orders for Dublin-made tabinets, opened up a number of outlets for the sale

1. CE, 22, 31 July, 7, 28 Aug., 11, 25 Sept., 1850; 15 Jan. 1851.

2. CE, 21 July, 1850; John F. Maguire, The Irish Industrial Movement (Cork, 1853), pp. 168-70.

3. SR, 3 Aug., 1848; CE, 28 Aug., 1850.

4. CE, 7 Aug., 9 Oct., 1850.

of Cork gingham.¹ By February 1851 every gingham weaver in Cork was fully employed.² Similar advances were made in promoting the city's hosiery and nailmaking trades. At least one small master hosier was saved from business collapse through the Traders' Association's efforts, while the position of the nailors³ was temporarily improved when the custom of some Cork and Dublin builders and shipwrights was secured.⁴ But the movement, dependent as it was on the goodwill of the public and the efforts of a few individuals, was on insecure foundations. The public proved reluctant to invest its money in the venture,⁵ and the market outlets for gingham, nails and hosiery proved uncertain. In Cork few large shops patronized the Traders' Association, and with the decline of the Dublin custom, on which the Cork gingham weavers mainly relied, many weavers had to enter the Workhouse.⁶

More important, the Irish manufacture movement in Cork in 1850-52, unlike those of the previous decades, lacked even the token support of the city trade societies. The narrowness of the Traders' Association's objectives, confined as they were to the revival of the textile and nail making trades, partly explains the trade societies' lack of interest. Yet the middle class Irish manufacture movements

1. CE, 5 Aug., 5, 11, 30 Sept., 1850.

2. CE, 14 Feb., 1851.

3. CE, 2 May, 1851. By 1851 there were 10 nailors in the city, earning less than seven shillings for an average 110-hour week.

4. CE, 30 Oct., 6 Nov., 30 Dec., 1850; 23 May, 4 June, 1851.

5. CE, 25 Sept., 11 Dec., 1850; 14 Feb., 4 June, 1851.

6. CE, 15 Jan., 4 June, 1851.

of the 'thirties and 'forties had equally limited aims, but had nonetheless inspired parallel organizations among the city artisans, in the form of the Cork Trades Association and the Mallow Lane Board of Trade. In the early 'fifties, there was no such co-operation: only three trades outside the textile sector supported the efforts of the Traders' Association - the coachmakers, stonecutters, and cabinet-makers. In the case of the cabinetmakers, at least, co-operation with the manufacture movement was due mainly to pressure from one of the biggest employers in the trade, Fletcher of Patrick Street. Fifty-two of his employees joined the Traders' Association in a body and committed themselves to support the local textile industry by each buying a winter coat of local manufacture.¹

The other city trades held aloof. The general non-involvement of the building trades was no surprise, for they had never given support to manufacture revival movements.² But even the coopers, shoemakers, tailors and hatters, who had been most prominent in the Mallow Lane Board of Trade of 1841, showed no interest whatever in the movement of the early 'fifties. In previous years the artisans had complained of the apathy of the middle classes: now the artisans were condemned for their disinterest by which

they subjected themselves to the imputation of being undeserving of all the anxiety and solicitude manifested for their amelioration.³

1. CE, 23, 30 Oct., 11 Dec., 1850; 19 Feb., 1851.

2. CE, 3 Jan., 1842.

3. CE, 7 May, 1851.

Repeated efforts to attract the trade societies into the movement failed. The annual membership fee of the Traders' Association was cut from ten to five shillings for those artisans desirous of becoming members, but the only recruits were the fifty-two cabinetmakers from Fletchers' establishment.¹ Similarly, the establishment of a new Mechanics' Institute failed, to its promoters' disappointment, to

enlist the active, intelligent and influential trades of Cork in the /manufacture/ movement, and to give them a personal and peculiar interest in its success, ... to draw them together as much as possible ... /and/ to afford them the means of rational recreation and the opportunity of intellectual improvement.²

While the Mechanic's Institute, equipped with a library of newspapers, maps, and scientific publications remained empty, the unemployed tradesmen left the city for London, America and Australia, or lounged against the wall in Daunt's Square, the traditional spot for gatherings of the unemployed.³ The only frequenters of the Institute were the drapers' assistants from some of the big city stores, apparently pressed into membership by their employers, who were themselves members of the Traders' Association.⁴ The highlight of the Irish manufacture movement, the Irish Industrial Exhibition held in Cork in 1852, was similarly ignored by the trade societies. The only sign of artisan participation was the erection of a triumphal arch by the weavers of Blackpool, the only group for whom the movement had any relevance.⁵

1. CE, 16 Oct., 11 Dec., 1850.

2. CE, 8 Jan., 1851.

3. CE, 1, 19 Feb., 1851.

4. CE, 12 Feb., 1851.

5. CE, 7, 21 May, 11, 14 June, 1852; A.C. Davies, 'The First Irish Industrial Exhibition, Cork 1852', in Irish Economic and Social History, Vol. ii Year, pp. 46-59.

The manufacture movement in Cork during the early '50s remained, therefore, in membership and attitude, the preserve of the employers and businessmen of the city. Of the 200 members listed in the newspaper reports of the Traders' Association meetings,¹ the most strongly represented group was that of the manufacturers and master tradesmen, followed by those in the dealing sector.

TABLE 18²

Social composition of the Cork and Munster Traders' Association,
1850-52

| | Numbers | Numbers as % of total membership |
|----------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Manufacture | 12 | 5.45 |
| Master tradesmen | 53 | 24.09 |
| Journeyman | — | — |
| MANUFACTURING SECTOR | 65 | 29.54 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Grocers, vintners | 16 | 7.27 |
| Merchants | 21 | 9.55 |
| Dealers, drapers | 13 | 5.91 |
| Agents, brokers | 10 | 4.55 |
| DEALING SECTOR | 60 | 27.28 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Professionals | 17 | 7.73 |
| Clergymen | 7 | 3.18 |
| PROFESSIONAL SECTOR | 24 | 10.91 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Gentlemen | 13 | 5.91 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Unidentified | 58 | 26.36 |
| <hr/> | | |
| TOTAL MEMBERSHIP | 220 | |

1. CE, 28 Aug., 11, 18, 25 Sept., 2, 23, 25, 30 Oct., 6, 181, 13, 27 Nov., 11, 18, 30 Dec., 1850; 15 Jan., 5, 12, 19 Feb., 12 Mar., 7, 23 May, 4, 25 June, 28 July, 1851.
2. Sources for this table are various numbers of the Cork Examiner, 1850-52, which reported the meetings of the Traders' Association.

By comparing the social composition of the Cork and Munster Traders' Association with the Irish Manufacture Association of 1832, a definite social reshuffle in the supporters of manufacture revival between 1832 and 1852 is apparent.

TABLE 19

Social Composition of the Cork and Munster Traders' Association, 1850-2
and of the Irish Manufacture Association, 1832

| | Irish Manufacture Association, 1832 | Cork and Munster Traders' Association |
|--------------|--|--|
| Manufacture | 37.81 | 29.54 |
| Dealing | 37.80 | 27.28 |
| Professional | 4.67 | 15.45 |
| Gentlemen | 1.83 | 5.91 |
| Unidentified | 17.89 | 26.36 |

Among the organized supporters of manufacture revival the greatest decline between 1832 and 1850 occurred in the dealing sector, while the participation of the professional and gentleman class had risen - a trend noticed and welcomed by contemporaries.¹ But within the manufacturing sector, whose participation remained fairly stable between the 'thirties and 'fifties, there was a shift of strength. The

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1. CE, 27 Nov., 1850. The Irish manufacture movement of the 1850s successfully canvassed the support of a section of the landed proprietor class. Local manufacture revival efforts were made in their own areas by people like Richard Bourne, a landlord in Ashbourne, Co. Meath, by Lady Anne Monck of Collinstown in the same county, by Lord Cloncurry, and by Lord Bandon (CE, 31 July, 8 Aug., 18, 25, 30 Sept., 1850; Irish Trades Advocate, 20 Sept., 4 Oct., 1851). Some of the landed men supporting the movement were 'new men' i.e. men who had acquired land under the Encumbered Estates Act. In 1850, one such individual, a Dr. Bevan, told the Essex Bridge Board of Trade in Dublin that 'he was a new man himself and he thought the best way to improve his property was to establish manufactures in the country' (CE, 5 Aug., 1850).

participation of the large manufactures had declined, while that of the smaller masters had proportionately increased.¹ The 54 unidentified individuals in the movement possibly included operative tradesmen, vintners and small shopkeepers, but contemporary reports of operative non-involvement suggest that the trades generally had become utterly disillusioned with the whole Irish manufacture idea. Not until the early 1880s was there any further trade society interest in manufacture revival, and they lost interest very rapidly.²

The real success of the manufacture movement of the '50s lay in an area of no direct relevance to the organized trade - viz. the promotion of female employment, described in 1852 as 'the grand feature of the present time'.³ Since the 1820s, but more especially since the famine years of the mid-forties, classes in needlework, crochet and lacemaking had been provided by religious orders and by benevolent ladies for the wives and children of the city's working classes. The articles made in these classes were sold either on the local or English market, and the average earnings of the individual workers in such concerns varied from two to nine shillings a week, averaging around four shillings.⁴ In 1851 the Traders' Association

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1. The master tradesmen taking part in the movement of the 1850s were as follows: 9 shoemakers, 4 cabinetmakers, 4 bakers, 3 printers, 3 builders, 3 silversmiths, 2 nailors, 2 saddlers, 2 papermakers, 2 lampmakers, 2 painters, 2 smiths, 2 gasfitters, and one each of the following: bookbinder, engineer, weaver, hatter, engraver, carver, mason, shipbuilder, coachbuilder, ropemaker, tailor, paperstainer, stonecutter.
 2. See below, pp. 267-70.
 3. Maguire, op. cit., p. 158.
 4. *ibid.*, pp. 185-247; CE, 16 Jan., 22 May, 22, 31 July, 26 Aug., 16, 18 Oct., 1850; 5 Feb., 6 Aug., 1851; 9 July, 1852; 26, 28 Jan., 1853; 26 July, 27 Dec., 1854; 15 June, 1857.

co-operated with those already working in the field of female employment, and helped to set up a school instructing over 100 girls in different branches of needlework and teaching mat-making to over forty boys.¹

These efforts were well-meant, and in many cases the weekly earnings of the girls in such concerns saved families from destitution.² But the industrial school system was frowned upon by the organized trades and its advocacy by the Irish manufacture promoters of the early '50s did nothing to endear them to the trades. One of the primary purposes of the trade societies was the limitation of the available labour force by the maintenance of strict control on the admission of apprentices,³ but the industrial school system, by training boys outside the control of the trade societies, threatened to flood the market with non-union labour. In the 1820s and 1830s the Cork trades had objected strongly to the local Foundling Hospital's practice of apprenticing Hospital boys to city tradesmen,⁴ and though the Irish Poor Law of 1838 forbade the apprenticing of pauper children to tradesmen outside the Workhouse,⁵ the industrial schools threatened to make the same inroads on the trades as the Foundling Hospital had done twenty years earlier. A letter to the Dublin publication, the

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1. CE, 15 Jan., 7, 23 May, 27 June, 1851; 12, 23 Jan., 1852.
 2. CC, 26 Jan., 1850: Of the 130 girls employed in the Cork Embroidery School, over 40 were orphans and the remainder were the children of unemployed labourers and shoemakers.
 3. See below, pp. 148-151.
 4. Royal Commission on the State of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, First Report, Appendix C, pp. 29-30.
 5. Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on Laws relating to the relief of the Destitute Poor in Ireland. PP. 1846, xi, Pt. I, Qs. 3328, 7099-7100.

Irish Trades Advocate, in 1851, summed up the average trade society member's hostility towards industrial schools by parodying the arguments of the exponents of such institutions:

Organize industrial schools; teach the rising generation (especially the pauper and the outcast) industrial occupations; make tradesmen of them; and you confer a lasting obligation on them. You return to the bosom of society, as solvent and trustworthy individuals, those who would otherwise have swelled the ranks of the vicious and the criminal; and in thus saving your country and your fellow-man, you also serve your God ...¹

This caustic letter was not quite fair to the industrial school promoters, but it did express the sentiments of the trade societies clearly. It showed that the period of co-operation between trades and middle class manufacture promoters, which had lasted for over two decades, was at an end and by 1853 the manufacture movement of the 1850s had disappeared. The years 1829-50 were an important formative period in national and local politics in Cork and throughout Ireland as breaches were made in the traditional political elite. Catholic Emancipation and the Great Reform Act opened up to the Catholic middle classes the field of parliamentary politics, while the series of reforms in the late 1830s and particularly the Municipal Reform Act of 1840, admitted them to the hitherto closed arena of local government. As reform altered the structure of the political elite, so a new dimension was given to popular politics by the introduction of the Repeal issue and later by the emergence of militant separatist nationalism. Repeal first drew the Cork artisans into politics and initiated certain features which would remain part of Cork popular

1. Irish Trades Advocate, 6 Oct., 1851.

politics for the greater part of the century. The first of these features was the Irish manufacture revival movement, the second was the the trades' political demonstration.

Artisan participation in popular politics from 1830 on, did not, however, indicate the existence of independent working class politics. Artisans seldom held positions of authority in any of the political or economic movements of the 'thirties and 'forties. The Irish manufacture movements, the People's Hall, and the Repeal Association were dominated by local businessmen and professionals, and even in the case of the militant Confederate Clubs of '48 the leadership was largely middle class and propertied. The anti-trade union attitudes of all these bodies testified to the subordinate position held by the journeymen in their ranks.

There was never any clear articulation of artisan resentment against this middle class domination, but neither does it appear that journeymen were prepared to accept their political leaders' opinions on economic issues. The number of strikes in the mid-1830s, the disagreements between the trade societies and the Cork Board of Trade in 1841, and the lack of artisan support for the Irish Manufacture movement of 1850-51, testify to the lack of artisan respect for middle class opinion. On the other hand, the gradual abandonment of combination violence in favour of the arguments of reason and self-improvement indicate that Cork artisans were, in fact, adopting the values dear to the local middle class right through the nineteenth century.

During the 'thirties and 'forties the Cork artisans had not yet learned to separate economic and political issues, and the basis of their political involvement was largely economic. Their participation in the constitutional Repeal movement of 1830-46 and in the militant Confederate Clubs of '48 both derived from economic distress, though the movement of '48 fostered a new emphasis on the ideological right of Ireland to national independence. Among Cork artisans there was little clear thinking on the precise implications of Repeal and national independence. The volatility of support for Repeal during the period was in itself an indication of a lack of political understanding. In periods of high excitement, as in 1832 and 1842, Repeal swallowed up the Irish Manufacture movements, and by appearing as the panacea for all ills, helped to deprive Chartism of any influence in Cork. At other times, as during the political inertia of 1840, it was almost impossible to rouse support for Repeal.

The sudden deflation of revolutionary enthusiasm in Cork in 1848 is perhaps the clearest indication of political immaturity among the artisan and working classes of the city. They relied on a handful of middle class leaders who, inspired solely by romantic nationalism, had not the least understanding of popular discontent or military tactics. The last-minute withdrawal of these leaders threw the ranks into utter confusion, and because few artisans had been given any experience of authority in the movement, there was no alternate core of leadership around which to centre a last-moment attempt at revolt.

The Cork artisans' lack of response to the Irish Manufacture movement of the early '50s and to the militant nationalist Irish

Democratic Association of 1849-50¹ was largely due to their dawning political realism. The promises of the Irish Manufacture revivals and political movements of the previous twenty years had come to nothing; there was difficulty in maintaining wages; employment prevailed in many trades; and the incursion of non-union men and apprentices further aggravated the situation. From 1850 onwards the Cork trades abandoned political matters, and turned their attention solely to the internal problems of their trade unions.

1. See below, pp. 210-11.

CHAPTER III

CORK TRADE UNIONISM, 1850-1880

The nature of the problems facing the organized trades in Cork changed little during the entire period 1820 to 1900. Wage issues and the flooding of the market by non-union men, apprentices and sweated out-workers headed the list of trade grievances during the nineteenth century, though in the 1880s and 1890s the issue of importation got increasing publicity. Not until the 1880s, when an effective local trades council was established,¹ was any full publicity given to the grievances of the trade societies. But even from 1850 onwards the press gave more publicity than in previous decades to the reasons behind trade disputes. This was perhaps due to the increasing 'respectability' of the trade societies, their avoidance of violent methods in pursuit of their objectives, and their increasing use of newspaper advertisements as a means to publicize their grievances and seek public sympathy for their standpoint. From such advertisements and from press reports of trade disputes and complaints, it is possible to compile a table of the principal problems and grievances of the city's organized trades. Since press coverage of trade society news was far from comprehensive, particularly in the decades before 1880, the shortcomings of such a table are self-evident. Yet it does provide an over-all picture of the problems facing the average trade society in the years between 1850 and 1900.

1. See below, pp. 257-64.

TABLE 20¹

Frequency of Cork Organized Trades' Public Complaints of Specific
Grievances, 1850-1900

| | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | Total |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Low wages | 11 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 13 | 42 |
| Employment of Non-Union Labour | 7 | 8 | 6 | 16 | 27 | 64 |
| Employment of Apprentice Labour | 6 | - | 2 | 2 | 3 | 13 |
| Long Working Hours | 4 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 24 |
| Imported Goods | 3 | 1 | 2 | 41 | 46 | 93 |
| Employment of Sweated Labour | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 20 |
| Displacement of men by machinery | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| High Unemployment | - | 1 | - | 22 | 9 | 32 |
| Employment of Female Labour | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Competition of Industrial Schools | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Other Grievances | - | - | - | 3 | 2 | 5 |

The Problem of Non-Union Labour

The most consistent source of grievance in all trades was the employment of non-union men and sweated outworkers in place of society members. The unfair labour problem affected all trades in the city, but the most seriously affected were those trades with a record of ineffective unionisation - tailors, painters, shoemakers and cabinet-makers being the most prominent. In the Cork tailoring trade the problem of sweated labour dated from around the mid-40s when, to meet

1. CE, CC, SR; Reports of local and amalgamated unions.

the growing competition of the London sweated trade, the Cork masters began to use increasing numbers of outworkers. By the mid-50s the sweated system had established itself firmly in the city, and the increasing availability of sewing machines was taken advantage of by the smaller masters, who sent more and more garments for completion to female outworkers.¹ Unionization was apparently weak among the Cork tailors in the 1850s and '60s, for the problems of non-union and sweated labour and machanization were particularly acute, leading to major strikes in the trade in 1859 and again in 1870.² Though the establishment of the local branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors in 1873 led to a dramatic advance in unionization in Cork's tailoring trade, the problems of sweated and non-union labour were not eliminated, and another major strike on these issues occurred in 1893.³ Moreover, the success of unionization in the trade was not as complete as union spokesmen implied. In 1885, when the union claimed that only twenty journeymen in Cork were outside union ranks, comparisons between the union membership and the census figures show that the true number of non-unionists was nearer 170.⁴

Like the tailors, the bakers were especially open to incursions by non-unionists. The trade was easily learned, strike breakers could be trained within a matter of weeks to replace striking society members,⁵ and the rural areas provided a vast fund of potential

1. CE, 31 Dec., 1847; 22 Aug., 10 Sept., 1855; 12 Jan., 1859.

2. See below, pp. 176-79.

3. See below, pp. 342-49.

4. Quarterly Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, Apr., 1885 p. 4; Yearly and Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1885; Census of Ireland, 1881.

5. CE, 6, 10 Mar., 1883.

blacklegs. The bakers of provincial towns were hardly unionized at all, and even as late as the 1890s both Cork and Limerick were flooded by country bakers who were ready to work in the cities for rates which, though low by union standards, were far higher than those paid in the country towns.¹

The bakers' society in the city tried to reduce the fund of available labour by enforcing a boycott on all country bakers coming into the city.² Such measures had little success, and from the 1850s on the trade was increasingly invaded by Workhouse-trained boys and those coming from the rising industrial schools. In the late 1850s a body of benevolent local gentlemen, headed by the Cork Examiner editor, John Francis Maguire, unwittingly added to the journeymen bakers' problems by setting up a body called the Benevolent Apprenticing Society. The purpose of the society was to apprentice Workhouse educated boys to 'respectable master tradesmen', though not to masters of the 'higher trades', for 'that would not be politic'.³ The Benevolent Apprenticing Society seemingly survived little over a year, during which time it apprenticed twenty-nine boys, the majority of whom were apparently sent into the baking trade. The operative bakers' society objected strongly to this invasion of the trade by what they described as 'the offscourings of hospitals and workhouses', and they secured from 36 of the city's 60 master bakers a pledge to employ only

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1. Royal Commission on Labour, C. 1892; Qs 16576, 16921-5, 28952-3, 29006.
 2. CE, 28 May, 1860.
 3. CE, 23, 28 Jan., 11 Feb., 4 Mar., 1 July, 1857; 2, 16 Apr., 1858.

'respectable' workmen.¹ Though the society's fierce opposition to the apprenticing plan helped to defeat the Benevolent Apprenticing Society, it did not remedy the problem of overstocking of the trade, and as late as 1881 the operative bakers complained of incursions by the industrial school-trained boys.²

The bakers and tailors, therefore, together with the badly organized outworking shoemakers,³ were most susceptible to the competition of non-union labour. But other apparently better organized trades faced the same problem. In 1853 a strike by boiler-makers in a local shipbuilding company was quickly crushed by the employment of non-union men as strikebreakers, and this in spite of backing for the strike by the executive of the boilermakers' amalgamated union.⁴ The plumbers too, constantly faced the competition of non-society men.⁵ The extent of the problem was illustrated when, in the 1890s, the local bye-law forbidding society men to work with non-union men was waived because it had proved impossible to enforce.⁶ On the other hand, the influence of the plumbers' union appeared to be on the increase when, in 1894, some thirty non-union men joined with the local society men in a strike for higher wages.⁷

1. CE, 26 Apr., 1858; 14 Sept., 1860.

2. CE, 20 July, 23 Sept., 1881.

3. CE, 23 Nov., 1855; 12, 14 Sept., 1860.

4. CE, 13 July, 1853.

5. Minute Book of the Cork Plumbers' Society, 6 Feb., 1875; 19 Feb., 1878; United Operative Plumbers' Association, Quarterly Returns, Dec., 1882, p. 4.

6. Minute Book ... Plumbers, undated entry between 9 July, 1891 and 30 Sept., 1892.

7. Minute Book ... Plumbers, 27 March, 28 May, 1894.

The printers, too, were especially affected by the incursions of non-union men as 'rats' or strikebreakers in the 1850s and 1860s. Many 'rats' were, in fact, society men who had left the society in times of disputes, and up to the 1880s the problem of union desertion in bad times remained a problem. The printers' society tried to stop this trend by fining heavily any deserter who wished to re-enter the society,¹ but the success of such measures was limited. The problem was most serious in the 1850s when there were five 'unfair' houses in the city out of a total of between twelve and eighteen.² In 1851 a wage strike in the Southern Reporter office was effectively met by the ready availability of blacklegs, both non-union men and society deserters.³ By 1855 the Southern Reporter was run entirely on non-union labour, and by 1860 had earned the description - 'the worst rat-house in the city'.⁴

The coopers were among the trades most affected by unfair competition. Economizing small masters - 'men of small or equivocal capital', as the coopers' society described them,⁵ used the labour of country coopers to undercut the wages of the city society men. In the late 1820s the local newspapers and those of other Munster towns periodically published Cork masters' advertisements for non-society coopers from the country areas. Two such advertisements,

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1. Minute Book ... Plumbers, 27 March, 28 May, 1894.
 2. Typographical Protection Circular, 1850, p. 60.
 3. CE, 7 Mar., 1851; Typographical Protection Circular, July, 1853, 18 Oct., 1889.
 4. CE, 24 Jan., 1855; Typographical Society, Monthly Report, Feb., 1860, p. 2; Sept., 1860, p. 1.
 5. CE, 19, Jan., 1855.

published simultaneously in the Cork and Limerick newspapers, were part of one master's effort to break the coopers' combination in the city:

Country Coopers!
Now is your time! Freedom and Riches await you!
James Noonan will give the greatest encouragement
and constant employment to fifty Country Coopers.
Such as can perform twig work will meet a preference.¹

and again,

Country Coopers!
Now is your time! The City of Cork is open to you.
Employment will be given to thirty or forty Country
Coopers in Cork and Fermoy at the rate of 3/4d. a day.
Apply to James Keppel at my cooperage in Fermoy, or at
my home in Cork, Saint Dominick Street.
- James Noonan.²

During the 1830s and '40s country coopers constantly served as black-legs³ and the practice continued in the following decades. Many employers, as late as the 1880s and '90s, ran their businesses completely on non-union labour, either imported from the rural areas or from among the non-society men in the city.⁴

Closely related to the non-union labour issue was that of apprentice labour. Most trade societies had provisions in their rules for the limitation of apprentices in the trade. In the 1820s and 1830s the ropemakers' society allowed only members' sons to enter the trade.⁵ The slaters allowed only two apprentices to each master.⁶

1. CMC, 9 Jan., 1828.

2. Limerick Evening Post, 11 Jan., 1828.

3. CC, 5 June, 1830; CE, 21, 22, 25 Sept., 1843.

4. CE, 12 Jan., 1853; 19 Jan., 1855; 1, 2, 3 July, 1863; Minute Book of the Cork Coopers' Society, 4, 5 May, 1886; 6 Sept., 1898.

5. CMC, 13 Feb., 1828.

6. CC, 1 July, 1834.

and the shoemakers permitted each journeyman to have only one apprentice, preferably his son.¹ The hatters allowed only two apprentices per master and would not tolerate the employment of women in the trade.² When a trade society grew weak, such rules became inoperative. Thus, during the 1850s the badly organized cabinetmakers were much affected by the incursions of boy labour. Of the 175 cabinetmakers in the city in 1850, only a handful were in the cabinetmakers' society, and these were greatly outnumbered by apprentices. Many of the smaller houses in the city were run exclusively on boy labour, one of the major establishments having 65 apprentices to 18 men.³

The coopers had organized an all-out campaign against the masters' indiscriminate employment of apprentice in the mid-'50s, but with limited success.⁴ From the 1870s on, the recognized number of boys was settled at a maximum of three per master, and all boys except the eldest son of a cooper had to be indentured.⁵ Though the effectiveness of this rule is not clear the Coopers' Society maintained their preference for members' sons into the 1890s.⁶

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1. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, First Report, App. C., p. 27.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. CE, 23 Oct., 1850.
 4. CE, 20, 23 April, 7 May, 1855; 29 April, 1859.
 5. Minute Book of Cork Society of Coopers, 7 Jan., 1875; 21 Apr., 1887; 10 May, 1888. A master employing ten men was allowed one apprentice; a master employing upwards of ten men was allowed two apprentices. The third apprentice was possibly the permitted eldest son.
 6. Minute Book ... Coopers, 27 Sept., 1898.

Among the printers, the apprentice problem was most serious around mid-century. In 1845, when the Cork printers joined the English-based National Typographical Association, nine of the city's twelve offices were run exclusively on boy labour.¹ By 1850 the Typographical Association calculated that the ratio of apprentices to journeymen in Cork was 32 to 58, and by 1860 it was 49 to 79.² Where possible, the printers' society in Cork gave preference to members' sons as apprentices, and by the 1880s they allowed only one apprentice to each six journeymen employed. But this rule proved impossible to enforce where employers were strong enough to resist it, and the apprentice problem continued. In 1882, Guy Brothers, one of the biggest printing houses in the city, was run largely on boy labour, and though the printers' society objected strongly, they were powerless to remedy the situation.³

The questions of boy labour and non-union labour were the source of so much dissention because they were directly related to the maintenance of wage levels. A plentiful supply of non-society labour helped to undercut wages and weakened the bargaining power of a trade society; a weak trade society had little hope of excluding non-society men or of forcing a wage rise. It was a vicious circle. A study of

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1. Half Yearly Report of the National Typographical Association, Jan.-June, 1845.
 2. Typographical Protection Circular, Feb., 1850, p. 60; Half Yearly Report of the National Typographical Association, 1861; Proceedings at a Meeting of Delegates from the typographical societies of the United Kingdom ... 1861. Census of Ireland, 1861.
 3. CE, 15, 18 Mar., 1882.

the trend of wages and incomes between 1820 and 1900 should include estimates of food prices, rent levels and unemployment rates as well as information on weekly or daily wage rents. But even by confining attention strictly to the actual wage rates in each trade, the picture of nineteenth century Cork artisans' earnings is far from clear.

Wage Rates, 1850-1900

Wage information is incomplete, especially from 1820 to 1880, for in that period one must rely on erratic and undependable newspaper reports on wage rates, and on the scrappy records of those amalgamated unions which established themselves from time to time in Ireland. Local societies' records for the period have long since vanished. In the case of several trades, moreover - particularly in the case of the tailors, shoemakers and coopers - the picture of earnings is further complicated by the prevalence of piecework as opposed to a day or weekly rate. The tailors, from the mid-1830s on,¹ worked on the log system. The system of 'paying to the log' was a piecework system, defined by the Royal Commission on Labour in the 1890s as follows:

The printed statement of times allowed for making garments in the tailoring trade, agreed upon between employers and employed /is called the log/. The number of hours allowed to a garment multiplied by an agreed price per hour fixes the remuneration to be given to the workmen.²

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1. Up to the mid-1830s the Cork tailors were paid by the day. CC, 5 Dec., 1833; Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 310.
 2. Royal Commission on Labour, PP, 1892-93 (xxxviii), /C - 7063 - v. c/, pp. 82-3.

In Cork where rates were slightly lower than in Dublin and Belfast, the log rose from 3½d (at which rate it had stood since the 1840s) to fourpence in the 1870s, and then to fourpence halfpenny. But actual daily earnings, determined by the amount of work available, averaged from two shillings to four shillings in the 1850s, around four shillings in the 1870s, and this average wage apparently continued to apply for the remainder of the century, though in a busy season men could earn over ten shillings a day.¹

Shoemakers' earnings were also calculated on a piece rate. In the mid-1850s shoes and boots of different styles fetched the maker from two shillings and twopence to six shillings per pair² and the piece rate still applied in the early 1870s.³ The average daily earnings of the shoemaker, however, remain unclear. It was calculated in the 1830s that weekly earnings ranged between twelve and sixteen shillings.⁴ By the 1850s earnings still averaged two to four shillings a day (twelve to sixteen shillings per week),⁵ and by the 1870s the daily rate was around six shillings.⁶ As in the tailors' case, earnings varied from season to season, and as it seems that the above figures apply to times of full employment, average earnings over the whole year were probably much lower.

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1. CE, 25, 27 May, 1870; 6 June, 1893; Yearly and Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1868-1900; Quarterly Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1887-1900; 1887, lxxxix, 715 /C. 5172/, Pt II, p. 410.
 2. CC, 23, 26, 30 Nov., 1855.
 3. CE, 29 June, 1870; 28 Apr., 1871.
 4. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, First Report, App., C., p. 28.
 5. CE, 23, 26, 30 Nov., 5 Dec., 1855.
 6. CE, 29 June, 1870.

In the coopers' case, piecework and timework combined to confuse the wages issue. Different processes in the trade were paid at different rates, and as mechanization spread in the later years of the century, coopers' piece rates apparently dropped. In 1871, the Coopers' Society failed to substitute time rates for piece work but it later succeeded in having overtime work in the breweries paid by time, and by the 1890s some men in the trade worked exclusively on time rate.¹ These men were considered the most comfortably-off in the trade, and when any collection was made in the society they were required to pay twice as much as the piece-rate workers.² As in the case of the tailors and shoemakers, the coopers' earnings were erratic, varying from one season to the next.³ Like the wages of the tailors and shoemakers, too, they rose little during the course of the century. Earnings in the coopering trade in the 1850s varied between an average twenty shillings a week and a maximum of fortyfive shillings.⁴ By the 1870s wages were being pulled down by the competition of the lower-paid country coopers, by city men working under price, and by the increasing use of machine-made firkins and butter boxes.⁵ By 1886 many society men earned as little as seven shillings a week, and between twenty and twenty-four shillings was considered a reasonable weekly wage for a cooper, while the recognized weekly wage in the building trade was thirty shillings.⁶

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1. CE, 11 June, 1855; Coopers' Minute Books, 13 Dec., 1871; 9, 16, 23, Sept., 1896: In the making of tierces in 1855, 'raising' and 'heading' were paid at the rates of twelve and tenpence respectively; in 1870, the raising of firkins cost fourpence and the heading threepence. When machine-made fish barrels were made in the late 1890s, the header and hooper got only 3½d each.
 2. Coopers' Minute Book, 17 Jan., 25 June, 1883; 6 July, 1898.
 3. See below, p. 315.
 4. CE, 19, 22 Jan., 1855.
 5. Coopers' Minute Book, 19 Nov., 1873; 2 Jan., 1874; 4 Oct., 1883; 3 Sept., 1886.
 6. *ibid.*, 9 Dec., 1886.

Table 14 shows the available information on wage rates in the different trades of Cork between 1820 and 1900. It suggests that with the exception of the case of the tailors, shoemakers and coopers (whose piece rates make evaluation difficult), wages in Cork rose slowly over the period 1820 to 1900.

TABLE 21¹

Daily Wage Rates in the Cork Trades, 1850 to 1900¹

| | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | c. 1900 |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------|
| <u>BUILDING TRADE</u> | | | | | | |
| Masons | 4s. | 4/2 | | 5s. | 5/6 | 5/9 |
| Bricklayers | 4s. | | | | | |
| Plasterers | 4s. | | | 5s. | 5/6 | 5/9 |
| Stonecutters | 4s. | | | | | |
| Carpenters | 4s. to 5s. | 4s. | 5s. | 5/3 | 5/6 | 5/9 |
| Plumbers | 4s. | 5/4 | 5/8 | 5/8 | 6/6 | |
| Painters | 4s. | | 5s. | 5s. | 5/6 | 5/9 |
| Paperhangers | | | 4/8 to 5/10 | | | |
| Builders' labourers | | | | 2/2 to 2/4 | 2/6 to 2/8 | |
| <u>ENGINEERING</u> | | | | | | |
| Engineers | 4s. to 10s. | 4/6 to 4/8½ | | | 5/8 | |
| Boilermakers | 5s. | | | | | |
| Millwrights | 4s. to 10s. | | | | 5/8 | |
| Gunsmiths | 4s. to 5s. | | | | | |
| Brassfounders | 4s. to 5s. | | | | | |
| Ironmoulders | 4s. to 5s. | | | 4s. to 5s. | 4/8 | 5s. |
| Ironfounders | | | | 4/2 | 4/8 | 5s. |
| Nailors | 4s. | | | | | |

1. Table compiled from information available in contemporary newspapers and trade union records.

TABLE 21 (CONTD)

| | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | c. 1900 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| <u>TIMBER AND FURNITURE</u> | | | | | | |
| Cabinetmakers | 4s. | 4s. | 4/4 | | 4/6 | 4/10 |
| Coopers | 3s. | 5s. | | | | |
| Sawyers | | | 3/4 to 5s. | | | |
| Corkcutters | | | | 3/4 | | |
| Paperstainers | 4s. | | | | | |
| Chandlers | 3s. to 4s. | | | | | |
| <u>SHIPBUILDING</u> | | | | | | |
| Shipwrights (iron) | 4s. to 10s. | | | | | |
| Shipwrights (wood) | 4s. to 6s. | | | 3/6 | 5/6 to 6s. | |
| Sail and Ropemakers | 3s. to 4s. | | | | | |
| <u>PRINTING</u> | | | | | | |
| Letterpress printers | 3s. to 5s. | 4s. to 5/4 | Up to 7s. | | 5/5 to 7/1 | |
| Lithographic printers | | | | 5/6 | 5/6 | |
| <u>LEATHER TRADE</u> | | | | | | |
| Cotton Weavers | 1s. to 2s. | | | | | |
| Woollen Weavers | 1/4 to 3s. | | | | | |
| <u>CLOTHING TRADE</u> | | | | | | |
| Tailors | 4s. | 4s. | | | | |
| Shoemakers | 3s. to 4s. | Up to 6s. | | | | |
| Bootrivetters | | | | 2/10 to 4/4 | 2/2 to 5/10 | |

TABLE 21 (CONTD)

| | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | c. 1900 |
|-------------------|------------|-------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|
| <u>LABOURERS</u> | | | | | | |
| General labourers | 1/4 to 2s. | | 2/2 to 2/6 | Up to 2/6 | | 2/6 to 2/8 |
| Firemen | | | 4/4 | | | |
| Lamplighters | | | 2/6 | | | |
| Brewerymen | 2s. | | | | | |

The most complete wage rate figures are available for the building trades. All branches in the trade experienced a rise in wages during the century. A 14% wage rise in the 1840s was followed by a period of no change until the 1880s, between when and 1900 three successive rises brought rates up by a further 44% to 5 shillings and ninepence per day.¹ Cork building trade rates were generally lower than those of Dublin. The only exception were the plumbers who, in the mid-1890s, received a wage rise which brought them, at six shillings and sixpence a day, some 8% higher than the Dublin plumbers.²

1. PP. 1888, cvii (135), /C - 5505/; 1893-4, cii (85), p. 170; 1894, lxxxi, Pt. III, /C - 7567 - II/p. 94; 1897, lxxxiv, pp. 20-21; 1898, lxxxviii, Pt. I, pp. 36-7; Annual Report of the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters and Joiners, 1866-1889; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1866-1900; Quarterly Report of the General Alliance of Operative House Painters, 1877-1882; D'Arcy, op. cit., pp. 168-72.
2. United Operative Plumbers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, Quarterly Report, 1876, 1879, 1880-86, 1891; PP. 1894, lxxi, Pt. III, p. 116, 1893-4, cii (85), p. 190.

TABLE 22¹

Comparative weekly wage rates in Cork, Dublin and Belfast:
Building Trades

| | 1820s | 1830s | 1840s | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | 1900 |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Carpenters</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| Cork | 18s.to 21s. | 18s. to 21s. | 24s. | 24s.to 30s. | 24s. | 33s. | 33s. | 33s. | 34/6 |
| Dublin | 26s. | 28s. | 26s. | 30s. | 26s. | 34s. | 34s. | 34s. | 32/2 to 36s. |
| Belfast | | | | | 30s. | 31/6 | 28s.to 31/6 | 33/9 to 34/10 | 38/3 to 40/6 |
| <u>Painters</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| Cork | | | | 24s. | | 30s. | 30s. | 33s. | 34/6 |
| Dublin | 26s. | 27s. | 28s. | 27s. | 28s. | | | | |
| Belfast | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>Plumbers</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| Cork | | | | 24s. | 32s. | 34s. | 34s. | 39s. | |
| Dublin | | 23s. | 28s. | 24s. | 32s. | | | 36s. | |
| Belfast | | | | | | | 30s.to 32/6 | 30s.to 36s. | |

In the engineering trades there was a general rise of between 25% and 42% in Cork wage rates between 1850 and 1900. Again, rates were generally lower than those of Belfast and Dublin, with the exception of the engineers who (with the plumbers) were the only Cork trade whose wage rates were higher than in Dublin. In 1893 the Cork engineers were

1. These figures are based on the sources listed in footnotes 1 and 2 p. 156.

strong enough to refuse a wage cut which would have put them on a par with Belfast rates, and they adamantly refused to change from time to piece rates.¹

In the coopers' case it is not possible to give full figures for Cork wages but it does seem that Cork rates, though higher than those in the country towns, lagged behind those of several other urban centres. As early as 1802 Cork rates had been lower than those paid in Dublin, Limerick and Waterford,² and in 1840 the Cork coopers claimed that their daily wage rate was lower than the rates in Dublin, Belfast, Waterford, Limerick and Sligo.³ Cork continued to lag behind Dublin in the 1860s,⁴ but thereafter the absence of precise information on rates prevents further comparisons.

The cabinetmakers' wage rates rose by some 61% from three shillings in 1820 to five shillings and tenpence in the late 1890s,⁵ but were generally lower than those of Dublin and Belfast, as Table 23 shows:

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1. CE, 3, 24 Feb., 10 Mar., 1893; PP. 1887, lxxxix, 715 /C. 5172/, Pt II, pp. 179-206; PP. 1894, lxxxix, Pt III, pp. 181-214; PP. 1893-4, cii, (85), pp. 232-3; Boyle, The Rise of the Irish Labour Movement, 1888-1907, pp. 47-9. When Cork engineers' wages averaged 24s. in the 1850s, Dublin wages averaged 33s: in the 1890s, Cork wages averaged 34s. to 36s. while Dublin wages averaged 32s. to 34s., and Belfast wages 28s. to 33s. Iron-founders' wages in the 1890s were 28s. in Cork, 32s. in Belfast and 34s. in Dublin.
 2. CMC, 1 Oct., 1802.
 3. SR, 19 Sept., 1840: Daily rates were - Dublin, 5s; Belfast, 3/6; Waterford, 4/4; Limerick, 3/9½; Sligo, 3/6; Cork, 3/4.
 4. PP. 1887, lxxxix, 715, /C. 5172/, Pt II, p. 341.
 5. SR, 2 Feb., 1826; CE, 9 Apr., 1864; PP. 1898, lxxxviii, Pt. I, pp. 128-9.

TABLE 23¹

Cabinet Makers' Rates, 1820-1900

| | 1820s | 1830s | 1840s | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | 1900 |
|---------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| Cork | 18s.to 20s | | | 24s. | 24s. | 26s. | | 27s. | 29s. |
| Dublin | 22s. | 22s. | | 28s. | 28s. | 30s. | 32/6 | 32/6 | 35s. |
| Belfast | | | | | 22s.to 25s. | 28s. | | | 26s.to 38/3 |

Wage rates for the shipbuilding trades (with whom the fortunes of the engineering trades were closely tied) are uncertain. Piecework was preferred in the trade, except for caulking and coppering work,² and rates for repair work were higher than for new work. The heyday of the trade in Cork was in the 1850s and 1860s when four shipyards were in operation in the vicinity of the city.³ But the rise of iron shipbuilding displaced the wooden shipbuilding of Cork, and decline set in from the mid-1860s onwards.⁴ Though wage rates apparently rose by 28% to 50% between 1850 and 1900, the chronic unemployment of the 1880s and '90s, and a wage cut in 1894, counteracted these advances.⁵

In the printing trade, where piece rates were preferred,⁶ wage rates rose by 55% between the 1830s and 1900. Different rates applied

1. Friendly Society of Operative Cabinet Makers Trade Report and Financial Statement, 1870-1875; Alliance Cabinet Makers' Association, Annual Report, 1878-1900; Yearly Account of the Income and Expenditure of the Journeymen Cabinet Makers, Carvers' and Woodturners' Friendly Society, 1844-188.
2. CE, 21 July, 1887.
3. These shipyards were the Cork Steam Packet Company; George Robinson & Company; Robert & J. Lecky; and Pikes' of Water Street.
4. M.J. Gough, History of the Physical Development of Cork City (M.A. Diss., University College, Cork 1973)
5. PP. 1890, lxviii (375); 1896, lxxx, Pt I, pp. 88-9.
6. Minute Book of the Cork Typographical Society, 3 Oct., 1896.

in the newspaper offices and the jobbing houses, but these were roughly equalized in 1891 to give an average wage of 32/6 per week, with tenpence an hour for overtime.¹ Pay was, as in the case of other trades, lower than that in Dublin or Belfast, but considerably higher than in the under-organized country towns where, as late as the 1890s, wages varied from fifteen to twentyfive shillings a week. Waterford was particularly notorious for the low payment of printers, who got an average of twenty to twenty-four shillings for a sixty hour week, while in Cork trade members earned 32/6 for a fifty-three hour week.²

TABLE 24³

Printers' Wage Rates, Dublin, Cork and Belfast, 1830-1900

| | 1830s | 1840s | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | 1900 |
|---------|-------|-------|----------------|----------------|---------------|-------|-----------------|------|
| Cork | 21s. | | 20s.to 26s. | 24s.to 32s. | Up to 42s. | 32/6 | 32/6 to 33s. | |
| Dublin | 30s. | 30s. | 30s.to 32/6 | 30s. | | | 35s. | |
| Belfast | | | | | | | 32/6 to 42s. | |

1. *ibid.*, 18 July, 1891.
2. *ibid.*, 13 Apr., 1895; Royal Commission on Labour, PP, 1893-4, xxxiv, CHECK, Qs. 17033; 27439-50.
3. Typographical Protection Circular, 1850, p. 60; Half Yearly Report of the Provincial Typographical Association, Dec., 1859, p. 4; Jan., 1861, p. 4; PP, 1887, lxxxix, 715 /C - 5172/, Pt II, p. 325.

Frequency and Effectiveness of Strikes, 1850-1880

Just as information is lacking on the subject of wage rates in nineteenth century Cork, there is also a dearth of information on the frequency of strikes and labour disputes, particularly in the years before 1870. Table 25, which lists the known number of strikes per decade, is based mainly on local press reports. Because the local press tended to ignore all labour matters which did not immediately impinge on the daily business life of the city, these figures must be seen as a rough estimate rather than a comprehensive record of strikes. The rising number of strikes recorded from the 1870s onwards is due not alone to the very real increase in labour organization and militancy, but also to the fact that the press began at that time to report in more detail on labour activities. This is especially true of the years from 1890s on, when unionization spread among sectors of the labour force hitherto unorganized, and when, following the Parnellite split, the newspapers on both sides of that split tried to court the labour vote by paying more attention to trade and labour matters.

TABLE 25

Total Number of Strikes per Decade in Cork, 1830-1900

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 1830s | - | 10 |
| 1840s | - | 11 |
| 1850s | - | 12 |
| 1860s | - | 7 |
| 1870s | - | 15 |
| 1880s | - | 22 |
| 1890s | - | 54 |
| TOTAL | - | 131 |

Table 26 shows the number of strikes in each trade or occupational group over the same period, 1830 to 1900.

TABLE 26¹

Number of Strikes in Each Trade in Cork, 1830-1900

| | 1830s | 1840s | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| BUILDING SECTOR | | | | | | | | |
| Masons | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 5 |
| Stonecutters | | | | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Carpenters | 1 | 3 | | | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 |
| Plumbers | | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| Painters | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Slaters | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Builders' | | | | | | | | |
| Labourers | | | | | | | 6 | 6 |
| ENGINEERING SECTOR | | | | | | | | |
| Engineers | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Boilermakers | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Foundry | | | | | | | | |
| Workers | | | | | 2 | | 2 | 4 |
| TIMBER AND FURNITURE | | | | | | | | |
| Coopers | 1 | 2 | 2 | | | | 4 | 9 |
| Sawyers | | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| Corkcutters | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| French-polishers | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| SHIPBUILDING | | | | | | | | |
| Shipwrights | | 1 | 2 | | | 2 | 4 | 9 |
| PRINTING | | | | | | | | |
| Printers | | | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 4 |

1. Sources:-Contemporary newspaper reports, police reports and parliamentary papers.

Such strikes seldom succeeded in achieving their objectives. Of the twenty-one strikes during the 1830s and 1840s, only one had any measure of success. This was the building trades strike of 1830s, which resulted in a compromise settlement on the disputed question of wages. The artisans who had been working for between 16/6d and 18s. demanded one guinea a week. They were granted the guinea rate for summer work, but got only 18s. for the winter season - a compromise which failed to satisfy many members of the trade and which led to further disputes.¹

All other strikes in the 1830s and '40s failed utterly, and always for the same reason: blacklegs could easily be drafted in to replace the strikers. A bakers' strike in 1834 was quickly turned into a lockout by the ready availability of strikebreakers, and the acrimony of the dispute lasted for months as the bakers' society launched a wave of attacks on the blacklegs.² In the same year, a general strike by the city's journeymen tanners was crushed with ease, when some five hundred country labourers were found to fill the strikers' places,³ and a turnout by the journeymen shoemakers, crushed by the same means, resulted in the strikers setting off on tramp through the county in search of work. The town of Fermoy was reputedly flooded by Cork shoemakers vainly looking for employment, and by their very presence posing a threat to the bargaining strength of the local shoemakers.⁴

1. CC, 18 Feb., 6, 27 Apr., 25 May, 1, 5 June, 1830.

2. CC, 8 July, 1834.

3. CC, 6, 11, 20 Nov., 1834.

4. CC, 10 Dec., 1833; 15 Feb., 1834.

To most trade societies contemplating a strike the inevitability of a blackleg inrush must have been clear, yet the trade societies continued to use the strike as one of their principal weapons to procure a wage rise, or, more frequently, to offset a wage cut. Irrespective of the odds against success, most trade societies opted to strike rather than to accept a wage cut without a struggle. The cabinet makers did, it is true, accept a wage reduction during the depression of 1822, but they also tried to secure a return to the old rates when times improved.¹ In 1830 the masons and carpenters of the city, though idle, refused to accept the builders' rate of three shillings a day, and the respective trade societies determined to impose a fine of £5 on any member accepting the builders' rate. The determination of the trade societies was reflected in one individual carpenter's retort to a gentleman who had criticized the stand of the striking trades. He would, he declared, work for no less than three shillings and tenpence a day,

and if there was a man-of-war at Cove, /he'd/ rather go aboard her than work for three shillings a day.²

Though this strike ended in compromise, the strength and determination of the strikers was evident in the fact that they held out for over two months. Moreover, a compromise settlement was in itself a far more satisfactory outcome from the strikers' point of view, than the complete defeats so common in labour disputes of the period.³ Dogged resistance to wage cuts continued into the '40s. In 1843, when

1. SR, 2 Feb., 1826.
2. CC, 18 Feb., 1830.
3. CC, 18 Feb., 20 Apr., 1830; Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel, 26 Feb., 1830.

unemployment was at a serious level, the operative masons flatly refused to reduce their rates.¹ The stonecutters made a similar stand in 1845,² and the curriers in Hegarty's tannery chose to be dismissed rather than accept a wage cut which their employer urged because of 'the pressure of the times'.³

The case of the coopers provides the best evidence that trade decline and dogged combination could co-exist. During the trade slumps of the 1830s and '40s, when as many as 60% of the trade were idle, the coopers' society kept up its demands for certain levels of pay, and enforced (as it continued to do late into the century) the system of 'idle weeks' during which, to prevent a glut of firkins, no man was allowed to work on firkin making, but was paid a certain rate by the master cooper while he remained idle.⁴ In 1843, the butter merchants complained of the 'determined spirit of combination among the coopering trade' and the master coopers pleaded that they 'had not the power of coercing the journeymen' who had launched a campaign against the importation of country-made firkins to the city.⁵ This particular dispute is of particular interest, as the issues at stake were given detailed treatment in the local press. This unusually close documentation of the strike issues was due mainly to the fact that the strike affected not just the journeymen and their immediate masters, but the extensive butter trade of the city.

1. CE, 5 May, 26 June, 1843.

2. CE, 10 Oct., 1845.

3. CE, 23 Jan., 1843.

4. CMC, 11 June, 1828; CE, 26 Aug., 1875; 11 Oct., 1978; CSORP.OR, 1851: 6/611; Coopers' Minute Book, 3 Apr., 10 May, 1873; 30 May, 1 June, 1876.

5. CE, 5 July, 1 Sept., 1843.

Depression and low prices had, around 1840, prompted the master coopers to bring in from the rural areas casks of inferior materials. The coopers' society, together with a certain section of the master coopers, resolved that none of the society men should cooper country-made casks. To distinguish the genuine city-made casks from the imported items, local casks were to be branded with a shamrock mark, and were to be examined in the coopers' own firkin crane or inspection yard, specially opened for the purpose.¹ A second section of the masters, twenty-eight in number, opposed this development, and approached the Committee of Merchants which directed the affairs of the Cork Butter Market, with a view to removing the firkin crane.² The Committee of Merchants, cornered by the two opposing factions of the coopering trade, was unsure what course to follow.³ The combination of the journeymen coopers and their allies among the masters proved sufficiently strong to force the Committee of Merchants to exclude all country casks. But within a few weeks the Committee had sufficiently reasserted itself to open its own firkin crane in opposition to that of the coopers, and had readmitted country-made firkins. When the five-hundred society coopers went on strike in protest in 1843, the Committee resolved to break the society by mass employment of country blacklegs and spent £200 on combatting the strike.⁴ The butter merchants of the city, whose representatives

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1. CC, 10 Sept., 1840; CSORP.OR, 1840; 6/12145, 16319, 16657.
 2. Records of the Cork Butter Market A (v) 24: Coopers' Petition re. Standard of Casks, 1840.
 3. Records of Cork Butter Market G (130), Committee of Merchants Minute Book, 1837-1857, 29 June, 2 July, 1840.
 4. Records of the Cork Butter Market, G (130), Committee of Merchants Minute Book, 1837-1857, 15 July, 9 Dec., 1843.

sat on the Committee of Merchants, established special cooperages in the county towns, where strikebreakers could work without danger of attack from the city men, and they planned the importation of extra firkins not only from other Irish centres, but from Liverpool and Hamburg.¹

While the dispute lasted, much bitterness prevailed. The butter merchants and butter buyers accused the coopers' society of trying to ruin the city's butter trade, and denounced the pliability of the master coopers who had sided with the journeymen;

The reason the merchants were so powerless in this case was that they had not those master coopers who, forty years ago, used to make it their practice to put down all these combinations.²

But the master coopers had their own grievances against the butter trade. Unlike the butter buyers,³ butter merchants and hide and skin buyers, they had no representation on the Committee of Merchants. When, in late 1840, the masters' firkin crane was superseded by that of the Committee, the masters sought to retrieve their declining influence in the butter trade by securing a place on the Committee of Merchants.⁴ Not until 1843 was this place given them, and then

1. CE, 28, 30 June, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25 Sept., 9, 30 Oct., 1843; Committee of Merchants Minute Book, 24, 31 Aug., 17 Sept., 1840.

2. CE, 5 July, 1843.

3. The butter buyers were those in the trade who bought the butter from the farmers; the butter merchants were those who exported the packet butter.

4. Committee of Merchants Minute Book, 31 Aug., 17 Sept., 1840; SR, 15 Sept., 1840; CE, 24 Mar., 1856. The master coopers' control over the market for casks and firkins had been declining since 1832. In that year the masters' charter had, with the charters of all the other city guilds, been swept away by the Reform Act, and with it their power to seize and fine all faulty casks.

seemingly through pressure brought to bear on the Committee of Merchants by the striking journeymen coopers. The Committee opened its ranks to two master coopers, elected by those city masters who, over the previous years, had at least 500 firkins branded annually in their names at the firkin crane.¹ But the master coopers were not strong enough to hold their place on the Committee, and by 1845 were no longer represented.²

In the strike of 1843, therefore, the journeymen and master coopers had common grievances against the butter interest, and the journeymens' hostility was consequently directed less against the masters than the butter buyers. These individuals were regarded as grasping middlemen standing between the farmer and the merchant, and were in the coopers' view,

petty tyrants who look upon us as slaves that must minister to their wants - even at our own destruction. /sic/ We are but fit to be made bands of for their carriage wheels ... They would laugh at our misery and our sufferings; they, unmoved, would behold our naked and starving families seeking admittance within the walls of the Workhouse. Their consolation then would be - 'You have brought this upon yourselves, for your combinations have left you without a trade.'³

The outcome of the strike is not clear. Attempts by the journeymen to leave matters to the mayor's arbitration failed,⁴ but the fact that they were willing to submit to arbitration suggests that they found themselves getting the worst of the contest with the butter trade. The strike dragged on for at least four months. Thereafter,

1. Committee of Merchants Minute Book, 6, 11 Aug., 1843; CE, 15 Sept., 9 Oct., 1843.

2. ibid., 5 Apr., 1845.

3. CE, 18 Sept., 1843.

4. CE, 6 Oct., 1843.

the press ceased to report its progress but the reports of isolated assaults on blacklegs in 1844 suggest that no agreement had yet been reached by that date.¹ By 1846, however, the coopers were back working for the butter interest, for in that year the society of coopers claimed that some 75% of its members were partially employed on firkin making, though at such a low rate of pay that the average earnings were only seven shillings a week.² By 1847 over 60% of the society men were destitute, and some master coopers, affected by the depression of the trade, tried to reduce wages even further.³

The strike of 1843 was the last major display of militancy among the Cork coopers for the remainder of the century. From 1850 onwards, though the issues of wages, unfair labour and imported firkins continued to disturb the trade, the journeymens' reactions to such grievances changed. Strikes over the following fifty years were usually confined to the journeymen of a single master, and not until 1894 was there a general strike in the trade.⁴

The violence of the 1830s and '40s had by the early '50s been replaced by self-conscious respectability, for though isolated assaults on strike-breakers occurred among the coopers, tailors, shipwrights and others, these were generally the acts of individuals, and were hastily repudiated by the trade society concerned.⁵ When

1. CE, 17, 24 Apr., 1844.

2. CE, 4 Feb., 1846.

3. CE, 3 Feb., 1847; CC, 28 Jan., 1847; CSORP, 1847: Z/1474.

4. CE, 2, 11, 12 May, 1894.

5. CE, 7 May, 22 Aug., 16 Oct., 1855; 25 May, 7 Nov., 1870.

the coopers' society was accused in 1853 of arranging the burning of an obnoxious master's premises, they published their denial in an indignant letter to the press.¹ When similar allegations against the society were made in 1855, the local liberal press, no friend to combination, gave sufficient testimony that the coopers had abandoned violence when it praised their

spirit of decent independence and feeling of self-respect which ought to distinguish, and ever does distinguish, the true working men.²

So great was this transformation from militancy to 'reasonableness' among all the city's trades, that the police authorities assured the Castle in 1851 that though trade societies were still active in the city, there had been no 'combination' - by which was meant violent union activity - in the city for a number of years.³

But the very respectability of the trade societies and their avoidance of violence meant that their grievances got little publicity. Brief and badly documented strikes during the 1850s and 1860s included two among the shipwrights in 1852 and 1855 over the issues of wages and non-union labour; one by the shipyard boilermakers in 1853 over the same issues; a cabinetmakers' strike in 1860, and a strike by the tobacco spinners in 1868.⁴ The printers were involved in one trade dispute with the Southern Reporter office, where the sub-editor tried to cut over-time pay.⁵ None of these strikes succeeded. Only the

1. CE, 12 Jan., 1853.

2. CE, 22 Jan., 1855.

3. CSORP.OR, 1851; 6/611.

4. CE, 15 Spet., 1852; 13 July, 1853; 15 Oct., 1860; 16 Apr., 1868.

5. CE, 7, 12, 14 Mar., 1851; 24 Jan., 1855; 8 Apr., 1862.

printers' dispute got any publicity, and in all the other strikes the questions at issue were clouded by lack of press coverage. A strike reached the headlines only if it affected several establishments in a trade and clogged the smooth running of business in the city. In this category were the bootmakers' strikes of 1855 and 1860, the building trade strikes of 1854, 1860 and 1872, the tailors' strikes of 1855, 1859, and 1870, and the wave of strikes among the unskilled in the early 1870s. The record of strike failure had not changed since the 1830s and '40s. None of these strikes, with the exception of that in the building trade in 1860, had any measure of success. But because these strikes each lasted for a relatively long time, because they affected large numbers of journeymen and employers in the city, and because - in the case of the tailors and shoemakers, at least - they were futile attempts to stem the tide of mechanization and modernization, they were important landmarks in local labour history.

Strikes in the building trades were generally directed towards the remedying of wage grievances. In 1854 the carpenters' and Masons' societies issued notices in the press demanding, due to the high price of provisions and tools, that wages be raised from four shillings (which rate had stood since the 1840s) to four shillings and sixpence a day.¹ The strike failed. The journeymen remained out for twenty-four days, but came back to work when the master builders threatened to import country labour under police protection,² and work was resumed on the old terms. By 1860, when the master builders had

1. CE, 15 Feb., 20, 22 Mar., 1854.

2. CE, 29 Mar., 1854.

formed their own protective association, the Associated Builders of the City of Cork, the masons had sufficiently built up their funds to strike again for the rise to four-and-sixpence. Following a strike of two months duration the masons were granted four-and-twopence.¹ The carpenters took no part in this strike, and by 1863 were barely able to maintain their standing wage of four shillings a day.² But some time between 1860 and 1871 all the building trades had gained the sought-for rate of four-and-sixpence. By 1871 the painters and carpenters were calling for a further rise to five shillings,³ and following another three weeks' strike, the five shilling rate was granted by the master builders in return for some concessions on overtime.⁴ No further disputes occurred in the building trade until the 1890s, and in the intervening period, wages in the trade rose to five-and-sixpence.⁵

Most wage rises in the building trade over the period 1830 to 1870 were secured only through strike action, and through the healthy state of union funds, which enabled the trades concerned to engage in protracted strikes. The recurrence of general strikes among the building trades, therefore, though reflecting badly on employer/men relations in the trade, was an indication of union strength and resilience.

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1. CE, 4, 13 Apr., 6 June, 1860.
 2. CE, 21, 25, 28 Feb., 1863.
 3. CE, 18 Feb., 27 Apr., 1871.
 4. CE, 15, 27, 29 May, 1872.
 5. See below, p. 350.

On the other hand, the absence of concerted strike action among the shoemakers in the 1850s and '60s was a sign of their failure to organize themselves into an effective union. During the 1820s and early '30s the journeymen shoemakers had had their own society which met each week to regulate the trade, excluded non-members from the city shops, and organized strikes against non-compliant journeymen and masters.¹ By the mid-1850s, however, this organization was totally defunct, and wage regulation was solely in the hands of the masters.² In 1855, the journeymen shoemakers succeeded in re-organizing their society, and deciding 'by a steady and resolute determination to maintain their position as mechanics', called for a wage rise.³ They apparently got this rise, and their newly organized society maintained its bargaining power for some years, for in 1860 the masters complained of the

degraded position in which trade combination has ... placed them ... /whereby/ the operative dictates whatever terms he pleases, and demands compliance under the penalty of fines.⁴

To meet this challenge from the journeymens' society, the masters had in 1858 formed the Master Boot Makers' Protective Association. When, in 1860, one of their number was fined by the operatives' society for some unspecified offense, the Masters' Association locked out all the society men and brought in numbers of non-union shoemakers

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1. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, First Report, App. C., pp. 28-28; CC, 7 Dec., 1833.
 2. CC, 6 Feb., 1849.
 3. CC, 6 Feb., 1849; CE, 23, 26, 30 Nov., 5 Dec., 1855.
 4. CE, 2 July, 1860.

to replace them.¹ The outcome of the lockout was unclear, but it effectively squashed the militancy of the journeymen, for never again during the course of the century was there a general strike in the trade. The next wage rise, given voluntarily in 1870 by a minority of master, drew immoderate expressions of gratitude from the operatives' society.²

While the operative shoemakers were reorganizing their society in the mid-50s, similar moves were made by the tailors. In 1855 a number of journeymen tailors struck for a wage rise to meet the high price of provisions, and demanded that the use of sweated labour in the trade be discontinued.³ Not until 1859, however, did a general strike occur in the tailoring trade. It was brought about by an attempted wage cut and by the master tailors' opposition to the resolution, passed shortly beforehand by several of the city trade societies, against working on Church holy days.⁴ Almost two-hundred journeymen tailors struck - the entire union strength in the city - but in spite of its wide extent and initial militancy, the strike lasted only four days, the men returning on the employers' terms.⁵ This prompt and humble submission was partly due to the lack of public

1. CE, 29 June, 29, 31 Aug., 14 Sept., 1860.

2. CE, 29 June, 1870.

3. CE, 11 May, 22 Aug., 10 Sept., 1855.

4. CE, 14, 21 May, 2 June, 1858; 10 Jan., 1859.

5. The wage cut was apparently abandoned, but the holiday issue was not settled to the journeymens' satisfaction:
'Holidays, as a general rule, are to be kept; but in cases of necessity, one or more men may finish or make alterations, provided the work is in a hurry'. CE, 12 Jan., 1859.

support, the influence of the Cork Examiner, and the cautiousness of the recently formed local trades council, the Cork Trades Association.¹ This body, far from supporting the tailors' strike, urged them to return to work.² But the main reason for the collapse of the strike was the ready availability of blackleg labour, and the employers' threat to send the work on hands for completion to London outworkers and to bring in machinery which would displace large numbers of local tailors.³ Following the failure of the strike of 1859, conditions in the tailoring trade grew progressively worse. Filthy conditions prevailed in many city workshops and apprentice and non-union labour undercut wage rates. By the 1860s many men in the trade earned less than one-and-tenpence for a twelve hour day, and as local union funds dwindled many came to believe that amalgamation with a bigger union was the only possible remedy for the situation.⁴

The Strikes of 1870 and the Growth of Labour Solidarity

The great Cork tailors' strike of 1870 sprang directly from the failure of the 1859 strike, for it revolved round the three issues of wages, non-union and sweated labour, and the mechanization of the trade.⁵ The 1870 strike, which lasted ten weeks, began in one city establishment and spread quickly to the other houses, eventually involving 240 union members. Earlier in the year the city masters,

1. See below, p. 249.

2. CE, 12, 14, 19 Jan., 1859.

3. CE, 10, 12 Jan., 4 Feb., 1859.

4. CH, 16 Feb., 1859; CE, 23 Oct., 1869.

5. CE, 2 Aug., 1870.

under pressure of business, had acceded to the operatives' demand that the 3½d log, in force since the 1840s, should be raised to fourpence. But when business slackened the rise was withdrawn and a new log substituted, prepared by twelve of the Cork masters and approved by some of the masters of Dublin and London.¹ Though this purported to be a fourpenny log, it was rejected by the operatives' society because, unlike their own log, it allowed for the further mechanization of the trade. The tailors' society, seeing in the sewing machine an instrument to cut labour costs and replace society men by sweated female labour, had imposed fines on employers who used sewing machines. The employers, for their part, claimed that machinery would actually increase the amount of work available by enabling the manufacture of cheap ready-mades during the slack season when other work was not in demand. To them, the objections of the operatives were ridiculous, and in the words of one master tailor, it seemed that

the working tailors of Cork were so obtuse that the benefits of machinery in their trade would have to be beaten into their heads.²

The local society's sustained opposition to machinery continued for a number of weeks, preventing all attempts at settlement of the strike. But this opposition was finally overcome by the determined stand of the masters and by the attitude of the London and Dublin operative tailors who, though supporting the Cork men on other issues, had little sympathy for their stand against machinery.³ The lack of

1. CE, 27, 30 May, 11 June, 1870.

2. CE, 6 July, 1870.

3. CE, 15 June, 7 July, 1879.

support from the journeymen tailors of other towns discouraged the strikers, but final settlement was forced upon them by other factors - the exhaustion of their funds, the importation of German blacklegs, and the threat of the masters, (so effective in 1859) to send all work on hands for completion to the London outworking trade.

Settlement was facilitated by the mediation of the London Operative Tailors' Society, whose secretary, George Druitt, came over to Cork to act on the operatives' behalf.¹ But the settlement proved a victory for the masters, for though the fourpenny log was retained, it was the log approved by the masters, and it allowed for the introduction of further machinery into the trade.² The leaders of the strike were severely dealt with, the two most prominent among them being sentenced respectively to eighteen months and two years' hard labour.³ For the journeymen tailors, the strike was obviously a failure. Machinery continued to displace society men, allowing less skilled men, female workers and blackleg labour to enter the trade - developments which led to a further major strike among the tailors in 1893.⁴ Moreover, the tailors' society was itself disrupted when, during the last phase of the 1870 strike, some men agreed to return to work on the employers' terms while a minority of intransigents held out for union demands.⁵

1. Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 144-5, 153-4.

2. CE, 23, 24, 25, 27, 30 June, 5, 6, 7, 14, 16 July, 2, 4 Aug., 1870.

3. CE, 1, 6 Aug., 1870; Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 151-6.

4. See below, pp. 342-49; CE, 12 Nov., 1873.

5. CE, 7, 14, 16 July, 2 Aug., 1870.

The tailors' strike of 1870, unlike that of 1859, must not be judged merely on its ultimate failure, but must be seen in the context of the time, against the background of social unrest which erupted suddenly in Cork in 1870. This eruption took the form of a wave of strikes among the unskilled labour force of the city, demanding a general wage rise to fifteen shillings a week and a reduction in hours to a twelve-hour day.¹ The excitement caused by the tailors' strike helped to launch this wave of general labour unrest in the city. As the tailors' dispute entered its third week and the strikers began to feel the pinch, the tension in the city was heightened by the introduction of German blacklegs into the trade. Popular resentment took the form of a rash of attacks on the persons and property of employers, on the blacklegs, and on sewing machine agents. Widespread rioting occurred. From the crowded slum areas where tradesmen and labourers' families lived in squalid tenements, the rioters sallied forth against the police, retreating back where the police feared to follow, in the maze of lanes and alleys which honeycombed the centre of the city.² Rioting was not an unfamiliar feature of Cork life. Riots of an equally serious nature had taken place at the height of Fenian excitement in the mid-'60s.³ But in 1870 popular excitement was heightened by what the local press described

1. CE, 27, 28, 29 Apr., 1870.

2. CE, 23, 24, 25, 27 June, 1870; CSORP, 1870: 12819, 12956, 13023, 16317.

3. CE, 12, 24 Mar., 1863; 18 Aug., 1864.

as 'the most extraordinary movement that has yet occurred in our experience' - a wave of strikes among the unskilled workers of the city and county.¹

This wave of strikes began on 27 June, 1870 in the Cork Steam Ship Company's yards, and spread within a matter of hours to the timber yards, salt and lime works, the provision stores, the gasworks, and the various factories of the city. As a band of strikers led by the foundry labourers and flax-mill workers paraded from one concern to the next, calling for a wage rise or a strike, even the factories employing mainly boy and female labour were drawn into the movement. The feather dressers, paper factory women, cotton mill and flax mill women, and the boys of the tobacco factory, all turned out for a uniform rise of two shillings weekly over the current rates which varied from half-a-crown to six shillings.² Within two days the grocers' porters, sailors, coal heavers, and even the newspaper boys had joined the strike. The grocers' porters formed a union of their own which lasted into the 1890s - one of the first unions of unskilled men in the city.³

The practical results of this spontaneous wave of labour militancy varied widely. Some employers did concede the strikers' demands: the foundry labourers' wages were raised by 20% to eighteen shillings a week, while a large number of wholesale grocers and the Gas Consumers' Company granted the fifteen shilling weekly rate. Other

1. CC, 28 June, 1870.

2. CE, 28 June, 1870.

3. CE, 28, 29 June, 1870; 18 Mar., 1890.

advances were given by a number of the city coal merchants. By early July the unskilled of the city were back at work, but the tailors' strike continued and the wave of unrest spread for a time to the country towns. In Mallow, twenty-two miles north of Cork, strikes of short duration occurred in tanyards and factories, reputedly through the instigation of two local army pensioners who, returning from Cork brought home news of the unrest in the city. In Youghal, thirty miles east of the city, the brickyard labourers and operative shoemakers successfully struck for a wage rise, while further strikes were reported from the county towns of Charleville, Kanturk, Fermoy, Queenstown and Kinsale.¹

In 1871 unrest among the unskilled of the city was still in evidence. The lamplighters struck for seventeen shillings a week, and later on the labourers of several city establishments made a concerted demand for a rise to eighteen shillings. Only the firemen employed by the Steam Packet Company won their demands, for most employers proved tougher than they had done in 1870. At a meeting of city employers in the Cork Commercial Buildings, all except the brewers and distillers agreed that though each employer should concede or refuse the wage rise as he thought fit, none would employ any labourer who had gone on strike while in another's employment.² Employer determination had increased further by late 1872 when another series of wage strikes broke out among the unskilled. It was agreed to black-list all men who had struck work, and to pay no more than

1. CE, 6, 7 July, 1870; CSORP, 1870: 14005, 15232.

2. CE, 1 Jan., 26 Oct., 9 Nov., 1871.

fifteen shillings a week to unskilled labourers.¹ By late 1872 the phase of unskilled labour militancy had passed. The employers who in 1870 had been pressurised or frightened by the wave of popular excitement into granting the strikers' demands, had sufficiently recovered their poise to stage a unified opposition to further wage demands. Moreover, the excitement and popular euphoria which had accompanied the strikes of 1870 was lacking in those of the following years - a fact attributed by local magistrates to the severe prison sentences passed on those arrested in the rioting of 1870 and on the leaders of the tailors' strike.²

Nonetheless, the consciousness of unskilled labour continued to awaken slowly during the early 1870s. It was in these years that the first attempt was made to unionize the agricultural labourers of the county, with the establishment of the Kanturk branch of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1873.³ This body was later subsumed into the Land League and the Home Rule movement, but it did have some success in the labour sphere. It succeeded in raising agricultural labourers' wages in some areas,⁴ and it gave the labouring population of north Kerry and north-east Cork, and particularly of the Kanturk area, the experience of labour and political organization. In 1881 the labourers and tradesmen of Kanturk were the first in County Cork to organize themselves in a local Trades'

1. CE, 10, 29 Aug., 2 Sept., 28 Oct., 1872.

2. CSORP, 1870: 16317.

3. Pamela L.R. Horn, 'The National Agricultural Labourers' Union in Ireland, 1873-9', in IHS, Vol. xvii, No. 67, Mar., 1971, pp. 432-3.

4. *ibid.*, P. 350, 351.

Association, and it was significant that when the trades of Cork city eventually formed an effective and permanent trades council, it was modelled on that of Kanturk.¹

But in 1870 effective labour organization, particularly among the unskilled, was yet in the future. The wave of unrest in the city was not, therefore, attributed to labour consciousness or economic distress, but was blamed by the local police on the prevalent political disaffection of the period and on the natural unruliness of the Cork populace. In Cork, it was asserted:

there can be collected in an incredible short time, a formidable mob ripe and ready for mischief ... Perhaps in no other part of the country is there so formidable and so disaffected a mob as that of Cork, and in which the Fenian element so largely predominates ...

Immediately the tailors' strike commenced and tension rose in the city, the authorities smelt a political rat, for

as the Fenian element largely permeates all trades in the city, we /feared/ it would enter at once into the contest ...²

Political excitement did certainly add to the popular disquiet.

The Franco-Prussian War was then at its height, creating very real excitement at popular level in the city.³ The French side was generally favoured, a fund was opened for the relief of the French war casualties, and spontaneous pro-France demonstrations took place sporadically among the populace.⁴ When a demonstration was organized in July 1870, to welcome a French deputation to the city, a huge crowd

1. See below, p. 257.

2. CSORP, 1870: 16/317.

3. CE, 22 July, 1870.

4. Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 161-7.

attended, seeing the event less an expression of friendship towards France than 'a demonstration of enmity towards England'. At that demonstration the speeches of the platform orators were permeated by anti-English and pro-Fenian sentiments, and the rejoinders of the crowd were even more openly seditious - 'The time is coming round' - 'The old chains are rotten and rusty' - 'The link will soon snap asunder' - and, the usual Fenian cry - 'God Save Ireland'.¹

Active Fenian fomentation of labour unrest is less certain. It is true that the tailors were quite numerous in the Fenian ranks,² as were the foundry labourers, so prominent in the strikes of the unskilled. But these strikes were directed against specific economic grievances and it is arguable that the Fenian sympathies of these groups were a consequence rather than a cause of their economic condition and labour militancy. On the other hand, the Fenian element would have been happy to harness economic disaffection to the cause of separatist nationalism. At a trades' meeting in support of the striking tailors the most militant calls for trades solidarity were made by men who were known Fenians - Charles Lynch and Cornelius P. O'Sullivan, both coopers.³ Whatever the role of active Fenians in the upheavals of 1870, there was clear evidence of a growing sense of labour solidarity, particularly among the skilled trades. The trades' public meeting in support of the tailors was the first of its

1. CE, 25 July, 1870; CSORP, 1870: 14785.

2. See below, pp. 218-19; 234-36.

3. CE, 9 June, 1870.

kind in the city, as both the trades themselves and outside observers were aware. To the trades this solidarity was 'a new and happy sign'. The coopers' society placed its entire funds at the tailors' disposal, and agreed to buy their clothes only from tailoring establishments which conceded the tailors' demands. The local branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers made similar commitments, and other trades promised financial support.¹ To other observers this trade solidarity was a new and frightening development, capable of manipulation by those anxious to upset the social and political status quo.²

The growing labour militancy was, however, tempered by nostalgia for the more intimate relationship (real or imagined) which had existed between master and man in former days. The trades' meetings in support of the tailors showed their confused ideas: some men spoke of the 'rights of labour', 'the dignity of labour', and the 'battle of labour against capital'; others spoke of the 'paternal care' which employers should show towards their men.³ But the language of labour consciousness spread. Soon, men in court on combination charges were defended by their lawyers in the language of class: in 1871 counsel for a journeyman shoemaker suing his employer for overdue wages described the case as nominally concerning wages, but explained that its real function was 'to assert the right of his client and the class to which he belonged'.⁴ Shortly before

1. CE, 6, 27 June, 1870; Coopers' Minute Book, 30 Oct., 1870.

2. CE, 9, 20 June, 1870.

3. CE, 6, 27 June, 1870.

4. CE, 28 Apr., 1871.

this, the awakening of labour solidarity had been described by counsel for the defence in the case of striking foundry labourers. He told the court that

a mighty revolution had recently taken place in the status of the working man - a revolution recognized by wise statesmen as a vast social advancement. The working man was now recognized as a sentient, intellectual being, not as a mere machine - a something next the brute. But it was attempted by the present proceedings /against the striking foundry men/ to deny him free sense or free will. (Loud applause in the gallery).¹

The Progress of Unionization among the Cork Trades, 1830-80

The greatest problem facing the organized trades of nineteenth century Cork was the incursion of non-union men into the labour market of the city. Unionization was the remedy for this problem, but within the unionization process there were two alternatives: the city trades could either attempt to rigidly exclude from the city labour market all non-local tradesmen, or they could admit and organize the outsiders. The first solution was applied by the locally-based trade societies. The coopers tried (though unsuccessfully) to prevent the incursions of country coopers to the city, and would not even contemplate allowing them join the local trade society. The local body of stonecutters imposed a heavy entrance fee on all outsiders, requiring a payment of five and three pounds respectively from any Dublin and Limerick stonecutters who came to work in the city.² The second solution - the admission

1. CE, 12 Oct., 1870.

2. Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, First Report, App., C., pp. 27-8; CE, 9 July, 1860.

and unionization of outsiders - was applied by the amalgamated unions, mostly English in origin, which began to establish themselves in Cork from the late 1830s.

The degree of unionization, whether based on the local or amalgamated principle, varied widely from trade to trade. Table 27 outlines the degree of unionization among the Cork trades between 1830 and 1900. This table is based on the records of trade unions, on occasional newspaper reports of trade affairs, and on the recorded numbers of each trade marching in the public demonstrations which took place in the city from time to time. The most reliable information dates from the 1870s, from which date the survival rate of trade union records increased. Figures from the 1850s are the least complete. When trade union records for other decades are lacking, it has been possible to fill the gap by drawing on the figures for trades' participation in public demonstrations, but as no such demonstrations took place in Cork between 1848 and 1861, this alternative source of information is not available.

Reliance on trade demonstration numbers in any decade has its dangers. There is no certainty that in the demonstrations of the 1830s and 1840s all those marching under a trade banner were necessarily journeymen. When, for instance, the local Ancient Corporation of Carpenters marched in the O'Connell demonstration of 1845, several 'respectable employers' marched with the trade.¹ Moreover, the presence in a public demonstration of any trade, complete with banner and regalia, does not necessarily imply that the members were

1. CE, 9 June, 1845.

effectively organized in a trade society. The weavers of the city were such a case. In the late 1820s the city's cotton, broadcloth and worsted weavers apparently each had a separate identity and organization, competing with one another for preference in the distribution of relief during the textile slump.¹ In the following two decades they continued, though much reduced in numbers, to maintain a separate identity, marching in the Repeal demonstrations under their own banners, and mobilizing their members as a voting and canvassing force in the election of 1832.² Yet the weaving trades were the most ineffectively organized in the city. Several factors militated against aggressive combination by the weavers. Firstly, the intimate pre-industrial relationship between master and journeyman persisted, largely because the slump in textiles had reduced both master and man to much the same level of poverty, and secondly, the isolated working conditions of the individual weaver, who spent most of his waking life at his loom in his own home, gave him little opportunity for labour organization.³ Moreover, from the early 1830s onwards, the weavers and their immediate employers depended for employment and a market on the efforts and goodwill of the city's middle-class Irish manufacture promoters.⁴ Such dependence was not at all conducive to militancy and by the early 1850s the weavers were described as

1. SR, 4, 9, 11 Nov., 1826.

2. CMC, 19 Mar., 25 June, 24 Oct., 1832; CE, 9 June, 1845.

3. CC, 5 Jan., 1825; CMC, 28 Nov., 1832; CE, 7 Aug., 9 Oct., 1850.

4. See above, pp. 48-51; 89-91; 131-39.

well deserving of the solicitude and sympathy which /had/ been manifested towards them /by the home manufacture promoters/. For while enduring the keenest pangs that the most severe privations could inflict, they /had/, notwithstanding, borne their sufferings with mainly fortitude and the most exemplary patience, and /had/ been at all times distinguished for their peaceable and orderly demeanour. In silence and sorrow, they /had/ meekly submitted to their sad lot, without committing crime, or disturbing society by clamour, riot, or agitation.¹

TABLE 27²

Number of unionized men in each trade as a percentage of total trade membership, Cork, 1830-1900

| | 1830s | 1840s | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | c.1900 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| BUILDING | | | | | | | | |
| TRADE | | | | | | | | |
| Masons | | | 77 | 40 | 53 | 74 | 60 | 79 |
| Plasterers | | 52 | | 45 | 64 | 68 | 68 | 71 |
| Stonecutters | | | 40 | | 100 | 94 | 100 | 100 |
| Carpenters | 37 | 45 | | 30 | 33 | 40 | 33 | 53 |
| Plumbers | | | | | | | | |
| Painters | | | | | | | | |
| ENGINEERING | | | | | | | | |
| AND IRON | | | | | | | | |
| Engineers | | | 34 | | 35 | 59 | 64 | 67 |
| Boilermakers | | | | | | | | |
| Ironmoulders | | 61 | 37 | | | | | |
| Nailors | | | | | | | 100 | |
| Farriers | | | | 88 | 100 | 86 | | 50 |

1. CE, 16 Oct., 1850; 14 Feb., 1851.

2. Information drawn from contemporary newspaper reports, trade union records and printed census returns.

TABLE 27

| | 1830s | 1840s | 1850s | 1860s | 1870s | 1880s | 1890s | c.1900 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| <u>TIMBER AND FURNITURE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Cabinetmakers | | 14 | | | | 61 | 50 | |
| Coopers | | 62 | 82 | 47 | 71 | 45 | 50 | 39 |
| Sawyers | 91 | 74 | | 10 | | | | |
| Coachmakers | | 66 | 10 | 30 | 50 | 35 | 60 | 68 |
| Corkcutters | | | | 57 | 53 | | | |
| <u>SHIPBUILDING</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Shipwrights | | | | 96 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| <u>PRINTING</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Letterpress printers | | 34 | 43 | 24 | 51 | 66 | 79 | 84 |
| Lithographic printers | | | | | | 40 | | |
| <u>FOOD AND DRINK</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Bakers | | 48 | | 25 | 29 | 57 | 45 | 80 |
| Millers | | | | | | | | |
| <u>CLOTHING TRADE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Tailors | | 55 | | 28 | 56 | 77 | 63 | 64 |
| Shoemakers | | 14 | | 14 | 29 | 30 | 25 | 38 |
| Bootrivetters | | | | | | | | |

Though these figures are incomplete, they corroborate certain contemporary assumptions about trade organization. The low level of unionization among the shoemakers was a recognized fact. The revival

of the journeymens' society in 1855¹ had little obvious effect on the low unionization rate in the trade, and matters improved slightly only when the trade, becoming factory-based, was organized in the 1880s by the Bootrivetters' Union. Even then the outworking hand-sewers remained a little-unionized trade, and as late as 1900 only 14% of their number belonging to the Cork Ladies' and Gentlemens' Bootmakers' Union.²

The painters' low level of organization was largely due to the ease with which men unconnected with the trade - labourers and handy-men - could be hired to do inferior work at cheaper rates of pay. As late as the 1880s and '90s the operative painters made constant complaints of the economizing employers 'who would get a man with a whitewash brush to put paint on'.³ In this the Cork painting trade was one of the most disorganized groups in the building trade; their skill was easily learned and each spring the trade was flooded by casuals. So open was the painting trade to these non-union incursions that it was described by Earnest Aves as 'the dustbin of national industry'.⁴

At the other end of the scale in Cork, the shipwrights showed a surprisingly high level of organization, due perhaps to the organization facilities afforded by the close concentration of the trade members in large shipyards. Unlike the tailors and shoemakers,

1. See above, pp. 174-75.

2. PP, 1899, xcii, 493, pp. 62-3.

3. CE, 13 Apr., 1855; 6 Jan., 1872; 23 Mar., 1886; 6 Apr., 1888; 7 Sept., 1894.

4. G.S. Jones, Outcast London (Oxford, 1971), pp. 59-60.

who worked as outworkers or in close proximity to a master in a workshop of an average ten to twelve artisans, the shipwrights worked in establishments which in the 1850s and 1860s employed from threehundred to eighthundred men, both skilled and unskilled.¹ On the other hand, the high level of unionization among the farriers was due not to the concentration of large numbers of the trade in single establishments, but to the exclusiveness of the trade. Numbers never rose above forty, and the farriers had little to fear from the competition of unfair labour.² Some of the building trades - masons, stonecutters and plasterers - were, as their percentage unionization rate suggests, quite well organized. But the carpenters whose union was, in fact, quite strong and aggressive,³ never succeeded in unionizing more than 50% of their trade. Like the painting trade, carpentry was relatively easily learned, and consequently attracted a sizeable casual fringe.⁴

As late as the 1890s, Cork trade unionism was described as introspective and narrowly local:

The societies are mostly local, and everything is looked at from a local standpoint ...⁵

Though this assessment was quite accurate, it disguised the fact that trade unionism in Cork and in other Irish cities and towns had, at least as early as the 1830s, been moving towards closer connection

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1. CE, 7 June, 1850; 8 Oct., 1852; 28 Apr., 1854; 29 Feb., 1860; 8 Oct., 1864; 3 Mar., 1866.
 2. PP, 1896, xciii, 277, p. 60; 1897, xcix, 275, p. 46; 1898, ciii, 127, pp. 36-7; 1899, xcii, 493, pp. 34-5; Census of Ireland, 1841-1901.
 3. See below, pp. 206-9; 363-5; Jones, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
 4. Jones, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
 5. Webb Trade Union Collection, A, Vol. iii, ff. 46-7.

with English unionism. The Irish brushmakers, at least those of Dublin, were allied with the English Brushmakers' Union until 1834, when the Irish towns were cut off from the union.¹ In the early 1830s most Cork trade societies were of local origin, many of them tracing their origins to the eighteenth century.² Of the thirty-one trades participating in the Repeal procession of March 1832, all were locally-based societies. Three possible exceptions were the brush-makers (though there is no surviving evidence of their connection with the English union) and the hatters and glovers, both of whose societies were connected with the journeymens' societies in Dublin.³

Towards the late 1830s the first real drive to establish English-based amalgamated unions in Ireland began. By 1835 the Manchester-based Friendly Society of Journeymen Cabinetmakers, Carvers and Woodturners (founded in 1833) had set up a twenty-six member branch in Cork. Sixteen other branches of varying size were established throughout the country, eight in the north-eastern counties of Ulster, four in Leinster, three in Munster and one in Connaught.⁴ But from the financial standpoint the English amalgamated union found its Irish venture unprofitable. By 1838 it had decided to break its connection

1. William Kiddier, The Old Trade Unions: from Unprinted records of the Brushmakers' (London, 1930), pp. 63, 161-3.

2. See above, p. 1.

3. CMC, 12, 13, 16 Mar., 1832; Clarkson, op. cit., pp. 110, 112-3.

4. Annual Report of the Societies in the House Furnishing Department, 1834-39. The other branches were Derry, Belfast, Armagh, Dungannon, Newry, Coleraine, Lurgan, Ballymena (all in Ulster), Dublin (2 branches), Kilkenny, Carlow (Leinster), Clonmel, Waterford, Limerick (Munster) and Sligo (Connaught).

with Ireland, 'as the expense of communication was so great, and the connection found too unwieldy to conduct with any degree of general satisfaction'.¹ In the late 1840s the society seemingly re-established Irish branches in Dublin and in the north-eastern counties.² But no amalgamated cabinetmakers union set up in Cork again until the London-based Alliance Cabinet Makers established a branch there in 1880. Even then, the numbers in the Cork Alliance branch fluctuated sharply from year to year,³ the depressed state of the local cabinetmaking trade left the branch financially weak, and in 1892 the Cork Alliance members were cut off from the union for non-payment of union dues.⁴ Though the Cork branch was re-admitted in 1894 with a greatly increased membership, it was again defunct by 1901.⁵

The success of the other amalgamated union branches established in Cork in the late '30s was equally shortlived. The United Operative Stonemasons' Society, whose headquarters were in Birmingham, began to establish lodges in Ireland in 1835 in organizing drives radiating inland from Belfast and Dublin, reaching by 1836, as far south as Cahir and as far west as Galway. By mid-1837 branches had been established at Limerick, Ennis, Waterford and other Munster centres,

1. *ibid.*, 1838.

2. Yearly Account of the Income and Expenditure of the Journeymen Cabinet Makers', Carvers', and Woodturners' Friendly Society, 1846-1886. These branches were at Dublin, Derry, Dundalk, Dungannon, Belfast, Newry, Armagh and Coleraine.

3. Alliance Cabinet Makers' Association, Annual Reports, 1878-94. The Cork branch had nine members in 1884, forty-nine in 1894.

4. *ibid.*, 1894, p. 12.

5. *ibid.*, 1894, p. 23; 1901.

with one branch in the extreme south, at Cork.¹ The Irish lodges were active for a number of years, but they unfortunately distinguished themselves by a consistent reluctance to obey union rules and pay union dues. Financial confusion ensued and it was decided, as in the case of the cabinetmakers' union, to cut off the Irish branches.² The lack of any real harmony between the English and Irish branches of the masons' society was revealed when the Armagh branch, indignant at its ejection from the union, threatened in retaliation to send its members to England as strikebreakers:

Irish blood will not be trampled on; you have often taken the advantage is /sic/ and treated us as though we were a parcel of blacks, but we will whiten some of your jobs for you with Irish Volunteers, for they are not all down yet.³

In the early 1840s some of the cut-off branches in the northern half of Ireland apparently formed an amalgamation of their own, centred on Armagh. The fortunes of this Irish amalgamation were obscure, and by 1889 it had apparently been extinct 'for years'.⁴ But the Cork masons had remained aloof from this body and were not again involved in amalgamation during the remainder of the century. From 1840 to the present day all unionized masons in the city have belonged to the local society.⁵

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1. United Operative Stonemasons' Fortnightly Report, 26 June, 1835; 22 July, 1836; 3 Feb., 28 Apr., 21 July, 1837.
 2. *ibid.*, 13 Mar., 1837; 28 Aug., 1839; 2, 16 Jan., 12 Mar., 1840.
 3. *ibid.*, 1839; R.W. Postgate, The Builders' History (London, 1923), p. 125.
 4. Postgate, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
 5. United Operative Stonemasons' Fortnightly Report, 4, 18 June, 1840; PP, 1897, xcix, 275, pp. 2-3; Belinda Loftus, Marching Workers (Arts Council of Ireland, 1978), p. 79.

Though amalgamation had failed in Cork during the 1830s, the principle remained alive in the following decade. In 1845 the Cork hatters were affiliated to the Hatters' Society of Great Britain and Ireland.¹ This union had a branch in Dublin since 1821,² but the date of its establishment in Cork is not certain, and it was apparently moribund by the early 1860s.³ During the 1840s the Cork printers, too, opted for amalgamation, affiliating in 1845 with the National Typographical Association.⁴ But once again the affiliation proved short-lived. By 1849 the Cork printers had again reverted to their local society, but they continued to work in harmony with the Typographical Association in Britain. They sent periodic trade reports to the Association, supported striking printers in other centres, and had an arrangement with the Typographical Association for the mutual relief of tramps.⁵ Though some Cork printers believed that separation from the amalgamated union had weakened their society's bargaining power,⁶ most members opted for local autonomy. The Cork printers' society therefore, like that of the masons, remained independent, resisting all attempts later in the century to re-affiliate it to the Typographical Association.⁷

1. CE, 9 June, 1845.

2. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 3.

3. No body of hatters took part in the public demonstrations in Cork from 1860 onwards.

4. Half-Yearly Report of the National Typographical Association, Jan.-June, 1845; Jan.-July, 1846.

5. Typographical Protection Circular, 1849, p. 4; 1850, p. 60; 1851; Typographical Society Monthly Circular, 1852, p. 1; 1853, p. 1, 1854, p. 1; 1858, p. 1; 1860, p. 2; Provincial Typographical Association Half Yearly Reports, Dec., 1860; Jan.-June, 1867; Jan.-June, 1870; Jan.-June, 1871. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 3. The Dublin printers, who had joined the Typographical Association in 1836, similarly returned to an autonomous position in 1848.

6. Report of Proceedings at a Meeting of Delegates from the Typographical Societies of the United Kingdom, July, 1861, p. 7.

7. Minute Book of the Cork Typographical Society, 28 Nov., 1891, 13, 27 Apr., 1, 8, 22 June, 19 Oct., 11 Dec., 1895; 2 July, 1898.

In the 1840s, too, the first attempts were made to establish amalgamated branches among the Cork ironworking and engineering trades. Initially successful, these efforts also proved of short duration. The Order of Friendly Boiler Makers, later called the United Society of Boiler Makers and Iron Shipbuilders, opened a branch in Cork in 1847.¹ Although there is little information on this early branch, it was apparently set up by immigrant Scottish boilermakers, and when a large proportion of its members, mostly Glasgow men, left Cork after an unsuccessful strike in 1853, the branch collapsed.² Though the branch may have revived in later years, there is no record of its existence until 1877 from which date until the end of the century it had a fairly healthy existence, maintaining a membership of between twelve and fifty-one members, an average of thirty members a year.³

Amalgamation among the foundry workers began in Cork in the late thirties. The Iron Founders' Friendly Society of England, Ireland and Wales set up a branch in the city in 1839, with other branches in Dublin, Belfast and Waterford. In Cork membership averaged 23 per year, reaching a high point of 44 in 1847.⁴ But membership had, by 1852, fallen to eight and thereafter though branches continued to function in Dublin and Belfast, no Cork branch was listed in union records until 1884. In that year Cork again

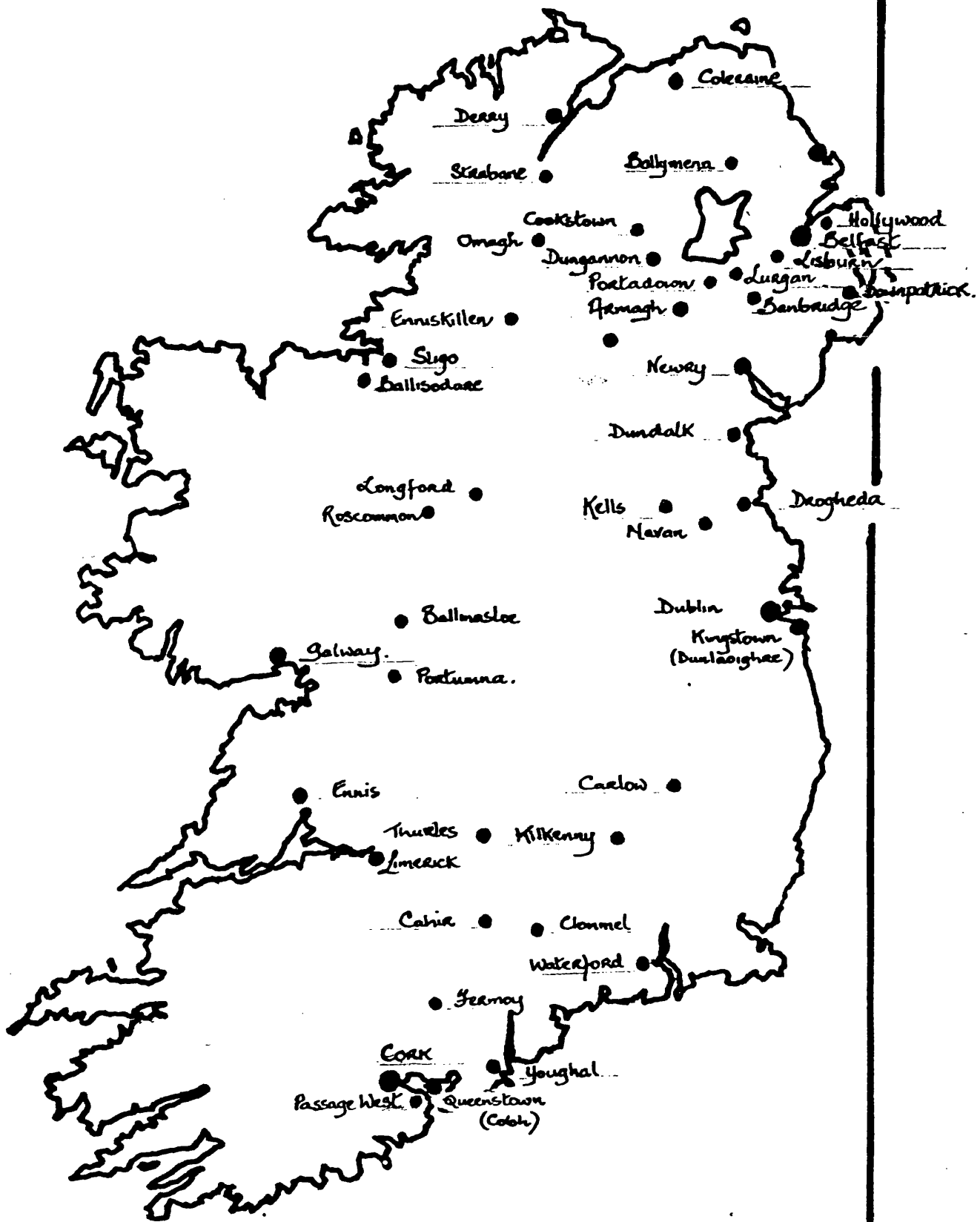
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1. D.C. Cummings, A Historical Survey of the Boiler Makers and Iron Shipbuilders Society from August 1834 to August 1904 (Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1904), p. 38.
 2. CE, 13 July, 1835.
 3. Annual Reports of the United Society of Boiler Makers and Iron Shipbuilders, 1877-1900.
 4. Half-Yearly Report of the Friendly Society of Iron Founders of England, Ireland and Wales, 1839-48.

appeared in the lists, and the local branch thereafter maintained an average yearly membership of twenty.¹

The most successful attempts at amalgamation in Cork during the 1840s and 1850s were made by the engineers and coachmakers. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers set up a branch in Cork in 1851, with an initial membership of thirty-five. Following some fluctuations in the early '50s, branch membership grew rapidly from forty in 1855 to eighty-five in 1862. A slight downward trend in the mid-'60s was followed by another rise in 1867, after which the annual membership averaged 120 in the 1870s, 116 in the 1880s, and 137 in the 1890s.²

Unlike the engineering workers, the journeymen coachmakers of Cork had been organized since early in the century in their own locally-based society. In 1812 a thirty-two member society was either established or reorganized, its rules being revised in 1824.³ In 1834 the several local coachmakers' societies of England amalgamated to form the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers,⁴ and at some stage between then and the late 1840s the Cork coachmakers' society joined the amalgamation with forty-one members.⁵ By 1851 there were fifteen

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1. *ibid.*, 1884-1900.
 2. Annual Reports of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1851-1900.
 3. Cork Coachmakers' Minute Book, 1812, pp. 3-8; Cork Branch Rules and Regulations, 1823, Panel 2A, Vehicle-Building and Automotive Museum, Holyhead Road, Coventry.
 4. F.S. Winchester, A Short History of the National Union of Vehicle Builders, 1834-1959 (Manchester, 1959), pp. 1-2.
 5. United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, First Quarterly Report, Panel 3, Vehicle Building Museum, Coventry.



MAP 3: Irish Towns organised by British amalgamated unions, 1830-1880

other Irish branches of the amalgamation, seven in Ulster, three each in Munster and Leinster, and two in Connaught.¹ By this time the Cork branch had grown to a membership of sixty-seven - almost seventy percent of the total trade membership in the city. Membership slumped in the early 1850s, but from 1854 onwards the increased recruiting efforts of the local society brought numbers back up to an average thirty to forty per year. Thereafter, annual membership of the coachmakers' union in Cork averaged sixty-one in the 1860s, one-hundred in the 1870s, fifty-five in the 1880s (a drop due to the trade slump), and ninety in the 1890s.²

While English-based amalgamated unions were trying to establish themselves in Ireland from the late 1830s on, there seems to have been an attempt by several Irish trades to establish some form of Irish-based amalgamation based on co-operation between the trade societies of the different towns. Unlike the English amalgamateds, these Irish organizations either kept no records or else their records have long since disappeared. This complete lack of documentation prevents one from deciding whether, indeed, what seems an amalgamation was, after all, merely an informal co-operation between the members of particular trades in different Irish centres. The Armagh-based stonemasons' organization in the early 'forties was an authentic amalgamation. But the separate trade of stonecutters in Ireland apparently belonged to a less well defined federation. In 1845, the Cork stonecutters were described as 'being in union with' those

1. Quarterly Report of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, 1851-2.

2. *ibid.*, 1851-1900.

of Dublin, the latter body lending its banner to the Cork men on the occasion of an O'Connell demonstration in the southern city.¹ Similarly, the United Society of Ladies' and Gentlemens' Shoemakers, which took part in the same demonstration, was apparently a loose amalgamation of the Cork and Youghal shoemakers.²

The O'Connellite years were apparently a period of much communication between the trades of different Irish towns. The trade demonstrations in honour of O'Connell provided an opportunity for each trade to parade its patriotism and trade solidarity (real or imagined). To make the desired public impression, it was vital for a trade society to have at least one elaborate banner. Whenever a trade did not have such a banner it was usual, as in the stonecutters' case in 1845, to contact its kindred trade in another town to supply the need. Thus, the Cork tailors' society and other city trade societies agreed to lend their banners to the Mallow trades for use in the Repeal demonstration of 1843.³ Again, in 1845 the Cork trade societies lent their banners to the trades of Cahir, for use at a Repeal demonstration in Thurles.⁴ In 1862 the situation was reversed when the Cork tailors borrowed the Limerick tailors' banner for another public demonstration.⁵

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1. CE, 9 June, 1845.
 2. CE, 9 June, 1845.
 3. CE, 5, 9, 12 June, 1843.
 4. CE, 22 Sept., 1845.
 5. CDH, 2 Jan., 1862.

This inter-town connection between trades was ensured by the prevalence of the tramping system in the nineteenth century, most trade societies using part of their funds for the relief of visiting tramps. The existence of an amalgamated society branch in a town ensured a fairly constant stream of tramps, not alone from other Irish towns but also from Britain. Between 1865 and 1877 the Cork branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers relieved an average ten tramps per year. These men passed through Cork en route to and from Britain and America as well as between Cork and other Irish towns. So great was the tramp traffic in the trade in general that in 1866 it was found necessary to prevent frauds by tightening up the regulations governing the issue of travelling cards.¹ The local branch of the Ironfounders' Society also catered for tramps, providing them with beer, bed and supper, and payment at the rate of one penny per mile tramped.² Between 1840 and 1852 the branch catered for 1,160 tramps - an average of 96 per year - with the greatest influx (844) in 1847 and 1848.³

Not all trades favoured the tramping system: the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, whose Cork branch was set up in 1873, catered little for tramps. Between 1874 and 1893, the Cork branch issued very few travelling cards to its members and spent only £7.5s. on relieving tramps, while during the same period £266.8s. was spent

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1. Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1865; 1866, p. 90; 1867-1871.
 2. Half Yearly Report of the Iron Founders' Society of England, Ireland and Wales, 1848, p. 31
 3. ibid., 1840-52.

by the local branch of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, that society generally preferring tramp relief to the stationary relief favoured by the tailors.¹ In the coachmakers' case, the tramp traffic through Cork continued steadily from 1850 to 1880, reaching its zenith in the latter half of the 1870s. It declined to a trickle from 1880 onwards (a decade earlier than the decline of coachmaker tramping in the rest of the United Kingdom) due to the lack of employment opportunity in the trade in Cork from the 1880s onwards.²

Though the local branches of amalgamated unions attracted the widest range of tramps, the tramping system predated the amalgamateds, and had long operated in the case of the locally-based societies. In the early 1830s bakers, masons, shoemakers and others all went on tramp to and from Cork. In 1833, an unemployed Cork baker, appearing in court on a combination charge, gave an account of his travels. He had tramped in three weeks from Cork to Macroom, thence to Killarney, back to Passage West and Cove, on to Fermoy and back to Cork city, a distance of over 160 miles, getting three-pence relief from the bakers' society in each town en route.³ Even when the Friendly Society of Journeymen Cabinet Makers decided to lop off its uneconomic Irish branches in 1838, mutual assistance of

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1. Yearly and Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1874-94; Quarterly Report of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, 1874-94.
 2. CE, 28 Sept., 7 Oct., 1881; 24 Apr., 1882; Quarterly Report ... Coachmakers, 1851-1900, March 1886, March 1887; Amounts of Various Benefits paid /by the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers/, 1868-1918, Panel 5, Vehicle-Building Museum, Coventry.
 3. CC, 30 Nov., 1833.

Irish and English tramps continued,¹ while the local printers' societies in Dublin and Cork and the English Typographical Association helped one another's tramps right through the century, even when there was no formal alliance between them.² As late as 1870 the local bakers' society in Cork held it a point of honour never to refuse aid to a tramp, and into the 1890s the coopers' society paid one-and-sixpence to each tramp calling to the society rooms.³

The printers continued to support the tramping system until the end of the century, as did the plasterers and the cabinetmakers.⁴ Among the trades which carefully documented the tramping system was the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers. This Northampton-based union, which catered for factory-based workers, was established in Cork in 1885, from which date until the late 1890s it continued to use the tramping system extensively. The union's monthly reports made the system as effective as possible by publishing accounts of the exact state of trade and employment prospects in each centre in which a union branch existed. The monthly reports also documented accurately the whereabouts of tramping union members, and from these records it appears that Cork tramps travelled widely in both Ireland and Britain. Though the long-term influence of such

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1. Annual Report of the Societies in the House Furnishing Department, 1838.
 2. Typographical Monthly Circular, 1854, p. 1; Typographical Association Half-Yearly Report, Jan.-June 1870; Jan.-June 1871; Webb Trade Union Collection, Sec. B, Vol. lxxvii (4); Cork Typographical Society Minute Book, 12 Sept. 1896.
 3. CE, 7 Nov., 1879; Cork Coopers' Society Minute Book, 9 May, 1895; 26 Feb., 10 Sept., 1896; 9 Aug., 1898.
 4. Cork Typographical Society Minute Book, 12 Sept., 1896; National Association of Operative Plasterers, Annual Reports, 1894-97; Alliance Cabinet Makers, Annual Report, 1882-86.

travelling is not easily gauged, it is reasonable to assume that men returning from a tramping spell in England helped to make their trade-fellows at home aware of labour developments outside their own local area.¹

Cork trade unionism in the years between 1830 and 1880, therefore, was not completely isolated from the growth of unionism in the rest of Ireland or in Britain. The amalgamated unions especially helped to break the isolation of local trades, for when an amalgamated union set up a branch locally, its reports kept all paid-up members of the branch in touch with current happenings in the trade outside their own area. In this way, a number of the artisans of Cork, Dublin and Belfast, as well as those of many smaller Irish towns like Waterford, Kilkenny, Sligo and Clonmel, were drawn out of narrow localism into awareness of trade union growth in the United Kingdom as a whole.²

The increasing success rate of amalgamation from the 1840s onwards was greatly facilitated by the development of the railway system in Britain and Ireland, though railway growth was much slower in Ireland than in Britain. Cork had always been one of the most easily accessible centres in Ireland: it was a busy port, and cross-channel steamers came right into the city-centre docks, so that as soon as railway development facilitated travel from the industrial cities to the ports of Britain, Cork and other major Irish ports became more accessible to

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1. Monthly Report of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, 1885-1900; especially Nov. 1885, p. 6; Apr. 1891, pp. 6-7; June 1891, p. 6; Apr. 1894, p. 5; July 1892, p. 7; May 1898, p. 5.
 2. Annual Report of the Societies in the House Furnishing Trade, June 1834-June 1838; Quarterly Report ... Coachmakers, 1848-1900; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1851-1900.

British cities than to inland Irish towns. The new ease of communication facilitated the traffic of tramps from Britain to Ireland, and provided the officials of British unions with ready access to Ireland. As early as 1852, a deputation from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers came to Cork to canvas the local branch's support for the striking engineers in England,¹ and in 1864 and 1872 the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers sent delegates to Cork to settle disputes and forward the Nine Hours movement.² In 1870 the London Operative Society of Tailors sent its secretary to Cork to settle the major tailors' strike.³

But Cork's proximity to the British ports was a mixed blessing. Because access from Cork to inland Irish towns was less easy (even when the railway system had long been established), than Britain's access to Cork, the southern city frequently received an influx of tramps from Britain who, instead of passing through en route to other Irish towns, stayed in the city to add to the already overstocked labour market. In 1896 favourable reports of the Cork printing trade by the Labour Gazette and Print led to a great influx of tramps into the city,⁴ much to the disgust of the local Typographical Society. The Boot and Shoe Rivetters in the city faced this problem during the 1880s and '90s. Whenever their union's monthly report commented favourably on the state of trade in Cork, there was an inrush of hands

1. CE, 31 Mar., 2 Apr., 1852.
2. Quarterly Report of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, Sept., 1864, p. 1; June 1872, p. 1.
3. CE, 7 July, 1870.
4. Cork Typographical Society Minute Book, 12 Sept., 1896; Labour Gazette, Apr.-Dec., 1896.

from the British centres, and as many of these newcomers had not sufficient money to travel on to Dublin or Belfast, they stayed in Cork as a burden on the funds of the local union branch.¹

The progress of amalgamation in Cork had ground to a halt in the late 1850s, but from the late 1860s the trend revived. In 1868 the Liverpool-based United Operative Plumbers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland established a Cork lodge which continued to function for the remainder of the century.² But in the early 1870s one of the most important advances in the cause of amalgamation was made when the Amalgamated Society of Tailors began to admit the various local societies in Ireland. In 1873 twenty-one Irish local tailors' societies fused with the Amalgamated Society, the Cork tailors' society being among the first to join.³ In Cork the immediate result of the amalgamation was a dramatic strengthening of the unionized tailoring trade in the city, the percentage of unionized men rising from 56% to 77%. For the remainder of the century the tailors unionization level, though decreasing in the 1880s, remained well above 60%.⁴

In the late 1860s and early '70s there was an attempt, less successful than in the tailors' case, to draw the Irish towns into union with the amalgamated carpentry unions in Britain. From the

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1. Monthly Reports of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Aug., 1888, p. 5; July 1890, p. 7; May 1898, p. 5.
 2. Cork Plumbers' Society Minute Book, 1 May 1868; United Operative Plumbers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, Quarterly Returns, 1873-1891, 1894.
 3. Quarterly Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, Nov., 1873, pp. 1-7. The Irish branches were at Derry, Belfast, Coleraine, Enniskillen, Armagh, Newry, Lisburn, Lurgan, Banbridge, Strabane, Ballymena (Ulster); Kells, Waterford (Munster), Galway and Sligo (Connaught).
 4. See Table 27 above.

mid-1870s on, the Associated Carpenters and Joiners of Scotland maintained a branch in Belfast, but this union never attempted to organize any of the southern Irish towns.¹ The Manchester-based Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners made the strongest bid for Irish membership. Established in 1860, this union had, by 1866, set up branches in Belfast and Dublin, and prospects for further Irish organization seemed bright. In July 1866 the union's executive reported:

We have at length succeeded in accomplishing an amalgamation between the Irish and English workmen. In the past we have seen with regret that Irish workmen have not in all cases met with that cordial reception and treatment at the hands of their English co-workers, which every man is entitled to at the hands of his fellow-man, irrespective of country or creed. But now the Irish workers have joined us in large numbers and in good faith, we have every confidence that the advantage will be mutual, and that past differences, arising from whatever cause they may, will be buried in oblivion.²

This optimism was not ill-founded. The union extended its influence widely in the northern counties and in some centres in Leinster and north-east Munster, claiming a total of thirteen Irish branches in 1880.³ But in Cork the union had little success. In 1871 a Welsh carpenter working in one of the local dockyards established a branch in the city, but the strong local carpenters' society resisted all

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1. Annual Report of the Associated Carpenters and Joiners of Scotland, 1874-94.
 2. Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Monthly Report, July 1866.
 3. Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Annual Report, 1866-80. The branches were at Belfast, Ballymena, Lisburn, Derry, Portadown, Newry, Hollywood, Armagh (Ulster); Dublin, Carlow, Drogheda, Dundalk (Leinster), Waterford and Clonmel (Munster); and Sligo (Connaught).

overtures to join the new body. For a time the two unions competed with each other for members, but the amalgamated branch never attracted more than ten adherents in Cork, and by 1877 had been squeezed out of existence by the opposition of the local society.¹ The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners continued to extend its organization through the rest of Ireland in the 1880s and '90s, but not until the mid-1880s did it make another attempt to set up a branch in Cork. Even then, that branch had to battle against the fierce opposition of the local society before the two bodies eventually fused in 1893.² Still less happy was the experience in Cork of the other main British amalgamated carpentry union, the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters and Joiners. Established in 1827, this union had run a short-lived Dublin branch in the late 1830s and early 1840s, but like the other amalgamated carpentry unions it did not begin its real organizing drive in Ireland until the late 1860s.³ Most of its organizing was done in the north-eastern counties of Down and Antrim, but one isolated branch was set up in Cork in 1875. Like the local branch of the Amalgamated Society, it attracted few members, and it perished quietly through lack of funds sometime in 1880.⁴ Even in other Irish centres the General Union had little success. By 1880

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1. CE, 12, 18 Apr., 1875; 22 Mar., 1877; CDH, 11, 12 Apr., 1873; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1871, 1877; Andrew Boyd, op. cit., p. 49.
 2. Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1884-1893, see below, pp. 363-65.
 3. Minutes and Resolutions of the General Delegate Meeting of the Friendly Society of Operative House Carpenters and Joiners of Great Britain and Ireland, London 1837, Nottingham 1841; D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 3.
 4. Annual Report of the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters and Joiners, 1875-1880.

it had only four branches to the Amalgamated Society's thirteen, and these branches had far fewer members than those of the Amalgamated.¹ The Cork branch of the General Union was revived in the mid-'90s, but it met such hostility from the local body (by then fused with the Amalgamated Society) that it collapsed in 1896 after a year's troubled existence.² It was paradoxical that this determined local opposition to amalgamated unionism co-existed with the strong labour solidarity shown in the trades' support for the tailors' strike of 1870. But even this solidarity was selective. It was shown only towards the striking tailors and not at all towards the unskilled labourers who joined the general strikes of the early '70s. This cold-shouldering of the unskilled continued as a feature of Cork trades unionism for the remainder of the century, preventing the formation of a broad labour movement.

It was also paradoxical that while the Cork trades moved (though with halting steps) towards closer contact with English trades unionism, there grew among the local workingmen a strong spirit of militant nationalism which aimed at separation from England. The nineteenth-century form of this militant separatism traced its roots to the Famine emigration and the failure of the rising of '48.

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1. Annual Report of the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters and Joiners, 1866-1900. The Irish branches were at Belfast, Larne, Hollywood (all in Ulster) and Cork.
 2. *ibid.*, 1882, 1889, 1894-6; Monthly Report of the General Union of Operative Carpenters and Joiners, Mar., 1895, p. 9; May, 1895, p. 17; June, 1895, p. 10; Oct., 1895, p. 19; Dec., 1895.

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CHAPTER IV

THE CORK TRADES AND MILITANT NATIONALISM,
1850-70

The Irish Democratic Association

In Cork, as in Dublin, the fiasco of 1848 had ushered in a period of political apathy among the trades.¹ The Irish Democratic Association, a body which sought to perpetuate the revolutionary separatism of 1848, made no great impact in any town in Ireland. In Cork it had little more than one-hundred members drawn from among the die-hards of the old Confederate Clubs.² These members included artisans, labourers, clerks and shop assistants, but they joined the Democratic Association as individuals and established no connection between that body and the organized trade societies. The Democrats had to contend not alone with the apathy of the trades and working men, but with the determined opposition of influential local men who correctly saw in the new body a revival of the ultra-democratic spirit of '48. In Cork, John Francis Maguire, proprietor of the Cork Examiner, effectively hampered the progress of the Democrats by refusing to report the proceedings of the local branch in his paper. So successful was this technique of silence that by April 1850, six months after its inception, the Cork Democratic Club's existence was still not known to many of the most enthusiastic nationalists in the City.³

It is not clear how long the Cork branch of the Democrats survived after 1850. With its disappearance from the scene, the last vestiges of tradesman activity in politics in the city faded away.

1. D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 77.

2. Irishman, 16 Nov., 1849; 2 Mar., 1850.

3. Irishman, 16 Mar., 6 Apr., 1850; CE, 8 Mar., 1850.

The local activities of the Tenant League and the Independent Irish Party provided much political excitement and elections in the 1850s were fought out vigorously on the issues of tenant right and religious questions. But the silencing of militant nationalism and the demise of the Repeal movement left the trades without any incentive to make themselves heard in the political field. Like the Land League of later years, the Tenant League, whose *raison d'être* was the improvement of the lot of the tenant-farmer, had little direct appeal for the city working man. Neither the League nor the Independent Irish Party paid even lip-service to the promotion of local manufacture and employment, and made no attempt, as the Repeal Movement and Irish Confederation had done, to recruit members on a trade society basis. News of the Cork trades in the 1850s concentrated mainly on combination issues, and the old Cork Trades Association, apart from a few faint pipings by its members at the 1853 election, sank into utter oblivion.¹

In Cork the first signs of reawakened militant nationalism were seen in early 1858, when placards were posted through the city in support of the Indian Mutiny.² In March of the same year, the secret revolutionary organization later known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenian Brotherhood was established in Dublin. By the summer this organization had found roots in Cork city and had linked up with the literary and political Phoenix Society of Skibbereen. The arrest and trial of the leaders of the Phoenix Society brought the new revolutionary movement into the public eye,³

1. CE, 23 Apr., 1851; 22 Aug., 1853; 23 Mar., 1857; 9 May, 20, 29 June, 1859.

2. CC, 16 Jan., 1858.

3. E.R.R. Green, 'The Beginnings of Fenianism' in T.W. Moody, The Fenian Brotherhood (Cork, 1968), pp. 16-18; CE, 5 Nov., 1, 10 Dec., 1858; C.S.O.R.P., 1858: 17986, 20370.

and Cork became involved in the internal disputes already breaking out between the extreme and constitutional nationalists in Dublin. There, the militants under James Stephens clashed with the constitutional nationalists represented by A.M. Sullivan of the Nation newspaper, one outcome of the conflict being the establishment by Stephens of the Fenian front organization, the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick.¹ In Cork, A.M. Sullivan's attempt to launch a national movement of his own through the initiation of a country-wide Repeal petition was supported by the Chamber of Commerce and by John Francis Maguire of the Cork Examiner. The local ultra-nationalists, for their part, organized a counter movement by setting up a fund to defend the Phoenix men, and later under a gregarious local Fenian, Edward O'Sullivan, opened a bitter controversy with John Francis Maguire.²

As the 1860s passed, the growing popular sympathy for the revolutionary movement made itself felt in more or less violent ways. The opening of the new Patrick's Bridge in 1861 showed evidence of anti-English feeling among the crowd. Many, it was alleged, refused to doff their hats for the playing of 'God Save the Queen'. Two years later, the same anti-English feeling made it easy for some local Fenians to foment a riot in protest against the celebrations held to honour the newly-wed Prince of Wales, and a similar riot broke out in 1864 when a soiree of local orangemen was disrupted by a mob singing 'Up with the Green'.³ By the mid-sixties, popular anti-English feeling was so strong that a local police constable assured

1. E.R.R. Green, op. cit., p. 18.

2. CE, 2, 9, 11 Jan., 1861; CDH, 11 Jan., 1861.

3. CE, 12, 13 Dec., 1861; 18 Aug., 1864.

the Castle that

if the governmental authorities made Ireland a second Eden, it would not tend to smoulder /sic/ the spirit of disaffection that exists in the breasts of the artisan and labouring classes in this city ...¹

Artisan Involvement in the Fenian Movement

Contemporary commentators, both hostile and sympathetic, agreed that the Fenian movement's active members, as well as those whose sole contribution to the cause was participation in a riot, belonged generally to the lower and working classes. In 1865, the informer, Warner, had claimed that in Cork

all the shopmen, small traders, those employed at the breweries, distilleries, and factories, etc., are to a man sworn Fenians. Many heads of firms have admitted such to be the case ...²

The following year, the Cork Examiner, prematurely assuming that Fenianism was dead, explained that the movement had

derived its vitality chiefly from the towns, and the majority of its active participators appear to have belonged to the male working population, tradesmen and mechanics, and the labourers employed about the large establishments ...³

But by the end of the decade Fenianism was still vigorous. In Cork, one of the local Resident Magistrates complained to the Castle,

the difficulty of obtaining information is now so great that unless some novel means be adapted, I very much fear that our detective department cannot cope with that of the Fenians ...⁴

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1. Fenian Papers, 1866: F-2091 (filed with F-2112).
 2. ibid., 1865: F-233 (1 and 2).
 3. CE, 28 Feb., 1866.
 4. Fenian Papers, 1868: 765-R.

A year later, Cork Fenianism was described as 'at no time so perfect as at present /or/ its secrets so well kept'. It was suggested that two extra detectives, scheduled to be sent to Cork, should be

members of the Constabulary, and Tradesmen if such can be procured, men who whilst employed at their trade, can best obtain the most valuable information. If tradesmen can't be had, the others can be of little more use than those already here.

Two such detectives sent to Cork failed to obtain much information, for the appearance of strange artisans roused the suspicions of workmen in the local city establishments. Moreover, the Fenians' own intelligence system continued to counteract that of the Castle, and the secret society's growing tendency to deal ruthlessly with informers deterred the giving of information except for exorbitant sums which the Castle was unwilling to pay.¹

Sweeping comments by contemporary observers are more easily accessible than precise statistical information on Fenianism, and such statistics as are available are obviously incomplete. Between 1865 and 1870 a list of Fenian suspects, compiled by the Castle on a country-wide basis, enumerated 284 such suspects in Cork city, with a further 78 in the outlying districts of Passage West, Queenstown and Ballincollig. The limited nature of such figures is evidenced by the claims of two informers, Warner and Massey, that in 1865 there were four thousand Fenians in Cork city alone, with another four thousand between Passage West and Queenstown, and while this may have

1. Fenian Papers, 1869: 5354-R; Leon O'Broin, Revolutionary Underground (Dublin, 1976), p. 9.

exaggerated the situation, the Castle authorities admitted that their own lists were far from complete.¹

Yet the Castle's files, incomplete as they are, confirm the contemporary evaluation of the Cork Fenian movement's social composition. From the Castle's records it has been possible to make the following occupational break-down of Fenianism in Cork city and the nearby centres of Passage, Queenstown and Ballincollig:

TABLE 28²

Occupations of Fenian suspects in Cork City, Passage West,
Ballincollig and Queenstown, 1865-1870

| | | | |
|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Artisans | 166 | Shopkeepers | 5 |
| Labourers | 38 | Women | 4 |
| Drapers' | | Newspaper | |
| Assistants | 28 | Staff | 4 |
| Factory | | Dealers | 3 |
| Workers | 19 | Pedlars | 3 |
| Clerks | 13 | Merchants | 2 |
| Publicans | 10 | Militarymen | 2 |
| Porters | 7 | Pawnbrokers | 1 |
| Brewery | | Carmen | 1 |
| Workmen | 6 | Fishermen | 1 |
| Seamen | 5 | Lodginghouse | |
| Unidentified | 43 | keeper | 1 |
| | | TOTAL | 362 |

Regrouping the list in Table 28 the social composition of the Cork Fenian movement appears as follows:

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1. Fenian Papers, 1865: 233 (1 and 2); Cork Special Commission: Report of the Proceedings, Evidence of Godfrey Massey (Dublin, 1865). In Cork county and city there were in all, Massey claimed, over twenty thousand sworn Fenians.
 2. Irish Crimes Records, 1865-70, Vol. i. Fenianism: Index of Names.

TABLE 29

Social Composition of the Cork Fenian Movement, 1865-1870

| Social Group | Number | Number as % of Whole |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Artisans | 166 | 46 |
| Unskilled workers | 70 | 20 |
| Drapers' Assistants | 28 | 8 |
| Clerks | 13 | 3.5 |
| Publicans, etc. | 11 | 3 |
| Merchants, Dealers, etc. | 11 | 3 |
| Others | 20 | 5.5 |
| Unidentified | 43 | 11 |
| TOTAL | 362 | |

In the rank-and-file of the Cork Fenian movement, therefore, the artisans were by far the strongest identified individual group, followed by labourers, drapers' assistants and clerks. In the leadership of the movement, however, there was a slight shift of balance between the constituent social groups. In 1867 the Castle compiled a list of the individuals most prominent in organizing a demonstration to commemorate the execution of the Manchester Martyrs. The breakdown of this list of 194 names, shown in Table 30, indicates the social composition of the Cork Fenian leadership in the later 1860s.

TABLE 30¹

Occupational Background of those prominent in Organizing the Cork
Manchester Martyr's Demonstration, 1867

| Occupational Group | Number | Number as % of Whole |
|---------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Artisans | 60 | 31 |
| Shopkeppers | 32 | 16 |
| Clerks | 31 | 16 |
| Publicans | 24 | 12 |
| Labourers | 15 | 7 |
| Drapers' Assistants | 13 | 7 |
| Others | 17 | 7 |
| Unidentified | 2 | |
| TOTAL | 194 | |

A similar picture is obtained by combining information given in newspaper reports with the periodic communications from the Cork police authorities to the Castle, indicating the individuals considered most influential among the local Fenians. Numbering twenty-eight in all, this group fell into the following divisions:

TABLE 31²

Occupational Structure of Cork Fenian Leadership as indicated in
Newspaper and Police Reports, 1865-1870

| Occupational Group | Number | Number as % of Whole |
|--------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Artisans | 9 | 32 |
| Publicans | 8 | 28.5 |
| Clerks | 4 | 14 |
| Shop Assistants | 2 | 7 |
| Shopkeepers | 1 | 3.5 |
| Unidentified | 4 | 14 |
| TOTAL | 28 | |

1. CSORP, 1867: 22537. The classification 'Others' includes 4 pawnbrokers, 4 newspaper staff, 3 pedlars, 1 solicitor, 1 seaman, 1 teacher, 1 gardener, 1 railway official and 1 ex-policeman.
2. Information compiled from Fenian Papers, routine police reports and contemporary newspaper reports.

Thus, labourers, who accounted for a large proportion of the Fenian rank-and-file, were less well represented among the leadership, while publicans and shopkeepers, who figured low on the scale of general membership, were especially prominent among the leaders. The artisans alone dominated both leadership and rank-and-file, in the latter case accounting for 46% of total membership and outnumbering the publicans in the ratio of seventeen to one, the drapers' assistants and clerks by four to one, and the labourers by two to one.

The vast majority of these artisans recorded in the Castle files were journeymen. Only ten can be definitely identified as master tradesmen who, having their own establishments, were listed in the trade directories of the time. According to the Castle's lists, the number of Fenian suspects in each trade in the city was as listed in Table 32:

TABLE 32

Members of Each Trade listed in Castle Fenian Files, distinguishing
Masters from Journeymen

| | | |
|---------------------|----|------------|
| Tobacco | 28 | |
| Shipwrights | 20 | |
| Engineering Workers | 19 | |
| Shoemakers | 13 | (1 Master) |
| Smiths | 11 | |
| Printers | 9 | |
| Coopers | 9 | |
| Carpenters | 7 | |
| Coachmakers | 6 | |
| Slaters, plasterers | 6 | |
| Painters | 5 | |
| Bakers | 4 | |

1. Irish Crimes Records, 1865-1870, Vol. I. Fenianism: Index of Names.

TABLE 32 (Contd)

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------|
| Skinners, carriers | 4 | (1 Master) |
| Cabinetmakers | 3 | |
| Hatters | 3 | (3 Masters) |
| Tailors | 3 | (1 Master) |
| Butchers | 2 | |
| Builders | 2 | (2 Masters) |
| Matmakers | 2 | |
| Bird Fanciers | 2 | (2 Masters) |
| Masons | 1 | |
| Harnessmakers | 1 | |
| Stonecutters | 1 | |
| Musical Instrument | | |
| Makers | 1 | (1 Master) |
| Ropemakers | 1 | |
| Sawyer | 1 | |
| Brush & Bellows Maker | 1 | (1 Master) |
| Miller | 1 | |
| | <hr/> | |
| TOTAL | 166 | |

Yet, despite this preponderance of journeymen among the Cork Fenians, there is no satisfactory evidence of the corporate involvement of any trade society in Fenianism. There is no doubt of the trade societies' sympathy with the Fenian cause, as their participation in pre-Famine public demonstrations repeatedly showed. The 1860s and 1870s saw the revival of the political demonstrations which - such a prominent feature of popular politics during the 1830s and '40s - had become moribund during the 'fifties. In the earlier decades the marching trades had coupled loyalty to the Crown with their enthusiasm for Repeal, but the demonstrations of the 1860s and '70s were the very opposite to loyal, and were deliberately exploited by the Fenians to instil nationalist fervour into the public.¹ Trades

1. O'Broin, Revolutionary Underground, p. 18.

societies or individuals who participated in such demonstrations were no doubt well aware that by so doing they were lending moral support to the revolutionary movement.

Fenianism had been rooting itself in Cork city and county since 1858,¹ but in the early years the trade societies made no move to openly associate themselves with the movement and the initiative of organization was taken mainly by shopkeepers and clerks.² Until the McManus Funeral of 1861, the first political demonstration in the city since 1848 and the first major attempt of the Fenians to raise sympathy and funds for their organization, the Cork trade societies made no open gesture in favour of Fenianism.³ But when the plan for the funeral was mooted, an invitation to the trades' representative to help in arranging the demonstration met with a 'hearty response', some trades subscribing money towards the event. Despite the opposition of the Catholic bishop, eleven trades took part in the funeral demonstration through the city, a scene repeated by the Dublin Fenians and trade societies a few days later.⁴

During the following seventeen years, the Cork trades took part in ten demonstrations of a Fenian character, nine in Cork itself, and one - the O'Connell Centenary demonstration of 1875 - in Dublin. Even where such demonstrations were initially intended as non-political,

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1. Joseph Denieffe, Personal Recollections of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (New York, 1906), pp. 26, 31-2.
 2. CE, 4 Feb., 7 Nov., 1859; 22 June, 1860; 14 Sept., 1861; CDH, 11 Jan., 1861.
 3. Leon O'Broin, Fenian Fever; An Anglo-American Dilemma (London, 1971), pp. 3-4; E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859-1873 (London, 1965), pp. 96-8.
 4. Norman, op. cit., p. 97; CE, 14 Sept., 9, 31 Oct., 4 Nov., 1861; CSORP, 1861: 8418 (filed with 1877: 3591).

the Fenian element stepped in to mould the affair into a manifestation of sympathy for militant separatist nationalism. To some extent the O'Connell Centenary was manipulated in this way,¹ while the 1864 demonstration in Cork to mark the unveiling of a monument to Father Theobald Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance, met a similar fate. On this occasion, the trades themselves, in response to Fenian urging and in defiance of the demonstration organizers' admonitions, insisted on wearing green sashes and carrying, as well as their trade banners, several green banners with nationalistic emblems.²

Yet, though trade society participation was still a major feature of the political demonstrations of the 1860s and '70s, it was never quite as enthusiastic as in the 1830s and '40s, and the level of trades' participation fluctuated considerably from one demonstration to the next. The greatest support by the Cork trade societies for any Fenian demonstration was in 1877, at the funeral of the local Fenian, Michael Francis Murphy, when twenty trades marched in procession. The lowest level of participation was in the Amnesty demonstration of 1875.³ Table 33 shows the strength of trades' participation in the ten political demonstrations between 1861 and 1877.

1. O'Broin, Revolutionary Underground, pp. 13-14.

2. CE, 14 Sept., 7, 19, 11 Oct., 1864; Larcom Papers Ms 7587 N.L.I., 2 Oct., 1864.

3. CE, 22 Nov., 1875; 4 Feb., 1877.

TABLE 33¹

Pro-Fenian Demonstrations, 1861-1877: Participation of Cork trade societies

| Demonstration and Date | No. of trades taking part |
|---|---------------------------|
| Terence Bellow McManus Funeral, 1861 | 12 |
| Mathew Monument Unveiling, 1864 | 18 |
| Manchester Martyr's Demonstration, 1867 | 7 |
| Pro-France Demonstration, 1871 | 11 |
| Brian Dillon Funeral, 1872 | 9 |
| Home Rule and Amnesty Demonstration, 1873 | 15 |
| Amnesty Demonstration, 1875 | 5 |
| O'Connell Centenary (Dublin) 1875 | 8 |
| Michael F. Murphy Funeral, 1876 | 20 |
| John O'Mahony Funeral, 1877 | 7 |

There were different reasons for the considerable fluctuation in the level of trade society participation in such demonstrations. Those held on weekdays were understandably less well attended than those held on Sundays. Some societies objected to the expense involved in taking part in such affairs, while others tried to preserve harmony in their ranks by the avoidance of all political entanglements.²

A trade's non-participation in any demonstration was seldom, if ever, due to the majority of the society members' opposition to nationalism. The printers society, many of whose members were prominent Fenians, avoided political demonstrations because many other members were Unionists in politics and English by birth,³ and the

1. CE, 4 Nov., 1861; 9 Aug., 1864; 2 Dec., 1867; 22 Aug., 1871; 25 Aug., 1872; 9 Oct., 1873; 31 Jan., 22 Nov., 1875; 21 Dec., 1876; 24 Feb., 1877.

2. CE, 2 Dec., 1867; 4 Oct., 1880.

3. CE, 4 Sept., 1888; Typographical Society Minute Book, 12 Feb., 1898.

wisdom of their course of action was proven by the disagreements which rose from time to time within largely nationalist trade societies. At national level such divisions were appearing by the early 1870s between those wishing to involve themselves in the constitutional politics of the Home Rule Party and those who refused to dilute the militant separatism of the revolutionary movement by any such involvement.¹ These disagreements inevitably spilled over into political circles in Cork, and even into the trade societies, coming into the open in 1873 on the occasion of a demonstration for Home Rule and Amnesty. This demonstration was unwisely held without prior consultation with the ultra-nationalists of the city. The ultras denounced the demonstration committee's introduction of the Home Rule issue as a betrayal of pure nationalist demands, scenes of confusion ensued at the public meeting, and three trade societies refused to participate in the affair. The three societies concerned were the boilermakers, farriers and the coopers, who objected strongly to the introduction of the Home Rule issue into the demonstration.²

Because of the predominantly Fenian nature of these public demonstrations, we can tentatively gauge the strength of any trade society's Fenian sympathies by noting the frequency and strength of that society's participation in such events. In the ten Fenian demonstrations held between 1861 and 1877, the most frequent participants, as shown in Table 34, were the bakers, carpenters, tailors, slaters and plasterers, followed by the painters and shipwrights, and by the ⁰/~~bo~~tmakers, coopers and masons:

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1. David Thornley, Isaac Butt and the Home Rule Party (London, 1964), pp. 227-250.
 2. CE, 9, 11, 13 Oct., 1873; CSORP, 1873: 13441, 13627; Coopers' Minute Book, 8 Oct., 1873.

TABLE 34¹

Number of Fenian Demonstrations in which each Cork Trade Society
took part between 1861 and 1877

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Bakers | 9 |
| Carpenters | 9 |
| Tailors | 9 |
| Slaters, plasterers | 8 |
| Painters | 8 |
| Shipwrights | 8 |
| Bootmakers | 7 |
| Coopers | 7 |
| Masons | 7 |
| Stonecutters | 5 |
| Cabinetmakers | 4 |
| Coachmakers | 4 |
| Corkcutters | 3 |
| Curriers | 3 |
| Plumbers | 3 |
| Victuallers | 3 |
| Farriers | 2 |
| Smiths | 2 |
| Bootrivetters | 1 |
| Hatters | 1 |
| Millers | 1 |
| Paperhangers | 1 |
| Paperstainers | 1 |
| Sawyers | 1 |
| Ropemakers | 1 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total Number of Demonstrations | 10 |

Because of the incomplete nature of the figures given in newspaper reports, it is almost impossible to discover which, numerically, were the most strongly represented trades, but taking the figures available for the demonstrations of 1871, 1873, 1875 and 1877, it seems that the consistently greatest turnout was by the tailors (c. 100%), the carpenters (c. 75-100%) and the coopers (c. 70-100%).²

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1. CE, 4 Nov., 1861; 9 Aug., 1864; 2 Dec., 1867; 22 Aug., 1871; 25 Aug., 1872; 9 Oct., 1873; 31 Jan., 22 Nov., 1875; 21 Dec., 1876; 24 Feb., 1877.
 2. CE, 22 Aug., 1871; 26 Aug., 1872; 9 Oct., 1873; 22 Nov., 1875; 24 Feb., 1877.

Even though this participation in political demonstrations indicates the underlying Fenian sympathies of the trades, it does nothing to prove a trade society's direct active involvement in Fenianism. Prominent members of a trade society could be active Fenians without at all committing the trade society to Fenianism. Thus, though a number of printers, among them the Typographical Society's secretary for 1871, were particularly active in the revolutionary movement, the society per se succeeded in remaining free of all political involvement until the 1880s.¹ On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that trade society members involved in Fenianism could ignore the obvious opportunities for Fenian recruitment in the ranks of the society. Some Fenian trade society officials, at least, did not spurn such opportunities. The president of the Passage West Shipwrights' Society in 1866 was an active Fenian, whose father's house was used for Fenian meetings, and through his recruiting activities the entire Passage Shipwrights' Society was placed under suspicion. According to Warner's evidence in 1865, there were some two thousand Fenians in Passage West, and a further two thousand across the harbour in Queenstown, and though the Castle listed only forty-nine suspects in these two centres, it was significant that twenty of these were shipwrights.² Moreover, the shipwrights had a tradition of militant nationalist activity and labour unrest. In 1848 they had been one of the few trades with their own Confederate Club,³ in the late 1860s were among the first trades to

1. CE, 11 Oct., 1880; Fenian Papers, 1871: 7325-R; Irish Crimes Records, 1865-70, Vol. i, Fenianism: Index of Names.

2. Fenian Papers, 1865: 233 (1 and 2); 1871: 7325-R; Irish Crimes Records ... Index of Names.

3. See above, p. 126.

give support to the Amnesty Movement,¹ and as late as the 1890s they were noted for their frequent involvement in trade disputes.

Other societies with possible Fenian links were the tailors' and the coopers' societies. The tailors' society held their regular weekly meetings in the public house of William Geary, a prominent Cork Fenian, while the coopers' meeting room in Dominick Street was used for Fenian meetings.² Though it is possible that neither the coopers' nor the tailors' societies as a whole knew of these Fenian connections, there must have been some connivance, at least in the coopers' case, between the Fenians and the trade society committee. The coopers' society, too, it must be noted, was among those who withdrew from the public demonstration of 1873 as a protest against the introduction of Home Rule into what it was felt should have been a purely Fenian demonstration.³

In 1868, the Cork Constitution, seeing the high level of unemployment in the city, blamed the distress on the working classes' 'spirit of sedition' which deterred outside investment in business and manufacture and kept the lower strata of society in a constant unhealthy ferment.⁴ It might be more accurate to see this 'spirit of sedition' as a consequence rather than a cause of distress and depression.⁵ The reputedly high rate of Fenian involvement by the

1. CE, 25 Oct., 1869; Fenian Papers, 1869: 4818-R; See below, p. 239.

2. Fenian Papers, 1870: 5640-R; Tadhg O Murchadha, Sgeal Sheanduin (Baile Atha Cliath, 1920), p.

3. CE, 9, 11, 13 Oct., 1873.

4. CC, 17 Jan., 1868.

5. CE, 21 Feb., 1863.

coopers was possibly a reflection of depression in their trade.

Declining since the late 1820s, the coopering trade of Cork city had been further injured in the late 1850s by a reduction in Cork's share of the navy provision contract and by the substitution of iron for wooden binding on navy contract casks.¹ To arrest the sharp decline in the trade in the early 1860s masters and men formed a joint committee, the journeymen promising 'steadiness and attention to work,' while the masters undertook to employ only local society men in their shops.² But the slump in trade continued. The average journeyman's earnings were less than those paid to labourers; more coopers than ever before resorted to the workhouse; and one-hundred coopers were emigrated to Canada, leaving the wives and children to enter the workhouse or fall back on the donations of the local coopers' society.³

The carpenters, also prominent in the Fenian ranks, were in equally bad straits. Though more tenacious than the coopers in maintaining their daily wage rate of four shillings, the carpenters were feeling the effects of unemployment. By early 1863 only seventy members of their 160-strong society were at work, and the society, like that of the coopers, was emigrating its members to ease the pressure on the employment market.⁴ Poverty may also have played a part in the shoemakers' strong adhesion to Fenianism. The wretchedness of the shoemakers was proverbial. The trade had the distinction of heading

1. CE, 14 Sept., 1855; 24, 28 Mar., 9 Apr., 1856.

2. CE, 12 June, 1862.

3. CE, 17 Apr., 12 June, 1862; 2 July, 1863.

4. CE, 21, 28 Feb., 27 Mar., 1863.

the list of artisans entering the workhouse each year in the mid-nineteenth century,¹ and in 1868 the Cork Indigent Roomkeepers' Society, which aided 'respectable mechanics and their families in temporary distress' gave relief to more shoemakers than to any other class of worker. Of the 278 individuals relieved by the society in 1868, seventy-eight were shoemakers.²

In spite of the obvious Fenian sympathies of most organized trades, as evidenced in their participation in political demonstrations, and in spite of the probably active participation of some trade societies in Fenian activities, the trade society as such was no longer the self-contained political pressure group it had been in the days of O'Connell. Already in 1848 the move away from the trade society as a political unit has been begun by the channelling of artisan political enthusiasm into the Confederate Clubs, most of which clubs were run on a mixed occupational basis.³ The newly formed temperance societies were becoming as prominent a feature of political demonstrations of the 1840s as were the trade and mortality societies and by the sixties the temperance societies and their associated temperance bands had become even more prominent in these political demonstrations.⁴ But other organizations, too, had come into being to take artisan political expression out of the hands of the trade societies. Some of these groups were short-lived ad hoc committees

1. See above, p. xxxviii-xxxix.

2. CC, 1 Apr., 1868. The Occupations of those relieved were as follows: Shoemakers, 78; Milliners, Sempstresses, 62; Servants, 41; Small Dealers, 34; Labourers, 20; Others, 43.

3. See above, p. 126.

4. CC, 22 May, 1843; 6 June, 1845.

set up to meet a particular cause or crisis. The Fair Trial Committee established in 1859 to help defend the Phoenix prisoners was one such body.¹ Another similar Fenian Defense Committee was established to defend the Fenian prisoners after the abortive rising of March 1867.² The Amnesty Association was launched some months later in Dublin, and continued as an active group in Cork and elsewhere for a number of years.³ Other bodies which were, in reality, Fenian front-groups, provided a new milieu in which individuals, irrespective of their occupation or social class, could come together on the common ground of nationalist enthusiasm. The first of these groups, the Cork National Reading Room, which had organized the McManus Funeral in the city, was dominated by known Fenians, one of whom, Michael B. O'Brien, was to become famous in 1867 as one of the Manchester Martyrs. The National Reading Room formed a branch of James Stephens' National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick until 1864, in which year it severed its connection with that body because of an internal fissure in the nationalist camp, and became an independent Cork-based Fenian body.⁴ The National Reading Room was a mixed social group, not confined to artisans, for though artisans certainly formed a large part of the rank-and-file, the leadership was largely of the clerk and shopkeeping class.⁵ When after 1865 the National Reading Room faded from the scene, the next Fenian cover-group to emerge was the Cork Working

1. CE, 4 Feb., 1859.

2. CE, 25 Mar., 1867.

3. Norman, op. cit., p. 127; Fenian Papers, 1869: 4666-R, 4818-R, 5335-R.

4. CE, 12 Mar., 1864.

5. CE, 4 Feb., 7 Nov., 1859; 22 June, 1860; 14 Sept., 1861; CDH, 11 Jan., 1861.

Mens' Association, which combined its role as a genuine friendly and benefit society with its less publicized (but no less widely recognized) role as a political body.¹ The Cork Working Mens' rooms were widely suspected as a Fenian arms store² and its leading members were all active Fenians.³ The Fenian nature of the Cork Workingmens' Association was an open secret in the city. Its members took pride of place in all nationalist demonstrations and were among the most vociferous objectors to the introduction of the Home Rule issue into the Amnesty demonstration of 1873.⁴ The association had, as its name suggested, more a working class membership than had the National Reading Room of previous years, and though its leadership included clerks and drapers' assistants (who formed an inevitable feature of any Fenian group), most of the rank-and-file were unskilled workers, quay porters, day labourers and a number of skilled artisans. Even the leadership included a number of unskilled men.⁵ Though a political group, the Workingmens' Association was conscious of its working class character, describing itself on one occasion as 'essentially a movement of the masses - the trades, the sons of labour, and the young men who are a country's best reliance',⁶ and becoming involved for a time in the recruiting campaign of the English Agricultural Labourers' Union which was attempting to organize in Ireland.

1. CE, 2 Mar., 1872.

2. Fenian Papers, 1869: 5059-R.

3. CE, 25 Oct., 1869; 22 Aug., 1871; 26 Aug., 1872; 15 Oct., 1873; 5 Sept., 1881.

4. CE, 15 Oct., 1873.

5. CE, 25 Oct., 1869; 18 Mar., 1872; 15 Oct., 1873.

6. CDH, 13 Oct., 1875.

The nationalist enthusiasm of the artisan and labourer was also, of course, channelled into the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenian Brotherhood itself, as evidenced by the high proportion of tradesmen in that secret organization. It was becoming more apparent with the passing of the years that, with the development of militant nationalism at popular level, the trade society was losing ground to other bodies more specifically political in nature, as the unit of organization for politically-minded artisans. When, following the Mathew Monument demonstration of 1864, a meeting of three-hundred Cork artisans formed a United Trades' Association, an embryonic trades council modelled on that set up in Dublin some months previously, the organizers of the new body were at pains to avoid political involvement.¹ During its short existence, the United Trades Association remained cautious about all political matters, its secretary being most unhappy about the trade societies' participation in the Manchester Martyrs' demonstration of 1867 and going so far as to consult the police on the legality of such participation.² In pursuing such a deliberately non-political course, the Cork United Trades Association was simply emulating the example of the similar Dublin body which, recalling the failure of the trades' pro-Repeal stand of the 1830s and '40s, consciously shunned politics.³

In Cork, however, the early 1870s saw the non-political line of the United Trades' Association discontinued. When the Mechanics' Hall was established in 1870 there was evident from the start open

1. CE, 28 Nov., 1864.

2. Fenian Papers, 1867: F-4994.

3. Arthur Mitchell, op. cit., p. 14.

collaboration between the trades and the Fenian element in the city. The Hall's rules, it is true, forbade the introduction of political matters into its proceedings, but the rule was flouted continuously. The Hall was used for Fenian meetings; a room was let to the Democratic Club, a local Fenian front-group; and in the Hall were held the meetings to arrange the Amnesty movement's programme and the funerals demonstrations of the Fenians, Michael Francis Murphy and John O'Mahony. In O'Mahony's case the remains were allowed to lie in state in the Hall when the churches were closed against them.¹

Fenianism in Cork, as elsewhere, was organized less through the medium of previously existing bodies like the trade societies, than through the efforts of individuals who, despite disparate social and occupational backgrounds, shared a strong commitment to militant separatist nationalism. In Cork, Fenianism was established through the efforts of a few men, some of whom had preserved their nationalist sentiments through the doldrums of the 'fifties since their participation in the abortive risings of 1848-49, and some of whom had been active in the militant though ill-supported Irish Democratic Association. Among these individuals was William O'Carroll, a master baker who had been active in the Wolfe Tone Confederate Club in 1848. He was a 'centre' in the Cork Fenian movement until, becoming bankrupt, he emigrated to Australia in 1862.² Another Fenian organizer in the city was James Mountaine, a shoemaker who had been active in '48 and in

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1. CE, 16 May, 1870; 2, 6, 9, 28 Jan., 1871; 21, 27 Dec., 1876; 15, 21, 22, 23, 24 Feb., 1877; CDH, 18, 21, 23 Dec., 1876; 15, 26 Feb., 1877.
 2. CSORP, 1864: 20623; Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, Rossa's Recollections, (Irish University Reprint, Dublin, 1972), pp. 298, 307.

the Cork branch of the Irish Democratic Association in 1849-50. By the 'sixties he had risen to become proprietor of a boot-trimming shop, and was still prominent in the nationalist movement. Arrested in the swoop on Fenian leaders in 1865, he was, as in 1848, acquitted because of an insufficiency of evidence against him - a fact much regretted by the authorities, who considered him 'a dangerous man /and/ well-informed on any Fenian subject'.¹ Brian Dillon, 'head centre' of the Cork Fenians in 1865, had also been a member of the Irish Democratic Association in 1849. Sentenced to ten years' penal servitude in 1865 and conditionally released in 1871, he died in 1872, his funeral providing the occasion for a huge Fenian demonstration in Cork city.²

Mountaine, O'Carroll and Dillon, in common with other prominent Fenians, worked on their own premises. Mountaine's trimming shop and O'Carroll's bakery, both in the North Main Street, and Dillon's public house in Dillon's Cross, were the type of sympathetic houses which Fenian groups could use for meetings and recruitment. The prominence of shoemakers and blacksmiths (most of whom worked in their own rooms, premises or forges) on the Fenian lists is, no doubt, connected with their ability and willingness to give their workplaces as meeting places or houses of call for local Fenians. Publicans were even more likely to provide accommodation (and refreshment) for Fenian meetings, and the Cork publicans were highly suspect. Certain public houses were recognized Fenian haunts: the 'Cork Arms' and

1. Fenian Papers, 1866: F-2254; Larcom Papers, Ms. 7687, N.L.I., 31 Dec., 1865.

2. Irishman, 9 Mar., 1850; CSORP, 1872: 12974; CE, 26 Aug., 1872.

Geary's and Curtin's public houses in the North Main Street, and 'The Ship' in Warren's Place were all Fenian asylums.¹ In 1865, three of the six Fenian 'centres' in the city were publicans,² and in 1870 the Castle was informed that

the publicans in this city /i.e. Cork/ - as a body - have done more to foster sedition and encourage disloyalty than any other section of the community.³

Fenianism was more likely to spread in a public house than elsewhere, and the introduction of tradesmen to the movement was likely to occur not alone on their ordinary drinking visits to the public houses, but also when their trade societies met (as they invariably did before the establishment of the Mechanics' Hall in 1870) in the back rooms of the city's public houses. The convivial atmosphere of the public house together with the mellowing effects of alcohol and the enthusiasm roused by the singing of Fenian songs, was probably as effective in recruiting Fenians as was any deep commitment to separatist nationalism.

Equally suitable as a breeding ground for Fenianism was the factory or large workshop. Contemporary observers believed that the large shops and factories of the city were permeated by Fenianism, and the Castle's list of Fenian suspects suggests that this was indeed the case. The group highest on the suspects' list were the tobacco twisters, shipwrights and engineering workers, all of whom worked in large workshops or factories. The workforce in a factory, concentrated in a particular area from morning till evening, was more easily reached

1. *ibid.*, 1865; 233 (1 and 2).

2. CSORP, 1870: 17146.

by a Fenian recruiter than was the membership of the trade society. The society members scattered among different concerns in the city, might not, with the exception of the committee men, come together for months on end. Fenian recruitment in a factory, moreover, was likely to attract a wider social following than recruitment aimed at a trade society. In the Ballincollig area, for example, the local gunpowder mills provided a large pool of labourers and skilled men (mostly coopers) on which Fenian organizers could draw. Of the twenty-six Fenian suspects listed in the Ballincollig area, at least thirteen were employed in the gunpowder mills - five coopers and eight labourers.¹ The city breweries provided an equally promising pool of potential Fenians - labourers, coopers, carpenters and clerks - and the extent to which this labour force had been recruited into the revolutionary movement was evident when, on the morning following the abortive rising of March '67, scarcely half the employees of Murphy's Brewery arrived at work, having left the city on the previous night to start the rising in the rural areas.²

One of the most notable features of Fenianism was its levelling of class and occupational barriers within the social stratum which embraced it. Though the Castle's distinction between 'respectable' and 'low' Fenians was accurate enough,³ the structure of Fenianism was such as to allow men of humble social status to obtain within the organization positions over men, who, outside the Brotherhood, would

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1. Irish Crimes Records, 1865-70, Vol. I, Fenianism: Index of Names.
 2. Sgeal Sheanduin, p. 34.
 3. Fenian Papers, 1865: 246; 1870, 5550-R, 6224-R; O'Broin, Revolutionary Underground, p. 27.

have been considered their social superiors. Though the leadership of the Cork Fenians was, as has been suggested, largely in the hands of artisans, publicans, shopkeepers and clerks, the labourers were not unrepresented. Two labourers, Denis Callaghan and John Reilly, held high positions among the Ballincollig Fenians, while a grocer's porter, John Dennehy, was a man of considerable influence among the Fenians of the city.¹ This showed how different in structure was the Fenian organization to the Confederate Clubs of the late 1840s, which, for the most part, had been dominated by middle class men of professional status, while the general membership included artisans, labourers and shop-boys.² It was also different to the old Repeal movement which, while depending for leadership on the middle class professional and mercantile men, recruited artisan support mainly through the medium of the trade and mortality societies. By the 'sixties, the establishment of the Fenian movement and its many front groups gave the artisan and labourer a chance to express his political opinions and aspirations independently of his trade society, and to become involved in a political movement which was not inevitably dominated by men of a higher social class. The trade society could still give expression to its group political opinion through participation in pro-Fenian demonstrations and by subscribing to various nationalist causes.³ But such subscriptions tended to come less from trade

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1. Irish Crimes Records, Vol. I, Fenianism: Index of Names; Fenian Papers, 1870: 6224-R.
 2. See above, 125-28.
 3. The trades subscribed towards the Amnesty Fund (1871-2), the Dillon Monument (1873) and the Parnell Defense Fund (1880); CE, 1 Dec., 1871; 3, 21 Feb., 1872; 4 Jan., 19 Mar., 25 Sept., 1873; 11-22 Nov., 1880; 5 Jan., 1882.

societies than from individual artisans, and Fenian front-groups like the Cork Workingmens' Association, the Democratic Club and the National Foresters now took the lead in political demonstrations which, in the days of O'Connell, had been headed by the trade societies.

The removal of the trade society as the sole unit of political organization for its members indicated that the age of the skilled craft was passing away. But it also indicated the development of a new political and social climate in which the artisan or workingman could participate in politics as an individual rather than a nameless trade society member. Though corporate political expression by trade societies continued in the form of participation in political demonstrations, the political activists had other areas in which to operate.

This lessening of direct political involvement was perhaps to the advantage of the trade societies, leaving them free to concentrate on intra- and inter-trade organization. The formation of the first successful trades council in Cork in 1870 was one result of the trades' new organizational effectiveness. Though even this body was unable to long remain free of political involvement in an era when all movements, political, religious, and economic, veered inevitably towards the political field.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTEMPTS TO FORM A CORK TRADES COUNCIL

In the early 1870s the first fairly successful attempt was made to form an umbrella organization in which the Cork trade societies could come together for the advancement of their mutual interests. But the idea of such a general association or trades council had originated much earlier in the century - probably in the mid-1850s. Inter-trade co-operation had already been usual in the 1820s and 1830s,¹ but unlike the trades of Limerick, who were organized in the 'Congregated Trades',² the Cork trades apparently had no permanent umbrella organization in the 1830s and '40s. The reputed 'Union of Trades' of the late 1820s and early '30s was not a trades council, even of a rudimentary type, for its violent methods were totally different to the self-consciously 'respectable' methods of the trade councils of later years. Neither did the Cork Trades Association of the 1830s fit the trade council model for it was less a federation of organized trade societies than a radical political body of mixed social composition, in which the trades were but a constituent part.³ Though the trades regarded themselves as a distinct group', and jealously guarded their role in organizing political demonstrations in the city,⁴ they had not yet in the late 1840s formed any organization based on this feeling of separate identity. When the Desmond Club sought artisan support in 1848, there was no general trades council through which it could approach the trades, and each trade society had to be contacted in turn.⁵

1. See above, Chapter 1.

2. Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel, 21, 24 Oct., 1828; 23 July, 1830; 24 Jan., 1837; Limerick Reporter, 14 Jan., 1840, 30 Jan., 1845.

3. See above, pp. 45-7.

4. CE, 21 May, 1843; 9 June, 1845.

5. SR, 14 Mar., 1848.

Not until 1857 did a number of trades representatives meet to form a united association of the city trades. The nature and activities of this body are obscure, and even its name is uncertain. Various referred to as the Union of Trades, the Cork Trades Association, the Cork Amalgamated Trades, and the United Trades Association, it embraced only nine of the city trade societies - bakers, bootmakers, cabinet-makers, ropemakers, smiths, curriers, chandlers and sawyers - though it apparently had some connection with the tailors and bakers of Queenstown, Bandon, Mallow and Fermoy.¹ It was far from militant in its objectives, its members' declared aim being

the protection of labour by peaceable and legal means, feeling it /their/ duty and interest at all times to cultivate a good understanding between employer and employed; to respect the laws and constituted authorities, yet firmly and peaceably determined to support the rights of labour.²

The associations actions were even milder than its words. Not until 1859 did it come to the public's notice, and then only to persuade the city's striking tailors to accept a settlement on the employer's terms.³ After 1859 the Trades Association again fell into obscurity. In 1862 it was disrupted by its members taking opposing sides in a squabble between two local public men, Sir John Arnott (honorary president of the Association) and John Francis Maguire, proprietor of the Cork Examiner.⁴ By 1864 the association had apparently disintegrated, for another attempt was made to organize the trade societies of the city into a general federation.

1. CE, 29 July, 1857.

2. CE, 19 Mar., 29 Oct., 1858; 19 Mar., 1859.

3. CE, 14, 19 Jan., 1859; See above, p. 176.

4. See below, pp. 430-31.

This new attempt followed the demonstration to mark the unveiling of the monument to Fr. Theobald Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance. In this demonstration eighteen of the city trade societies had taken part, and this short-term co-operation spurred some of them to consider forming again a permanent trades' association.¹ They were also influenced by the example and promptings of the Dublin trade societies, which had shortly beforehand formed their own United Trades Association 'for the protection of trade and the promotion and encouragement of native manufacture'.² The Cork United Trades Association of 1864, a replica of the Dublin body, was intended by its founders to afford mutual protection for the trades, foster local manufacture, and stem importation. While Cork artisans and labourers as a class directed their energies into the Fenian movement, the spokesmen of the United Trades Association were at pains to repudiate all militancy, whether in labour matters or in politics. They canvassed the support from benevolent local businessmen, and stressed that depressed trade societies should emigrate their members rather than resort to 'strikes and kindred evils'.³

Predictably, an organization with so mild an attitude failed to make any public impact, and during the Fenian years of the late 1860s the Cork Trades Association, sharing the fate of its predecessor of the 1850s, faded into obscurity. Then, in early 1870, the representatives of seventeen trades, feeling the lack of a central

1. CE, 14 Sept., 28 Nov., 1864.

2. Arthur Mitchell, Labour in Irish Politics (Dublin, 1974), p. 14; Irish People, 19 Nov., 1864.

3. CE, 28 Nov., 1864.

organization and meeting place, met to discuss the establishment of a Mechanics' Hall.

Cork Mechanics Hall, 1870

In its original form, the Mechanics' Hall was the brainchild of the Catholic bishop, Dr. Delaney, who, in 1869, in conjunction with a number of local businessmen, 'many of whom were notoriously antagonistic towards organized labour', wished to provide the trades with a centre which would serve both as an educational institute and a labour exchange.¹ Clerical and employer supporters of the project saw the Hall as a facet of the temperance movement launched in the city some time previously. It was hoped that the Hall would, by providing accommodation for the committee meetings of the different trade societies, 'bring them away from the temptations they had to encounter in connection with their present committee rooms', invariably rented in public houses.² Forty years previously the promoters of the Peoples' Hall had been motivated by the same temperance ideal and by the related ideal of self-education which was also an important aspect of the Mechanics' Hall. The Cork Mechanics' Institute, established since 1868 in the local Lancastrian Schools, was transferred to the Hall. Here, the sons of artisans were educated for a small fee, instructive lectures were delivered to the working man, and a library presented by the Mayor and augmented by donations

1. Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

2. CE, 3 Feb., 29 Mar., 1870.

from a generous public helped to 'improve the moral and intellectual condition' of the trades. The trades' own appeal for funds echoed the benevolent paternalism of the Hall's projectors:

Though there are, as there must be, social differences and distinctions, there is ... no difference whatever between the natural capacities of the children of the rich and the children of the poor ... Apprenticed at an early age to our respective trades, and employed during the entire day from morning to evening at our work, we naturally want some time for self-improvement ... A well selected library, suited to the various tastes and requirements, would afford us the best of all means for this improvement, and rendering the working classes of this city more capable of holding their own in these days of unexampled progress.¹

Most trades representatives were unwilling to submit to clerical and business-man control and refused to couple the proposed Mechanics' Hall with the temperance movement. Thus, without the trades' co-operation, the project had to be temporarily laid aside, and not until the trade societies were brought directly into the consultations in 1870 did the project gather momentum.² Even though the need for co-operation between the original projectors of the Hall and the trade societies had been admitted, the alliance was not a happy one. The two sections regarded the Hall from two different standpoints. To the business-men and Catholic clergy the Hall was not an amalgamation of trade society committees for the purpose of mutual protection, but an association of artisans for the purpose of individual moral improvement. Significantly, the rules of the Hall, as originally framed, forbade discussion of trade matters, polemics,

1. CE, 19 Oct., 1871.

2. Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

and politics.¹ In effect, from this viewpoint, the Mechanics' Hall was to operate simply as a mechanics' institute-cum-temperance society, or a trades' counterpart of the Catholic Young Mens' Society operating in the city since the early 1850s.²

Though the trades had initially echoed the temperance and self-improvement notes of the Hall's promoters, they really saw the Hall as the basis of an organization which would further their economic interests and give them a unified voice in public affairs. The eventual triumph of this view was ensured when the Hall's committee was formed from among the ranks of the trades themselves, each trade sending its president to sit on the committee. At least seventeen trades were represented in the government of the Mechanics' Hall, though some trades remained outside it, and many of those who joined continued to hold their committee meetings as they had always done, in the back rooms of public houses.³

The fate of the Mechanics' Institute which had been incorporated in the Hall, showed how soon the trades jettisoned the Hall's educational function. The Institute operated for a few years, but the atmosphere of the Mechanics' Hall proved unfavourable. Disputes between the trades and the Institute's management hindered progress, and by late 1876 the Institute had been removed from the Mechanics'

1. CE, 16 May, 1870.
2. CE, 5 Nov., 1852. The Catholic Young Mens' Society, founded in Limerick in 1851, spread to Cork in 1852. It was essentially a religious society, whose aim was 'the promotion of the individual and the advancement of the members in solid virtue and true intelligence.'
3. CE, 3 Feb., 1870; Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 9. The trades represented on the committee of the Hall were the plasterers, coopers, dyers, bakers, housepainters, cabinetmakers, paperhangers, carpenters, millwrights, curriers, tailors, ironworkers, masons, block-and-pump makers, cork cutters, tinplate workers, bootclosers.

Hall and re-established in the Lancastrian Schools, where it again came under the direct patronage of the Catholic clergy and a section of the city's business men.¹ In the same way the Hall soon abandoned the temperance role first planned for it. It failed to break the tradition of trade committee meetings in public houses, and it was ironic that when the law against Sunday opening of public houses was introduced in the late 1870s, the greatest opposition came from the trades of the Mechanics' Hall.² Nor was the anti-trade union stand of the original projectors of the Hall long allowed to continue. When the great tailors' strike broke out in 1870, the clerical supporters of the Hall had been at pains to point out that the Hall had no part in fomenting or conducting the strike. This was true but mid-way through the strike the Hall veered away from the path of neutrality, and organized trade meetings to give moral and financial support to the striking tailors, meetings at which were made some of the most militant speeches yet recorded among the Cork trade societies.³

Yet, in spite of these departures from the inoffensive role first envisaged for it, the Mechanics' Hall of the 1870s never developed into an effective trades council, still less into a radical exponent of the rights of labour, and the militancy evident during the strike of 1870 soon petered out. When the Nine Hours Movement reached Ireland, Cork was the first centre to become involved,⁴ but it was

1. CE, 21 Oct., 1876.

2. See below, pp. 470-71.

3. CE, 9, 29 June, 1870.

4. United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, Monthly Report, June 1872, p. 1; CE, 1 Jan., 27 Feb., 12, 13, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28 Mar., 1872.

not from the Mechanics' Hall that the initiative came. The movement was launched by societies unconnected with the Hall - the coachmakers, engineers and ironfounders - and though other societies reaped the benefit of the movement, the Mechanics' Hall earned none of the credit. Indeed, it was significant that the local Nine Hours League met, not in the Hall, but in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers club-room in Devonshire Street.¹

The inherent social moderation and conservatism of the Mechanics' Hall was most evident in its reaction to the attempt in 1872 to establish a branch of the First International in Cork. The International, in fact, got no real chance to root itself in the city. Scarcely had its projectors arrived in the city than they were denounced by the local press and clergy as a foreign and atheistic body.² But even more detrimental to the International's progress was the hostility of the extreme nationalist element, strongly represented among the trades. The International's organizers had naturally hoped to find sympathy among the artisan class, and vigorously canvassed the Cork trade societies, denying that the new organization had been 'hatched by English and Colonial Atheists', and insisting that nationalism and internationalism were compatible:

Although believing that our first duty is to advocate the right of Ireland to make her own laws, we consider ourselves bound, and do pledge ourselves as Irish working men, to co-operate through the International with the working classes of all other nations ...³

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1. CE, 19, 21, 23, 25 Mar., 1872.
 2. CE, 13, 26 Mar., 1872.
 3. CE, 16 Mar., 1872.

The canvas proved unsuccessful. Among the strongest opponents of the International were some of the city's committed Fenians,¹ and the Mechanics' Hall, among whose membership the International had hoped to find its support, opted for Fenianism and against Internationalism. Some members of the trades did prove friendly to the International, but the biased reporting of the local press succeeded, as it had done in the case of the Irish Democratic Association twenty years previously, in concealing this sympathy from the public, giving publicity instead to that element of the trades which violently opposed the International. The reason for trades' opposition to the International was two-fold. There was firstly the mistaken idea, bolstered by clerical opposition, that the new body was anti-religious. Secondly, it was rejected (again mistakenly) as a body inimical to nationalistic and Fenian aspirations. The most vehement opposition to the International came from the Cork Workingmens' Association, the local Fenian cover group, and from individual active Fenian members of the trade societies.²

Some two decades later, the Webbs were told that the organized trades of Cork had split sometime in the 1870s, following internal political disagreements.³ It is not clear whether this break-up occurred because of the International issue, or because of a different disagreement among the trades during the parliamentary election of 1872. On this occasion, different factions of the trades supported

1. CE, 27 Mar., 1872.

2. CE, 21, 25, 27, 29, 30 Mar., 1872; Fenian Papers, 1872: 8105R.

3. Webb Trade Union Collection, Sect., A., Vol. III, f. 45.

rival nationalist candidates. One group sided with the pro-Fenian, Joseph Ronayne, while the other faction supported the more moderate nationalist John Daly, Mayor of Cork, and benefactor of the Mechanics' Hall.¹ Though the details of this quarrel were obscure, it was seemingly a confrontation between Fenians and moderates in the Hall, and during the late 1860s and early 1870s the ultra-nationalist or Fenian element came increasingly to dominate the affairs of the Mechanics' Hall. In fact, so successful was this Fenian take-over that the Hall became more identified with Fenianism than with trade unionism, and not until the early 1880s was an attempt made to form a general trades association whose main interests were economic rather than political.

The Cork United Trades Association, 1881

In February 1881, following the example of the trades of the county Cork town of Kanturk, eleven of the Cork city trades met to form the United Trades Association and Irish Industrial League. The aim of the new body, like that of its predecessors, was to combat the prevailing trade depression by promoting home industry and increasing employment opportunities, and to protect the interests of the affiliated trades by establishing a dispute-free industrial climate.²

1. CE, 2, Jan., 11, 21 Nov., 1872.

2. CE, 21, 25 Feb., 1881. The trades involved in establishing the United Trades Association were the coopers, bootmakers, tailors, cabinet makers, ladies' shoemakers, coachmakers, farriers, shipwrights, stonecutters, bakers and carpenters.

Founded on the initiative of the trades themselves, and initially intended as an organization confined to artisans, the United Trades Association was within a few months of its foundation opened up to 'all persons of character, whether in the shopkeeping or labouring interest' and it was proposed to find 'some good business men' to accept places on the executive committee.¹ This decision to broaden the basis of membership was prompted mainly by financial considerations, the non-tradesmen or honorary members being required to pay an annual fee of one guinea, while tradesmen members paid only one shilling a year. The move was only partly successful. The Trades Association received no more than thirty honorary subscriptions in any one year, and periodic appeals for funds for specific purposes met with a similarly unenthusiastic response. The most generous donations came always from the same quarter - from the brewing and distilling interests, traditionally generous to and popular with the trades.² Yet, in spite of its limitations, this extra-trade financial support was vital to the United Trades' existence. The yearly accounts of the association were not published in sufficient detail to show its exact dependence on such subscriptions, but up to the mid-1880s, at least, from forty to eighty percent of the United Trades' income came from such sources.³

Financial matters apart, the United Trades welcomed middle class participation because of the social tone and respectability which accompanied it. In its early days, the Association was most anxious

1. CE, 11 July, 1881.

2. CE, 18 May, 18 July, 1881; 5 July, 1884; 6 May, 1892; 1 Jan., 1895.

3. CE, 31 Jan., 12 Sept., 1884.

for this middle class approval, and particularly for that of the Catholic clergy. This was evident in the way the new association vigorously canvassed, and quickly received, the patronage of a number of Catholic bishops, and in the fact that in 1884 the honorary vice-presidency of the association was given to a local Catholic priest.¹ The quest for middle class patronage was also discernible in the conferring of the honorary presidency and vice-presidency in 1881 on Charles Stuart Parnell and John Daly, the two city MPs, though this was prompted less by the desire for middle class support than by the trades' anxiety to show solidarity with the forces of nationalism.² The United Trades' quest for middle class approval was a constant feature throughout the nineteenth century. It had been evident in the propaganda of the People's Hall in the 1830s, in the anti-strike pronouncements of the Trades Associations of the 1850s and '60s, and in the organization of the Mechanics' Hall in 1870. By the early 1890s this anxiety for middle class support had petered out, to be replaced by a more militant spirit of trade solidarity. Yet, even during the 1880s, the middle class link, essential though it was, did not detract from the primary purpose of the United Trades - viz. the organization and protection of the trades themselves.

The founders of the United Trades of 1881 did not intend the new body to be confined to Cork city, but ambitiously planned to spread its influence over Munster so that it would become eventually an all-

1. CE, 30 May, 13 June, 1881; 31 Jan., 1884.

2. CE, 11 Apr., 1881.

Ireland body.¹ Thus, during 1881, delegates from the Cork body co-operated with the trades of the county towns to establish branches of the association in most of the major towns of county Cork, and in two centres in the neighbouring county Tipperary.² These country branches were in constant communication with, and paid affiliation fees to the Cork city branch, though some town branches resented this financial subservience to Cork.³

The accession of trade societies to the city's United Trades Association proceeded steadily during 1881 and 1882. The eleven trades forming the nucleus of the association were joined, after some hesitation, by the building trades - masons, plasterers, plumbers and painters⁴ - by a number of small declining trades like the nailors, millers, french polishers, ropemakers, corkcutters, upholsterers and sawyers,⁵ and by the printing trades.⁶ By mid-1881 the Cork United Trades had sixteen affiliated trades, and by mid-1882 this had risen to twenty-seven.⁷ But between 1882 and early 1884 the impetus for organization declined. Several of the county branches continued to function, but the disturbance accompanying the land agitation prevented further organization in the country areas.⁸ The city branch faced a

1. CE, 11 July, 1881.

2. CE, 1 Jan., 21 Feb., 10 March, 2, 3, 10 Sept., 17, 18 Oct., 1881. The County Cork branches were at Skibbereen, Queenstown, Mallow, Bantry, Fermoy, Youghal, Clonakilty, Passage, Mitchelstown, Kanturk and Millstreet. The County Tipperary branches were at Clonmel and Tipperary town.

3. CE, 11 July, 1881.

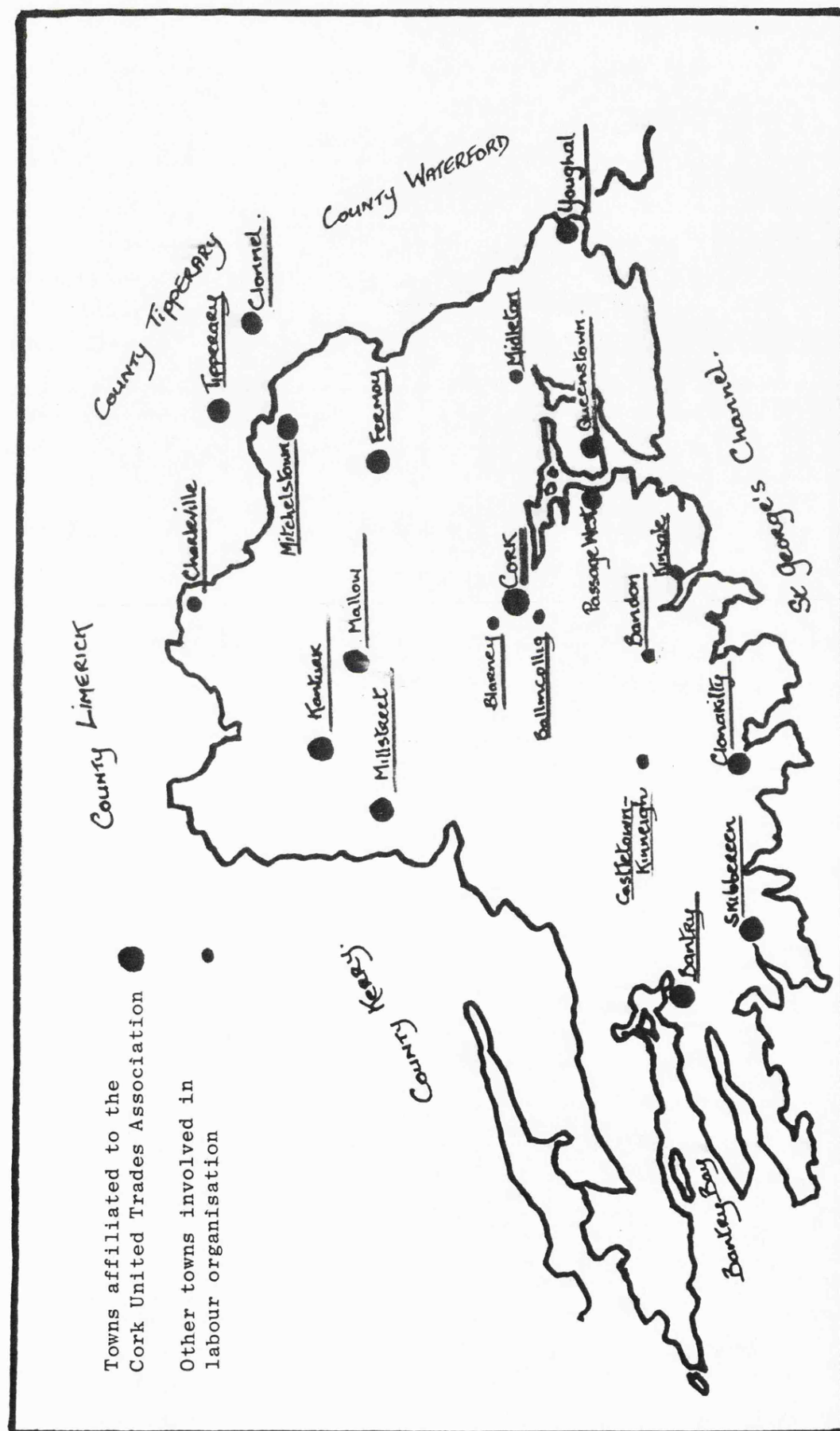
4. CE, 11, 25, 28 July, 1881.

5. CE, 28 July, 23 Sept., 1881; 27 Jan., 1882.

6. CE, 24 Apr., 4 Aug., 1882.

7. CE, 28 July, 1881; 4 Aug., 1882.

8. CE, 11 July, 1881; 30 Jan., 1882.



MAP 4: Towns in County Cork associated with the United Trades Association, 1881-1884

similar setback at this time, though the trouble in this case was due less to external than internal matters. Part of the city United Trades' trouble was political, involving an attack on the association's president, John Henry Jolley, for his lack of nationalist enthusiasm.¹ But more important was the rising discontent within the United Trades over the management of funds and the election of officers.

Each affiliated trade was entitled to send delegates to sit on the council of the United Trades, one delegate to represent each twenty men in the individual trade society. For each delegate sent to the council, a trade society paid one pound a year - i.e. one shilling per member of the trade society. By this method, numerically strong trades like the coopers or carpenters could expect a larger representation and a stronger voice in the United Trades than could a weak trade like the nailors. But because the required affiliation fee of one shilling per member meant a higher fee as well as a greater representation, trades economized by registering only a portion of their membership with the United Trades. The bakers' society, for example, with a total membership of some 250 men, registered only sixty men with the United Trades, thereby paying only three pounds affiliation fee instead of ten pounds, and having three instead of ten delegates on the council.²

The officers of the United Trades were elected by the delegates from among themselves at the quarterly meetings of the association, but most officers retained office for much longer than three months -

1. See below, pp. 405-7.

2. Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on Licensing Laws, PP. 1898, xxxviii, Qs 65883-4; 65893; 65901-11.

usually for one or two years. During the first three years of the United Trades' existence, each of the officers of president, vice-president and treasurer changed hands only once. Only the office of secretary remained in the hands of the same individual (one of the coachmakers' delegates) while the other three offices had been held by delegates of the tailors, printers, stonecutters, cabinet-makers and plasterers.¹ Thus, over a three year period, delegates of six of the United Trades' twenty-seven affiliated trades had held office. Though the majority of affiliated trades seemed satisfied with this arrangement, others felt that a clique had developed, and the carpenters and printers demanded that the election of officers be removed from the hands of the delegate meeting and vested in the general membership of the United Trades. When this motion was defeated, the two dissenting societies, joined now by the masons, drew up another bone of contention - the management of United Trades funds. They demanded that the association's balance sheet be examined at the delegate meeting in the presence of a press reporter. This demand - as it had obviously been intended to do - created confusion among the delegates, and the opening up of the accounts was refused on the grounds that 'there was an explanation which it would not be prudent to give the public - it would be better to do it privately'. Defeated in their motion, the carpenters, printers and masons withdrew from the United Trades.²

1. CE, 18 Apr., 1881; 18 Dec., 1882; 15 Feb., 1883.

2. CE, 8, 15, 23 Nov., 1883.

The details of the dispute about the finances are not at all clear. The carpenters were generally believed to have brought up the matter through malice, having failed to secure the election of officers of their own choice. Yet the printers and masons, who seemingly had no grievance of this kind, were quite as vehement in their condemnation of the United Trades' management of funds as were the carpenters.¹ In fact, the financial condition of the United Trades was chaotic. The trade depression which the association had been founded to combat had caused many trade societies to fall into arrears, while the expenses incurred in organizing the county branches had decimated the United Trades' funds. The secession of the carpenters, printers and masons in 1883 was simply the last straw, for even before their withdrawal over half the affiliated trades had fallen away, and by early 1884 only nine trade societies remained in the United Trades Association.²

The decline of the association was due to a mixture of trade depression and apathy, political squabbles and bad management. But in the search for a scapegoat the obvious choice was the United Trades' secretary, Michael McCarthy, the coachmakers' delegate. He was - quite unfairly - singled out from the rest of the committee, and blamed for the financial mess, and when he resigned in an atmosphere of much bitterness, the reorganization of the United Trades was placed in the hands of the local priest, Fr. Francis Hayde.³ The first phase of

1. CE, 20 Mar., 1884.

2. CE, 15 Nov., 1883; 13 Feb., 23 May, 9 Aug., 12 Sept., 1884.

3. See Table 13, p. 30.

the United Trades' existence was over, but the new resilience of the trades meant that the association, unlike those of former decades, did not fade out at this first major setback. In its new phase from 1884 on, though certain organizational changes were effected and changes of policy attempted, the planks on which the association was established remained intact - the promotion of home industry and the protection of trade interests.

The United Trades and the Irish Manufacture Movement

The promotion of local manufacture was an objective familiar to the trades and the middle classes of Cork since the third decade of the nineteenth century, and it figured largely in the programme of the United Trades Association in the first phase of its existence from 1881 to 1884. Though the reasons for trade depression were complex, importation from abroad was considered a major factor in the decline of home industry. The United Trades Association, which had taken the sub-title, Irish Industrial League, aimed to awaken public opinion to the extent of importation and to develop a popular preference for home-manufactured goods. The trades themselves were probably more conscious than other parties of the extent of importation. It was, in fact, the most frequently voiced complaint at United Trades' meetings - far more common than complaints against non-union labour and wage grievances.¹ Even relatively prosperous trades like the

1. See Table 20, p. 143 above.

printers suffered the effects of competition from cheap imported work, but those worst hit were small declining trades like the nailors, cork cutters and ropemakers, and large outworking trades like shoemakers and tailors.

The promotion of local manufacture necessitated co-operation between the trade societies and the concerned professional and employer class and the shopkeeping class. Non-cooperation by any of these groups meant the failure of the movement, as evident in the collapse of the Irish manufacture drives of the 'thirties, 'forties and 'fifties. The formation of the United Trades Association in early 1881 was the trades' first step since 1842 in the attempted revival of local manufacture. In the general trades' apathy of the post-Famine years the local manufacture movement of 1850-52 had been ignored by the artisans. In 1881 the trades were the first to act in support of the local manufacture revival, and the middle class response came later in the year when a series of meetings of the inhabitants of the different city wards culminated in the establishment of a local Irish manufacture committee, similar to those of the 1840s and '50s. The Cork effort of 1881 was modelled on a similar Dublin committee set up earlier that year.¹

The high point of co-operation between the United Trades and these middle class promoters of home manufacture was reached in the early 1880s with the establishment of the Cork Boot Factory and the organization of the Dublin Exhibition. The United Trades, concerned

1. CE, 21, 31 Aug., 2, 21 Sept., 5, 24 Oct., 1881.

by the largescale importation of cheap footwear, first mooted the Boot Factory scheme, and its success in the face of considerable odds was largely due to the drive and enthusiasm of one man, the United Trades' secretary, Michael McCarthy. It seems quite likely that McCarthy was the originator of the scheme which resulted in the establishment of Cork Boot Factory in Blackpool, seven months after it was first proposed to a meeting of artisans, traders and prominent citizens.¹ McCarthy's scheme, based on his observation of the Dublin firm of Winstanley and Company, bore his own peculiar brand of radicalism. The main feature of the scheme, as McCarthy wished it to develop, was the exclusion of large capitalists from the running of the new company. This was to be achieved by limiting each shareholder's quota to twenty shares. The trade societies were to preserve their role in running the new company by purchasing shares, the profits from which would help to finance the running of their individual trade societies.² The United Trades' voice in the new company seemed guaranteed when McCarthy became secretary of the directorate, and the enthusiasm of the United Trades for the project was obvious as the association's executive pressed the affiliated trades to support the new factory.³

Unhappily for McCarthy's scheme, the response of the individual trade societies, and of the working classes generally, was disappointing. McCarthy travelled round the county, at his own expense,

1. CE, 31 Aug., 1881; 14 Apr., 1882.

2. CE, 31 Aug., 1881.

3. CE, 2 Feb., 20 May, 1882.

in an effort to popularise the company among potential small shareholders, but with little success. By February 1882, six months after the scheme had been launched, only five-hundred pounds had been lodged to the company's credit, and in an effort to bring in more money the twenty-share limit was scrapped, the upper limit now being one-hundred shares. This defeated the initial plan to exclude large capital holders, and the company eventually became much like any other company, with very little influence in the hands of the trades.¹

While the Cork Boot Factory was being planned, there was a revival at national level of the idea of industrial exhibitions as a means of boosting home manufacture. The first of these exhibitions since 1852 was held in Dublin late in 1882, meeting with an enthusiastic response from the Cork trades and the business-men promoters of home manufacture. The limited company established to finance the exhibition sold some two-thousand shares in Cork, 240 of which were, in spite of the prevailing depression, in the hands of the trade societies. The bakers, carpenters and tailors headed the list, with forty shares each, but even the depressed and numerically declining nailors took two shares.² The United Trades Association was enthusiastic about the exhibition, delegates from twenty of the twenty-seven affiliated societies, accompanied by bands and a banner made specially for the occasion, attending the official opening of the exhibition in August 1882³ - a very different reaction to the

1. CE, 24 Feb., 8 July, 1882; 23 May, 1884.

2. CE, 1, 8 Feb., 15 Mar., 1882.

3. CE, 29 June, 11, 14 Aug., 1882.

apathetic response of the trades to the Cork Exhibition of 1852.¹

A similar exhibition was held in Cork in 1883, and again the trade societies took a prominent part. The United Trades' president was appointed to the exhibition's executive committee, and the exhibition opened with impressive trades pageantry. Some 1,300 local artisans, together with delegations from many other Irish towns and cities, marched under expensive new banners in the most flamboyant trades demonstration seen in Cork for several years.² But enthusiasm for the exhibition idea was already waning. The prevailing trade depression had prevented the members of many trades from subscribing, and many of the larger city firms were accused of losing interest in the whole Irish manufacture question. Besides, when the exhibition closed, it transpired that the executive committee had not fulfilled its promise to organize a sale of individual artisans' exhibits, and the disappointed parties, financially at a loss through the oversight, retained much bitterness towards the gentlemen at fault.³ Consequently, when a largely middle class local Irish Industrial Association was set up in 1884, the United Trades showed no interest, though the secretary, McCarthy, was involved.⁴

In 1885 the trades made their last effort to promote an industrial exhibition and on this occasion the exhibition was different to those of the preceding years, being confined to the work of artisans, and not including the products or manufactures of any large concerns.

The idea of an artisans' exhibition originated in a paper read to the

1. See above, p. 133.

2. CE, 22 Dec., 1882; 19 Jan., 29 Mar., 4 July, 1883.

3. CE, 15 Dec., 1881; 7 Feb., 1882; 21 Nov., 1882; 19 Jan., 15 Feb., 10, 17 Mar., 23 May, 1883; 29 Oct., 1885.

4. CE, 19 Mar., 1884.

Dublin trades in 1884. A committee to further the project was set up in Dublin, and the Cork United Trades, in response to this Dublin committee's promptings, initiated the movement in Cork by requesting the mayor to hold a public meeting on the subject.¹

The purpose of the Artisans' Exhibition was to foster interest in native craftsmanship, and the proceeds of the exhibition were intended to finance technical education for the sons of tradesmen. Each artisan was asked to pay threepence per week for eight weeks towards the erection of the exhibition buildings, and a committee of professional and business men, together with the president and secretary of the United Trades, was appointed to canvas the city for support.² Again, as in 1883, the trades' response was disappointing, and when the exhibition opened, only £54 of the total Cork contribution of £307 had been given by the trade societies - a sorry sum when compared with the average £300 spent on political demonstrations a few years previously in honour of Parnell.³ Depression of trade was blamed for the unenthusiastic response of the trades, but disillusionment with the whole idea of exhibitions was of equal importance. Few exhibits were entered for the event by the Cork trades, there was no pageantry at the opening of the exhibition, and the relatively small financial contribution from merchants and business men showed that the middle classes, no less than the trades, had wearied of the exhibition idea.⁴

1. CE, 14 Mar., 1885; Cork Trades Letter to P.J. Madden, Mayor, 1885, Cork Archives.

2. CE, 19 Mar., 1885.

3. CE, 11 Dec., 1882; 20, 27 Apr., 25 May, 1885.

4. CE, 11, 20, 27 Apr., 21, 25 May, 1885.

At the nadir of depression in 1886, the operative tailors, particularly affected by importation and the produce of the sweated trade, called a meeting to consider the question of reviving local manufacture. The total lack of response was indicative of how little life was left in the Irish manufacture movement of the 'eighties. The meeting was attended by no prominent public or business men, and by none of the trades except the tailors themselves and some workers from a local match factory threatened with closure. The meeting, of course, accomplished nothing, and the utter helplessness of those involved was obvious in their return to the political panacea - so often resorted to when all else failed. Just as the Cork artisans of the 'thirties and 'forties called for Repeal as a cure-all, now the tailors declared that political change alone could restore the fortunes of Ireland and that the

consummation of Home Rule /by/ opening up trade and manufacturing industry /would/ once more and forever restore peace and prosperity to our dear old land.¹

It is significant that when all the other Cork trade societies avoided any interaction with the National League of the 'eighties, the depressed tailors alone joined the League in a body.²

The movements to promote Irish manufacture in the 'eighties were the last of their kind in Cork for the remainder of the century. The movement of the 1890s under the patronage of the Countess of Aberdeen never roused any interest among the trades, though it did get some support in middle class circles.³ The movements of the

1. CE, 29 Oct., 1885; 6, 11 Feb., 1886.

2. CDH, 23 Nov., 1887.

3. CE, 17 Feb., 21 July, 1893.

'eighties were a hopeless attempt not alone to fight against foreign competition, but to reconcile the conflicting interests of employers and increasingly assertive trade unions. These two forces were not, it need hardly be said, always in conflict, and many unions worked in relative harmony with the employers of their members.¹

But between employers and unions there was an inevitable divergence of interest which could develop into active hostility when either side pressed its case too far. The Irish manufacture movement would, it was hoped, by the promotion of local industry and the improvement of employment opportunity, foster harmony between master and man. But the manufacture movement of the eighties, like those of previous decades, was really an employers' movement which clashed with some of the basic aims of the trade societies. This was most evident in the attitude of the movements' business-men promoters towards the question of wages. Like their counterparts in the 1840s who had naively advocated the introduction of female labour as a means of cutting wages in the hatting trade,² these men regarded cheap labour as a major requisite of the man of capital who intended to set up a new industry. The trade societies of the 'eighties, like those of the 'forties, were strongly opposed to the use of female and unskilled labour in areas considered the preserve of the skilled artisan, but such labour was regarded by the men of capital as an advantage to be exploited, and considered the new clothing firm of W.P. Lyons and

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1. The coopers' society, for instance, decided in 1896 to cut their rates for cask making in order to help the master coopers to get over a period of depression. Coopers' Minute Book, 2 Nov., 1896.
 2. See above, p.91.

Company certain to succeed because of 'the large amount of cheap labour which is available /in Cork/'.¹

In fact, most of the new enterprises begun during the 'eighties did nothing to displace skilled labour, but aimed, rather, to employ unskilled and female labour in hitherto unexploited areas of manufacture. On the other hand, and this was how the trades viewed it, they did nothing to extend employment to the skilled tradesman. The Cork Boot Factory, for example, proved of no benefit to the boot-makers, who had purchased several shares in it, for it employed rivetters, a semi-skilled body unconnected with the hand workers.² Similarly, the match factories established in the early 'eighties employed unskilled and female labour, including a great number of outworkers,³ while other concerns like the new Chemical Blacking Company established in 1882, and the previously mentioned clothing firm of W.P. Lyons and Company, depended on a similar workforce.⁴ The provision of such factory work was, of course, of great benefit in providing much needed employment for women and unskilled men and boys, and when some of these concerns collapsed in the depression of the mid-eighties, the already high tide of unemployment was swelled considerably. When the Blackpool Flax Mills closed down in 1884, some 420 women were laid off, and with the closure of the match factory and a biscuit factory in 1886, some one-thousand men and women joined the ranks of the unemployed.⁵

1. Southern Industry, April 1889, p. 11.

2. CE, 31 Jan., 1884; 24 Feb., 1886.

3. CE, 3 Dec., 1881; 24 Feb., 11 July, 1882; Irish Builder, Vol. xxv, No. 568, p. 264, 15 Aug., 1883.

4. CE, 11 Mar., 1882.

5. CE, 2 May, 1884, 6 Feb., 20 Apr., 1886.

The trades societies themselves, though disgruntled at their failure to benefit from the establishment of new businesses in the city, were aware of the need to provide employment for women,¹ and to introduce mechanization and the factory system into some industries to allow them to compete with foreign manufacture. The rope makers, for example, claimed that a properly financed rope cordage factory in the city would provide employment for three-hundred of the trade, and blamed their trade's decline on employers' failure to introduce mechanization.² The cork cutters and stone-cutters, too, blamed their decline on a similar failure to bring modern equipment into the trade.³ The benefits of mechanization were most evident in the printing trade, where, by the early 'nineties, the increasing use of machinery had led to an increase in numbers employed and to a rise in wages.⁴ But not every trade welcomed mechanization, and it proved a mixed blessing even within those trades most benefited. The printing trade was such a case: while the majority of those in the trade benefited from mechanization, the pressmen were gradually phased out, and were never re-absorbed into the trade.⁵ The coopers and cabinetmakers opposed mechanization, which made many of their members redundant, and the french polishers and upholsterers, together with the tailors, found that the increasing use of machinery in their trades had led to an influx of female and sweated labour and consequent unemployment for the skilled artisan.⁶

1. CE, 28 Apr., 1887.

2. CE, 19 Oct., 1881.

3. Evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour, 1893-4, Qs. 16878-82.

4. *ibid.*, Qs. 17058-62.

5. *ibid.*

6. CE, 27 Sept., 1895; 8, 15 May, 1896; See below, pp. 305-55.

Thus, mechanization, which was for the employer a welcome advance, was regarded with mixed feelings by the trades, and the same differences were obvious in the two groups' attitude towards the issues of wages and unskilled labour.¹ Thus, though the manufacture revival efforts of the 'eighties provided a ground for co-operation between the trades and the businessmen, the bonds were quite fragile and liable to snap at the least extra tension. Thus, Daniel Galvin, mayor of Cork in 1882, and by trade a master baker, suddenly passed from favour to odium in the eyes of the trades when he went against their interests. He had earned their gratitude by helping to finance their hall when times were hard, but when he led the opposition to a general strike by the operative bakers in 1883, he fell quickly from favour.² In the same way, Henry L. Tivy, proprietor of the local conservative newspaper, the Cork Constitution, had been popular with the United Trades in the early 1880s, but a major dispute with his printing staff led to a complete break-down in relations between him and the United Trades, though in his case political differences were as significant as trade matters.³

Though the United Trades Association was, in the early days of its existence, anxious for the support of the middle class and clerical element, it estranged many potential supporters by its strongly militant attitude towards those who failed to patronize home manufacture. This militancy was largely due to the influence of the United Trades' secretary, Michael McCarthy. His forced resignation

1. CE, 9, 10, 12 June, 1893; 1 Feb., 8 July, 1882.

2. CE, 5 Jan., 1882; 7, 8, 9 Mar., 1883.

3. CE, 4 Apr., 1885; 4, 23, June, 1888; 5 June, 9 Aug., 1895;
See below, pp. 408-10.

from office in 1884 and the harsh criticism of his activities while in office, were partly due to the new organizers' fear that he had been leading the Trades in too aggressive a manner, thereby discouraging desirable middle class supporters. The first militant involvement of the United Trades Association soon after its foundation, concerned a protest against the importation from England of building materials for a new hall of residence attached to the Queen's College. The chief individuals involved in the building of the hall were William Bence-Jones, a county Cork landlord of Land War notoriety,¹ and the Rev. George Webster, Church of Ireland Dean of Residence in the Queen's College. The United Trades' response to the importation was militant in the extreme, the trades delegates declaring their intention to deal with Bence-Jones and Dr. Webster 'by any means they had at their command'. The strong language of the trades was prompted by the excitement of the prevailing land agitation and the popular hostility towards Bence-Jones as much as by their resentment at the actual importation issue. But the incident also coincided with a wage strike among the unskilled labourers of the city, so that the grievances of the striking labourers became confused with the anti-importation stand of the United Trades, and both became mixed with the general anti-landlord feeling accompanying the current land war. In keeping with the popular boycott techniques of the Land League, the Cork carters, falling in with the United Trades and the striking labourers, blacked the first cargo of building materials which had eventually to be dis-

1. James S. Donnelly, The Land and the People of Nineteenth Century Cork (London, 1975), pp. 270-75.

charged by government employees at the Haulbowline docks. When the second cargo was unloaded some days later by specially recruited labour, those involved in discharging it were attacked by a mob, and the carts bringing the material to the site of the hall were ambushed en route.¹ Behind the boycott were Michael McCarthy and the leaders of the labourers' strike, and McCarthy narrowly escaped a term in gaol for his participation.²

The next occasion of strong action by the United Trades - though less militant than the reaction to Bence-Jones and Webster - involved a bitter confrontation in late 1881 between the Trades and a prominent Catholic clergyman. Though the United Trades had received Catholic episcopal patronage, the clergy generally gave little practical help to either the United Trades or the cause of home manufacture. In fact, in 1881 a number of parochial clergy, close on the heels of the Bence-Jones affair, imported material for the building and furnishing of city churches.³ The worst offender, Canon Hegarty of SS. Peter and Paul's Church, had not alone imported the materials for a new mural altar, but had withdrawn the contract for carved wooden confessionals and statues from a Cork cabinetmaking firm, and sent it to a firm in Belgium. On the summons of Michael McCarthy, the masons and stonecutters withdrew from work on the altar, and placards posted throughout the city called on all tradesmen to boycott the work:

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1. CE, 19, 20, 29 July, 10 Aug., 1881.
 2. CE, 8 Aug., 1881; 23 May, 1884.
 3. CE, 8 Aug., 1881.

Tradesmen of the city and county are requested to give no help to put up the foreign work lately brought into SS. Peter and Paul's Church and sought to be put up by stealth. Let it lie there until those who imported it learn the fact that Irishmen want the work more and can do it as well and as cheap as foreigners. Teach such people that you will not allow money to be sent out of the country for work which can be done at home, while you and your families starve. God Save Ireland.¹

The offending clergyman, called upon by a meeting of the United Trades to explain his actions, pointed out that the greater part of the work had been done locally, and that the local firm's delay in executing the work had forced him to send it abroad. The reaction to these explanations was hostile in the extreme, and the clergyman's pompous attitude was answered by a storm of hissing - a reaction to which he was not accustomed, particularly at the hands of tradesmen. The trades confirmed the boycott on the work, and appointed a committee to investigate how many local churches gave their contracts to local firms.² But the militancy petered out, and after a lapse of some weeks the United Trades decided to lift the boycott on the work in SS. Peter and Paul's, considering that the clergyman involved had learned his lesson. But ten years later the same clergyman, by then a member of the Irish Industrial League, again offended the United Trades by importing an altar for another church, and added insult to injury by telling the United Trades deputation waiting on him that they were too well-dressed to look like fellows in need of work.³

1. CE, 7 Sept., 1881.

2. CE, 7, 8, 9, 10, 19 Sept., 1881.

3. CE, 2 May, 1891.

Though the militancy of the United Trades was toned down when, in 1884, McCarthy left office and Fr. Hayde took over the reins, the association continued to speak out against clerical non-cooperation in the cause of local manufacture. The importation of altars by the Augustinian community in 1888,¹ and the importation of an organ by the Dominicans in 1897 drew a sharp reaction from the United Trades. When the Dominicans ignored a letter of protest from the Trades, the association passed a resolution against future subscriptions by its members to the Dominican's church.² The effectiveness of such a ban was doubtful in the extreme, but its adoption, like the United Trades' stand on other such occasions, showed that the association was far from deferential to the clergy when trade interests were at stake. Anti-clericalism per se was not at all a feature of the Cork trades, as evidenced in 1870 by their blind stand against the International, but there was undoubted resentment over the clergy's failure to patronize home industry and to ensure that contractors working on church building gave preference of employment to union labour. Several trade deputations to the Catholic bishops and clergy, in quest of this practical support, were disappointed, and though the responsibility for providing men and materials usually lay with the contractors and architects, the clergy were never fully absolved from blame.³

1. CE, 24 Aug., 2 Sept., 1888.

2. CE, 23 Jan., 5 Feb., 1897.

3. CE, 25 July, 1881; 6, 7 Apr., 1886; 2 Sept., 1888.

How great was the United Trades' success in furthering home industry? In the 'eighties, the combined efforts of the United Trades and the middle class promoters of local industry did bear some fruit. The Cork Boot Factory, set up in 1882, employed a hundred workers by 1887, and the local nailmaking trade was given a short lease of life when, through the efforts of the United Trades and the local Home Manufacture Association, it was given the town council contract in 1886.¹ But these few advances fell far short of the hopes of the trades, and the limited extent of the United Trades' success was evident in the continuing complaints of importation in the nineties.

The trades laid much of the blame for this continuing problem of importation on the non-cooperation of the middle classes and the clergy, but equally responsible were the working classes of the city, who generally bought their shoes, clothing and furniture from establishments dealing in cheap imported goods.² The rank-and-file of the United Trades, indeed, gave much of their patronage to such shops. The tailoring trade, in particular, in which the effects of importation and sweating had been creating problems since the 1850s, protested in the late nineties against the amount of tradesman custom given to these 'unfair' shops. In an effort to combat this tendency, the tailors' society sent lists of fair employers to all the other trade societies, but the problem remained, even United Trades delegates patronizing such shops.³

1. CE, 14 Apr., 8 July, 1882; 10, 17 Apr., 1886; 15 Jan., 1887.

2. CE, 20 Apr., 1886; 10 Mar., 1887; 10 Aug., 1888; 24 May, 5 Oct., 1895.

3. CE, 25 Oct., 1895; 12 Feb., 1897.

Generally, the United Trades failed to establish a public preference for locally made goods, but by providing a forum where each trade society could air its grievances against individual employers or merchants who used imported goods, it did make such parties more careful in their dealings. While the United Trades could do nothing about mass working class preference for cheap imported goods, it brought to book many individuals sensitive to public opinion, and though many refused to give any satisfaction, others took note of the United Trades' protests and undertook to buy locally thereafter.¹

Between 1850 and 1880 the attempts to organize a Cork trades council followed a consistent pattern. The themes of temperance, self-improvement and reliance on middle-class and clerical support were as much a feature of the United Trades Association of 1881 as they had been in the Peoples' Hall of the 1830s, while the Irish manufacture revival of the 1880s was essentially the same as that of 1832.

But things were changing. The manufacture revival was the last of its kind during the century, and the temperance and self-betterment idea was given less and less attention by the organized trades. From the mid-1880s, moreover, clerical and middle-class patronage became less vital to the success of trades council organization, and the trades council abandoned its Mechanics Institute image in favour of a closer involvement in the organization and problems of its constituent trade unions.

1. CE, 23 July, 1886; 11 Mar., 1 Apr., 1892; 11, 12 May, 1894.

CHAPTER VI

TRADE UNIONISM AND LABOUR PROBLEMS,
1880-1900

During the 1870s fifteen separate labour disputes were recorded in Cork. In the 1880s the number rose to twenty one.¹ Table 35 shows the yearly frequency of strikes during the 1880s and '90s.

TABLE 35

Yearly Frequency of Strikes in Cork, 1880-1898.

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|----|-------|---|----|
| 1880 | - | - | 1890 | - | 12 |
| 1881 | - | 2 | 1891 | - | 4 |
| 1882 | - | 3 | 1892 | - | 5 |
| 1883 | - | 5 | 1893 | - | 5 |
| 1884 | - | 2 | 1894 | - | 7 |
| 1885 | - | 1 | 1895 | - | 4 |
| 1886 | - | 2 | 1896 | - | 7 |
| 1887 | - | 2 | 1897 | - | 6 |
| 1898 | - | 1 | 1898 | - | 4 |
| 1899 | - | 4 | | | |
| TOTAL | - | 22 | TOTAL | - | 54 |

Ten strikes during the 1880s were in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations, and eleven among the skilled trades. The main cause of strikes were wage claims and objections to the employment of non-union labour. Among the skilled trades five strikes concerned wage issues and three concerned non-union labour, while among the unskilled sector seven strikes were due to wage grievances and there were no recorded strikes against non-union labour. All but three of these strikes were confined to a single establishment, the three strikes of general extent being among the labourers (1881), and the operative bakers (1882 and 1883).

1. See Table 26 above, pp. 162-63.

Though it was claimed in the mid-nineties that relations between employers and workers were very good,¹ the decade actually saw a sharp increase in the number of strikes in the city.² Of the fifty-four strikes during the period 1890-99, twenty-seven were among the unskilled sector and twenty-six among the skilled. No year in the decade had less than four strikes, while in the 'eighties disputes were never more frequent than five in any one year. In the 'nineties, as in the 'eighties, disputes over wage issues accounted for the greatest overall number of strikes (i.e. twenty), but of this number fifteen were among the unskilled, while the skilled trades struck as often over the employment of non-union labour and over demarcation disputes as over wage questions. Table 36 indicates the main causes for disputes among the skilled and unskilled in the period 1880-1898.

TABLE 36³

Questions at issue in Strikes in Cork City, 1880-1898

| | 1880s | | | 1890s | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|-----------|---------|-------|
| | Unskilled | Skilled | Total | Unskilled | Skilled | Total |
| Wage Issues | 7 | 5 | 12 | 15 | 5 | 20 |
| Hours | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Non-union labour | - | 3 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| Objections to dismissal of men | - | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | 3 |
| Apprentice labour | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Machinery | 1 | - | 1 | - | 2 | 2 |
| Work-Demarcation | - | - | - | - | 5 | 5 |

1. Royal Commission on Labour, c. 1892, Qs. 17144.
2. The apparent rise in strike frequency, however, may be due to the greater attention paid by the press to labour matters in the 1890s.
3. Sources for this table are newspaper and trade union reports, 1880-1898.

TABLE 36 (Contd)

| | 1880s | | | 1890s | | |
|-------------|-----------|---------|-------|-----------|---------|-------|
| | Unskilled | Skilled | Total | Unskilled | Skilled | Total |
| Union Rules | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Importation | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Unspecified | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 10 | 12 | 22 | 27 | 26 | 53 |

In the nineties, too, the number of strikes affecting more than one establishment in a trade rose sharply over that of the 'eighties. Twelve such strikes occurred in the 'nineties, seven among the skilled and five among the unskilled. The skilled trades involved in such general strikes were the coopers (1893), bakers (1890), carpenters (1892 and 1896), tailors (1893), plumbers (1894), and painters (1898). The unskilled sectors affected were the builders' labourers (1890), pork butchers (1890), railwaymen (1890 and 1898), seamen (1890) and dock labourers (1890). This rise in the frequency of disputes coincided with increased unionization of the semi-skilled labour sector, and with the extension to Cork of further British-based amalgamated unions. Amalgamation, a feature of Cork unionism since as early as the 1830s, made its real impact in the 1880s and '90s, the number of amalgamated branches in the city rising from seven in 1880 to twenty-one in 1895, and falling slightly to sixteen by 1900.

Six new union branches were established on the amalgamated principle in Cork in the 1880s, and eight in the 1890s, either fusing or co-existing with local societies, or starting from scratch where no union previously existed. In 1880, over 75% of all unionized workers in Cork city had belonged to locally based societies. By

1895, over 70% belonged to amalgamated union branches. In 1880, over 1,550 workers had been organized in eighteen local societies and less than 600 in amalgamated branches. By 1895, over 1,800 workers belonged to amalgamated branches, and less than 900 to local societies. Table 37 shows the numerical strength of the local and amalgamated unions in Cork in 1880 and in 1895.

TABLE 37¹

Membership of local and amalgamated unions in Cork city,
1880 and 1895

| AMALGAMATED UNION BRANCHES | 1880 | 1895 |
|--|------|------------|
| United Society of Boilermakers & Iron Shipbuilders | 12 | 30 |
| United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers | 79 | 79 |
| Amalgamated Society of Engineers | 111 | 145 |
| United Operative Plumbers Association of Great Britain and Ireland | 10 | 39 |
| Amalgamated Society of Carpenters & Joiners | - | 240 |
| Amalgamated Society of Tailors | 238 | 220 |
| General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters & Joiners | - | 21 |
| Alliance Cabinet Makers' Society | - | 42 |
| Friendly, Society of Ironfounders of England, Ireland and Wales | - | 15 |
| National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters & Finishers | - | 42 |
| Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants | - | 228 |
| National Amalgamated Sailors' and Firemens' Union | - | 340 (1890) |
| Amalgamated Society of Pork Butchers of Cork, Limerick and Waterford | - | No details |
| Irish National Federal Union of Bakers | - | 208 |

1. Sources for this table are parliamentary papers and trade union reports, 1890-98.

TABLE 37 (Contd)

| | 1880 | 1895 |
|---|-------|------------|
| National Union of Dock Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland | - | 30 |
| Mutual Association of Coopers | - | 100 |
| Associated Shipwrights' Society | - | 83 |
| National Association of Operative Plasterers | - | 36 |
| Amalgamated Society of Millsawyers and Woodcutting Machinists | - | No details |
| Operative Stonecutters of Ireland | - | 110 |
| Amalgamated Society of Lithographic Printers of Great Britain and Ireland | - | No details |
| Ropemakers' society (title unknown) | - | - |
| TOTAL | 513 | 1,803 |
| <u>LOCAL SOCIETIES</u> | | |
| Cork Brewery Workmens' Society | 150 | No details |
| Cork Bakers' Benevolent Society | 200 | - |
| Builders' Labourers Society | - | 240 |
| Ancient Corporation of Carpenters | 200 | - |
| Cabinet Makers' Society | 60 | - |
| Cork Society of Coopers | 200 | - |
| Corkcutters' Society | 20 | 20 |
| Cork Farriers' Society | 32 | 20 |
| French Polishers' Society | 24 | - |
| Cork Operative Society of Masons & Bricklayers | 160 | 152 |
| Working Millers' Society | 40 | - |
| Co-operative Nailmakers of the City of Cork | 50 | - |
| Amalgamated Society of painters & paperhangers | 120 | 70 |
| Cork Society of Plasterers | 100 | 60 |
| Cork Ladies' & Gentlemens' Bootmakers' Union | 120 | 55 |
| Cork Harbour Shipwrights & Passage Shipwrights | 110 | - |
| Cork Typographical Society | 116 | 121 |
| TOTAL | 1,152 | 828 |

Militancy among the Unskilled, 1880-1900

When the wave of militancy among unskilled labour petered out in 1873, no further major strikes occurred in that sector until the early 1880s. When the militancy of the unskilled revived, it was not due to a systematic unionization of the labourers, but was a spontaneous response to a period of hardship. In early 1880 unemployment had risen sharply among the city's general labourers, and wage rates had been cut by many employers. In the late 1870s the wages of the Butter Market labourers had been cut to 13/6d to meet a low ebb in the trade, and in the early '80s the wages of the Passage Dock Labourers were cut from eighteen to sixteen shillings a week.¹ But other employers paid still lower rates, many as little as twelve shillings a week.²

The initiative for militant action came, however, not from the city but from the county. In 1881, spurred on by the urging of the more militant Land Leaguers, the farm labourers of Co. Cork and other areas launched a wave of strikes to secure a wage rise and prevent the use of labour-saving machinery by the farmers. Some instances of machine-breaking and rick burning occurred, but the movement was generally well disciplined. By the autumn of 1881, the farm labourers' strike had petered out. But before it did so, it had repercussions among the unskilled of the city. In early August 1881, a band of thirty striking farm labourers from Castletown-Kinneigh, some fifty miles from Cork, came into the city and called on the urban

1. CE, 7, 10, Nov., 1881; 4 Apr., 1882.

2. CE, 18, 19, 20, 22 July, 1881; Donnelly, op. cit., pp. 238-40.

labourers to strike for a wage rise.¹ The call was quickly answered, the workers in many establishments turning out, as in 1870, for a general wage rise to fifteen shillings a week - which rate had been eroded gradually since its concession a decade previously.²

As in 1870, too, the strike took the form of a cumulative movement, striking labourers marching from one concern to the next, calling on those still working to turn out. First to strike was the entire labouring force of the corporation - 'from the scavengers to the ferrumite men'. These were followed by the labourers at Hegarty's tanyard, those at Gouldings' Fertilizer Factory, and the men of the several foundries, who had been so prominent in the great strike wave of 1870.³

The strike, though militant in tone, lacked direction and it failed generally to win the fifteen shilling rate. A few employers did concede the wage rise, but a year later the general rate of wages for unskilled labourers in Cork city was between twelve and fifteen shillings - averaging around thirteen shillings a week.⁴ The corporation labourers met the most adamant refusal. A special meeting of the town councillors decided that their labourers had been

misguided in the matter by a parcel of idle fellows who did not want to work at all themselves,

and resolved that

it was the duty of the corporation to maintain their own dignity in this matter, and not allow themselves to be coerced into a course that they did not agree with.⁵

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1. CE, 2 Aug., 1881.
 2. CE, 3, 5 Aug., 1881.
 3. CE, 3, 5, 9 Aug., 1870.
 4. CE, 16 Aug., 1881; 13 Sept., 1882.
 5. CE, 15, 17 Aug., 1881.

Not surprisingly, the average weekly wage for a corporation labourer in 1890 was still only twelve shillings, and not until the organized labour element entered the corporation in 1899 was this rate increased.¹

Following the short upsurge of activity in 1881, unskilled labour in Cork made no further impact until the end of the decade, and its next upsurge mirrored, with a delay of one year, the militancy of the rising 'new unionism' in Britain. Between mid-1889 and early 1891 some fourteen strikes took place among different classes of unskilled or semi-skilled labour in Cork. The pork butchers, foundry workers, millers, builders' labourers, dock workers, carters, shipping company labourers and railwaymen had, by mid-1891, entered protracted disputes. An unprecedented aspect of this 'strike fever',² was the extent to which sympathetic strike action was taken by the different groups of workers concerned.

Unionization of the unskilled work force had in fact begun on a local basis in the early 1870s. In 1870 the Butter Market porters had organized themselves in the shortlived Saint Dominick Society, while around the same time there came into existence the Cork Labourers' Society (catering for the general labourer), the Cork Grocers' and Wine Merchants' Working Mens' Benevolent Benefit Society, and the Cork Working Mens' Association (initially a Fenian front organization but later concentrating its attention on labour matters, particularly among the dock labourers).³ Some of these societies had died out by the 1890s but the Grocers' and Wine Merchants' Porters' Society survived

1. CE, 6 May, 1890; PP, lxxxix, pp. 176-7.

2. CE, 7 May, 1890.

3. Sean Daly, op. cit., pp. 5, 90, 214, 314.

and a number of new societies sprang into existence. These were the Coal Carriers' Union, The Cork Carriers' Society, the City of Cork Quay Labourers' Protective and Benefit Society, and the Builders' Labourers' Society, all of which catered for clearly defined classes of labour.¹ Apart from these new local societies, Cork was touched in 1890 by the 'new unionism' which had been developing in Britain since the mid-1880s. By March 1889, the Sailors and Firemens' Union, founded in Sunderland in 1887, had a Cork branch, recruiting mainly among the employees of the Steam Packet Company.² Later in 1889 the Merseyside-based National Union of Dock Labourers established a branch in the city, again drawing its membership from the Steam Packet Company's employees and subsuming the local Quay Labourers' Society.³ At the same time, the British-based Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants set up a branch in the city. It had to compete for some time with a hostile separate Irish society established in February 1890, but the two societies eventually merged in late 1890, and thereafter Cork remained in the amalgamated society.⁴

A more successful attempt to establish an Irish-based amalgamated union was made in the case of the pork butchers - the men who killed pigs in the large bacon factories of the Munster towns. Cork was apparently the first centre to establish a pork butchers' society late

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1. CE, 12 Dec., 1889; 18 Mar., 9 May, 1890; PP, 1896, xcii, 277, p. 60; 1897, xcix, 275, pp. 16-17; 192-3.
 2. CE, 22 Mar., 1889; Seafaring: the Organ of the Seafaring Class, 30 Mar., 1889, p. 8; National Amalgamated Seamens' and Firemens' Union of Great Britain and Ireland, Annual Report, 1889, p. 11.
 3. CE, 9 Dec., 1889.
 4. Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Report and Financial Statement, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892; Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, General Secretary's Report, Feb., 1890.

in 1889 followed by Waterford and Limerick. In early 1890, it was decided

that the three societies representing Cork, Waterford and Limerick be amalgamated for our common good, without injuring employers in any way, and that we will be considered in future as one body, acting in concert for our mutual good, without harassing anybody.¹

The amalgamated society soon entered a major dispute with the owners of the big bacon-curing establishments of the Munster cities,² and though it was not entirely successful, the solidarity of the union members and the support of the other trade societies ensured that the settlement was relatively satisfactory.

It has been pointed out that the 'new unionism' of the 1890s generally failed to reach as wide a spectrum of the unskilled labour force as had at first been hoped. The new unions

depended far more on their foothold in certain industries and large works, than on their ability to recruit indiscriminately ... /They were/ alliances of local closed shops, composed of regular employees rather than associations of mobile, footloose labourers, ready to turn their hand to almost any task, which constitute an essential element in the myth of the new unionism.³

What was true of Britain was equally true of Ireland. Almost all the 'new' unions of the late 1880s and early '90s, those based on local as well as on amalgamated principles, catered for clearly defined classes of workers. Most of these workers, though referred to as 'unskilled', did, like the butchers or dockers, possess a certain skill or experience in their particular line of work, and they would

1. Limerick Chronicle, 25, 28 Jan., 1890.
2. See below, pp. 298-99.
3. H.A. Clegg, Alan Fox, A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889 (Oxford, 1964), p. 87.

have considered themselves far superior to the really unskilled casual labourer. Most of the new unions set up in Cork around 1890 recruited neither among the unskilled nor (with the exception of the builders' labourers and railwaymen) among the lowest wage earners. While the builders' labourers earned an average fourteen shillings a week,¹ and the railway porters and signalmen from sixteen to twenty-one shillings,² seamen earned between seventeen-and-sixpence and twenty-eight shillings a week, and dockers earned an average twenty-three shillings,³ rates not much lower than those earned in many skilled trades.

Most new unions in Cork were not, then, organizations of labour's underdogs. Only one Irish-based union at this time approached the concept of true general unionism on the model of the Knights of Labour. This was the South of Ireland Labour Union, which found most of its city recruits in the ranks of the foundry labourers and the millers. The origins of the South of Ireland Labour Union are obscure. There are indications that it was founded in 1884 by Villiers Stuart, a West Waterford landed proprietor. It was not founded as a trade union but in imitation of the United Trades Association of the neighbouring county of Cork.⁴ Between 1884 and 1890 this body fell into obscurity, but in early 1890 it again emerged, this time as an authentic general labour union unconnected with its original founder.

1. CE, 9, 14 Nov., 1890.

2. CE, 12 Dec., 1889. Goods porters and foremen received sixteen shillings; signalmen received between seventeen and twenty-one shillings.

3. CE, 31 Mar., 1890; Seafaring, 6 Apr., 1889, p. 13; 1 June, 1889, p. 12; 7 June, 1890, p. 13.

4. Irish Times, 20 Nov., 1885.

By this time it had some three-hundred members, reputedly drawn from fourteen different classes of labour, among whom the foundry labourers and mill workers were the most prominent. The leaders hoped to recruit the mass of their members from among the general labourers of the city, hitherto uncatered for by any of the emerging 'new' unions of the day. It is uncertain what influence, if any, the South of Ireland Labour Union had in the rural areas, or to what extent the city recruiting drive succeeded. The leaders of the union were, with one exception, unskilled labourers without any public influence. The exception was Cornelius P. O'Sullivan, a master cooper and publican and an active Fenian. He had been active in encouraging the labourers' strike of 1881,¹ and in the 1890s was, together with Michael Austen of the Typographical Society one of the few champions of unskilled labour among the skilled artisans of the city. The organized trades societies gave no support to the South of Ireland Labour Union. In fact they actively opposed its recruiting efforts and were instrumental in bringing about its ultimate failure.² The Union had some tenuous connections with the Knights of Labour, one of that body's members attending its first public meeting in Cork, but whatever these connections, they failed to win the Union any success or prestige in Cork, and by the mid-'90s it had faded from the scene.³

1. CE, 5, 8 Aug., 1881.

2. See below, pp. 382-83.

3. CE, 3, 24 Feb., 1890.

All these unions and societies came dramatically into the public notice in a wave of strikes in 1890. Already in 1889 simmering unrest had boiled over in a number of disputes. Flax mill workers struck unsuccessfully for a wage increase to fourteen shillings;¹ the pork butchers employed by Lunhams of Kemp Street struck with some success for a wage rise, the removal of an obnoxious foreman, and the deletion of the rule which required the searching of the persons of workers leaving the factory premises.²

The main phase of unskilled labour unrest began late in 1889, when the Great Southern and Western Railway goodsmen, organizing themselves during the previous two years, struck for a general wage rise of two shillings. They were joined in their demand by the goods guards, signalmen and porters along the line from Cork to Dublin. The goodsmen won their case, but the company adamantly refused to extend the requested wage rise to all porters on the railway. The strikers were forced to modify their demands and the week-long strike ended in a compromise general rise of one-and-sixpence per week.³

In spite of the strike's partial failure, it had not gone unnoticed in Cork that it was but one facet of a growing unrest among the labour force, one employer acknowledging that

the time was past when any company or public firm could proceed without giving fair attention and consideration to claims put forward by their servants.⁴

1. CE, 4 Sept., 1889.

2. CE, 9, 11, 13 July, 1889; PP, 1890, lxvii, p. 61.

3. CE, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16 Dec., 1889.

4. CE, 12 Dec., 1889.

Even the unorganized railway clerks were affected by the new air of militancy. Many clerks had come into Cork from the country stations to serve as blacklegs in the porters' strike of 1889, and this gathering ironically made the clerks aware of their own grievances. In early 1890 a petition, albeit a timid and ineffective one, was presented to the railway company directors to point out the unsatisfactory pay, short holidays and dearth of promotion prospects in the job.¹ Yet the clerks were to remain unorganized while the porters, signalmen and milesmen of the four major local railway companies formed themselves into a branch of the Irish Railway Servants Friendly Society and prepared themselves for future militant action.²

But the next railwaymens' strike in April 1890 had nothing to do with the railwaymens' own grievances. It was part of a cumulative movement of sympathetic strikes among the unskilled and semi-skilled workers of the city, sparked off by a strike among the dockers. The local members of the National Union of Dock Labourers, employed by the Clyde Shipping Company and by John Scott (coal merchant) struck for regular hours and a rise in wages to equal the twenty-four shilling weekly rate paid by the Steam Packet Company and several other city employers.³ Blackleg labour was quickly provided by the Clyde Shipping Company's clerks and by imported Glasgow labourers.⁴ The use of blackleg labour roused widespread resentment among the newly organized unskilled sector in the city. The Cork Carriers'

1. CE, 4 Feb., 1890.
2. CE, 10, 11, 14 Feb., 1890. The four major railway companies were the Great Southern and Western; the Macroom Railway; the Bandon and South Coast Railway; and the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway.
3. CE, 31 Mar., 1, 10 Apr., 1890.
4. CE, 2, 3, 5 Apr., 1 May, 1890.

Society, whose members worked for the hauliers of the city, were the first to enter the strike. The society members working for the local hauliers, Nat Ross and Son, refused to deliver goods to the blackleg dockers. The recalcitrant carriers were promptly replaced by blacklegs. Then several members of the Grocers' and Wine Merchants' Porters' Society, employed in the various grocery establishments in the city, refused to handle the goods brought by blackleg carriers, and they, in their turn, were dismissed and replaced.¹ At this stage the local branch of the Seamens' and Firemens' Union, already agitating for a rise in wages and regulation of hours in their own work, moved into the circle of sympathetic strikers, refusing to work with blackleg dockers and to handle goods brought by Nat Ross's blackleg carters.² Finally the railwaymen struck. Two of the Great Southern and Western goodsmen refused to handle goods brought by blackleg carriers, and were promptly dismissed. In protest against the dismissals the rest of the goodsmen in the Cork terminus struck, and further sympathetic action by the Bandon Railway workers was averted only with difficulty. Within a month of its inception, the wave of sympathetic strike action had affected five different classes of labour in fifteen separate business concerns. Dockers and seamen in two companies, carriers from three establishments, labourers in two concerns, and the railwaymen of two companies were most prominent in the disputes, and in the case of the railwaymen the sympathetic action spread outside Cork city to workers in Queenstown and on the Limerick-Waterford line.³

1. CE, 9 Apr., 2, 3, 5, 6 May, 1890.

2. CE, 21 Apr., 1890; PP, 1890-91, lxxviii, App. I, p. 36.

3. CE, 22, 23, 25 Apr., 1890; PP, 1890-91, lxxviii, pp. 86, 104, App. I.

These strikes were not successful. The ready availability of blackleg labour allowed business to go on while the strikes were in progress,¹ some strikers submitted and returned to work after a few days, while others were permanently replaced by the strikebreakers. While the strikes did last, however, a surprising degree of militancy was shown. The occurrence of sympathetic strikes was in itself the main evidence of the rising militancy among the unskilled. The striking seamen and dockers now refused to resume work until the dismissed railwaymen were reinstated, and in declaring for the striking railwaymen, they made their feelings on labour solidarity quite clear:

They had no cause of complaint against their employers, but they were bound by the ties of brotherhood to support the railwaymen ... /and/ if it was to be a true labour union, the men should stick together.²

Again and again the strike leaders stressed that their action was a matter of principle, and that in 'the struggle against powerful capitalists' all labourers were 'bound in common ties'.³ The most militant strikers were the carriers who, long after the other sections of the strikers had returned to work, held out against all attempts at a settlement. Their main objection, aptly enough, was to that clause of the settlement which required of them a guarantee to handle without question all goods, whether brought to them by blackleg or union labour. The carriers' eventual capitulation, following a two week strike, was made only under protest, and was actually forced upon them by the decline in public sympathy, the non-support of the cautious local United Trades Association, and the decided disapproval shown by

1. CE, 22, 23, 25 Apr., 1890.

2. CE, 22 Apr., 1890.

3. CE, 22, 23 Apr., 1890.

the national labour figure, Michael Davitt, towards the principle of sympathetic strike action.¹

Scarcely had the local railway goodsmen terminated their sympathetic strike action than the guards and signalmen, answering a manifesto from the union executive in Dublin, initiated strike action of their own for improvements in pay and working hours. The threatened paralysis of city commerce by the two week strike lost the railwaymen much public sympathy. Blackleg labour was drafted in, and the railway company again proved resolute as in 1889 against all settlement attempts favourable to the strikers. The mediation of the Catholic archbishop of Dublin failed to improve the situation, and the men eventually returned to work on the company's terms, guaranteeing against precipitate strike action in the future.²

These strikes by railwaymen, carriers, dockers, and seamen were interlinked, but other and unconnected strikes had occurred earlier in the year among other classes of unskilled labour in the city. The first of these, the strike by operative pork butchers, originated in Shaw's bacon curing factory in Limerick in late January 1890 when the company refused the mens' demand for 'pig money', i.e. an extra payment of one penny for each pig killed. This pig money was shared among the men at the end of the week and was intended to buy their clothes for the job. The strike spread within three days to the unionized bacon factories in Cork and Waterford, just as the employers from the three cities decided to break up the growing union by a policy

1. CE, 7, 24 Apr., 5 May, 1890.

2. CE, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30 Apr., 1, 2, 3, 5 May, 1890; PP, 1890-91, lxxviii, p. 104, App. I.

of dismissing union members.¹ In Cork the employees of Shaw's factory (a branch of the Limerick company), Lunham's of Kemp Street, and Dennys, turned out or were locked out, blacklegs taken in, and a five week strike ensued. The strike was a militant one, and marked by initial solidarity, the main influence for militancy coming from the secretary of the Limerick branch of the pork butchers' union.²

Equally encouraging to the strikers was the support of the United Trades Association. The Association and its constituent trade societies agreed to subscribe towards the butchers' strike fund, and at least forty-five pounds was contributed, saving the strikers from financial collapse at a crucial point of the strike. Moreover, the moral support of the United Trades Association officers gave the strikers a certain prestige which they would not otherwise have had. The United Trades' president, Eugene Crean, and the secretary, Michael Austen, made the unprecedented move of heading a picket on Shaw's factory in Blackpool as a protest against the drafting in of blackleg labour. Michael Austen, moreover, took a prominent role in directing the strike, visiting Limerick to review the strikers' position and to encourage their stand, while in the eventual settlement conference Eugene Crean acted for the strikers.³ The settlement was, in contrast to the results of other strikes of the semi-skilled,

1. CE, 27, 28 Jan., 1890.

2. CE, 28 Jan., 1890.

3. CE, 19, 21, 27 Feb., 3, 4 Mar., 1890.

relatively favourable to the strikers, the men gaining the disputed 'pig money' and guaranteeing in return to submit to arbitration in all future disputes.¹

In marked contrast to this relative success of the pork butchers' strike was the dismal failure of the three other major disputes of unskilled workers in early 1890, by the foundry labourers, working millers, and builders' labourers.

The foundry labourers and millers were members of the South of Ireland Labour Union. Though not strictly unskilled workers, their earnings were within the wage range of the unskilled, averaging between eleven and seventeen shillings a week.² Repeated demands for two to three shilling wage rises were refused, and the men of Perrott's foundry and McMullens' and Furlongs' mills came out on strike, backed by the South of Ireland Labour Union. The strikers' initial militancy was bolstered by vague promises of support from the Knights of Labour and the Gas Workers' Union in England, but this help never materialised and union strike funds sank lower and lower.³ The only hope for the strikers lay in the support of the United Trades Association, but that body, deeply hostile to the principle of general unionism embodied in the South of Ireland Labour Union, stood aloof. Whereas the pork butchers had received financial aid from the United Trades just when they needed it, the striking foundry men and millers were left strictly to their own devices and once their strike fund was exhausted they had

1. CE, 8 Mar., 1890; PP, 1890-91, lxxviii, App. I, p. 84.

2. CE, 3 Feb., 17 Mar., 21 Apr., 1890.

3. CE, 3, 5, 8, 28 Feb., 7, 11, 17, 31 Mar., 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30 Apr., 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 May, 1890.

to capitulate.¹ But even more instrumental in defeating the strike was the absence of moral support by the United Trades and its constituent trade societies. Unlike the pork butchers, the foundry men and millers were acting in isolation: they had neither the backing of the local trade societies nor, as in the case of the dockers and seamen, had they the support of a strong amalgamated union. They had to fall back on their own resources, moral and financial, and a certain amount of sympathetic action was evident within their own circle, where union men in mills unaffected by the strike refused to handle grain sent out by the strike-bound concerns. But such limited support was useless and once the funds ran out the South of Ireland Labour Union accepted the inevitability of defeat, though very many individual strikers would even then willingly have continued the strike.²

The failure of the builders' labourers strike around the same time was also due to the lack of unified support from the trade societies and to the exhaustion of funds. The builders' labourers were the only unskilled group to consistently (though seldom successfully) assert their position. The Builders' Labourers' Society, which by 1893 numbered some 230 members, entered at least six separate disputes between 1890 and late 1894. The biggest strike, that of 1890, was largely a wage strike, intended to secure a general rise of two shillings a week plus overtime pay. The general wage rate of the Dublin builders' labourers was sixteen shillings a week, while that of the Cork labourers averaged fourteen shillings. The pattern of

1. CE, 22, 24 Feb., 1890.

2. CE, 3 Feb., 24, 25, 26, 30 Apr., 6 May, 1890.

wages was, in fact, quite complex: of the 220 men in the Builders' Labourers' Union in 1890, between fifty and sixty men received thirteen shillings a week, some 120 received fourteen shillings, between fifteen and twenty earned fifteen shillings, and seventy men earned from fifteen to eighteen shillings, different rates being paid by different builders.¹ The strike of 1890 lasted seven weeks. The labourers, initially supported by the contributions of the United Trades Association, held out against all attempts at arbitration, and some builders eventually granted the two shilling rise. But the labourers eventually called off their strike and accepted a weekly fourteen shilling rate, with the promise of the extra shilling from March 1891. This capitulation was largely due to the withdrawal of support by the masons' and plasterers' societies. These trades had been in enforced idleness since the beginning of the labourers' strike, and they eventually agreed to work if tended by blackleg labourers. This withdrawal of the vital support of the skilled trades most closely involved effectively broke the strike and the disgruntled labourers gave up the fight.²

Even the unsatisfactory wage settlement of 1890 was not allowed to stand for long, and between 1890 and late 1894 at least one strike per year among the builders' labourers sought to retain the fifteen shilling rate and prevent the employment of non-unionists by economizing builders.³ The regularity of strikes in the trade was

1. CE, 9, 14 May, 1890.

2. CE, 20, 21 May, 5, 6, 20, 25 June, 1890.

3. CE, 6 May, 1891; 17 June, 1892; 17 Mar., 14 May, 1893; 6 July, 2 Nov., 1894.

due not to the strength but to the weakness of the labourers. The easy availability of blackleg labour, a feature of the trade all over the British Isles, allowed individual builders to deal with the Labourers' Society just as they chose. One prominent city builder, Daniel Hill, consistently refused to pay the fifteen shilling rate, and when the labourers struck in protest in 1891 he quickly replaced all the strikers with non-union labourers. The Builders' Labourers' Society's rule against working with non-union men became inoperative, particularly when the local Master Builders' Association followed Hill's example in refusing to recognize the union, and the fifteen shilling rate became ever more remote so that by 1893 average wages had been cut to thirteen shillings.¹ Moreover, the erratic fluctuation of membership numbers in the Labourers' Society indicated that body's unstable foundations. Though numbers never fell below two-hundred, they sometimes soared as high as six-hundred and then quickly fell again to their former level.²

The last major outbreak of unskilled labour militancy in the early 1890s again involved the local branches of the Seamens' Union and the National Union of Dock Labourers. This particular phase of strike action had a dual cause. Firstly, it was an attempt to compel the Cork Steam Packet Company, in a period of high unemployment, to

1. CE, 6 May, 1891; 5, 8, 9, 17 May, 1893.

2. CE, 9, 14 May, 1890; PP, 1896, xcii(277), p. 58; 1897, xcix (275), pp. 16-17; 1898, ciii (127), pp. 10-11; 1899, xcii (493), pp. 12-13. Builders' Labourers' Society Numbers were as follows:

| | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| 1890 - 220 | 1894 - 590 | 1897 - 250 |
| 1892 - 575 | 1895 - 240 | 1898 - 200. |
| 1893 - 208 | 1896 - 600 | |

replace non-union dockers with union members in need of work. The striking dockers were supported by the separate Coal Porters' Society, whose members refused to unload the Steam Packet boats, and by the Seamens' Union members working on the company's boats. The non-union labour issue was complicated by a political issue connected with the prevailing land agitation. The landlords of County Cork had, in 1886, formed the Cork Defence Union to combat the growing incidence of boycotting and to neutralize the influence of the Land League.¹ By 1890 the land agitation was grinding to a halt, but the Defence Union were still active in helping to export members' cattle whose sale was blocked at home by Land League opposition. In late 1890 a consignment of boycotted cattle was sent to Cork port for shipment to England, but the seamen from a number of the Steam Packet boats refused to put to sea with these cattle on board, while at the same time objecting to the employment of non-union men by the company. Even when a number of seamen were given stiff hard labour sentences for refusing to obey captain's orders, the strike was continued and assumed wide ramifications.²

Tillett and McGhee of the Dockers' Union visited Cork to view the situation, dockers in Milford Haven, Bristol and Liverpool refused to handle the cargoes of the Steam Packet boats, and the executives of the Seamens' and Dock Labourers' Unions notified all branches in Britain against engaging with the strike-bound company.³ But the union executives and the Cork rank-and-file viewed the dispute from

1. Donnelly, op. cit., pp. 325, 329-30.

2. CE, 31 Oct., 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 18 Nov., 1890.

3. CE, 1, 6, 12, 19 Nov., 1890; Seafaring, 8 Nov., 1890, p. 3.

very different standpoints. While the local union members considered the boycott issue as important as the non-union issue, the union executive saw the boycotted cattle question as a local matter which should not have been allowed enter into the field of labour disputes. Wilson of the Seamens' Union condemned the Cork members' action in refusing to handle the cattle, and threatened disciplinary action against the local branch.¹ Particularly censured was Michael Austen, journeyman printer and secretary of the United Trades Association, who since late 1889 had been secretary of the Seamens' branch in Cork, and to whose efforts the growth of the branch was largely due.² He was blamed for urging the members to boycott the cattle and for thus 'leading them to serve political ends' and he was later replaced as secretary by Thomas H. Clarke. This was an unfortunate choice for Clarke was not a committed unionist like Austen, and he soon absconded with the union funds.³

The local branch of the Dockers' Union was even more severely censured for its part in the strike, which it had entered without any prior consultation with the union executive. Moreover, the non-union labourers against whom the strike had been directed continued in their employment, and further non-union hands were found to replace the strikers.⁴ This loss of employment by a large number of its members shook the foundations of the local branch and paid-up membership plummeted. For a year the branch was virtually extinct, but it was re-established in mid-1892 through the efforts of the secretary of the Glasgow branch of the union.⁵

1. CE, 3 Nov., 1890; 29 June, 1891.

2. Seafaring, 3 Aug., 1889, p. 13; 14 Sept., 1889, p. 13.

3. Seafaring, 22 Aug., 1891, p. 8; CE, 3 Nov., 1890; 5, 7 May, 1892.

4. PP, 1890-91, lxviii, App. I, p. 92; CE, 10, 12 Nov., 1890; 24 May, 1892.

5. CE, 24 May, 1892; National Union of Dock Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland, Report of Executive, 1891-1895.

Depression and Organization of the Skilled Trades, 1880-1900

No exact figures are available for the level of unemployment in Cork during the 1880s and 1890s, and we depend for information on the imprecise and possibly exaggerated reports of the trades themselves, sometimes in letters to the press, but more often from 1881 onwards at meetings of the United Trades Association. Contemporaries generally agreed, however, that unemployment was a serious problem both among the unskilled labour force and among the manufacturing trades. The period of trade depression apparently began around 1877, coinciding with a rural depression in which both smallholders and well-to-do farmers suffered. In the rural areas sickness and disease spread, the death rate rose, and there was a sharp increase in the number of persons receiving Poor Law relief.¹

Distress also spread in the city. At least one death from starvation was recorded,² and the number of people seeking refuge in the Workhouse rose gradually from the mid-'70s on. In 1875 the Cork Union Workhouse had given indoor relief to 8,921 individuals. By 1881 the number had risen to 18,219, an increase of over 104%. The number of individuals receiving outdoor relief showed a corresponding rise: from 2,609 in 1875 the outdoor relief recipients had by 1881 risen to 27,156 - a nine-fold increase in six years.³

Official Poor Law relief proved insufficient to deal with the problem of poverty in the city, where distress was aggravated by the

1. Donnelly, op. cit., pp. 259-264.

2. CE, 27 Jan., 1880.

3. Thoms Ir. Almanac and Official Directory (Dublin,

rising level of unemployment among the casual labourers. In early 1880, in protest against the corporation's failure to set up relief works, the unemployed marched through the city in a spontaneous hunger demonstration, headed by men carrying poles surmounted by loaves of bread and placards demanding 'Bread or Work' - an echo of the hunger demonstrations of the 1820s.¹

Though the worst unemployment was among the unskilled labourers, the trades also felt the pinch. Several trade societies' unemployment and benefit funds were so drained by the level of idleness among their members that they applied to the local relief committee for funds. The application was unsuccessful, for the relief committee catered only for the labouring classes, but the trades' application in itself showed the extent of their distress.² By 1881 it was claimed that out of a total of between 2,000 and 3,000 men, over 1,000 were idle.³ It is not clear which trades were worst hit. Union records, even the regular and comprehensive records of the amalgamated unions, gave relatively little information on this subject. There was little apparent fluctuation in the income and expenditure of individual unions from one year to the next, and the ironfounders' financial reports, for example, showed no sign of depression in the period 1884-89, though the local branch claimed in 1886 that a great number of its members had been idle for over a year.⁴ Similarly, though the local tailors' society complained bitterly of depression

1. CE, 10, 12, 13, 19 Jan., 1880; See above, p. 31.

2. CE, 3, 4, 5 Feb., 1880.

3. CE, 30 July, 1881; Census of Ireland, 1881.

4. CE, 28 Oct., 1886; Half Yearly Report of the Ironfounders' Friendly Society of England, Ireland and Wales, 1884-89.

in the mid-eighties, the financial reports of the branch gave no indication of depression. Income and expenditure levels showed no dramatic change, while sick benefit payments, mortality payments and travel payments were no different to those of earlier or later years.¹

Unemployment was nonetheless serious, so serious, in fact, that it was at this time that the trades, disillusioned by the failure of the local public boards to promote employment opportunities and foster home manufacture, first mooted the idea of labour representation in the municipal corporation.² If the vociferousness of their complaints accurately reflected their condition, all the building trades except the plumbers were extremely depressed during the 1880s. In 1886, what was described simply as 'large numbers' of the carpenters and masons were idle,³ almost the entire painters' society was out of work,⁴ and the extent of the problem was acknowledged by the corporation when they appointed a special committee to investigate the depressed state of the building trade.⁵

In other trades the depression at local level reflected a decline in the trade over the British Isles as a whole. Thus, the overall depression in the coachbuilding trade in the 'eighties was reflected in the slackness of the trade in Cork.⁶ Funds were so low in the

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1. Yearly and Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1880-90; CE, 27 Jan., 24 Apr., 1882; 6 Feb., 1886; 12 May, 1888.
 2. CE, 23 Mar., 14 Oct., 1886; see below, 434-39.
 3. CE, 23 Sept., 1886.
 4. CE, 11, 16, 23 Mar., 1886.
 5. CE, 15 Mar., 15 Oct., 1886.
 6. Quarterly Report of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, 1880-1900; Mar., 1886, p. 1; Mar., 1887, p. 1; June, 1887, p. 1; Winchester, A Short History of the National Union of Vehicle Builders, pp. 11-12.

branch in 1881 that it could not participate in the Parnell demonstration of that year.¹ From 1887 there was a slight improvement in the fortunes of the trade locally. Union membership had risen by some thirty percent in the mid-nineties, the idle relief payments fell, and the balance of society funds rose considerably. But sharp rises in idle relief payments in 1893, 1895, and 1896-8 indicated that bad times had again set in, though the local correspondent of the Labour Gazette gave a more favourable picture of the trade.²

The coachmakers, in common with most other manufacturing trades, blamed their misfortunes on the rising tide of importation. The printers, too, complained unceasingly of the increasing use of foreign printed work in the book trade, in advertising and in electioneering campaigns.³ Yet the printers were among the trades least affected by the slump of the 'eighties, the number of society men idle at any one time never rising above 7% in the 'eighties, though by the late 'nineties it had risen to over 20%.⁴

Importation was blamed even more for the chronic depression of the corkcutters, nailors, ropemakers and cabinetmakers. These trades had in fact been dying slowly since the 1840s, and the depression of the 1880s merely aggravated their condition. At all United Trades meetings the cabinetmakers (the most buoyant of the four dying trades)

1. CE, 28 Sept., 7 Oct., 1881; 24 Apr., 1882.

2. CE, 9 Mar., 20 July, 1894; Quarterly Reports ... Coachmakers, 1880-1900; Labour Gazette, 1895-98.

3. CE, 15 Dec., 1881; 3 Mar., 1885; 13 Jan., 27 May, 1886; 14, 28 Apr., 1887; 17 May, 21 July, 1893; 24 May, 1895; 1 May, 1896; 23 Mar., 19 May, 1897.

4. Cork Typographical Society Minute Book, List of Society membership and numbers idle, 1869-1900.

raised an unceasing lament on the decline of their trade, blaming importation, mechanization, and the employment of female and immigrant slop-shop labour for their decline as a skilled craft-trade.¹ The state of the local branch of the Alliance Cabinetmakers' Society generally reflected the current depression. Membership fell sharply in the early 'eighties from fifty-two to nine, remaining at this low level for the remainder of the decade. By 1892 the branch funds had dwindled so low that it was cut off by the union executive for non-payment of union dues.² In spite of a slight improvement in trade in the mid-nineties, unemployment was prevalent, the importation and cheap labour issues continued to injure the trade, and by the late years of the century it was felt that the trade was irrevocably lost.

By the 1880s, the most hopelessly depressed manufacturing trades were the corkcutters, nailors and ropemakers. Numbers had been falling steadily since the 1840s, and the decline continued during the eighties and nineties, so that by 1901 these trades were of little consequence.³ Yet even as late as 1901 a few young men continued to enter these dying trades. Table 38 shows the age structure of these trades during the period 1871-1901.

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1. CE, 7 Sept., 1894; 8 May, 27 Sept., 1895; 23 Mar., 1897; Alliance Cabinet Makers' Monthly Report, Jan.-Dec., 1895; Annual Report, 1894, pp. 192-3.
 2. Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Alliance Cabinet Makers Society, 1882-1900; 1894, p. 12.
 3. Census of Ireland, 1871-1901.

TABLE 38

Ages of those involved in the Corkcutting, Ropemaking, Nailmaking
and Cabinetmaking Trades, Cork, 1871-1901

| | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| <u>CORKCUTTERS</u> | | | | |
| Younger than 20 years | 7 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| 20 to 45 years | 30 | 25 | 12 | 10 |
| 45 to 65 years | 7 | 2 | 12 | 3 |
| Older than 65 years | 1 | 1 | 1 | - |
| TOTAL | 45 | 35 | 28 | 15 |
| <u>ROPEMAKERS</u> | | | | |
| Younger than 20 years | 22 | 8 | 4 | 3 |
| 20 to 45 years | 24 | 17 | 8 | 6 |
| 45 to 65 years | 16 | 7 | 5 | 4 |
| Older than 65 years | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 64 | 34 | 19 | 14 |
| <u>NAILMAKERS</u> | | | | |
| Younger than 20 years | 6 | 4 | 1 | - |
| 20 to 45 years | 45 | 24 | 7 | 2 |
| 45 to 64 years | 24 | 16 | 12 | 5 |
| Older than 65 years | 3 | 5 | 3 | - |
| TOTAL | 78 | 49 | 23 | 7 |
| <u>CABINETMAKERS</u> | | | | |
| Younger than 20 years | 19 | 26 | 31 | 16 |
| 20 to 45 years | 81 | 62 | 69 | 70 |
| 45 to 65 years | 37 | 30 | 23 | 26 |
| Older than 65 years | 5 | 6 | 6 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 142 | 124 | 129 | 120 |

Yet in spite of their gradual decline, these trades were still in the 'eighties and nineties separate and recognizable crafts, marching under their own society banners in two of the political demonstrations of the period.¹ Though it is not clear what proportion of these

1. CE, 3 Oct., 1881; 18 Mar., 1890.

trades were unionized, they did have their own societies, and were represented as distinct trades in the United Trades Association.

Since the early 1880s the ropemakers formed a branch of the Ropemakers' Society which had a branch in Dublin,¹ while the nailmakers were organized in a local body called the 'Co-operative Nailmakers of the City of Cork'.² These two societies were unusual among the trade societies of the time in that their membership included both masters and men, the masters in both trades being themselves working men. The nailmaking trade especially, because of the small numbers involved, reflected some of the traits of a pre-industrial trade. As the woolcombers had done in the 1820s, some nailmakers of the 1880s lodged with their master in an intimate and not always happy relationship, the master sometimes charging exorbitant lodging rent and acting as money-lender to his men.³

The ropemaking trade was carried out in Cork in seven manufactories, but this apparent factory system concealed a thriving small master structure. The seven manufactories employed between them a mere seventy men, and the factory owners themselves belonged to the Ropemakers' Society.⁴ The market for rope and twine was predominantly a local one, and though some attempts were made to sell goods on the English market this was apparently unsuccessful, and even the local market was won largely by the imported goods, while lack of capital was blamed for the failure to set up a large-scale rope manufactory which could compete with the imports.⁵ The demise of the trade was

1. CE, 2 Feb., 1882.
2. CE, 10 Sept., 1881.
3. CE, 25 Nov., 1881.
4. CE, 19, 24 Oct., 1881.
5. CE, 19 Oct., 1881.

inevitable by the early 1880s. In 1881 only thirteen of the thirty-four local ropemakers were employed, and their union finally collapsed in the mid-eighties, so that from 1883 onwards the ropemakers' delegates were no longer seen at the meetings of the United Trades Association.¹

From the mid-1870s the corkcutting trade began to move towards the factory system. The number of commercial corkcutting firms in the city rose from four in 1875 to ten in 1900, but this rise coincided with the decline of corkcutting as a handcraft.² The skilled corkcutters traced the decline of their trade to the early 1860s. At this period the duties on imported ready-cut corks had been removed, but the duties on imported raw material retained. Thereafter the introduction of cut corks from France, Spain and Portugal effectively smothered the local trade which had, by 1881, shrunk to nothing.³

The corkcutting trade catered, of course, only for a local market, but local demand was for imported corks. Repeated calls to the city's bottlers and vintners to patronize the local corkcutters had little result.⁴ By mid-1884 only twenty society corkcutters were fully employed, and the gradual mechanization of the trade allowed the employment of unskilled labourers at cheaper rates than the skilled corkcutters.⁵ By 1892 the number of society men employed had fallen to six, many men having emigrated or turned to the only other employment they could find - that of unskilled labourers.⁶

1. CE, 23 Sept., 1881; 24 Apr., 1882.

2. CE, 30 Oct., 2, 6 Nov., 1883; Guy's County and City of Cork Directory (1875-6); Guy's Directory of Munster (1886-1900).

3. CE, 19 Oct., 1881.

4. CE, 14 Feb., 29 Apr., 1884; 31 Jan., 12 Aug., 1886; 17 Feb., 1887; 26 Aug., 9 Sept., 1892; 18, 31 Dec., 1894; 1 Mar., 19 Sept., 1895; 17 June, 1898.

5. CE, 6 Nov., 1883; 29 Apr., 1884.

6. CE, 2 Sept., 1892.

Though the nailors were not faced with the competition of a local factory-based trade, their decline followed the same pattern as that of the corkcutters. In 1877 some one-hundred nailors worked in the city. By 1881 only thirty men were working, by 1886 this number had fallen to six and many men in the trade were actually starving.¹

Importation was again blamed, but calls for patronage of the local trade had only limited and transitory success,² and by the end of the century the total number of nailors in Cork had fallen to seven.³

A similar sharp decline in numbers occurred in the coopering trade, but because the trade numbers were so much higher than in the nailors' and corkcutters case, the decline was less obvious.⁴ Yet the number of coopers in the city fell by over 50% between 1871 and 1901, the sharpest decline occurring during the 'nineties, and the number of young men entering the trade decreased steadily from 1871 onwards. As Table 39 shows, the proportion of trade members aged less than twenty years in 1871 was 22%; by 1901 this had fallen to 7%.

TABLE 39⁵

Numbers and Age Structure of the Cork Coopering Trade, 1871-1901

| | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Younger than 20 years | 125 | 65 | 46 | 19 |
| 20 to 45 years | 279 | 260 | 220 | 153 |
| 45 to 65 years | 115 | 99 | 110 | 88 |
| Older than 65 years | 45 | 18 | 21 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 564 | 442 | 397 | 275 |

1. CE, 10 Sept., 7 Oct., 1881; 24 Apr., 1882; 29 Mar., 14 May, 1886.

2. CE, 15 Apr., 1882; 10, 17 Apr., 1886.

3. See Table 5, p. xi above.

4. Census of Ireland, 1901. There were still almost 300 coopers in the city in 1901.

5. Census of Ireland, 1871-1901.

The coopers claimed that their local society dated from 1700,¹ but they had become prominent only in the 1770s.² Their society numbers, like the total numbers in the trade, had been declining since the 1830s, stabilizing in the early 1890s somewhere between one and two-hundred men.³ In 1892 the society decided to amalgamate with the Bradford-based Mutual Association of Coopers, remaining in that body until the early twentieth century, when local autonomy was again decided upon.⁴

During the nineteenth century the chief areas of employment for the Cork coopers were the butter trade, centred round the Cork butter Market; the provision trade, dominated in the late 1890s by the three firms of Lunhams, Stoker Brothers and John Stoker; the breweries and distilleries of the city; and the gunpowder mills at Ballincollig, some five miles west of the city.⁵ The prominence of the Cork coopering trade dated from the rise, in the late eighteenth century, of the local butter and provision trade,⁶ and the fortunes of the provision and butter trades were faithfully mirrored in the fortunes of the coopering trade.

Its heavy dependence on the seasonal butter trade, particularly between 1850 and 1880,⁷ meant that the coopering trade was to a great

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1. PP, 1897, xcix (275), pp. 118-9.
 2. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 295; see above, p. 2.
 3. PP, 1897, xcix (257), pp. 118-9; 1898, ciii (122), pp. 90-91; 1899, xcii (493), pp. 88-9; CE, 18 July, 3 Oct., 1898; Mutual Association of Coopers of Great Britain and Ireland, Monthly Report, Dec., 1900. The parliamentary papers and the records of the Mutual Association listed only 100 members in the Cork branch, but in the political demonstrations of the late 1890s some 200 men marched under the coopers' banner.
 4. Coopers' Minute Book, 18 May, 25 July, 1892.
 5. Coopers' Minute Book, 24 Sept., 1895.
 6. William O'Sullivan, The Economic History of Cork City from the Earliest Times to the Act of Union (Cork, 1937), pp. 154-170; 229-40; 256-79.
 7. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 296.

extent a seasonal one, slack periods following busy seasons. Supplies of butter were very low between November and mid-April and almost non-existent from January to March, as shown by the following table of the monthly receipts of salt butter at the Cork Butter Market in 1886.

TABLE 40¹

Monthly Cork Butter Market receipts of Salt Butter, 1886

| Month | Number of firkins and kegs | Month | Number of firkins and kegs |
|-------|-------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| Jan. | 1,905 | July | 48,510 |
| Feb. | 1,820 | Aug. | 35,065 |
| Mar. | 3,861 | Sept. | 37,867 |
| Apr. | 13,836 | Oct. | 32,973 |
| May | 30,261 | Nov. | 35,073 |
| June | 43,966 | Dec. | 10,310 |

This fluctuation in supplies produced a corresponding fluctuation in the demand for firkins. The coopers engaged in firkin making experienced a period of idleness in the early months of each year, and from the mid-1880s the coopers' society tried to produce winter work in the manufacture of extra brewery casks to tide the firkin makers over the slack season.²

From the late 1860s until the mid-70s Irish butter, and Cork butter in particular, had found an extensive market in Britain, but from the late 1870s the trade received several setbacks. A quick succession of bad seasons - wet weather followed by extremely cold

1. Donnelly, op. cit., p. 139.

2. Coopers' Minute Book, 3 Mar., 1887; 2 Feb., 1888; 6 Feb., 1893; Jan., 1899, undated entry preceding that for 6 Jan., 1899.

dry weather - produced a sharp drop in dairy yields and a consequent fall in butter production, the Cork Butter Market receipts falling by almost 17% between 1886 and 1887. Moreover, from 1887 the British market had been opened up to butter imports from France, Holland and the Scandanavian countries, with serious consequences for the Irish butter trade. The average price of Cork butter fell by almost 27% between 1871 and 1890, and the appearance on the market of the new product, butterine or margarine, was a further blow to the trade.¹

The decline of the Cork butter trade was reflected almost immediately in the coopering trade not alone in Cork but throughout the country as a whole. In 1887 a tramping cooper from Kilfinane in the county of Limerick called at the Cork city coopers' rooms and reported that

the trade was bad all over the country and ... there was not an apprentice at the trade.²

In the city at this time the majority of society men were either idle or employed on casual work. Special levies were put on all working members for the support of the idle men, and the poor state of the society's funds necessitated the suspension for some time of all emigration aid.³

Importation, too, had affected the trade. From the mid-1880s the butter buyers, fish curers, gunpowder mills and breweries began to import casks from Denmark, England and Scotland,⁴ and gradual mechanization further damaged the fortunes of the local coopers.

1. Donnelly, op. cit., pp. 149-154.

2. Coopers' Minute Book, 14 Oct., 1887.

3. ibid., 30 Sept., 1886; 3 Mar., 5 Oct., 1887; 5 May, 1888.

4. ibid., 8 June, 10 Aug., 1886; 17 May, 1888; 7 Dec., 1892; CE, 11 Mar., 1892; 6 June, 1895; 6, 12 June, 1896.

Since the late 1870s there was evident an increasing substitution of machine-made casks, firkins and boxes for the traditional hand-coopered items. Already in the early 1880s the coopers' societies of Cork and Limerick had moved against the mechanization trend. Subscriptions were taken up from masters and men to finance the campaign and delegates sent to the different towns of Munster to organize resistance to the introduction of machinery.¹

These moves had but limited success. By the early 1890s the unemployment problem among the firkin makers was again serious,² and in 1895 it was stated that the use of butter boxes was 'crippling the trade'. Leaflets putting forward the coopers' case were printed for distribution in England, and two Cork delegates were selected 'to go to England to cry down the butter boxes and contents of same'.³ But English butter buyers preferred box-packed butter, and as the Cork Butter Market and individual merchants used fewer and fewer firkins, the firkin makers became the lowest paid members of the trade. When in 1899 one firm, Lonsdale and Company, decided to change from firkins to butter boxes, over forty men were immediately thrown out of work.⁴ As times became more difficult for the operative coopers, so too did the master coopers feel the pinch. The number of masters listed in the local trade directories fell sharply from fifty-three in 1871 to ten in 1886, and though the number of masters remained stable for the

1. Coopers' Minute Book, 12 Mar., 15 Aug., 4 Oct., 1883; 13, 18, 20 May, 1886.

2. *ibid.*, 28 Nov., 1892; 6 Feb., 1893.

3. *ibid.*, 25 Apr., 1894; 14 June, 24 July, 1895; 17 July, 1 Oct., 1896; CE, 2 May, 1894; 6 June, 1895.

4. CE, 11 May, 1894; 30 Nov., 1895; Coopers' Minute Book, 17 Jan., 1899. Fulton & Co's City of Cork Directory (1871). Guy's Directory of Munster, 1886-1900.

remainder of the century their importance in the business life of the city had declined greatly since the early decades of the century.¹

Since the first signs of decline in the firkin trade in the mid-1870s, joint master-men committees to regulate firkin making had been a regular feature of the trade.² This increasing co-operation between the masters and operatives was symptomatic of a declining trade, just as joint master-man membership of the trade societies was in the case of the ropemakers and nailors. The powerful master coopers of the 1830s would not have countenanced such an alliance with their journey-men, but by the later years of the century both masters and men were facing a common danger - the phasing out of their traditional handcraft by modern methods.

The decline of the Cork provision trade also injured the coopers. Up to the mid-1870s the Navy's salt pork contract had been given exclusively to Cork merchants,³ but thereafter a sizeable proportion of the contract went to Dutch and Danish firms, with a consequent fall in employment for the Cork coopers. Yet even as late as the 'eighties, between three and four hundred coopers were employed in navy provision work,⁴ but this number had apparently fallen sharply by the early 'nineties. Much of the coopers' society's energies were spent on unsuccessfully lobbying the local MPs, for the return of the entire

1. Labour Gazette, 1895-98.

2. Coopers' Minute Book, 16, 29 Jan., 1874; 26 July, 4 Oct., 1883.

3. CE, 18 Mar., 1895.

4. CE, 19 Sept., 1891.

navy contract to Cork.¹ By the early 'nineties, with the decline of the provision trade and of firkin making, the coopers depended more and more on brewery and distillery work. Some men worked on the brewery premises, but most did brewery work in outside shops belonging to independent master coopers.² All matters pertaining to the liquor trade were consequently of vital concern to the coopers, and they were amongst the most vociferous protesters against the increased tax on beer and spirits in the mid-90s. The coopers' society was generally a Parnellite stronghold following the political crisis of 1890,³ and after Parnell's death remained strongly favourable to his successor, John Redmond. In 1895 they were one of the most prominent trade participants in a pro-Redmond demonstration in the city. But the entry in their minute book suggests that their real objective in taking part in the demonstration was less to honour Redmond than, as they expressed it, to 'show up the injustice of the Government in putting on an increased tax on beer and spirits'.⁴

In the mid-1890s, too, the Cork coopers were especially worried by the rising monopoly of the market by Guinness of Dublin. The competition of this firm was felt to be squeezing the local Cork brewers off the market and consequently threatening the livelihood of the forty coopers permanently employed in the local breweries. The labour market for coopers was further contracted by the amalgamation

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1. CE, 19 Sept., 1891; 8 Dec., 1893; 9, 23 Nov., 14 Dec., 1894; 18 Mar., 25 Oct., 15 Nov., 1895; Coopers' Minute Book, Aug., 1883, undated entry between 15 and 26 Aug., 1883; 27 Aug., 24 Sept., 1895.
 2. CE, 22 Mar., 1895.
 3. See below, pp. 419-21.
 4. CE, 22 Mar., 1895; Coopers' Minute Book, 14 Mar., 1895.

of a number of the local Cork distilleries. In the 1870s the city's four distilleries had employed between them over fifty coopers. The two amalgamated distilleries of the 'nineties together employed only twenty coopers, and any further rationalizations in the business would lead to further loss of work.¹

In the mid-nineties the coopers stayed the rising tide of unemployment by entering two new fields of manufacture - lard-kegs for use in the provision exporting trade,² and casks for the West Cork fishing industry.³ In the latter case a timely concession to mechanization was made, the coopers' society approving the production of machine-made herring barrels in one city cooperage.⁴ But these advances did not substantially change the coopers' dependence on the shrinking traditional areas of employment in the city. The committee of the coopers' society was drawn from the establishments of the members' main employers, and the committee for 1898 accurately reflected the employment areas of the trade, representatives being drawn from the four breweries, the two distilleries, the three main provision merchants' cellars, and the shops of three master coopers.⁵

The clothing and footwear trades, like the coopering trade, were subject to seasonal fluctuations in demand. A witness before the Royal Commission on Labour in the early 'nineties claimed that a tailor's working time could vary from two days per week in winter to a full week of twelve to fourteen hour days in Summer.⁶ In Cork,

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1. Coopers' Minute Book, 18 Aug., 1895; CE, 3 Mar., 1896.
 2. Coopers' Minute Book, 24, 28 Sept., 1895.
 3. ibid., 7 Dec., 1893; 18, 19 June, 1895; CE, 12 Nov., 1898.
 4. Coopers' Minute Book, 9, 16, 23 Sept., 1896.
 5. ibid., 18 Jan., 1898; 26 Jan., 1899.
 6. Royal Commission on Labour, c. 1892, Qs 14641-2.

however, the high-class tailors - all society men - depended for a great deal of their custom on the requirements of the gentry during the autumn hunting season. The extent of this dependence became apparent in the 1880s when the Land League's repeated bans on fox hunting caused unemployment levels to rise among the tailors and wages to fall by as much as fifty percent.¹ The bootmakers, equally injured by the hunting ban of the 'eighties, were also largely dependent on the custom of the gentry, the poorer classes in general buying the cheaper factory-made footwear, either locally made or imported.²

The number of boot and shoemakers in the city had been declining since the early 1840s, the sharpest decline occurring in the 1860s and '70s.³ But the 1880s saw the first major change in the structure of the trade with the increasing displacement of the handworkers by the factory based trade. Large-scale bootmaking firms had existed in the city since the 1850s, but these had employed large numbers of outworking hand-sewers.⁴ The establishment of the Cork Boot Factory in 1881 launched the manufacture of machine-made boots in the city, and by the late 1880s four such manufacturing firms had been established.⁵

1. CE, 1, 10 Nov., 11 Dec., 1882; 23 Nov., 1887; CDH, 18 Nov., 1887; See below, pp. 400-02.

2. CE, 20 Apr., 1886; 10 Mar., 1887.

3. Census of Ireland, 1841-1901. Between 1841 and 1901 there was an overall 74% decline in the number of bootmakers in Cork city. Decade by decade, this decline appears as follows:

| | | | | | |
|---------|---|-----|-----------|---|-----|
| 1841-51 | - | 14% | 1871-81 | - | 23% |
| 1851-61 | - | 9% | 1881-91 | - | 16% |
| 1861-71 | - | 37% | 1891-1901 | - | 19% |

4. CE, 1 Sept., 1881.

5. CE, 5 Apr., 1887; Southern Industry, May, 1889, p. 11; National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Monthly Report, Nov., 1889, p. 8.

These new factories introduced a completely new group of workers, the semi-skilled boot rivetters, described by the handsewers as 'a totally different body from the tradesmen of Cork'.¹ It is not clear how quickly the rivetters displaced the hand sewers, for the censuses for the period 1881 to 1901 failed to distinguish between handworkers and factory workers in the footwear industry. But the approximate change in the numbers of unionized men in each group between 1880 and 1900 gives some indication of the revolution within the industry. In 1880 there were some 120 men in the handsewers' society,² while in 1885 the newly established rivetters' union branch had thirty-five members. By 1904, the handsewers had only 54 union members, while the rivetters had over 170.³

The two groups did not, however, have any open disagreements, and their respective unions existed side by side for the rest of the century. The handsewers' society, revived from obscurity in 1858,⁴ had been divided since the 1870s into three branches - the Operative Ladies' Bootmakers Society, and the North Main Street and Grand Parade branches of the Operative Gentlemen's Boot and Shoemakers Society.⁵ The factory workers' organization, the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, was a British amalgamated union, with its headquarters at Leicester, home of the factory-based footwear industry. The union was introduced into Cork by some Dublin men

1. CE, 5 Apr., 1887.

2. CE, 7 Oct., 1880, 3 Oct., 1881.

3. PP, 1897, xcix (275), pp. 86-7; 1898, ciii (127), pp. 64-5; 1899, xcii (493), pp. 62-3; 1909, xliv (857), /Cd. 4890/; Monthly Reports of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, 1885-1900.

4. See above, pp. 174-75.

5. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 287.

who had come south during a strike in the capital.¹ Though membership of the Cork branch showed a considerable overall rise during the late 1880s and early '90s, there were, in fact, sharp fluctuations in membership level which reflected the fluctuating fortunes of the trade. The machine workers were as vulnerable to trade variations as were the hand workers, as the detailed trade reports furnished by the Rivetters' union showed. Like the tailoring trade, the factory footwear trade was a seasonal one. Though there was no regular pattern of boom and slump, the winter months tended to provide fuller employment than the summer, since the Cork factories manufactured little in the way of light summer goods.² Unemployment and trade stagnation also varied from year to year, the slackest periods being 1885, 1888, 1890-92, and 1898. Plummeting membership in the 'nineties reflected this overall depression, for non-payment of union dues was a symptom of unemployment in the trade, just as the rise in union membership indicated a new buoyancy in the trade.³

The factory-based footwear trade had first been promoted in the city for the express purpose of counteracting the inflow of cheap foreign-made footwear, but long after the factory system had been established in the city the complaints of importation continued. Meetings of the United Trades Association provided a forum for the airing of trade grievances against importation, and different delegates' estimates of the degree of importation in the footwear trade varied widely. Some claimed that £10,000 worth of foreign footwear came

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1. National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Monthly Report, Dec., 1885, p. 6.
 2. *ibid.*, 1885-1900; Dec., 1892, p. 5; Aug., 1898.
 3. *ibid.*, June, 1892, p. 8; Sept., 1892, p. 6; Nov., 1894, p. 9; Apr., 1895, p. 9.

into Cork each year, others that a single city establishment imported £20,000 worth of footwear annually.¹ Some footwear manufacturers in the city had, since the early 1880s, turned to largescale importation to meet the market demand for cheap footwear, but it was generally believed that the main offenders were the general goods stores and the multiple boot warehouses appearing in the city since the late 1870s. Numerically the master shoemakers continued to dominate the trade, but the footwear business was gradually passing from their hands into the local factories and the importing warehouses. By 1900, though sixty-five master shoemakers were listed in the local trade directory (there had been 111 in 1871), the eighteen boot warehouses and the five boot factories were encroaching very much on their business.² The boot warehouse business, like the tailoring trade, attracted a large number of small capitalists whose business dealings were a constant gamble with fortune. Fortune often proved fickle, for the footwear trade in Cork had the distinction of being second only to the tailoring trade in the number of its members who ended their careers in the Bankruptcy Court. Between 1890 and 1913 twelve bootmakers and warehouse proprietors went bankrupt in the city.³ Typical representatives of these warehouse owners who were nothing more than agents for English footwear firms were the McNay Brothers who went bankrupt in 1896. Of their forty-one creditors in the footwear trade, only three were Irish firms - Woods of Dublin, Hearnés

1. CE, 21, 22 Oct., 1886; 5, 21 Apr., 1887; 21 Oct., 1898.

2. Fulton & Co's, Cork City Directory, 1871; Guy's Directory of Munster, 1900.

3. Cork Bankruptcy Court Records, 1894/47, 50, 52, 59; 1895/88; 1896/108; 1897/17, 35; 1898/134; 1913/312, 314; 1902/175.

of Waterford and Bennis of Limerick. The remaining thirty-eight creditors were all English firms, most of them in Bristol, Leicester and Kettering.¹

To compete with the importation problem, local footwear manufacturers sought to cut their costs by employing non-union and boy labour. The problem of unfair labour faced the boot rivetters' union from their first arrival in Cork. The Blackpool Boot Factory, set up in the Irish manufacture drive of 1882, began to use boy labour in 1886, but the main employer of non-union and boy labour was Dwyer and Company.² The history of the union's relations with this firm was one of constant conflict: a strike against the employment of non-union men in 1887 ended in union victory, but a few months later the management began to dismiss all those prominent in the strike and by June 1888 the factory was run entirely on 'scab' labour.³ The union eventually succeeded in unionizing these men, but their success was counteracted when, following a further dispute in 1889, boy labour was drafted in by the firm - a process facilitated by the introduction of lasting and finishing machines into the factory and the resulting easy subdivision of labour.⁴

By the early 'nineties Dwyers was described by the local union secretary as 'a shop of machinery and boys, which is not at all

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1. *ibid.*, 1896/82. The distribution of firms was as follows: Bristol (12), Leicester (7), Kettering (5), London (4), Leeds (3), Northampton (2), Birmingham (2), Norwich (1), Manchester (1), Stafford (1).
 2. Monthly Report of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Dec., 1885, p. 6; Aug., 1886, p. 5; Sept., 1886, p. 9; Oct., 1886, p. 8.
 3. *ibid.*, Dec., 1887, p. 5; June, 1888, p. 4.
 4. *ibid.*, Sept., 1889, p. 6; Mar., 1890, p. 4; Mar., 1891, p. 6; July, 1894, p. 8.

satisfactory', and 'a depot for accommodators, sweaters, refractory members and machinery'.¹ Eventually during a period of brisk trade in 1896 the union made a successful effort to recruit Dwyers' workers. The extent of their success was evident when the company failed in its efforts to substitute piecework for timework, and in the ensuing four months' strike few blacklegs could be found. The strikers, backed by their union executive in England, were sufficiently strong to resist a compromise settlement. They secured weekly wage rises varying from two to eleven shillings per week per man and converted Dwyers' from a 'free labour' firm into one employing only trade union members, so that union membership in the city rose from forty-one in January 1896 to 152 in January 1898 - almost a four-fold increase.²

Just as the processes and structure of the footwear industry were being changed by mechanization in the last decades of the nineteenth century, so the nature of the shipbuilding industry was also changing. Shipbuilding had flourished in Cork harbour in the 1850s but from the 1860s onwards had rapidly declined. Blamed by many on the frequency of trade disputes, this decline in the shipbuilding industry was attributed by others to the lack of capital and business acumen on the part of the shipyard owners.³ The main reason for the decline, however, was the failure to adapt the local wooden shipbuilding industry to the newly developing methods of iron shipbuilding.⁴

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1. National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Monthly Report, Sept., 1892, p. 6; May, 1894, p. 8.
 2. *ibid.*, 1886-1900; Feb., 1896, p. 8; Jan., 1897, p. 6; Feb., 1897, pp. 6-7; Mar., 1897, p. 4; Apr., 1897, p. 5; May, 1897, p. 7; CE, 1 Feb., 23 Mar., 1897.
 3. CE, 21, 24, 25, 27 Jan., 1887.
 4. Gough, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

Not until the early 1880s was iron shipbuilding established in the traditional shipbuilding centre at Passage West in Cork harbour.¹ From the beginning it faced trouble. A legacy of bitterness remained in the trade since the 1860s when relations between the shipyard owners and the shipbuilding trades had apparently been far from cordial, and once disputes arose in the 1880s the memories of the bad relations of the 1860s were revived. The shipwrights apparently objected to the new ironshipbuilding: traditionally wooden shipbuilders, they found themselves displaced by ironworkers brought in specially from Scotland, and these imported iron shipbuilders monopolized the work while over fifty local wooden working shipwrights were idle.

The shipwrights, moreover, were themselves divided in their attitude to the developments within the industry. The Passage West men insisted on day rates of pay, and objected strongly to the contract system introduced by the Dock Company, whereby pay rates depended on the contract price agreed between the Company and the customer. The shipwrights from Rushbrooke, another small shipbuilding centre across the harbour from Passage, were willing to work by contract, and their compliance wore away the Passage mens' resistance, and they eventually agreed to work by contract on new work at the rates paid in Liverpool, London, Belfast and on Clydeside. They initially insisted on the retention of the six shilling daily rate for repair work,² but they concluded by accepting the contract system for all types of work.³

1. CE, 24 Apr., 1882.

2. CE, 29 Sept., 1882.

3. CE, 7 Oct., 1882.

The shipwrights' tradition of combination extended at least as far back as 1817,¹ but from the 1830s onwards when the shipbuilding industry was developed in Cork, their society became more prominent, participating in all the major political demonstrations of the time.² The three shipbuilding centres in the vicinity of Cork were Cork city itself; Queenstown and Rushbrooke, eight miles from Cork on the eastern side of the harbour; and Passage West, eight miles from the city on the harbour's western side. By 1873 the last of the Cork city shipyards had closed,³ but Passage, Queenstown and Rushbrooke (which was on the outskirts of Queenstown) continued as shipbuilding centres to which many city dwelling shipwrights and labourers travelled daily by train.⁴ It is not now clear whether the shipwrights of the different centres were organized in separate unions or in one general body. The shipwrights of Queenstown claimed to have had their own local society since 1856,⁵ but there are indications that they joined the Passage men to form the Cork Harbour Shipwrights Society during the 1870s.⁶ By 1890 both the Queenstown and the Passage men were marching in public processions under a common banner 'on one side of which was depicted a liner steaming out of Cork Harbour, and on the reverse a sailing vessel and views of Passage and Queenstown'⁷ - a pictorial sign of unity between the two bodies.

1. Sean Daly, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-8.

2. CE, 22 May, 1843; 9 June, 1845; 10 Oct., 1864; 13 Oct., 1873; 22 Nov., 1875; 25 Feb., 1877; 7 Oct., 1880; 11 Apr., 30 Oct., 1881; 11 Oct., 1890.

3. CE, 24 Jan., 1887.

4. CE, 29 Oct., 1886.

5. PP, 1898, ciii (127), pp. 32-3.

6. CE, 22 Nov., 1877; 7 Oct., 1880; 3 Oct., 1881; Sean Daly, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

7. CDH, 11 Oct., 1890.

During the 1860s there may have been some attempt made to fuse with an amalgamated society, for in a public demonstration of 1864 the trade carried a banner described by the local press as 'the card banner of the Amalgamated Shipwrights'.¹ This may possibly have referred to the loose and ineffective federation known as the United Kingdom Amalgamation of Shipwrights.² The ironshipbuilders had been catered for by the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders which had initially been introduced to Cork in 1847 and re-established in the late 1870s.³ But not until the early 1890s did the woodworking shipwrights of the Cork region make a further attempt at amalgamation. The Passage Shipwrights had overhauled their local organization in 1890,⁴ but in 1893, deciding that 'in these days of mammoth firms with large capital the days of local societies have gone by', they joined the Glasgow-based Associated Shipwrights' Society.⁵ Almost two years later the Queenstown shipwrights followed suit, so that by 1896 a total of eighty-five shipwrights from the Cork region belonged to the amalgamated society, sixty-one men from Passage, and twenty-four from Queenstown.⁶

During the 'eighties the shipbuilding industry in the Cork region failed to prosper. Contracts for repairs and building of ships for local concerns were sent to England and Scotland, and both the local

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1. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 308; CE, 10 Oct., 1864.
 2. David Dongan, The History of the Ship Constructors and Shipwrights' Association, 1882-1963 (Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1975), pp. 14-18.
 3. See above, p. 197.
 4. CE, 26 Feb., 1890; PP, 1898, ciii (127), pp. 32-3.
 5. Financial Report of the Associated Shipwrights' Society, 1893, pp. xi, 126.
 6. *ibid.*, 1895, 1896.

Steam Packet Company and the Passage Dock Company gave up the building of heavy vessels and concentrated mainly on repair work.¹ To offset the slump in the trade in 1885, wages were cut by three shillings a week. This resulted in a wage of thirty-three shillings for repair work and thirty shillings for new work, but in 1886 it was attempted to make a further cut to reduce wages to the level paid in Belfast by Harland and Woolf.²

The trade societies involved met the slump by putting increased pressure on local MPs to secure government contracts for the Cork yards. In response to this pressure, the Passage docks were placed on the Admiralty lists and a number of admiralty contracts were secured. But such contracts were not, with the exception of the building of H.M.S. Bann in 1885, of much consequence.³ Even under the most favourable conditions, the shipbuilding industry was, of its nature, subject to violent fluctuations. In Britain these fluctuations led to fourteen major adjustments in wages in the fourteen years from 1879 to 1892, and shipbuilding unions had a higher rate of disputes than any other craft societies.⁴ In Cork, where the industry was less buoyant than in Britain the boom-slump pattern was still more apparent, as the fortunes of the Passage and Queenstown yards rose and fell with the availability of contracts. These fluctuations affected not alone the shipwrights, but also the engineering workers and the unskilled labourers attached to the dockyards. In the early

1. CE, 24 Feb., 20 Apr., 4 May, 23 Sept., 1886; 13, 15, 21 Jan., 1887.

2. CE, 21, 29 Oct., 1, 17 Nov., 1886.

3. CE, 26 Feb., 10 June, 26 Aug., 8, 9 Sept., 17 Oct., 29 Nov., 22 Dec., 1893; 27 Feb., 1894; 19 Nov., 1896; CSORP, 1883:1375.

4. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op. cit., p. 107.

1890s the relief payments of the shipwrights union proved insufficient to tide the members over idle times, and the unskilled dockyard labourers were even more seriously affected. The consequences of unemployment in the Passage area were so serious that a local relief committee had to be set up to look after the immediate needs of those employed - 'decent mechanics and labouring men who were generally above the standard of outdoor relief, and who only wanted work'.¹

Between June 1893 and June 1894 the industry went through a period of depression² and the rate of unemployment among the unionized shipwrights reached one-hundred percent.³ Then in mid-1894 a number of repair contracts led to a sudden boom in the industry. Within a month the workforce in the docks increased from one-hundred to 250, though as this comprised mostly unskilled labour the shipwrights did not benefit and unemployment in union ranks remained as high as seventy percent.⁴ A few months later depression again set in, with the laying off of mechanics and labourers in the Passage and Haulbowline docks,⁵ and when the Lord of the Admiralty visited Cork in 1896 the unskilled and skilled workers of Haulbowline presented him with the trenchant demand -

We care not whether your colours be orange or green,
We only want work in the name of the Queen.⁶

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1. CE, 4 Feb., 1891; 29 Nov., 1893.
 2. Labour Gazette, Feb., 1894, p. 43; Apr., 1894, p. 107.
 3. Quarterly Report of the Associated Shipwrights' Society, June 1893-June 1894.
 4. *ibid.*, June 1894, Sept. 1894; Labour Gazette, May 1894, pp. 138-9; CE, 8 Feb., 27 June, 1894.
 5. CE, 4 Feb., 8 May, 20, 27 Sept., 1895; Labour Gazette, June 1894, p. 170; Sept. 1894, p. 266; Nov., 1894, p. 331; Quarterly Report of the Associated Shipwrights' Society, Mar., 1895. Though the Labour Gazette calculated unemployment among the shipwrights at 16.6%, union records showed it at 60%.
 6. CE, 19 Nov., 1896.

In spite, or perhaps because of the high level of unemployment in their ranks, the shipwrights in the Cork area maintained the trades' general reputation for dogged resistance to erosion of what they considered their rights. As in Britain, demarcation disputes were quite frequent in the Cork shipbuilding industry. Such disputes were particularly common between the shipwrights and the joiners. A demarcation dispute between these two trades in the Passage Docks dragged on almost without interruption between early 1894 and late 1895. Arbitration by outside parties was rejected by the shipwrights because it tended to favour the joiners. The shipwrights were determined to 'maintain the practice of the port', and would tolerate no interference, eventually withdrawing from membership of the United Trades Association when that body tried to impose a solution by arbitration.¹

Among the long established trades of the city, the greatest effort at reorganization in the late nineteenth century was made in the case of the bakers. Long an under-organized trade, particularly prone to the incursions of non-union labour, the bakers had begun as early as the 1870s to overhaul their organizational structure and establish an Irish-based amalgamation. Encouraged by the successful organization of the journeymen bakers of England and Scotland, and in an attempt to meet the rising cost of provisions, the bakers' societies of Dublin joined with a number of non-society men to demand a two-shilling weekly rise. This rise would bring wages up to thirty-six shillings for foremen and thirty shillings for under-hands. In the

1. Financial Report of the Associated Shipwrights' Society, 1894, p. 2; CE, 16 Feb., 22 Nov., 1895.

strike which followed the union was generally successful, and subsequently it was attempted to extend the new organization first to Queen's County and later to the provinces.¹ By early 1873 the Bakers' Union of Ireland, as the new body was called, claimed that twenty-seven counties were fully organized and five partly so. The bakers of Limerick had abolished night work and wages had been raised to twenty-five shillings for journeymen and forty shillings for foremen.²

In the Cork region the union had organized fourteen of the county towns,³ and had succeeded in enforcing day work and a wage rise. But in the city success was less complete. Night work still prevailed, and though the local society joined the new amalgamation their position was weakened by the secession of a number of society men who favoured night work and who formed their own splinter-society to uphold the prevailing system.⁴ The fate of this dissident group was not clear, but the lack of progress by the new Bakers' Union in the city was beyond doubt. In contrast to the dramatic tailors' strike of two years previously, the bakers' movement was never other than timid, and it created very little stir in the newspaper columns. Even at a general meeting of the union in Cork in 1873, at which delegates from Dublin and the provinces were represented, the approach was cautious in the extreme. The meeting emphasized that the journeymen wished for good relations with the master bakers, that they had no

1. CE, 25, 26 Aug., 1873.

2. CE, 1 Aug., 1873.

3. CE, 25 Aug., 1873. These towns were Midleton, Kinsale, Dunmanway, Clonakilty, Bantry, Rosscarbery, Fermoy, Mallow, Kanturk, Macroom, Charleville, Mitchelstown, Millstreet and Youghal.

4. CE, 25 Aug., 1873.

wish to dictate to the employers, and that their campaign relied for success on the force of reason.¹

Not surprisingly, so mild a movement achieved little. Not until 1876 was there any further activity on the bakers' part, and this action was directed not by the country-wide amalgamation of 1872-3, but by the local bakers' society - an indication that, as far as Cork was concerned, the amalgamation attempt had fallen through. The dispute of 1876 involved the society's attempt to relieve unemployment and spread the available work by reducing each hand's weekly work quota from thirteen to ten sacks of flour. The move actually succeeded, though the opposition of a minority of master bakers and their attempt to break society strength by the employment of unfair labour caused some trouble, when journeymen bakers abandoned the arguments of reason in favour of those of personal violence and window breaking.²

Over the next decade the bakers continued to suffer from the incursions of non-union labour from the rural areas and boy labour turned out by the industrial schools,³ while the practice of night work continued. In early 1882 there was a revival of the journeymens' organization drive. Night work in the country towns, which had apparently crept back since its abolition in the early '70s was again abolished. In March 1882 the city bakers' society demanded a similar ban on night work, and actually succeeded in enforcing day work following a strike against refractory masters. By now the bakers'

1. CE, 23, 25 Aug., 16 Sept., 1873.

2. CE, 4, 5, 15 Dec., 1876.

3. CE, 20 July, 23 Sept., 1881.

society numbered 150 men - some 47% of the entire trade in the city and the highest level of unionization reached since the 1840s. The strength of the operatives at this stage was evidenced by the terms they dictated to even the strongest employers. The journeymen in F.H. Thompson's bakery in Prince's Street forced their employer to dismiss a number of blacklegs he had brought from Belfast, and as an earnest of Thompson's good faith, demanded that he lodge with the bakers' society for each society man he employed, the sum of five pounds. This sum was to be forfeited by him if he dismissed any man before his one-year contract expired, or if he failed to pay his men thirty shillings a week plus any rise gained by the trade in general.¹

But a year later a number of the master bakers, led by Thompson, had prepared themselves to shake off union control. When the bakers' society demanded that extra hands be taken on to reduce the workload on the journeymen during Christmas Week, fifty city masters complied, but one, John O'Donnell, dismissed his society men and took in non-union country labour.² Joined by Thompson and Russell Martin, the two main opponents of the bakers' society, and later by fourteen other master bakers, O'Donnell advertised for countrymen to replace all the society men in the city. The anti-society masters employed a recruiting agent and set up a training depot in the city for black-legs, and sufficient numbers of strike breakers came in from the rural

1. CE, 13 Mar., 1883; Royal Commission on Labour, C, 1892, Qs 28,915.

2. CE, 14 Feb., 1883.

areas and from the Wintavern Street Bakers' Hall in Dublin to allow the strike-bound bakeries to run on a skeleton workforce.¹

Faced by this influx of blacklegs, suffering financial strain, and receiving disappointingly little support from the other trade societies of the city, the bakers called off their strike.² So complete was the defeat that the society had no part in the ensuing settlement, for each master settled individually with his own men and many strikers were left without work when masters refused to dismiss their blacklegs.³ In the discouragement following the strike, union membership fell by some 20%, nightwork was continued, and the prevalence of non-union labour kept many society men out of work. In 1886, of the forty-six bake-houses in the city, only twenty-one were run on union labour, and of the 105 society men between Cork, Queenstown and Passage, twenty-five were idle in Cork city alone.⁴

In the late 1880s an agitation against long working hours was launched in Scotland. Over four-thousand Scottish operative bakers struck for a fifty-five hour week, and within a month won their demand. The English operatives' union, the Amalgamated Operative Bakers and Confectioners, was less successful. Though they secured the ten-hour day in 1889, longer hours crept back in during the following years, and union membership declined.⁵ But the initial success of the British movement spurred the Irish operative bakers into action.

1. CE, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 Mar., 1883.

2. CE, 10, 13, 19 Mar., 1883.

3. CE, 13, 14 Mar., 1883.

4. CE, 23 Sept., 1886.

5. Bakers' Record and General Advertiser (hereafter cited as BRGA), Sept., Oct., Nov., 1889, passim; Clegg, Fox & Thompson, op. cit., pp. 127-9.

Late in 1889 a meeting of the trade was held in Dublin and attended by a Scottish deputation and delegates from Dublin and the counties of Louth, Armagh, Antrim and Down. This meeting launched a new Irish Bakers' Federal Union, with its executive centred in Belfast and its aims being to cut hours, raise wages, and regularise the amount of work required from each operative.¹ Contact was maintained with the Scottish Federation of Bakers, and organization progressed so well that by mid-1890 the Irish Federation had twenty-eight branches with a total of 1,700 members in Ireland as a whole. By August 1890 the number of branches had risen to fifty-four and the organization had spread to the southern counties. In the counties of Waterford and Kilkenny the new organization succeeded in raising weekly wages by three shillings and in abolishing night work, and similar advances were made in a number of towns in the eastern part of County Cork where dormant bakers' societies sprang again into life.²

The operative bakers of Cork city joined the federal union in August 1890 and immediately issued to the master bakers a demand for the cessation of night work, the regularization of work-load, and the dismissal of non-union men.³ The masters' resistance followed precisely the same pattern as in 1883. Thirty-one of the city masters

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1. BRGA, 22 Nov., 1889, p. 6; 30 Nov., 1889, p. 6; 7 Dec., 1889, p. 3; 28 Dec., 1889, p. 5.
 2. BRGA, 19 Apr., 1890, p. 7; 19 July, 1890, p. 3; 6 Aug., 1890, p. 5; 16 Aug., 1890, p. 6; 30 Aug., 1890, p. 6; 13 Sept., 1890, p. 7; 20 Sept., 1890, p. 7; CE, 11 Aug., 1890. The county Cork branches were at Middleton, Cloyne, Castlemartyr, Aghada, Carrigtwohill, Whitegate, and other unnamed towns.
 3. BRGA, 16 Aug., 1890, p. 6; CE, 11 Aug., 1890.

united against the operatives in the Master Bakers' Association.¹

But the masters were themselves divided. Some, particularly those who themselves worked in the bakehouse, favoured the abolition of night work, and initially sixteen and later twenty-seven masters in this class conceded the change to day work - a change also conceded in several county towns.² But the hard core of anti-day work employers, centred round F.H. Thompson, drafted in strike breakers from the provinces and from London, and pressurized the complying masters to revert to night work. This eroded the operatives' determination, and of the twenty-seven masters who had switched to day work, ten reverted to night work and were later followed by others.³

Those who reverted claimed, as had been claimed since the 1840s, that while night work prevailed in even one local bakery, while the public demanded fresh bread each morning, and while city bakeries supplied rural areas where same-day deliveries necessitated early morning baking, night work must continue generally in the city. The masters' argument was backed from an unexpected quarter. As soon as the operative bakers demanded day work, the van-men from the various bakeries protested against any such change, pointing out, not unreasonably, that while the night-baked bread could be delivered by day, day-baked bread would have to be delivered by night, especially in the rural areas. As things were, the van-men worked from early morning to late at night, those on the country routes sometimes not arriving

1. CE, 21 Aug., 2 Sept., 1890.

2. CE, 23, 25, 26, 28 Aug., 18, 20, 22 Sept., 2, 6 Oct., 1890.

3. CE, 28 Aug., 1, Sept., 6, 26 Oct., 1890.

home until dawn. Their working conditions would be considerably worsened if deliveries did not begin until evening and it was, in their opinion, more pleasant to work by night in a warm bakehouse than to face a long road in dark winter weather. Reform in bakers' working conditions was all very well, but not if it aggravated the plight of the van-men:

If our brothers in labour throw off their chains, but bind them on us, are we justified in wearing them?¹

The van-men formed their own society to resist the changeover to day work, and when some bakeries did change to day work the society refused to supply day-baked bread. The confused situation then arose in which the striking bakers' union men offered to act as unpaid blacklegs against the striking van-men - hardly a sign of that labour solidarity which is usually associated with the early 1890s.

Labour solidarity there was, but it was shown only by those who, unlike the van-men, were unaffected by the issues of the bakers' dispute. Most organized trade societies rallied to the support of the bakers, giving not only financial aid to the strikers, but pledging their members to buy bread only from day-working bakeries.² Though the pledge was not very effective (tradesmens' wives were reputedly the worst offenders in buying from strike-bound bakeries) its adoption indicated the degree of solidarity at trade committee level with the bakers' stand. The prevailing militancy of unskilled and semi-skilled labour in the city, the rapid spread of the Federated Bakers' Union,

1. CE, 21, 22 Aug., 1890.

2. CE, 15, 16 Sept., 2 Oct., 1890; Typographical Society Minute Book, 13 Sept., 1890.

and the initial compliance of several city masters had greatly encouraged the operative bakers. In the opening days of the strike they were fairly confident of success, declaring that rather than make any concessions

the men would prefer to put their families in the Workhouse for a time, and go on tramp themselves in order to win the struggle.¹

But the reversion to night work by several masters, the dismissals of union members and their replacement by blacklegs, and the growing public disgruntlement over the bread shortage made the operatives modify their demands bit by bit, until in mid-November 1890, three months after they began their campaign, the operatives of the city 'voluntarily' returned to night work.²

Discouraged by the failure of the 1890 strike, the Cork operative bakers made no further attempt to abolish night work during the remainder of the century, though periodic letters to the press attempted unsuccessfully to waken public opinion on the issue.³ Conditions in the trade deteriorated during the 'eighties and early 'nineties, and though the census showed a decline in the number of bakers in the city between 1871 and 1901, contemporaries claimed that surplus labour was flooding the market and that non-union labour displaced the union members, over 36% of whom were idle in mid-1892.⁴

1. CE, 10, 28, 29 Sept., 2, 3, 9 Oct., 1890.
2. CE, 8, 14, 15 Sept., 15 Nov., 1890; 1 June, 1892; Royal Commission on Labour, c. 1892, Qs 28,862-5.
3. Royal Commission on Labour, c. 1892, Qs 17,233; CE, 26, 29 Sept., 1892.
4. Royal Commission on Labour, c. 1892, Qs 17,123, 28,952-3; CE, 18 Nov., 1892; 30 Nov., 1896; 23 Jan., 12 Feb., 15 Mar., 1897; Journeymen Bakers' Magazine, Skpt., 1900, p. 1189.

For those employed, working conditions had changed little since the early 1840s. Men worked a seventy to eighty hour week in insanitary bakehouses (seldom, if ever visited by a factory inspector), for wages varying between twenty-eight and forty-two shillings a week.¹ The pressure of work during the night allowed little time to rest or eat, ill-health prevailed in the trade, and as one operative expressively put it,

We don't eat as much between the whole trade as would sustain a tinker's donkey for three hours.²

In the structure of the bakers' federation established in 1889, the local bakers' societies apparently retained a large measure of autonomy, contributing twopence per member weekly to the federation, but keeping their own local fund from which the branch was expected to support itself.³ Membership of the Cork branch dropped in the years immediately following the 1890 strike. Claiming a membership of 166 in 1890, by 1892 it numbered only 110, and though Cork delegates regularly attended the federation's annual conference, internal dissensions and non-payment of dues had begun to worry the Cork committee by the mid-90s, and other centres appeared to have similar problems.⁴ In 1895, to offset this disunity, the Federated Union's general meeting in Belfast called for the recruitment of the bakers in the small country towns and decided that the federation's structure should be tightened to form a proper amalgamated union.

1. Royal Commission on Labour, C, 1892, Qs 17,128, 28,929, 28,969; CE, 17, 19 Aug., 1892; 15, 20, 23 June, 1895.
2. CE, 26 Sept., 1892.
3. Royal Commission on Labour ... Qs 17,228, 28,887, 28,927-9.
4. CE, 1 June, 1892; 10 Apr., 1893; 31 May, 1894.

Cork was among the societies which pressed for amalgamation and denounced the principle of local societies as conducive of bickering and internal division.¹ But even when Cork and other centres joined the new amalgamation, a certain degree of local autonomy remained. In late 1895 the Cork operatives' body, still known as the Cork Bakers' Benevolent Society, agreed with the master bakers of the city that all second hands should work extra hours to make up time lost on Bank Holidays, the agreement being made without any apparent reference to the amalgamated union.²

After the bakers, the tailors had perhaps the weakest bargaining power among the trades. As the bakers suffered from the ready availability of blackleg and country labour, so the tailors faced the problem of the invasion of their trade by sweated outworkers. These workers were not amenable to society regulations, they provided alternative cheap labour for economizing master tailors and clothiers, and they consequently pushed the organized men out of employment. Moreover, the gradual spread of machinery (a major issue in the great strike of 1870) enabled more and more of the tailors' work to go to female and boy labour. Since 1860 the making of vests had been given to girls and outworkers and by the 1890s the making of trousers was done largely by boys.³ To mitigate the effects of machinery and outworking on their employment prospects, the organized journeymen tailors had, following the 1870 strike, enforced where possible a

1. CE, 29 May, 3 June, 1895; BRGA, 7 June, 1895.

2. CE, 23 Nov., 1895.

3. CE, 10, 12 June, 1893.

special charge for the preparation of garments for the machine.

For example, the men were to be paid for preparing the edges of coats for machine stitching at half the rate they would get for sewing them by hand.¹

Since the 1870 strike, too, the local log had changed. Standing at threepence-halfpenny after the strike, it rose to fourpence in 1874, and in 1878 was further advanced to fourpence-halfpenny. But in 1886 the journeymens' society conceded to some employers a reversion to the fourpenny log, and from that time there were two logs running concurrently in Cork - the fourpenny or second class log, and the fourpence-halfpenny or first class log. The cut which produced the second class log was a response to the prevailing depression of the mid-1880s. It was hoped that by cutting rates to a minimum small struggling masters would be enabled to establish or re-establish themselves in business. And by making union labour as cheap as possible it was intended to encourage such masters to employ society men in preference to non-union outworkers, and to compete against the growing factory-based clothing trade.² In the factories female labour predominated and the subdivision of labour had changed tailoring from a skilled to a semi-skilled occupation, with a consequent fall in pay rates. Lyons' clothing factory, operating in the city from the early 1890s, employed almost two-hundred hands, mostly women and girls. The piecework system applied, and though the few male workers employed in the concern earned as much as seventy

1. CE, 18, 19 May, 1893.

2. Yearly and Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1878, 1887; CE, 6 Feb., 1886; 10 Apr., 1893.

shillings a week, womens' and girls' weekly earnings varied between four and twenty shillings.¹

In the hand-sewing trade the first class log continued to be paid by the well-established and thriving employers (known as first class employers) like Keane and Turnbull, Cleburne and Son, and Richard Allen, who by 1893 together employed over half the society men in the city. In all, over 150 society men were employed by these three houses, and all worked on their employers' premises.² The smaller second class employers had far fewer men, generally employing from seven to nine society men each,³ while their more limited finances made them heavily dependent on sweated outworkers and machinists. During the 1870 lockout, the Cork masters had no formal organization,⁴ but by the early 1890s they had formed the Master Tailors' Association, a body dominated by the second class employers and allied with the masters of Dublin and Belfast to the Master Tailors' Association of Great Britain.⁵ The Cork Master Tailors' Association favoured the masters in the Liverpool lockout of late 1892, and was accurately judged by the Cork operatives to be a pressure group for the extension of machinery and sweated out-working.⁶

In early 1893, five members of the Master Tailors Association in Cork, whose business had prospered since the 1880s, were called upon

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1. CE, 6 June, 1892.
 2. CE, 23 Aug., 1892; 10 June, 25 Aug., 1893.
 3. CE, 3, 4, 8 Apr., 31 May, 1893.
 4. CE, 30 July, 1870.
 5. Master Tailors' Association Minute Book, 21 Oct., 1897.
 6. CE, 23, 24, 25 Aug., 1892; Clegg, Fox & Thompson, op. cit., p. 136.

to promote their men from the second to the first class log. Two masters complied, but William Day, Thomas Murphy, and Denis Lehane resisted and advertised for non-union men. Pressure of business, however, forced them to concede the operatives' demands and for over a month the first class log was paid in their establishments.¹ But, as in 1870, once pressure of work decreased, the complying masters reverted to the fourpenny log on the plea that they could not afford to pay the first class rate.² Though the journeymen brushed aside such arguments and claimed that the masters involved had made fortunes on the trade, later events showed that the masters' financial affairs were far from rosy. Of the eleven masters involved in the 1893 lockout, four had gone bankrupt by 1912. Two, Denis Lehane and William Day, blamed the strike of 1893 for their misfortunes, Day claiming that it had cost him over £1,000. But it would seem that the strike was less the source than the side-effect of the masters' financial disabilities. The Cork tailoring trade had more casualties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century than any other manufacturing sector in the city. Between 1890 and 1912 fourteen master tailors and clothiers went bankrupt - all men of considerable standing in the trade, and some of whom had been in business for many years.³

But in 1893 there was no outward sign of the second class masters' financial difficulties, and the journeymen continued to press for the payment of the first class log. The men employed by Day, Lehane and

1. CE, 31 May, 1, 6, 9, 10 June, 1893.

2. CE, 9, 10 May, 1893.

3. Cork Bankruptcy Court Records, 1892/27A; 1895/No. ref. number; 1897/17; 1898/113; 1899/148; 1902/181; 1906/217, 247, 230; 1910/311; 1911/297; 1912/303.

Murphy went on strike, and backed by the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, rejected all attempts at arbitration. When the determination of the operatives became clear, the masters took the offensive. Day, Lehane and Murphy locked out their men and were joined in the lockout by eight other master tailors of the second class.¹ The first class masters, as their counterparts in Liverpool had done the previous year, stood aloof and their employees remained at work.² Thus the lockout affected only some sixty society men out of a total of over two-hundred, but the society as a whole (including those members still working) was soon involved in the dispute, heading pickets, watching trains for the arrival of black-legs, and eventually participating in the settlement discussions.³

The adamant stand taken by both sides caused the strike to drag on for over five months. The resistance of the operatives was hardened by the support of their union's executive in England, and by the fact that the local society men still at work contributed steadily towards the strike fund.⁴ The dispute which began over the issue of the log developed, as in 1870, until it really concerned the problem of mechanization in the trade. The lockout masters were willing to advance their rate of pay from fourpence to fourpence-halfpenny, but were not willing to concede the union's demand for the first class log. The difference between the masters' fourpence-halfpenny log and the first class fourpence-halfpenny log demanded by

1. CE, 17, 31 May, 1893.

2. Clegg, Fox, and Thompson, op. cit., p. 136.

3. CE, 31 May, 1, 6, 9, 10 June, 1893.

4. CE, 6, 8 June, 1893.

the union seemed incomprehensible to outsiders, but it was of vital importance to the masters and operatives, as it concerned the machinery issue. The first class log, as worked in the first class houses of the city, included extra allowances to the operative for preparing garments for finishing by machine. This allowance was not included in the fourpence-halfpenny log proposed by the second class masters. In practical terms this meant that an operative making, for example, a lounge coat on the second class fourpence-halfpenny log would in fact earn a shilling less than by making the same coat on the first class fourpence-halfpenny log.¹ The operatives would accept the masters' log only if it were agreed to abolish all outworking and to have all necessary machine work done on the premises under strict union surveillance. The masters, for their part, maintained that the abolition of outworking - particularly in the making of vests - would cripple them financially and force them out of the trade - a reflection of the extent of the outworking system in the second class houses in Cork at this time.²

Deadlock ensued between the two sides, and relations were embittered when the masters set up a central workshop and recruited local and English strikebreakers, sent the operatives' log back to the society, and refused to recognise the tailors' union.³ On the operatives' side, there occurred several cases of malicious injury

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1. CE, 10 June, 1893. The operative, by making a lounge coat on the second class fourpenny log would earn 9.10½d; on the second class fourpence-halfpenny log he would earn 11.3½d; and on the first class fourpence halfpenny log he would earn 12.4d.
 2. CE, 9, 10 June, 1893.
 3. CE, 1, 22, 30 June, 1, 11, 27 July, 1893.

of goods in lockout shops, as well as assaults on masters and black-legs, and on customers patronizing such shops.¹ The major incident of the strike, however, concerned the killing of a journeyman tailor by William Day, one of the first master tailors to enter the dispute.

Day, returning home in the Sunday's Well area of the city one night at the beginning of the strike, was met on the road by four men, all operative tailors, who appeared to be waiting to ambush him. The men involved claimed later that they were merely returning from Day's house, having checked that no strike-breakers were working there, but the circumstances showed the operatives in a suspicious light, especially as one of them, a striker from Day's own shop, had recently been convicted of assaulting a blackleg. Day, who had carried a gun since the beginning of the strike, fired at one of the men, Dick Dooley, an employee of Keane and Turnbills'. Dooley was not on strike, but had joined the voluntary pickets placed by the tailors' union. He was brought home, seriously wounded, and Day was lodged in the County Gaol. Dooley died a week later, but Day was allowed out on bail and subsequently the charges against him were dismissed.²

Though the dismissal of so serious a charge might indicate that the sympathies of the bench were with the masters, it must be noted that several assault cases brought against operatives were leniently dealt with at the Police Court. Though such offences were obviously far less serious than that of Day, their dismissal in the court contrasted sharply with the severe sentences passed on those committing

1. CE, 31 May, 4, 7, 8, 10, 14 June, 12, 27 July, 1893.

2. CE, 31 May, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 16 June, 20 July, 1893.

similar misdemeanours during the 1870 strike. Most of the cases in 1893 were either dismissed due to conflicting evidence, or the defendants were allowed out on moderate bail. One party was given one month's hard labour for slashing a suit in a blacked shop, and one case of intimidation of blacklegs was considered sufficiently serious to go forward for trial to the Quarter Sessions, but these were the exceptions, and generally it seemed that the Cork local magistrates had mellowed considerably in their attitude to strike cases since the 1870s.¹

The strike dragged on into the winter of 1893, though some masters did concede the operatives' demands and work was resumed in these shops.² Other masters still held out, running their concerns on blackleg labour, and paying at the old second class rates.³ By the late 1890s the Master Tailors' Association had still not made any move to settle the dispute with the tailors' society, the lockout still persisted, and several houses operated entirely on unfair or sweated labour, though a visit to the city by the Amalgamated Society of Tailors' delegate in 1898 led to the abolition of outworking in one firm and the payment of the first class log in another.⁴

Three major disputes occurred in the building trade during the 1890s. Two concerned the carpenters and one was by the plumbers. No strike of any magnitude had occurred among the carpenters since

1. CE, 8, 10, 22, 29 June, 27 July, 1893.

2. CE, 27, 29 June, 12 July, 10 Nov., 1893.

3. CE, 24 Nov., 1893.

4. Journal of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, May, 1898, p. 29; CE, 15, 27, 29 May, 1872; 17 Sept., 1896.

1872, and in the interval no change in wage rates had been made.

In 1890 the carpenters still earned five-and-sixpence a week as they had done since the early '70s.¹ The carpenters' strike of 1892 was not about wages, however, but about the introduction of mechanization into the trade. A long-standing rule of the carpenters' society prohibited the working of any timber cut by steam-driven machinery.²

But in the early 'nineties, the bigger builders in the city, organized in the Master Builders' Association, determined to rationalize the trade and meet the competition of Dublin and Belfast builders, and called for a change in the carpenters' rule against machinery. An agreement drawn up in April 1892 between the Master Builders' Association and the United Building Trades (including the carpenters, masons, plasterers and stonecutters) decided to permit the use of machine-cut timber in the trade.³

Trouble arose two months later over the interpretation of this machinery clause. The carpenters' society maintained that the permitted machine-cut timber must be prepared either in the builders' own workshops or else in the local saw mills and by society labour. The builders, on their side, held that the agreement left them free to use mill-prepared timber whether or not it was cut by unionized labour, and that they were permitted in some circumstances to use even imported timber work.

There were, in fact, two separate issues at stake here. Firstly, the question of unionization of the labour force in the city sawmills

1. CE, 15, 27, 29 May, 1872; 17 Sept., 1896.

2. CE, 4, 5 Dec., 1888.

3. CE, 10 June, 1892.

was important, as no mill in the city employed society men. Secondly, the question of uncontrolled mechanization of the trade threatened, in the carpenters' opinion, the whole fabric of their trade, while the mills were in danger of becoming emporia for foreign work.¹ The ensuing one-week strike by 250 carpenters (practically the entire unionized section of the trade) resulted mainly in victory for the builders. Importation of some classes of work (skirtings, mouldings and cornices) was to be allowed, and the use of the machine-saw permitted, though some concession to the carpenters was made by the clause encouraging the erection of woodworking machinery in the builders' own workshops, where it would be under union surveillance.²

When further trouble broke out in 1896 the issues were basically the same. The carpenters' society, which had been by now affiliated to the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners,³ and worked under the rules of that body, attempted to modify the terms of the 1892 agreement to prevent the use of all imported joinery and to impose tighter controls on the mechanization of the trade. The builders had been well satisfied with the agreement of '92 and declined to change its terms, though it seemed that not all builders had abided strictly by those terms, and that the clauses dealing with importation, mechanization and the limitation of apprentices had been repeatedly broken.⁴ The ensuing strike, unlike that of 1892, affected only 50% of the city's unionized carpenters - those working for members of the

1. CE, 10, 11 June, 1892.

2. CE, 13, 14, 15, 16 June, 1892.

3. Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1892-3.

4. CE, 11 Nov., 1892; 8, June, 17 Sept., 1896.

Master Builders' Association. The men working for private building firms found no difficulty in enforcing the new rules, and these men, to the number of 130, remained at work.¹ Their financial support and that of the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, together with the currently busy state of the trade which enabled fifty strikers to find alternative work locally, enabled the carpenters to take a hardline attitude in the dispute. They refused all proposals of arbitration, and kept up the strike even when the other city trades refused all moral and financial support.² Early in the dispute, indeed, the carpenters felt sufficiently confident of success to bring in a whole new series of demands including one for a rise in weekly wages from the thirty-three shillings current since 1872 to the thirty-six shillings current in Dublin. The introduction of the wage issue considerably delayed settlement of the dispute, the majority of the strikers resisting any compromise on the wages issue, while the Master Builders' Association refused to deviate from the terms of the 1892 agreement.³ But both sides were being pressurized to settle. The master builders experienced great difficulty in finding strike-breakers, and had themselves to do the carpentry work on any building works in progress.⁴ The carpenters, for their part, were urged in no uncertain terms by the other building trades to settle the wages question and allow all to resume work.⁵ With such pressure on both sides, the eventual settle-

1. CE, 18 June, 1896.

2. CE, 23 June, 10, 21, 28, 29 July, 21 Aug., 17 Sept., 9 Oct., 1896.

3. CE, 18 Aug., 15 Sept., 23, 24 Oct., 1896.

4. CE, 12, 13 Aug., 15, 17 Sept., 1896.

5. CE, 21 Aug., 9 Oct., 1896.

ment, reached after a five month strike, was a compromise. It was possibly more favourable to the master builders than to the carpenters. Wages rose from thirty-three shillings to thirty-four and sixpence, to equal the current Belfast rates. The builders were to be allowed extensive use of machinery, but all joinery made in local mills was to be done by union men, while imported wrought and moulded timber was to be finished only by local joiners. On the apprentice issue, the carpenters gained the upper hand: the situation whereby a single builder could employ up to twenty apprentices was to be allowed no longer, no builder being permitted more than two apprentices, and this number only if he employed more than six operative carpenters.¹

In 1894, mid-way between the two carpenters' strikes, the operative plumbers demanded changes in their wages and working hours. Apparently the best paid trade in the building sector, the plumbers worked a fifty-seven hour week at an hourly rate of five-and-fourpence, twopence less than the rate applying in Dublin and Belfast.² But, as in the case of the carpenters and other building trades, extra allowances were paid for work done in the country - i.e. over three miles from the city boundary.³ In the case of the plumbers, this extra payment amounted to one-and-sixpence where the work necessitated staying overnight at the work place. But no such extra payment was given for Sunday when a job ran from Saturday through to Monday and required men to stay away from home over the weekend. Basically, the plumbers' demands in 1894 centred round the payment of this 'country money' for

1. CE, 19 Sept., 27, 30 Oct., 1896.

2. PP, 1893-4, cii (85), p. 190; 1894, lxxxi, Pt. III.

3. CE, 10 June, 1892; 26, 27, 28 Mar., 1894; 21 July, 27 Nov., 1896.

Sunday. They also sought payment for time spent travelling to the country jobs, and demanded that all train fares for such journeys be paid by the employers.¹ In this respect the plumbers had taken the offensive, seeking innovations in their pay and hour structure which would advance their interests at the expense of the employer. But certain other demands were of a defensive nature, particularly those demands pertaining to the limitation of apprentices. Like the carpenters at the same period, the plumbers found their trade gradually flooded by apprentice labour. Some employers in the city ran their establishments entirely on such labour, others employed as many as six apprentices, while the average ratio of all establishments was two apprentices to each journeyman.² Of the twenty-six plumbers' establishments in the city, thirteen were affected by the strike which, marked by a no-surrender attitude on both sides, lasted for ten weeks.

As in the case of the carpenters' strike of 1896, the master plumbers experienced difficulty in finding strike breakers, and though they claimed that they had thirty men available to replace the fifty-six strikers, these strikebreakers were never produced, and the masters themselves had to do the plumbing work on their current contracts.³ The operatives were backed by their union executive in England, and sufficient evidence of local society strength was the fact that the thirty-plus society men on strike were joined by almost the same number of non-union plumbers who worked with them in the different shops of the city.⁴

1. CE, 28 Mar., 2 Apr., 1894.

2. Plumbers' Society Minute Book, undated entry immediately following entry for 28 Mar., 1894.

3. CE, 9, 19, 25, 26 Apr., 2, 12, 14 May, 1894.

4. Plumbers' Society Minute Book, 26, 27, 28 Mar., 1894.

The strike ended abruptly in May 1894, following talks between the masters and the union's local and general executive representatives. The settlement, like that in the carpenters' case in 1896, was a compromise. No advance in wages was made, nor were the demands for Sunday 'country money' and other expenses granted, though the cut in weekly hours from fifty-four to fifty-one helped to balance this. On the apprentice question the union gained an apparent victory, the permitted number of apprentices being cut to allow one to each journeyman employed. It seems, however, that this clause was frequently ignored during the following years. By 1897 four houses in the city employed more than the permitted number of apprentices, and two of these houses, following a protest strike by the journeymen affected, cleared their premises of union labour and were turned over exclusively to an apprentice workforce.¹

Local Attitudes to Amalgamated Unionism

Though local trade societies which fused with amalgamated unions proved remarkably silent on their reasons for so doing,² membership of such unions was generally regarded as strengthening a trade's position vis-a-vis local employers. As early as 1861 some members of the local Typographical Society blamed the flooding of the local trade by apprentices on their society's isolation from the Provincial Typographical Association in England.³ Membership of an amalgamated

1. CE, 30 May, 1894; 7 Sept., 1897; PP, 1898, lxxxviii (423), pp. 20-21.

2. Coopers' Minute Book, 18 May, 14 June, 1892; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1893. Neither the coopers nor the carpenters, both strong local societies, recorded their reasons for joining British amalgamateds in the early 1890s.

3. Proceedings of a Meeting of Delegates from the Typographical Societies of the United Kingdom, 1861, p. 7.

union strengthened a local trade's financial and bargaining position during a strike. This was particularly true in the case of the tailors. The defeat of the 1870 strike of the independent Cork Tailors' Society was due largely to the exhaustion of the operatives' funds, contributions from other sympathetic local trade societies proving insufficient to maintain the tailors during a protracted dispute.¹ The defeat in 1870 prompted the Cork tailors to join the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, and in the big local tailoring strike of 1893 the operatives' sustained campaign was made possible largely through the financial support of the amalgamated's executive. A large portion of the £446 spent on the strike was given by the executive, and in the settlement negotiations the local strikers were strongly backed by the delegate of the amalgamated union.²

In the case of a local society, funds depended solely on the contributions of local members, and depletion of funds had to be met by extra contributions from the members or by economizing measures. During a lean period in 1886 a shortage of funds in the Cork Coopers' Society was met by such economizing, the members agreeing that

in the present financial state of the society, all emigration /aid/, gas, and all avoidable expenses be stopped for two months.³

A year later a similar financial crisis in the society was met by an additional weekly levy of sixpence on each member and a strike threatened against all members consistently neglecting to pay their society dues.⁴ The non-paying member was the bane of every trade

1. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 146; Coopers' Minute Book, 30 Oct., 1873.

2. CE, 15 May, 10, 12 June, 1893; Yearly and Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, 1893, 1894.

3. Coopers' Minute Book, 30 Sept., 1886.

4. *ibid.*, 31 Mar., 14 Oct., 1887.

society secretary's existence, as surviving records show. In 1890 the plumbers' secretary recorded that individual members' arrears ranged from six shillings and eightpence to fifty-one shillings and the branch, for this reason, was deeply in debt to the union executive. An ultimatum of 'pay up or get out' was issued to the non-paying members, and the secretary, in a moment of exasperation committed to paper his determination that

such latitude will never again be given to members of the Cork lodge. It is better to have six good men than forty like /those/ we have to grapple with from time to time ... The good and clear members are paying up the levy, but it is hard on men paying for men we will never get a penny from ...¹

The plumbers, however, unlike the coopers, could as a last resort appeal for financial aid to the executive of their amalgamated union, and on this particular occasion the executive cancelled a portion of the debt.² Moreover, in the plumbers' case, as in that of other amalgamated branches, the utter depletion of a branch's funds was prevented by the practice of 'equalization'. This allowed a union executive, when the funds of individual branches rose above a certain level, to appropriate the surplus money and distribute it among other branches whose funds had dropped to a low level.³ This practice of equalization was partly responsible for the periodic fluctuation of funds in the Cork branches of amalgamated unions, though the extra expenses resulting from strikes and periods of high unemployment also played a part. Table 21 shows the available figures for the level

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1. Plumbers' Minute Book, 17 Mar., 1890.
 2. ibid., 27 Mar., 1890.
 3. ibid., 21 Nov., 1868; 29 May, 1869; 26 Oct., 1872; Quarterly Report of the United Operative Plumbers of Great Britain and Ireland, Sept., 1873.

of funds in the Cork amalgamated union branches in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Few figures are available for local trade society fund levels, and therefore it is not possible to compare their financial condition with that of the amalgamated branches. The Coopers' Society was apparently prone to financial difficulties,¹ but not all local societies were equally hard up. The Typographical Society, for instance, had £258 on hands in 1895, though by 1898 this had fallen to £178, mainly through the pressure of members' applications for emigration aid.² To meet this drain on the funds the society had to increase members' subscriptions and reduce emigration benefit by five shillings.³

The financial weaknesses of local societies were thus quite considerable, though as Table 41 shows, the level of prosperity among the amalgamated branches varied widely from one branch to the next, some, like the cabinet makers and seamen having very small funds.

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1. Coopers' Minute Book, 14 Oct., 1887; 12 Jan., 1888; 14 Sept., 1892. In 1888 the society was without funds and eleven pounds in debt; by 1892 the society had a balance of £122 on hands.
 2. Typographical Society Minute Book, 14 Nov., 1896; 30 Jan., 1897; 8 Jan., 1898.
 3. *ibid.*, 14 Nov., 1896.

TABLE 41¹

Level of Funds in the Cork branches of amalgamated unions, 1880-1900

| | 1880 | 1881 | 1882 | 1883 | 1884 | 1885 | 1886 | 1887 | 1888 | 1889 | 1890 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Boilermakers | - | 37 | 71 | - | - | 64 | - | - | - | - | 82 |
| Cabinetmakers | - | - | 15 | - | 19 | - | - | - | - | - | 6 |
| Carpenters | - | - | 10 | - | 55 | 56 | 58 | 73 | 0 | - | - |
| Coachmakers | 11 | 22 | 16 | - | - | - | 23 | 24 | 27 | 19 | - |
| Tailors | 140 | 159 | 158 | 183 | 161 | 185 | 63 | 5 | 457 | 142 | 251 |
| Engineers | 466 | 355 | 416 | 478 | 514 | 395 | 402 | 246 | 381 | 473 | 499 |
| Ironfounders | - | - | - | - | 20 | 18 | 4 | 7 | 40 | 65 | 38 |
| Plasterers | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Sailors, firemen | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0 | 0 |
| Shipwrights | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 1891 | 1892 | 1893 | 1894 | 1895 | 1896 | 1897 | 1898 | 1899 | 1900 | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | |
| Boilermakers | 63 | 81 | | | | | | | | | |
| Cabinetmakers | | | | 0 | | | | 21 | | | |
| Carpenters | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Coachmakers | 81 | 228 | 328 | 371 | 350 | 361 | 385 | 378 | 289 | 260 | |
| Tailors | 209 | 149 | 76 | 8 | 1 | 8 | 21 | 75 | - | 16 | |
| Engineers | 467 | 207 | 442 | 260 | 128 | 230 | 264 | 181 | 233 | 282 | |
| Ironfounders | 66 | 76 | 75 | 62 | 22 | 37 | 71 | 87 | 101 | 56 | |
| Plasterers | | | | | | | 5 | 1 | | | |
| Sailors, firemen | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Shipwrights | | | 2 | 10 | 31 | 36 | 21 | 62 | 74 | 46 | |

1. Annual Report of the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders; Alliance Cabinet Makers' Society Annual Report; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners; Quarterly Report of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers; Yearly & Financial Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers; Half-Yearly Report of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders of England, Ireland & Wales; National Association of Operative Plasterers' Auditor's Report; National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemens' Union of Great Britain and Ireland, Annual Report; Financial Report of the Associated Shipwrights' Society. Figures here are given to the nearest pound.

Amalgamation had its disadvantages. The equalization system which worked to the advantage of financially embarrassed branches, took from the funds of the prosperous branches. Thus the Cork branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers saw its funds cut by almost two-hundred pounds in 1894 to meet the equalization requirements of the union.¹ Prosperous local branches tended to see this appropriation of funds as high-handed action by a remote central authority, and few local societies relished the thought of losing their independence to an English-based executive. When the Typographical Association organized an Irish recruiting campaign in the 1890s, the local Cork society adamantly refused to join, considering that the amalgamated's benefit provisions failed to take sufficient account of local circumstances. Even when local society funds began to fall in the late 'nineties, the local printers still insisted on remaining independent.²

In the case of those local trades which joined amalgamated unions, a certain degree of irritation resulted from executive vigilance over local affairs, and friction was caused by financial problems. The Amalgamated Society of Tailors harried the Cork and district branches because of the unsatisfactory nature of their financial reports and because their meeting room rents were too high. Moreover, when the Cork secretary drank the branch funds in 1887 the union executive refused to send any further money to Cork until the loss had been made

1. See Table 41 above.

2. Typographical Society Minute Book, 1, 8, 22 June, 19 Oct., 1895; 2 July, 1898.

good, but four years later the local branch was still defending the secretary, and refusing to reimburse headquarters.¹

Besides, union aid for local strikes was often given grudgingly when the executive felt that local action had been precipitate. In 1843 when the Cork branch of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders struck against a wage cut, the executive denounced the branch's failure to resort to less extreme measures:

As there is a provision made for all cases of dispute we hope we shall not again see the society's cash made away with any more for turnouts ...²

Similarly in 1872 the Coachmakers' Society executive sharply criticized the Cork branch for striking for a cut in hours.³ The local branches of the Seamens' and Dockers' unions received equally severe censure from their respective executives for their strike action in 1890-91, and though the executives did stand by the men in the settlement talks, several of the offenders received no strike pay.⁴

The local desire for autonomy was the greatest deterrent to the advance of amalgamation. The smoothest establishment of amalgamated branches in Cork occurred in the cases of previously unorganized groups like the ironfounders (1847), plumbers (1868), bootrivetters (1885), seamen (1889) and dockers (1889). An equally smooth transition from local society to amalgamated union branch was made in those cases where the local men sought or unanimously agreed to fusion with the amalgamated

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1. Quarterly Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, July 1874; Apr., 1875, Feb., 1887, Apr., 1887, Feb., 1891.
 2. Half-Yearly Report of the Iron Founders' Friendly Society of England, Ireland and Wales, June 1843, p. v.
 3. Quarterly Report of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, June 1872, p. 1.
 4. Seafaring, 8 Nov., 1890, p. 3; 4 July, 22 Aug., 1891, p. 12.

union, as did the coachmakers (1840s), engineers (1851), tailors (1873) and coopers (1892). Where a trade was already unionized the attitude of the established local society determined whether or not amalgamation should proceed. Trouble arose when an amalgamated branch set up in opposition to a local society and no fusion between the two bodies occurred. Sometimes an amalgamated union was introduced to the city by members of an existing local society who had quarreled with their fellow-members, and where this happened the amalgamated branch was doomed from the start. In 1894 an internal dispute broke out in the eighty-strong local Plasterers' Society: one section accused the committee of spending society funds on drink and objected to the raising of society fees from threepence to a shilling. The pro-committee section denied the drink charge, and claimed that most of the dissidents were in arrears of membership fees, many not having paid for almost a year, and that the rise in the weekly subscription was intended to offset the financial crisis brought about through their non-payment.¹ The dissenting members withdrew from the local society and, to the number of fifty-five, joined the English-based National Union of Operative Plasterers, later helping to extend that union to Waterford.² The fortunes of the amalgamated branch in Cork were not happy. Membership remained static and the local Cork society maintained towards the amalgamated branch an attitude of hostility. In 1897 some amalgamated members were forced out of their employment through the pressure of the locals, and by 1899 the branch had closed down.³

1. CE, 16 Oct., 1894.

2. CE, 19 Nov., 1894; Monthly Report of the National Association of Operative Plasterers, Nov., 1894, p. 16; Sept., 1897, p. 17.

3. National Association of Operative Plasterers, Auditors Report, 1894-99.

But the greatest trouble arose when the local society involved was a strong one, able to match the financial attractions of an amalgamated body. In such a case, the dispute between the two bodies could drag on for years, as happened in the dispute between the local Ancient Corporation of Carpenters and the local branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. From the inception of the amalgamated branch in 1871 the two bodies had been at logger-heads, the small amalgamated branch holding out against the opposition of the two-hundred strong local body.¹

The membership of the Amalgamated Society branch varied between sixteen in 1883 and forty-four in 1888, but the average membership was twenty-one. The hostility between the two was highlighted in the late 'eighties when the United Trades Association initiated a campaign against the amalgamated society to prevent them getting employment in the city. Letters were sent to local employers asking them not to employ the Amalgamated Society men, and in some cases the latter were dismissed and members of the local society employed in their place. This outburst of hostility towards the amalgamated men was occasioned by the depressed state of the building trade, in which situation the local body felt it deserved preference of employment.² Ignoring the fact that most members of the amalgamated society were natives of the city, the local body tried to discredit them as 'a society imported from England' whose funds, paid to an English executive, never helped projects of local or national benefit.³

1. CE, 12 Apr., 1873; 22 Mar., 1887; CDH, 11, 12, 18 Apr., 1873; Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1871, pp. 154, 215-6, 1883-88.

2. CE, 23 Sept., 1886.

3. CE, 27, 31 May, 3 June, 1886.

What was essentially an economic issue was complicated by the prevailing political climate, and when the quarrel between the two groups was resumed in 1887, the main note was political. The 'Plan of Campaign' was in full swing in the country, the National League had introduced an effective boycotting campaign, and there was a wave of agrarian violence directed chiefly against process servers and caretakers of evicted farms.¹ Thus when the two carpenters' societies clashed, most of the argument consisted of mutual accusations of betraying the national cause by working at their trade on evicted farms held by caretakers. The local society, dismissing the others as 'English dupes', described its own independence in the political terminology of the day:

With an unsullied record of two-hundred years, we decline to sell our birthright, and on the principle of Home Rule, prefer to govern ourselves.²

Six years later, this quarrel had been forgotten, and the local body fused with the amalgamated society.³ But even then the internal troubles of the carpenters were not over. A splinter-group of the old local body still remained independent, and these men later formed the nucleus of the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters and

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1. Donnelly, op. cit., pp. 313-41; F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland since the Famine, (London, 1971), pp. 188-94. Lyons defines the Plan of Campaign as follows: 'It was a device for collective bargaining on individual estates. Where a landlord refused to lower his demands /for Rent/ voluntarily the tenants were to combine to offer him reduced rents. If he declined to accept these, they were to pay him no rents at all, but instead to contribute to an 'estate fund' the money they would have paid him if he had accepted their offer. This fund was to be used for the maintenance and protection of the tenants who were morally certain to be evicted for putting this policy into practice.'
 2. CE, 15, 16, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28 Mar., 1887.
 3. Annual Report of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1893.

Joiners, the second large woodworking amalgamated to organize in southern Ireland.¹ Though the majority of the local unionized carpenters had joined the Amalgamated Society, the principles of amalgamation had apparently failed to touch them, for they persecuted the new General Union branch vigorously. In 1895 the General Union's organizer described the

open hostile opposition of the Cork branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, who tried in every way to prevent us from opening a lodge ... by intimidating the men who are favourably inclined towards joining us - in fact, by using every means both foul and fair - more of the former than the latter ...

The Amalgamated Society branch sent a deputation to the local builders to prevent the employment of the General Union men, picketed the meeting rooms of the new body, and finally withdrew from the 1895 Trades Union Congress when the General Union's local representative was allowed to attend.² Even when the executive of the Amalgamated Society tried to persuade the Cork branch to establish friendly relations with the General Union men, they met with an adamant refusal. As in the case of the plasterers, local opposition proved too strong, and by late 1896 the Cork branch of the General Union had collapsed.³

By 1895 nineteen of the trades affiliated to the Cork United Trades Association formed branches of amalgamated unions, yet just as even amalgamated branches tried to maintain some degree of local

1. See above, pp. 208-09.

2. Monthly Report of the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters and Joiners, May 1895, p. 17; June 1895, p. 10; Oct., 1895, p. 19; CE, 5 Apr., 4 June, 1895; Report of the Second Irish Trade Congress, held at Cork, 1895, pp. 17-20.

3. Monthly Report of the General Union of Friendly Operative Carpenters, 1895-6; Oct., 1895, p. 19.

independence, so the United Trades as a body remained somewhat hostile towards the principle of amalgamation. In the 1880s it had backed the local carpenters campaign against the Amalgamated Society branch, and in the 1890s it refused to allow the local branches of the National Association of Operative Plasterers and the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners to join its ranks.¹

This antipathy towards amalgamation was partly due to the power of amalgamated executives to override the United Trades Association's opinion in labour disputes concerning affiliated amalgamated branches. This element of jealousy contributed in 1896 to the United Trades' unfavourable attitude towards the general strike by city carpenters, members of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. The United Trades refused to intervene in the strike on the carpenters' behalf, ostensibly because it did not wish to infringe on the rights of the carpenters' English executive, but really because it resented the executive's control of the strike. When the United Trades eventually agreed to intervene in the strike, the carpenters retaliated by refusing to recognize the United Trades' president as umpire in the settlement discussions.²

Similarly in 1892 a dispute arose between the United Trades and the Cork branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, when the latter, on the instructions of the union executive in England, refused to sign an agreement designed to boost the declining local shipbuilding industry. The new owner of the Passage Dockyards, in order to make

1. CE, 16 Oct., 19 Nov., 1894; 10 May, 1895; CDH, 2 Apr., 1897.

2. CE, 19, 27 June, 21 July, 1896.

the concern more competitive, attempted to change the dock rules on contracts, piecework, hours and wages, to match those of the Belfast firm of Harland and Woolf. The United Trades eagerly accepted the proposed change, as did most of the shipbuilding trades - shipwrights, boilermakers, painters, plumbers, block-and-pump makers, and dock labourers - some trades even changing their society rules to enable them to accept the changes. The engineers alone held out, mainly because they opposed the possible introduction of piecework under the new agreement, and the ill-feeling between them and the United Trades increased when their intransigence led to the scrapping of the agreement and the prevention of a wage rise for other trades in the shipbuilding industry.¹

The Role of the United Trades Association in resolving Trade Disputes

Die-hard adhesion to union rules was frowned on by the United Trades Association which was a far less aggressive body than most of its constituent trade societies. The declared purpose of the United Trades was, in fact, to foster good relations between employer and employed, and since its foundation its rules had included a provision for the settlement of trade disputes, whereby employers in dispute with their men would submit their case to the United Trades' committee for settlement. This rule proved quite inoperative, principally because employers declined to place their case in the hands of a tradesman body, and resented a rule which 'sought to make employers the

1. CE, 28 Oct., 4, 8, 12, 16 Nov., 2, 9 Dec., 1892; 3, 10, 21 Feb., 9, 10 Mar., 1893; 9 Feb., 1894.

servants of the association ... while the tradesman was allowed to do as he wished'.¹ When the United Trades Association was re-organized under Fr. Hayde in 1884, this rule was scrapped in order to make the association more acceptable to employers. For some time, indeed, the efforts of Fr. Hayde and his helpers to de-radicalize the association seemed likely to turn the United Trades Association into a harmless and respectable mechanics' institute, designed to foster in the artisan the virtues of 'self-denial, perseverance, industry and thrift', and to thoroughly convince him of the evil of strikes. Towards this end instructive lectures were given to United Trades' members by well-disposed gentlemen, while a library, choral club - and for some time, a weekly christy minstrel show - were organized to draw the members away from the public houses.² This image was emphasized in 1886 by the local trade directory's description of the United Trades Association:

The chief object of this organization is to enable its members to improve themselves in all that regards their several trades. A library, reading room, lectures, musical entertainments, classes for technical education, and for the debating of questions interesting and useful to tradesmen /are provided/.³

This mild phase passed within a few years. With Fr. Hayde's retirement from the vice-presidency and the failure of the Irish manufacture movement and the depression of the mid-eighties, the United Trades Association abandoned its mechanics' institute image and turned more

1. CE, CDH, 23 May, 1884.

2. CE, 3, 7 Feb., 18 Mar., 30 Oct., 1884; 12 Feb., 1885; 20, 27 Feb., 1886.

3. Francis Guy's City and County Cork Almanac and Directory for 1886, p. 345.

towards forwarding trade interests. But the reorganization of 1884 had ironed out internal dissensions in the United Trades, and from then on membership numbers rose. By late 1885 the Association included fifteen affiliated trade societies with an approximate membership of 1,200 men. By 1888 nineteen trades had joined, and during the 1890s the number of accessions gradually increased to twenty-one in 1894 and twenty-five in 1898.¹

The deletion of the strike settlement provision in the Association's rules meant little in practice. Both before and after the change the United Trades' intervention in strikes never went further than a respectful deputation to the employer concerned to state the strikers' case and to try to arrange a meeting between the opposing sides.² The United Trades Association was not a strike-happy body, and its intervention in strikes was not militant. The only really aggressive stand it made was during the general strike and lockout of operative pork butchers in 1890, when the president and secretary of the United Trades headed a picket on Shaw's Bacon Factory.³ This display of aggressiveness, if it can be termed such, was never repeated, and even in this case the strike was eventually settled by the usual means - a deputation and conference.⁴

The United Trades intervened only in disputes concerning affiliated societies, and even in the case of these societies it held

1. CE, 24 Sept., 1885; Select Committee on Sunday Closing Acts, Ireland; PP, 1888, xix, Qs 8,490; PP, 1896, xciii (277), p. 420; 1897, xcix (275), p. 250; 1898, ciii (127), pp. 208-9; 1899, xcii (493), pp. 204-5.
2. CC, 8 Mar., 1883; 11, 13 July, 1889; 17 Mar., 1893; 1, 8, 15 May, 1896; 4, 12 Oct., 1898.
3. See above, pp. 298-99.
4. CE, 14, 27 Feb., 5 Mar., 1890.

aloof until requested to intervene. Such a request had to come from the trade society concerned, those from employers, rare though they were, not being entertained.¹ The United Trades' committee claimed the right to decide whether a projected strike in any of its constituent societies should proceed, but though this right was acknowledged in many cases, several societies regarded such a claim as an unacceptable intervention in internal trade matters. Thus, the general bakers' strike of 1883 was called without United Trades sanction, with the result that the Association was sharply divided in its attitude to the dispute, some delegates openly siding with the master bakers against the strikers.²

Once a trade society had made its case for a strike to the United Trades' satisfaction, the latter's support was fairly certain. But such support was liable to be moral rather than financial. The funds of the United Trades Association were never extensive, and few donations were made to strike funds, the only local exception being the pork butchers' strike of 1890,³ though towards the end of the century some contributions were made towards the striking engineers of London.⁴ For financial support, local striking trades had generally to look to their own funds or, if their cause roused sufficient sympathy, to donations from other local trade societies.⁵

The United Trades generally advocated a moderate approach to striking members.⁶ In a wage dispute among the cork cutters in 1883,

1. CE, 28 July, 1896.

2. CE, 10, 12, 13 Mar., 1883; 10 Mar., 1893; 6 July, 2 Nov., 1894.

3. CE, 22 Sept., 1890.

4. CE, 16 July, 24 Sept., 22 Oct., 1897.

5. CE, 11, 15, 22 Sept., 6 Oct., 1890.

6. CE, 19 Mar., 1883; 5, 12 Feb., 1897.

the Association pressed the men to accept a reduction of twenty percent in wages, and only when the employer tried to force a further reduction did the United Trades take up the cudgels for the cork cutters' society.¹ A similarly moderate stand was recommended to the boot rivetters in their dispute with Dwyer and Company in 1887, the United Trades becoming tough only when the company proved obdurate.² Strikes which continued for a long time through the strikers' refusal to talk were frowned on by the United Trades, especially when such strikes interfered with the employment prospects of other trades. This was particularly true in the case of the building industry, where an entire construction scheme could be held up if one trade laid down tools. Thus the ten week strike by the operative plumbers in 1894 was ended by the United Trades' insistence on a settlement, and the two general strikes by the operative carpenters in 1892 and 1896 were also ended through United Trades pressure on the men involved.³

Both employers and trade societies spokesmen agreed in deploring the absence of any effective machinery to settle disputes, and from the early 'nineties both the United Trades Association and individual employers were considering the establishment of some board of arbitration acceptable to both trades and employers. In theory, most trades agreed with the principle of arbitration,⁴ and some amalgamated trades had their own provisions for arbitration.⁵ But,

1. CE, 26, 30 Oct., 2, 6, 7 Nov., 1883.

2. CE, 9 Dec., 1887.

3. CE, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 June, 1892; 8, 16, 18, 19 June, 21 July, 21 Aug., 9 Oct., 1896.

4. Royal Commission on Labour c. 1892, Qs 16,353, 16,917, 16,938-53.

5. *ibid.*, Qs 14,714; CE, 27, 28 Mar., 1894.

in practice, difficulties arose in appointing arbitrators acceptable to both sides, and the trade societies shied away from arbitration as a procedure favouring the employer. The operatives generally preferred the idea of a general conference between masters and men, at which all questions could be fully discussed by both sides before any solution was imposed.¹

Late in 1894 it seems that the United Trades committee, after consultation with the affiliated trades, established its own board of arbitration.² No details survive of either the membership or the powers of this board, and in any case it was not readily accepted by the trades involved in disputes. In 1895 the Passage shipwrights withdrew from the United Trades over the latter's attempted imposition of an unacceptable arbitration scheme, and as most other trades had a similar attitude towards arbitration, disputes during the remainder of the decade were generally settled by the more acceptable general conference.³

Of the twenty-two disputes noted in the 1880s, only seven were intervened in by the United Trades, and this intervention was largely unsuccessful. Support was given to strikes by dock labourers, cork cutters, boot rivetters and the shipbuilding trades, but without much effect.⁴ The bakers' general strike of 1883, which, after some delay, won the support of the United Trades, ended in a triumph for the master

1. CE, 31 May, 1 June, 1893; 12, 14, 25 May, 1894.

2. CE, 24 Feb., 24 Mar., 1893; 14 Dec., 1894.

3. CE, 16 Feb., 22 Nov., 1895; 28 July, 9 Oct., 1896; 5 May, 1897.

4. CE, 13 July, 26, 30 Oct., 2, 6, 7 Nov., 1883; 20, 21, 24 Jan., 9 Dec., 1887.

bakers who settled without any reference to either the bakers' society or the United Trades.¹ Even the United Trades' enthusiastic and lasting support for the printers locked out by the Cork Constitution's proprietor in 1888 had no effect, and as late as 1898 the lockout of union men was still in force and the works in the hands of non-union labour.²

The role of the United Trades Association in trade disputes during the 'eighties was, at best, one of moral support for the trade societies. The only successful intervention was in the pork butchers' strike of 1889 when, through United Trades' efforts, some of the strikers' demands were granted and others resolved by arbitration.³ But the 'nineties saw the United Trades become more active in dealing with disputes.

Fifty-four disputes took place between 1890 and early 1899. In eleven of these the United Trades intervened successfully; in eight intervention was unsuccessful; in five cases the United Trades gave moral support to the strikers but did not actively intervene; and in three cases it intervened to stop the strike.

Though successful intervention occurred in over eighteen percent of strikes in the 'nineties (in comparison with five percent in the 'eighties) United Trades' effectiveness as a mediator depended on the conditions accompanying each individual dispute. The Association intervened successfully on the strikers' behalf only where the striking

1. CE, 8, 10, 13, 14, 19 Mar., 1883.

2. CE, 4, 23 June, 4 July, 10 Sept., 1888; 5, 12, 22 Jan., 1889; 23 Mar., 1891; 5 June, 9 Aug., 1895; 12 Nov., 1898.

3. CE, 9, 11, 13 July, 1889.

trade was in a strong position, as were the carpenters in 1896, or where the dispute was a minor one, easily resolved between employer and men, as were the builders' labourers' strikes of 1892 and 1893.¹ Compromise settlements were brought about by the United Trades in cases where the forces of employer and men were fairly evenly balanced, as in the pork butchers' strike of 1890 and the coopers' dispute with the management of the Ballincollig Gunpowder Mills in 1896.²

In cases where United Trades' intervention failed to settle a dispute, the stumbling block was usually either an obdurate employer or a weak or badly organized trade society. Thus intervention in single-establishment strikes by engineers, pork butchers, mill-sawyers, bakers and boot rivetters between 1892 and 1897 all failed because of a tough line taken by the employers concerned. When this happened, the United Trades simply pulled out and left the matter to the individual trade society involved.³ Similarly, United Trades intervention in the general strikes by operative bakers in 1890 and tailors in 1893 proved totally ineffective, the resistance of these trades being weakened by the easy availability of blackleg labour, and the strikers consequently having little bargaining power.⁴

Even where the United Trades officially approved a strike, its support could be rendered ineffective by the determined opposition of one or more of its affiliated trades. This was particularly true

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1. CE, 16, 23 Sept., 1892; 17 Mar., 1893.
 2. CE, 5 Mar., 1890; 8, 15 May, 5, 19 June, 1896.
 3. CE, 22 Feb., 29 July, 1892; 5 June, 1896; 1, 12 Feb., 23 Mar., 1897; Monthly Report of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Mar., 1897, p. 4.
 4. CE, 1, 8 Sept., 2 Oct., 1890; 14, 22, 30 June, 11 July, 25 Aug., 1893; 8 May, 1896; Royal Commission on Labour, C, 1892, Qs 17,123, 28,952-3, 29,037-9.

in the case of disputes in the building trade. In 1890 the builders' labourers' strike against the Master Builders' Association was supported by the United Trades and seemed likely to succeed when the masons' and plasterers' societies, whose members were kept in idleness during the strike, broke the strike by agreeing to work with blackleg labourers. Though the United Trades condemned the masons' and plasterers' action it was powerless to interfere, and the strike ended in compromise.¹ Similarly the settlement of demarcation disputes, generally referred to the United Trades by the employers and trades involved, proved difficult when one or both of the trades concerned refused to compromise.² A protracted demarcation dispute between the carpenters and cabinet makers in 1896 and 1897 thus caused much difficulty to the United Trades when the strong and aggressive carpenters' union tried to over-ride the United Trades' decision in favour of the weak society of cabinet makers.³

Generally, then, the United Trades had much less practical authority in settling disputes than it claimed in theory. In the case of amalgamated branches, particularly, the final work in sanctioning or calling off a strike lay with the union executive in England. In such disputes, the strikers' representative in settlement talks was not one of the United Trades officers but the amalgamated's

1. CE, 9, 13, 14, 20, 21 May, 5, 21, 25 June, 1890.

2. CE, 2, 9, 13 Feb., 6, 13 Apr., 1894.

3. CE, 28 Nov., 1896; 5 Feb., 15 Mar., 1897.

agent, though on some occasions United Trades' influence was necessary to bring about the settlement conference.¹

The effectiveness of the United Trades Association as a dispute-settling agent was, then, quite limited. But its very existence was evidence that the Cork trade societies had reached a stronger position than their predecessors in earlier decades, whose attempts to establish organizations like the United Trades had been but transitory. For all its weaknesses both in the field of trade disputes and in the promotion of home industry, the United Trades was recognized by both employers and trades as the voice of organized labour in Cork. Trade societies which, for one reason or another, withdrew from the United Trades Association, usually rejoined it again within a short time,² so that by the late 'nineties every trade in the city, and several labourers' and unskilled workers' societies had become affiliated to the United Trades Association which by 1898 represented some 4,000 men.³

Local Attitudes to General Unionism

The United Trades Association had, at its establishment, been based on a network of branches throughout County Cork,⁴ but though these county branches paid affiliation fees to the Cork city body, the

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1. CE, 9 Dec., 1887; 17 May, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12 June, 1893; 27 June, 17, 21, 23 Oct., 30 Nov., 1896; Monthly Report of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Jan., 1897, p. 6; Feb., 1897, p. 6; Mar., 1897, p. 4.
 2. CE, 26 Feb., 1892; 15 July, 1893; 21 Jan., 1898.
 3. Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws, PP, 1898, xxxviii, Qs 65,883-4.
 4. See above, pp. 259-60.

precise relationship between county and city branches was never clear, as the right of members of county branches to work in the city was not defined. With the reorganization of the United Trades in 1884 the association was set up on a localized basis, and all connection with the county branches was severed.¹ Many of the county branches continued to operate but periodic efforts to re-affiliate with the city body came to nothing.² Though the re-organized United Trades Association had some connections outside the city, these were not branches per se, but limbs of city trades whose place of employment lay outside the borough boundary. Two such trades were the Passage shipwrights and the Ballincollig coopers, and in the latter case the Ballincollig men had to ask permission of the Cork Coopers' Society before they could work within the city bounds - permission granted only under strict conditions.³

Thus, even as late as the 1880s the local trade societies in Cork, with the support of the United Trades, jealously guarded their field of employment against incursions from outside. The trades' opposition to the influx of what they described as 'barbarian hordes of rustic mechanics' was not in itself unreasonable. Non-union country tradesmen had always been ready to work at the city at less than union rates and provide a ready fund of blacklegs on which a strike-bound employer could draw. But the closed shop policy of the local Cork trade societies was enforced not alone against non-union labour but also

1. CE, 31 Jan., 23 May, 1884.

2. CE, 5 May, 1887.

3. CE, 14 Jan., 1885; Proceedings of the Select Committee on Sunday Closing Acts, Ireland, 1888, PP, 1888, xix, Qs 8,490; Coopers' Society Minute Book, 15 May, 1889; 1 Mar., 21 June, 1896.

against the members of other unions in the same trade. This was most obvious in the campaign of the local carpenters' body against the amalgamated bodies set up in the city between 1870 and 1895,¹ and in 1891 the local society flatly refused to work with the society men from Queenstown, eight miles down the harbour.²

The local exclusiveness of the Cork trade societies and of the United Trades Association was highlighted when, in 1891, the Fermoy trades sought re-affiliation with the city association. The Fermoy trades had, prior to the localization of the United Trades Association in 1884, formed a branch of that body. Since the localization of 1884 the Fermoy body had retreated into obscurity, but in 1890 it formed the basis for a local branch of the Irish Democratic Labour Federation. This body, initiated through the efforts of Michael Davitt, was the first nationally-based labour organization including skilled and unskilled alike. It had an advanced social programme which sought free education, land settlement, worker housing, reduced working hours, universal suffrage and labour political representation.³

The United Trades agreed to the affiliation of the Fermoy branch of the Democratic Labour Federation, allowing it two delegates on the council of the United Trades on payment of the usual affiliation fee of one shilling per member. But the individual trade society delegates of the city, while approving the affiliation, still refused to allow the Fermoy men to work in the city.⁴ The affiliation was obviously a

1. See above, pp. 208-09; 363-65.

2. Webb Trade Union Collection, Section A, Vol. III, ff. 46-7.

3. Arthur Mitchell, op. cit., p. 16.

4. CE, 4, 18, 25 Sept., 2 Oct., 1891.

sham, but only two delegates denounced it as such. They were Michael Austen, ex-secretary of the United Trades, and Charles Kelf, an English member of the Coachmakers' Society and an apostle of Fabianism in the city. Writing to the Fabian, Edward Pease, Kelf described the Cork situation from the viewpoint of an outsider:

I am sorry to say I find the Trade Unionists of Cork far from being fit subjects for a Fabian society. I found they were in favour of a few democratic demands but find they have only gobbled them up, why they know not. Scratch them and you find a Conservative of the crudest type. The societies are mostly local and everything is looked at from a local standpoint ... The Fermoy branch of the Democratic Labour Federation applied to be affiliated to the Cork Trades Council. The Council was agreeable to the affiliation but when I asked whether the members of the Cork societies would work by the side of the Fermoy men providing they obtained employment in Cork and worked for the trade union rate of wages, I was told certainly not. They could not think of allowing any but Cork men to work in Cork, except in very rare cases if they were short of men, and then they would have to join the local society and pay from two pounds to five pounds entrance fee. But I may say the Cork men will go to Fermoy and work whenever they get the chance, and only a short time ago three members of the Painters' Society went and blacklegged the Fermoy men on strike, and their action was defended in the Trades Council by the delegate of their society, who stated that their society had nothing to do with men of other towns, and only looked after its own members. And I think that a far specimen of the ethic of Trade Unionism in Cork.¹

However, the United Trades had already begun to broaden its basis and attitudes, in the late 1880s admitting newly unionized bodies of unskilled and semi-skilled men into its ranks. Up to the late 'eighties the unionization of such workers had been only partly successful, and therefore the question of the affiliation of unskilled workers to the United Trades Association had not arisen. The

1. Webb Collection, Section A, Vol. III, ff. 46-7.

establishment of the Pork Butchers' Society in Limerick, Waterford and Cork, and the setting up of local branches of the seamens' and dockers' unions was the first step towards the effective unionization of the unskilled sector.¹ These two unions joined the United Trades in 1889, followed in 1890 by the Passage Dock Labourers, the Brewery Workmen, the Builders' Labourers' Society, and the railwaymen.²

This gradual accession of unskilled membership was evidence of the slowly broadening spirit of the United Trades, but many skilled men objected to the trend, and in the ranks of the association Michael Austen and Charles Kelf were the only spokesmen for the unskilled.

In 1891, Kelf explained to Edward Pease that Austen

is the only one /in the United Trades/ who understands the present position of Trades Unionism ... We get on well together and, I may say, fight together on the Trades ...³

The two mens' efforts to broaden the Cork trade societies' spirit of unionism met several setbacks. Their attempt to induce the United Trades to press for the housing of agricultural labourers was rejected on the grounds that the trades had no obligation towards the agricultural worker, and that the housing scheme did not benefit the city trades since the contract had gone to a non-union employer.

Though willing to countenance the unionization of semi-skilled bodies like the dockers and pork butchers, the United Trades Association, reflecting the exclusiveness of its skilled membership, opposed all attempts to unionize the general labourer. Thus, when in 1891 it

1. See above, pp. 288-99.

2. CE, 26 Apr., 13 Dec., 1889; 28 Feb., 11 Apr., 9 May, 1890.

3. Webb Collection, Section A, Vol. III, ff. 46-7.

was suggested that the United Trades agitate for a wage rise for the unskilled labourers employed by the corporation, the motion was quashed by a large majority of delegates because the corporation labourers were not affiliated to the association, and because the United Trades did not wish to be seen stirring up strife between the corporation and its employees.¹ Nor was this closed attitude confined to the skilled trades. The Builders' Labourers' Society proved equally exclusive, refusing to open its ranks to any labourers except those employed in the building trade.²

Michael Austen and Kelf had been instrumental in pressing the United Trades to take up the cudgels on behalf of the general labourer. Austen was unique among the United Trades delegates in showing such interest in the cause of the unskilled. He had been one of the prime movers in establishing Michael Davitt's Democratic Labour Federation in the Cork region as well as directing the seamen's strike of 1890. But the advanced social programme of the Democratic Labour Federation failed to attract much attention outside Munster, and it collapsed during the Parnell split of late 1890, being replaced by the equally unsuccessful Land and Labour League of 1894.³ Though the United Trades had seemed initially willing to cooperate with Austen and Davitt in organizing the Federation in Cork city, they withdrew their support when the organization was about to get under way. The ostensible reason for this change of front was fear that any alliance with Davitt, then in conflict with Parnell over the

1. CE, 4, 11, 18 Sept., 1891.

2. Webb Collection, Section A, Vol. III, ff. 46-7.

3. CE, 19 Oct., 9, 12 Nov., 1894.

labour issue, would split the Home Rule in Cork.¹ But the real reason was hostility to the broad social basis of the Federation. An organization which aimed to organize the general labourer and place him on a par with the skilled artisan was immediately suspect. This fear of the general labourers' competition, like the trades' opposition to non-local artisans, was not entirely groundless. The early 'nineties saw much unemployment among the agricultural labourers of the county, who, coming into Cork city, swelled the ranks of the unemployed or acted as blacklegs in city labourers' strikes,² and who together with non-union and semi-skilled tradesmen, did the work of skilled men at a lower rate of wages. Such men, known as 'handymen', were detested by the skilled trades, and the United Trades opposition to the Democratic Labour Federation and other general labour bodies was due to these bodies' inclusion of handymen and labourers in their ranks. Then the general South of Ireland Labour Union sought affiliation with the United Trades in 1890, the request was bluntly refused by the trades:

If the Labour Union were distinctively an organization of labourers ... no man there would object to their being affiliated. But when such an organization embraced what some would term 'handymen', they could not expect a tradesman to sit at the same council table with the man who was taking the bread out of his mouth and interfering with his business.³

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1. CE, 11 Jan., 1890; 18 Mar., 1891; CDH, 22 Jan., 1890.
 2. CE, 25 Sept., 1891; 4, 17 May, 1893; Labour Gazette, June, 1894, p. 172. In 1894 in Skibbereen Union, wages were 4s. a week without food, and in Kanturk Union less than 33% of the agricultural labourers were employed. Many of these came into the city in search of work. Agricultural labourers were frequently used as blacklegs. A strike by Limerick dockers in 1890 was broken by the employment of agricultural labourers brought specially from Portlaw in County Waterford. LRTV, 18 Nov., 1890.
 3. CE, 22 Feb., 1890.

The strength of the United Trades' hostility towards the Labour Union was underlined by the different ways in which the trades reacted to two simultaneous strikes by unskilled and semi-skilled men in the city. The Munster-wide strike by operative pork butchers, the Cork branch of whose society was affiliated to the United Trades, was strongly supported by the trades' executive. In sharp contrast, the concurrent wage strike in Perrott's Iron Foundry got no support from the United Trades, ostensibly because the strikers' demands were unreasonable, but really because the strike was directed by the South of Ireland Labour Union.¹

Well might the strikers' leaders complain that 'they had been shunted by the trades', and that

it was the old, old story, that whenever a movement was started to help the working men, the greatest clog upon it were the Trades of Cork ... /who/ think more of their own ambition than of harmony and the working mens' improvement.²

The affiliation of the Fermoy branch of the Democratic Labour Federation in 1891, in spite of its discriminatory nature, seemed to indicate a liberalization of United Trades opinion vis-a-vis general unionism. But attitudes had again hardened by the mid-nineties, and invitations to the United Trades to send delegates to the meetings of the Land and Labour League were snubbed for four years in succession. Only the Builders' Labourers' delegates attended the first Land and Labour conference in 1894, and not until 1898 did the United Trades send

1. CE, 31 Jan., 3, 4, 8, 14, 17, 19, 21, 22, 27, 28 Feb., 3, 4, 8 Mar., 1890; See above, pp. 291-92.

2. CE, 24 Feb., 1890.

representatives to the league's meetings, many United Trades delegates even then strongly opposing the move.¹

The Cork Trades and the Irish Trades Union Congress

All in all, the trade societies of Cork were smugly local and inward looking in attitude. They had never shown any interest in the English Trades Union Congress, and in 1890 an attempt by Michael Austen to have United Trades' delegates sent to the congress in Liverpool were pointedly ignored by the rest of the association.² But Irish affairs had never been given due attention at the English congresses, and by the early 'nineties it was generally believed by Irish trade unions that an Irish-based congress was needed to supplement the work of the Trade Union Congress.³ The first call for such an Irish-based body was made in 1889 by the Dublin Trades Council. After some hesitation the Belfast Trades Council agreed to co-operate, and at a meeting in Dublin, attended by delegates from the trades councils of Dublin, Belfast and Cork, the Irish Federated Trades and Labour Union was formed. At its first meeting the new body called for shorter working hours, the abolition of the sweating system, land reform and the extension of the municipal franchise. It was decided that the body's next meeting would be at Belfast in 1890, but in the interval the Dublin and Belfast trades councils quarrelled, and the whole plan fell through. Then in 1891 the newly

1. CE, 19 Oct., 1, 12 Nov., 1894; 2 Aug., 1895; 6 Sept., 1897; 17 Sept., 1898.

2. CE, 9 Aug., 1890.

3. Arthur Mitchell, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-18.

organized Dublin gasworkers helped to form the Irish Labour League, inviting all trade societies throughout the country to attend an organizing meeting in Dublin. The new body had a radical programme going beyond that of Davitt's Labour Federation, advocating the nationalization of land and transport. But because Parnell was involved in the inaugural meeting of the League, the Dublin trades, seeking to avoid implication in the Parnellite split, stood aloof and the League fell away. But shortly afterwards a more successful move was made to mobilize a general trades' movement, when the Dublin Trades' Council, with the co-operation of Michael Davitt, invited the trades councils of the country to a meeting of their own. The objects of this meeting were the extension of the municipal and parliamentary franchise, the payment of MPs, and the return to parliament and to the municipal councils representatives in the direct labour interest.¹

The Cork Trades Association, disillusioned by the failure of the 1889 effort, was not enthusiastic about the efforts of 1890-91. To the unsuccessful Irish Labour League, it had promised 'to watch with interest the result of your proceedings',² but involvement went no further than that. Similarly, when asked to participate in the 1891 labour conference under the auspices of the Dublin Trades Council, the response of the Cork trades was equally cold. A United Trades

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1. John W. Boyle, The Rise of the Irish Labour Movement, 1888-1907, (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Trinity College, Dublin, 1961), pp. 126-8; 'Le developpement du mouvement ouvrier irlandais de 1880 a 1907' in Le Mouvement Social, No. 52, Juillet-Septembre, 1965 (Paris, 1965), pp. 42-3.
 2. Boyle, Rise of the Irish Labour Movement, p. 134.

meeting to discuss participation in the conference was very thinly attended, and though it was subsequently decided to send three delegates to the Dublin affair, the Cork trades were patently uninterested.¹

Through the efforts of the new Dublin-directed movement, seven candidates were chosen to contest the parliamentary election of 1892. The two successful candidates, Eugene Crean and Michael Austen, were both members of the Cork United Trades, but that body had no part whatever in their election. In fact the two men were persona non grata with the United Trades, from the committee of which they had recently been ejected because of their anti-Parnellite stand.² Crean was elected for Queen's County and Austen for West Limerick, but no candidate on the labour ticket was started in Cork - an indication of the general lack of trades' interest in the matter.³ But neither Crean nor Austen were authentic labour candidates - they were nationalists and anti-Parnellites. When, at the Dublin labour conference of 1891, Canty of the Dublin Gas Workers asserted that 'the labour question came before so-called nationality', Austen made his own position clear:

One of the essential characteristics of every Irishman ... should be his nationality. While every man present was a working man, and was most desirous of forwarding the cause of the working classes, it was, beyond doubt, a fact that wherever a working man was to be found, the country which gave him birth stood foremost.⁴

1. CE, 14, 17 July, 25 Sept., 1891.

2. See below, pp. 412-14.

3. CE, 11 May, 12 July, 1892; Limerick Reporter & Tipperary Vindicator, 8, 15 July, 1892.

4. Boyle, Rise of the Irish Labour Movement, P. 138.

When the Irish Trades Union Congress was eventually set up, meeting for the first time in Dublin in 1894, the Cork trades did participate, sending a total of five delegates to the Congress,¹ and at all subsequent congresses the Cork representation continued. The number of delegates sent from Cork in any particular year depended mainly on the location of the Congress. As both the United Trades Association and the individual trade societies paid the fares and expenses of their respective delegates,² they were more likely to send delegates to congresses held in Munster than to those held in Dublin or Belfast. Table 42 shows the strength of Cork trade representation at the Irish Trades Union Congresses in the late 1890s.

TABLE 42³

Number of Cork Delegates at the Irish Trades Congress,
1894-1898

| | Venue of Congress | Total No. Delegates from Cork | No. of United Trades Assoc. Delegates | No. of individual trade society Delegates | No. of trades sending their own delegates |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1894 | Dublin | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| 1895 | Cork | 40 | 4 | 36 | 23 |
| 1896 | Limerick | 11 | 3 | 8 | 5 |
| 1897 | Waterford | 9 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| 1898 | Belfast | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 |

The high attendance rate at the 1895 congress was due less to the Cork trades' interest in the proceedings than to the obvious reason that a

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1. Report of the Irish Trades Congress, 1894, p. 39.
 2. ibid., p. 13; Coopers' Minute Book, 31 May, 1895; 21 Apr., 1896; Cork Typographical Society Minute Book, 7 Apr., 1894.
 3. Reports of the Irish Trades Congress ... 1894-98.

meeting held in Cork city was easily accessible to all the city trade societies. Moreover, the holding of such an event in the city was a boost to local pride. Scarcely had the Congress of 1894 terminated and Cork been selected as the 1895 venue than the United Trades Association began to organize themselves in preparation. The association's president urged the affiliated societies to prepare themselves for the next year's congress not because of its significance in the labour field but because 'the honour of Cork was at stake.'¹ But the Cork trades' narrow local attitude to the congress had been summed up already a few months previously. On receipt of the Dublin Trades Council's request for Cork participation in the congress, the United Trades' president had volunteered the opinion that

personally, he did not much care about interfering in the matter, but it would be a curious thing if they were not represented ... They ought to send one or two gentlemen, at least, to represent the /Trades/ Council, and to show that they were Trade Unionists at heart, as well as they were in the Metropolis, or in any part of Ireland.²

The high rate of trades' contributions to the 1895 congress, like the high rate of attendance, was a symptom of local pride, over ninety pounds being contributed.³ But once Cork's turn as venue had passed,

1. CE, 22 June, 1894.

2. CE, 6 Apr., 1894.

3. CE, 17 Apr., 4 June, 1895. The number of delegates sent by each Cork trade society to the 1895 Congress was as follows: Bakers, 2; Bootmakers, 1; Bootrivetters, 1; Brewery Workmen, 2; Cabinet makers, 1; Carpenters and Joiners (Amalgamated Society), 4; (General Union), 1; Coach makers, 1; Coopers, 2; Cork cutters, 1; Farriers, 1; Gas Workers, 1; Ironfounders, 1; Masons, 2; Mill-sawyers, 1; Painters, 1; Plasterers, 2; Plumbers, 1; Railwaymen, 1; Shipwrights, 2; Stonecutters, 2; Tailors, 3; Printers, 2; United Trades Association, 4. Financial contributions were as follows: Tailors, £15; Stonecutters, £5; Bakers, £10; Printers, £10; Coopers, £10; Masons, £8; Plasterers, £6; Coachmakers, £4; Bootmakers, £4; Plumbers, £4; Painters, £3; Gas Workers, £3; Brewerymen, £3; Cabinet makers, £2; Boot Rivetters, £2; Ironfounders, £1.14s.

there was a dramatic decline in local trade society contributions to the Trades Congress. Societies did pay the required ten-shilling annual affiliation fee to the congress,¹ but the generosity evident in 1895 had disappeared. In 1897 the coopers' society subscribed a mere six shillings to the expenses of the congress, the local stone-cutters gave four shillings, and the other city societies gave nothing.² In 1898 the Trades Congress Parliamentary Committee asked from each trade society a contribution of one penny per member, eight Cork societies responded, but the Cork subscriptions still totalled less than £3.11s. This figure, however, does not include amalgamated branches' subscriptions, which were not listed separately but included in the total subscription figure of the union concerned.³

To individual artisans the financial demands of the Congress were not very welcome. Already trade society members paid their usual society fees, and often were called on for extra payments to meet a decline in funds, the death of a member, or the expenses of a political demonstration. The Congress payment was but a further item in a list of financial demands. Thus, even in the period of greatest support for the Congress in 1895, the Typographical Society experienced difficulty in collecting the required levy of two shillings per member for the financing of the Congress. Only when the society was threatened with exclusion from the Congress was an effort made

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1. Coopers' Minute Book, 8 May, 1897.
 2. Report of the Fourth Irish Trades Congress..1897, p. 7.
 3. Report of the Fifth Irish Trades Congress ... 1898, p. 8.

to collect the levy, and then the members were willing pay only one shilling each, the balance of five pounds being taken from the chest.¹

The general lack of interest shown by the Cork trades towards the Trades Congress was not unreasonable. In the intervals between its annual meetings the Congress never impinged on the everyday business of the individual trade society, still less on that of the individual artisan. The quarterly meetings of the Congress Parliamentary Committee at which the Cork trades had their own representative,² were little more than talking shops. In practical terms, the Trades Union Congress of the nineties was merely an extension of the United Trades Association. Its annual meetings were but larger replicas of the United Trades' meetings, at which the classic trades' grievances - importation, unfair labour and unemployment - were discussed without any real solutions being attempted, much less arrived at.³ Not until the Congress began to seriously consider the issue of labour representation on the Irish municipal councils did it make any real impact on the trade societies at local level.

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1. Typographical Society Minute Book, 10 Nov., 1894, 16 Mar., 6 Apr., 1895.
 2. Report of the Second Irish Trades Congress ... 1895, p. 33. John Henry Jolley, member of the Typographical Association and president of the United Trades Association, was elected to the Parliamentary Committee in 1895.
 3. Report of the Second Irish Trades Congress ... 1895, pp. 17-37; Report ... 1896, pp. 32-6; Report ... 1897, pp. 20-50; CE, 4, 5, 6 June, 1895.

CHAPTER VII

CORK TRADES AND NATIONALIST POLITICS,
1880-1899

In Cork the Parnellite years were launched by the general election of 1880. The two previous elections in the city, those of 1874 and 1876, had been marked by closed, inward-looking politics, in which the main issues at stake were not grand national questions but squabbles between two local economic and political pressure groups. These two groups were the Farmers' Club, forerunner of the local branch of the Land League, and the Cork Vintners' Association, a body consisting of the most prominent publicans of the city. In both the 1874 and the 1876 elections, these two bodies had come into conflict over the merits of the rival liberal candidates, and in 1880 a similar confrontation seemed imminent when the Farmers' Club mounted a campaign against the Vintners' choice, Nicholas Daniel Murphy.¹ Murphy's popularity with the Vintners' Association rested solely on his services to the trade, particularly his stand in parliament against the introduction to Cork of the Sunday closing of public houses.² But the Farmers' Club considered Murphy to be indifferent to the question of land reform, and, moreover, the dubious nature of his nationalism, illustrated in his support for coercion and his failure to work for the release of Cork Fenian prisoners made him totally unacceptable to the ultra-nationalist side in the city. Even within the Vintners' Association an anti-Murphy group emerged, headed by local publicans of Fenian sympathies.³ Following their failure to return John Mitchel in the election of 1874, the most

1. CE, 3, 6 Feb., 1874; 16 Mar., 2 Apr., 1880.

2. CE, 2 Feb., 1874; 16 Mar., 1880.

3. CE, 20 June, 1871; 2, 4 Feb., 1874; 16 Mar., 1880.

extreme Fenian element in Cork city had withdrawn from the arena of electioneering,¹ and they consequently stood aloof from the 1880 election. But a number of less intransigent Fenians connected with the Farmers' Club, determined to challenge the candidature of Nicholas D. Murphy, invited Charles ~~Stuart~~^{ewart} Parnell to stand for Cork. Parnell was returned and Murphy defeated, but it was indicative of the strength of local loyalties in Cork politics that Parnell was returned not at the head of the poll, but second to the local moderate nationalist, John Daly.²

Though the trades had shown their sympathy towards Parnell by taking part in a demonstration in his honour at the beginning of his election campaign, their role in the election itself was insignificant, and discontent soon began to break out in their ranks over this lack of political influence. The rising discontent of the trades complicated the already confused political situation among the nationalist ranks in the city. The broad term 'nationalist' was applied to a body which, far from being homogenous, consisted of several different groupings whose only common denominator was opposition to the maintenance of the Act of Union. The first three of these groupings, the Home Rule members of the town council, the Cork branch of the Land League, and the Trades, were agreed in their support for Parnell. The fourth group, the Fenian element, commonly known as the Nationalists, was itself a divided body, the majority regarding Parnell and constitutionalism as traitors to the cause of

1. CE, 9 Feb., 1874; 15 May, 1876.

2. CE, 2, 7 Apr., 1880; CDH, 1, 2 Apr., 1880.

militant separatism. The four groups were not, however, mutually exclusive, and the frequent overlapping of membership confused the situation further, the complexity of the situation becoming obvious in the rivalries uncovered soon after Parnell's election in 1880.

In late 1880, a public demonstration arranged in Parnell's honour was monopolized by the Cork Land League, whose members claimed that the event was intended to honour Parnell in his capacity as Land League leader. The town council Home Rulers, resenting this monopolization, and holding that the demonstration was meant to honour Parnell as a freeman of Cork city, only grudgingly agreed to cooperate with the organizers. Parnell's election committee (which included several Land Leaguers and a number of town councillors) claimed that the purpose of the display was to celebrate Parnell's election victory, and refused to cooperate with the Land League organizers. The Fenian element, for its part, described the demonstration as a betrayal of nationalist principles, and refused to take part.¹ Fenian hostility on this occasion was sharpened by the Land League officers' ill-timed condemnation of a recent Fenian arms raid,² and the Fenians had their revenge by upsetting the demonstration arrangements. As the procession made its way from Blarney where Parnell had alighted from the train, a group of armed young Fenians blocked its way, and forcing the Land League officers to dismount from the waggonette in which they rode, compelled them to walk the remaining five miles into the city. To further ruin the dignity of the proceedings, the 1,500-strong band of

1. CE, 24, 30 Sept., 1 Oct., 1880; CDH, 24, 30 Sept., 1 Oct., 1880.

2. CE, 18, 20, 25 Aug., 1880; CDH, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23 Aug., 1880.

Fenians took up their position at the head of the procession, and slowed it to a crawl by marching before it at snail's pace into the city.¹

Individual tradesmen were certainly involved in this incident, since the Nationalists counted many members of the trades in their ranks.² However, the trade societies had taken an enthusiastic part in the pro-Parnell demonstration, even the Typographical Society, which had not participated in a political display since 1843, marching with its banners and regalia.³ On the other hand, the trade societies issued no condemnation of the Fenians for their disruption of the demonstration, and for their own reasons they were probably gratified at the humiliation of the Land League officers, whose monopolization of the demonstration they resented as deeply as did the town council and the election committee.⁴

The Cork Trade Societies and the Land League

The trades of Cork and the local branch of the Land League, in fact, on the worst possible terms, and the pro-Parnell demonstrations of the early 'eighties became the arena for clashes between the two groups. Piqued by the secondary place given them in the 1880 demonstration, and by now organized in the United Trades Association,⁵ the trade societies insisted on a more prominent part in organizing

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1. CE, 4 Oct., 1880.
 2. CE, 24 Sept., 1880.
 3. CE, 4 Oct., 1880.
 4. CE, CDH, 24 Sept., 1 Oct., 1880.
 5. See above, p. 257.

the two Parnell demonstrations of 1881¹ and that of December 1882. By 1882 the Land League had been dissolved and reconstituted as the National League, the membership hardly changing at all, and the bad relations persisting between them and the trades. In 1882, when another Parnell demonstration was mooted in the city, a number of the National League members, seeking to tighten the League monopoly of political demonstrations in the city, had formed a sub-group called the Central Committee for National Purposes, which claimed control of the demonstration.² This new monopoly was attacked from all sides, but the most vociferous protestors were the trades who refused to participate in a demonstration in the planning of which they had no part. Without the colour and pageantry lent by the trades, the demonstration was sure to be a fiasco, and it was reluctantly called off - a development which caused much chagrin in the National League and much satisfaction among the trades.³

The hostility between the trades and the League was partly due to the trades' inflated sense of their own dignity. Any attempt, real or imagined, to relegate them to a subsidiary place on public occasions was greatly resented. In 1880 they had reacted indignantly when asked to send delegates to a meeting of the town council regarding the planned pro-Parnell demonstration,⁴ and their reaction to National League dictation regarding the demonstration of 1882 was even more marked:

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1. CE, 9 Apr., 29 Sept., 3, 4 Oct., 1881.
 2. CE, 13 Dec., 1882; CDH, 15 Dec., 1882.
 3. CE, 11, 13, 18 Dec., 1882; CDH, 14, 15 Dec., 1882.
 4. CDH, 1 Oct., 1880.

It was well once and for all to make it known that the trades of the city would not be dragged at the tail of any man ... It seemed as if the trades of Cork were at the beck and call of anybody who thought to get up a demonstration in Cork ... The trades of Cork knew how to respect themselves; they were independent of anybody, and it was rather impertinent of anybody to dictate to the trades of Cork. (hear, hear) ... They saw the semblance of a dictatorship at present, and the sooner that such a thing was put a stop to the better. (applause).¹

But there were more practical reasons for the trades' antipathy towards the League. Prominent Leaguers, involved in the cause of the tenant farmers, seemed indifferent to the interests of the city trades, employing non-union labour and failing to support the movement to revive local industry.² Trades' representations to the League to ask support for the Passage shipbuilding trades' demand for higher wages got no hearing, and the League broke its promises to speed up public building works in the city and to help the working millers by enforcing a boycott on bakers using imported flour.³ The trades, therefore, when called upon to support the cause of land reform, turned a deaf ear, and though individual artisans no doubt joined the League, no support came from the organized trade societies. In 1885, it is true, nine or two of the 300-strong tailors' society joined the League, but no other trade society showed the slightest interest in membership and the trades generally continued to regard the League as a separate and

1. CE, 11, 13 Dec., 1882.

2. CE, CDH, 13 May, 1881.

3. CE, 21, 22, 29 Oct., 9 Nov., 1886; 13 Jan., 1887.

4. As no records of the Cork branch of the Land League survive, there is no way of checking rank-and-file membership, though newspaper reports of League proceedings indicate which individuals were most prominent in the leadership.

antagonistic organization, while the League blamed its failure to foster trade interests on the apathy of the trades themselves.¹

This mutual antagonism was to a great extent the product of social rather than political tensions. When the Cork trade societies expressed antipathy towards the League, they generally had in mind the League's leaders, who, like the leaders of other constitutional nationalist movements, tended to come from the non-tradesman class. A recent study of the Land League has shown that the movement's leadership was dominated not by farmers but by 'a discontented segment of the town population':

Shopkeepers ... were the leaders of the movement. Without them there would not have been a Land League, since no other urban social group could so easily have identified its interests with those of the farmers. They played a crucial role: farmers became politicized as a result of the Land League, but townsmen, above all, shopkeepers, initiated the movement and provided it with badly needed leadership.²

Though this social evaluation concentrates on the Land League organization in the country towns rather than in the large cities, it is applicable with minor qualifications to the situation in Cork city. There, farmers from the outskirts of the city were prominent in the local branch of the Land League, but its most prominent spokesmen were merchants, master tradesmen, shopkeepers and vintners. At least nine of the forty-five most prominent city Leaguers had sufficient property qualifications to hold office as Poor Law Guardians,

1. CE, 29 Oct., 1885; 22 Oct., 11 Nov., 1886.

2. Sam Clarke, 'The Social Composition of the Land League' in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. xvii, No. 68, 1971, pp. 447, 468-9.

town councillors and as members of other public boards with whom the United Trades Association frequently came into conflict.¹

Some Leaguers, in their capacity as employers of labour, came into conflict with the organized trades, and this certainly embittered relations between the two bodies. The most prominent instance of this involved a dispute between the Corkcutters' Society and the partners in a local bottling firm. The partners, John O'Connor and Robert Walsh, leading city Land Leaguers, were accused by the corkcutters and the United Trades Association of trying to force a wage cut and of replacing the non-complying corkcutters by non-skilled labour. The details of the dispute were clouded by conflicting evidence, but the result was the worsening not alone of trade relations between the United Trades and the firm involved, but of political relations between the trades and the National League.²

For the Cork trades, severely affected by the depression of the 'eighties, the land agitation was an unwelcome clog in the progress of manufacture and industry. While local Leaguers thundered against the 'evicting and cruel-hearted landlord', the trades made it clear that they had no ill-feeling towards landlords as a class, and denounced the land agitation as 'an unfortunate war of classes' which robbed the trades of their best customers, the gentry.³ Land League promises of liberty and prosperity following on the defeat of the landlords and the achievement of land reform met with little respect from

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1. CDH, 19, 26 Apr., 10, 17, 31 May, 1880; 19 Dec., 1882. Of the forty-five principal Leaguers in the city, six were merchants, four were vintners or shopkeepers, three were manufacturers, two were medical men, and one was a commercial traveller.
 2. CE, 26, 30 Oct., 2, 3, 6, 7 Nov., 1883.
 3. CE, 26 Apr., 1880; 24 Apr., 10 Nov., 1882.

the trades, who declared that 'the trades of Cork had suffered more, and lost more money by /the Land agitation/ than all the farmers in Ireland'.¹

Yet the attitude of the country branches of the United Trades Association towards the Land League was very different to that of the city trades. In fact, the country United Trades members had far more in common with the local Land Leaguers than they had with the city branch of the United Trades. The establishment of the Kanturk United Trades Association, on which the Cork city body was modelled had been a direct response by the Kanturk tradesmen to the example and propaganda of the Land League. At its first meeting, the Kanturk United Trades Association was reminded by its chairman that

the labourers and farmers had already formed themselves into a league, and it was time that the trades should also combine, not only for the protection of their own interests, but also that in case occasion required, they should be able to speak in public matters with one voice and action of one man.²

This was a very different attitude towards the land agitation to the held by the city trade societies which, by 1882, were complaining that the agitation in the country had halted the organization of United Trades branches in the county towns.³ Trades resentment against the farmers, a normal aspect of town-country rivalry, was strengthened by the farming community's apparent failure to patronize locally manufactured goods and establishments employing fair labour. The coopers complained of the farmers' preference for imported glass and

1. CE, 11 Dec., 1882.

2. CDH, 21 Feb., 1881.

3. CE, 24 Apr., 1882.

zinc milkpans instead of the locally made coopered items, and the coachmakers were said to have

suffered terribly and uncomplainingly for a few years past from the effects of the land agitation, and it is much to be regretted that the farmers, so far from recognizing the great sacrifices they have made, give their patronage, in most cases, to those establishments where members of the association are not employed.¹

The main issue, from the trades' viewpoint, was the Land League's ban on foxhunting. This widely effective ban, enforced in 1882, was intended as a harassment of the landlords and gentry, but its more immediate effect was to deprive the city trades of their usual seasonal employment in providing the gentry with the requirements of the hunting season. The farriers, tailors and bootmakers were the most severely affected. The tailors, particularly, felt the effects of the hunting ban which aggravated the existing depression in the trade. In early 1882, some fifty members of the tailors' society in Cork were either on short time or unemployed, due to the fall-off in demand occasioned by the ban, and later in the year the society calculated that its members' average weekly hunting season earnings had fallen from thirty to twelve shillings.²

In spite of protests from the trade societies, the hunting ban continued with the approval of the National League, and this makes all the more surprising the fact that a large body of the tailors joined the League in 1885 while the rest of the trades, less injured by the ban, stood aloof. The tailors themselves were probably divided on the issue, for less than thirty-three percent of their

1. CE, 13 May, 7 Oct., 1881; 21 Oct., 1886; CDH, 13 May, 1881.

2. CE, 10 Nov., 1882.

number joined the League, but these included the officers of the society who made strong declarations of support for Parnell and the League.¹ If the tailors hoped, by such declarations, to win the League's sympathy in their opposition to the hunting ban, they were disappointed. A trades' deputation to the League leader, Michael Davitt, to protest against the land agitation's ill-effects on trade had no results,² and the hunting ban was in fact stepped up in 1887 as a protest against the arrest of the League leader and journalist, William O'Brien.³ Within a month, the tailors had again felt the ill-effects of the hunting ban, one city establishment letting go a third of its staff, amounting to twenty-five men, due to the fall in demand for hunting and riding outfits.⁴

The political involvement of the trades had been inevitable since the foundation of the United Trades Association in 1881 when Parnell had, as the trades themselves put it, 'condescended to accept' the honorary presidency of the association, and the honorary vice-presidency had gone to the local liberal-nationalist MP, John Daly. It had seemed for some time that Parnell hoped to use the United Trades Association simply as a pressure group to back the Land League. His own and his supporters' speeches at United Trades meetings concentrated on the land question and treated labour matters as an incidental.⁵

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1. CE, 29 Oct., 1885.
 2. CE, 3 Feb., 1887.
 3. CDH, 18 Nov., 1887.
 4. CE, 23 Nov., 1887.
 5. CE, 11 Apr., 1881.

Though relations between the county branches of the United Trades and the Land League were cordial enough, the lasting ill-feeling between the city trades and the League prevented the harnessing of the city United Trades to the land agitation. But if the trades bore any resentment against Parnell in his capacity as leader of the League, it was not allowed any open expression during the 'eighties. When repeated letters to Parnell calling for the discontinuance of the hunting ban failed to elicit a single reply, there were some murmurs of discontent within the United Trades' ranks, but these were quickly hushed up and the blame transferred from Parnell to the unpopular local officers of the National League branch.¹

Home Rule and the Cork Trade Societies

Whatever the hidden resentment towards Parnell in his role as Land League leader, in his capacity as head of the Home Rule movement he was well supported by the Cork United Trades. The precise political composition of the United Trades in the 'eighties and 'nineties is incalculable. In 1881 the association's secretary described it as embracing men of radical, liberal and conservative views.² Some societies had in their ranks a large number of Unionists. The Typographical Society, especially, had a sizeable number of Conservative and Unionist members who worked in the office of the local Unionist newspaper, the Cork Constitution.³ Other societies, particularly those

1. CE, 1 Nov., 11 Dec., 1882.

2. CE, 11 Dec., 1882.

3. CE, 4 Sept., 1888.

affiliated to English amalgamated unions, had some proportion of English members, unlikely to have interest in or sympathy with local and nationalist politics. As a body which by 1886 claimed to represent between two and three-thousand men, the United Trades Association could not be expected to have a unified political voice, and any political pronouncements by the executive of the association tended to cause muted dissent in the ranks. The supporters of Parnell outside the ranks of the United Trades Association did claim that the majority of the artisans were nationalists, and though this term covered a wide range of political views from Fenianism to mild liberalism, it does seem that most of the trade societies in the city were at least passive supporters of Parnell and Home Rule.

Can one measure the intensity of trades' Parnellism in the 'eighties? Financial support for different causes connected with Parnell would seem a good indicator, but difficulties arise in checking such contribution lists as appeared in the local press. Names of individuals usually prove impossible to identify, and thus give no clue to the background of the contributors. Though this in itself suggests that many contributors were men of small means and little public consequence - tradesmen, perhaps, or labourers - it prevents any statistical evaluation of contributions. Trade societies, however, did not figure very much in the contribution lists. This was partly because some societies, like the Typographical, were not politically unified and could not therefore use their funds for political purposes, while other trades pleaded depression and lack of funds.¹ On the other hand, the trades spared no expense in

1. CE, 4, 8, 22 Dec., 1880; 1 Jan., 1881.

arranging demonstrations and processions in honour of Parnell. It was calculated that a big demonstration could cost the United Trades over three-hundred pounds, and two such demonstrations with one other on a more modest scale took place between October 1881 and December 1882.¹ The banners borne and the numbers of men taking part in these demonstrations are another possible guide to the Cork trades' political loyalties, though the excitement and colourful pageantry accompanying such events probably accounted as much as political feeling for the individual artisan's participation. Some 1,600 tradesmen took part in each of the big Parnellite demonstrations of the early 1880s. As the total membership of the United Trades Association was at this time between two and three thousand, the proportion of United Trades members participating in the demonstrations can be put at anything between fifty and eighty percent.² The societies most fully and consistently represented in these demonstrations were the carpenters and cabinetmakers, with a turnout of 100% each, while the coopers and tailors followed with a representation of 70%.

These public demonstrations were regarded by the trade not alone as a display of support for Parnell, but as an opportunity to display their own strength and solidarity. Inter-trade competition ensured that each trade made as flamboyant a turnout as possible, and the most distressed trades preferred not to take part than to expose themselves to public criticism by marching without a banner and regalia. Thus, the coachmakers declined to participate in the demonstration of

1. CE, 4 Oct., 1880; 11 Apr., 4 Oct., 1881; 11 Dec., 1882.

2. CE, 30 July, 1881; 24 Sept., 1885; 14 Oct., 1886.

late 1881, and the declining ropemaking and corkcutting trades appeared in no political demonstration during the 1880s.¹ The trade banners were one of the most important features of these public demonstrations. Besides providing most of the colour needed for an impressive turnout, the banner embodied a trade's conception of itself as a social and economic community, and - in the Irish context - as a stronghold of national aspirations. Thus, the banners of most trade societies bore not only trade emblems and pictures of local scenes, but also nationalistic emblems like the round tower, harp, the figure of Ireland, and even the Fenian sunburst. Several trade banners, including that of the United Trades Association, were made in the early 1880s, and reflected the trade societies' Home Rule sympathies by bearing portraits of local Home Rule MPs, nationalistic ecclesiastics and, above all, of Davitt and Parnell.²

On the whole, the individual Cork artisan in the ranks of the United Trades Association was a Home Ruler, and for the first two years of its existence the United Trades Association remained, despite its antipathy towards the National League, fairly solidly nationalistic. But in mid-1883 political tensions came to light within the association. In late 1882 John Henry Jolley, one of the printers' delegates, was elected president of the United Trades. Jolley, a Protestant and a Unionist, was an efficient president, and at his election promised that politics would not be allowed interfere with the working of the United Trades Association. Some parties in the association, however,

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1. CE, 22 Mar., 4 Oct., 1880; 11 Apr., 3, 7 Oct., 1881; 31 July, 1886; 4 Apr., 1887; 27 Aug., 1888.
 2. CE, 11 Aug., 21 Sept., 1882; 4 July, 1883.

objected to Jolley's election, considering it part of

a systematic attempt to detach the Trades from the national party ... At all previous meetings of the Cork Trades, the men generally invited to attend were those whose politics were in unison with Mr. Parnell's. One by one they have been dropped, and now the cherished guests at the Trades' Hall are the editor of the Cork Constitution, the avowed enemy of national principles, and his few fast friends ... This is not the action of the tradesmen of Cork, but of a few wily wire-pullers who, posing as their friends, are doing their utmost to detach the tradesmen from their traditionally nationalist principles ... It is time the tradesmen of Cork ... made some change in their officers and patrons. If not, they may soon look out for an Orangeman proposed as president instead of Mr. Parnell.¹

In fact, though the United Trades had indeed begun to have more contact than formerly with the Cork Constitution editor, Henry L. Tivy, and with other Unionist gentlemen like Sir George Colthurst and William Shaw, MP,² this was due mainly to widespread inter-political cooperation in organizing the Cork Industrial Exhibition of 1883, and not to any political manoeuvres. Yet, though there was no evidence to support the allegations of such political wire-pulling within the United Trades Association, the suspicions remained for some time, and trouble arose again when Jolley refused an invitation to sit on the local council of the National League. The invitation had been refused because the League had not consulted the executive committee of the United Trades, and Jolley's action was approved by a majority of United Trades delegates.³ But others in the association - probably the same parties who had first made the wire-

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1. United Ireland (Dublin), 21 July, 1883.
 2. CE, 6 Dec., 1882; 19 Jan., 1883.
 3. CE, 26 Oct., 23 Nov., 1883.

pulling allegations - maintained that Jolley's action was political and calculated to dilute the patriotism of the association.¹

As well as straining relations between the United Trades and the National League, the Jolley affair led to internal political divisions within the Trades Association. The most bitter opponents of the president were the delegates of the Ancient Corporation of Carpenters, a strong local society whose aggressive nationalism was later revealed in a dispute with the local branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.² The carpenters' attack on Jolley combined with the United Trades Association's internal financial troubles to fragment the association late in 1883,³ and when the association was reorganized in 1884 much of the blame for former troubles was laid on political involvement:

The trades of Cork for some time past had run against their own interests by interfering in the business of other people, but /they were advised/ in the future not to interfere in business that did not concern them.⁴

Though there was no attempt to place a statutory ban on political discussion, the United Trades successfully avoided political involvement for over a year.⁵ However, the escalation of the land agitation, the Parnellite election victory of 1885, and the introduction of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill in 1886 drew the association back into politics. Meetings of the United Trades passed motions in favour of

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1. CE, 30 July, 26 Oct., 1883; United Ireland, 28 July, 1883.
 2. See pp.363-65.
 3. CE, 26 Oct., 3, 13, 15, 23 Nov., 1883.
 4. CDH, 23 May, 1884; CE, 12 Sept., 1884.
 5. CE, 24 Sept., 22 Oct., 1885.

Home Rule, and against Balfour's Crimes Act of 1887.¹ At this time, too, the growing popularity of the land agitation leader and editor of United Ireland, William O'Brien, was reflected in political attitudes in Cork. He was the hero of the hour, being conferred with the freedom of the city and receiving adulatory addresses from local boards and nationalist societies and also from the trades.² O'Brien's imprisonment in 1887 for his part in the Plan of Campaign was the signal for loud protests from the same quarters,³ and particularly from the trades. The United Trades Association had moved back into politics, and only one dissenting voice had been raised against the move, when one of the carpenters' delegates, himself a nationalist, proposed a motion against political discussion in the United Trades Association, 'with a view to strengthen the position of, and promote a better feeling of goodwill and confidence among all classes of our fellow-citizens'. The other delegates were so politically excited that nobody could be persuaded to second the motion - even for discussion's sake - and one delegate spoke for all when he declared that 'they were not going to shut their mouth on politics when they had occasion for it'.⁴

The events following the arrest of William O'Brien had a more than usually close connection with the trades, and though they strengthened the nationalistic feelings of the trades as a whole, they also exposed some inter-trade tension. The imprisonment of O'Brien,

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1. CE, 4, 27 May, 1886; 31 Mar., 1887.
 2. CE, 6 Dec., 1886; 7, 18 June, 1887.
 3. CE, 26 Oct., 4 Nov., 1887.
 4. CE, 21, 28 Apr., 1887.

condemned in all nationalist circles in Cork, was vigorously upheld by the Unionist Cork Constitution, which advocated, moreover, the arrest of the proprietors of the two local nationalist newspapers, Thomas Crosbie of the Cork Examiner, and John Hooper of the Cork Daily Herald, both of whom had supported O'Brien. In retaliation, the largely nationalist town council decided to send no more of its advertisements to the Constitution - a severe blow to the paper, which drew much of its revenue from advertising.¹ The majority of the United Trades delegates approved the town council's action, but for the Typographical Society the measure had economic as well as political implications. It was felt that a fall in the Constitution's revenue would result in the laying off of several of the printing staff, and as a majority of the printers in the Constitution office were Unionists in politics, the society considered it unfair that they should suffer for a nationalist cause. A deputation of the Typographical Society (themselves members of the United Trades) waited on the United Trades delegate meeting to ask a reconsideration of the support for the town council's ban on the Constitution advertising. The United Trades' frigid reception of the printers' deputation showed that trade solidarity had, on this occasion, to yield to political loyalties, and the deputation was reminded that 'it was a small matter for a great cause like the National League to boycott the Constitution'.²

1. CC, 18, 19 Nov., 3 Dec., 1887.

2. CC, 2 Dec., 1887; CE, 3 Dec., 1887.

Soon afterwards, the arrest of one of the Typographical Society's members, in connection with the Examiner's publication of reports of banned National League meetings, drew the printers' society as a whole into harmony with the United Trades, as all joined in the protest against the arrest, and in celebrating the man's eventual release.¹ A few months later, the reconciliation was completed when the United Trades strongly supported the same printers, now locked out by the Constitution proprietor in a dispute over apprentice labour.² But the falling-out between the United Trades and the printers showed that trade solidarity on political issues could be shattered when an individual trade considered a generally accepted political stand to be detrimental to its welfare. Conversely, an individual trade's welfare received scant attention from the general body of the trades when it conflicted with popular political loyalties.

Like the printers, the farriers' society clashed with the United Trades Association over the stand taken on William O'Brien's arrest. The National League had intensified the hunting ban in protest at the arrest. The tailors, badly affected by the ban, made but a feeble protest, but a section of the farriers' society called for the United Trades' support in modifying the ban by applying it only to those individuals who were opposed to Home Rule. The reaction, as in the printers' case, was hostile. The United Trades, and even some of the farriers themselves, criticized the suggestion as evidence of a lack of patriotism and declared that

1. CE, 19, 30 Dec., 1887; 9 Mar., 1888.

2. CE, 4, 23 June, 4 July, 1888.

though the farriers might suffer materially by the hunting ban/ they did not know if the members would grumble if they thought that by their suffering the punishment inflicted on William O'Brien would be abated.¹

The conflict between political loyalties and trade interests was therefore a real problem in the United Trades Association, but in the highly-charged political atmosphere of the 'eighties it was hardly possible to effectively bar politics from the association, especially as the trades regarded themselves as the real upholders of nationalism. But the trades' nationalism was largely economic, and could be sharpened by attacks on trade welfare as well as by the wave of popular excitement generated by political events. Thus, the coincidence of the trade depression of the mid-eighties with the exaltation of the land agitation and the first Home Rule Bill led to some of the strongest nationalist and socially radical statements made in the ranks of the United Trades.²

Which were supreme, trade interests or political loyalties? In spite of the United Trades' championing of nationalism in the face of the printers' and farriers' objections in 1887, trade welfare was probably more important than nationalism. It was easy to call for sacrifices for the national cause when one's own trade was not affected, but neither Unionist nor Nationalist artisans proved quite so altruistic when their own particular trade was threatened. One of the twenty Unionist printers locked out by the Constitution in 1888 defined his position clearly:

1. CC, 18, 25 Nov., 1887.

2. CE, 24 Feb., 23 Mar., 21 Oct., 1886. See below, pp. 432-35.

He was a Unionist in Politics, but he was first and always a trades unionist ...¹

The number of clashes between the United Trades Association and the nationalist members of the town council who acted contrary to trades interests showed that the nationalist artisans had precisely the same attitude as those of Unionist sympathies, and from the mid-eighties onwards trades disillusionment with the performance of the Home Rule town council grew. By the late 1890s this disillusionment had become sufficiently strong to make the trades submerge, at least temporarily, their nationalist and Unionist principles, and act on principles geared solely to the interests of labour.

The Parnellite Split

The Parnellite 'Manifesto to the Irish People' of November 1890 precipitated the split in Parnell's party and in his country-wide following.² In Cork the manifesto's appearance was immediately followed by a split in the town council, the majority of nationalist members declaring confidence in the Chief, while twenty members opposed him.³ The highly emotive issue seemed certain to split the United Trades Association, whose president, Eugene Crean, headed the anti-Parnellites in the town council, while the vice-president, Robert S. McNamara, took a prominent role on the Parnellite side.⁴

1. CE, 4 June, 1888.

2. F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine, pp. 197-200.

3. CE, 29 Nov., 3, 17 Dec., 1890.

4. CE, 10 Dec., 1890.

While the trades of Waterford voted overwhelmingly in favour of Parnell,¹ the Cork United Trades were evidently too evenly divided between pro- and anti-Parnellites to risk such a vote. Each side, of course, claimed the adherence of the majority of the trades,² but the Parnellites seem, generally, to have had the upper hand. This was evident in the first election of United Trades officers after the Parnellite split, when the president, Eugene Crean, and the secretary, Michael Austen, who had held office for four and three years respectively, were summarily replaced by the Parnellites, Robert S. McNamara and Charles Cogan.³

Eugene Crean had for some time been anxious to resign his post, and he denied that his replacement had any connection with the Parnellites split, pointing out that many of those voting against him were of his own political persuasion. But the circumstances gave a decidedly political tone to the affair. Already in late 1890 there had been rumours that Crean would be removed from the presidency, and his own trade, the predominantly Parnellite Ancient Corporation of Carpenters, failed to retain him as delegate to the United Trades, which position he had held for five years.⁴

Michael Austen was already in the bad books of many United Trades members because of his deep involvement in the organization of the city's semi-skilled workers and in the Democratic Labour Federation. His own trade, the Typographical Society, had been forced to defend

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1. CE, 21 Jan., 1891; 291 votes were recorded in favour of Parnell, 28 against him.
 2. CE, 11 Dec., 1890; 28 Jan., 1891.
 3. CE, 16 Jan., 1891.
 4. CE, 18 Jan., 1886; 10 Dec., 1890.

his many political involvements which the trades felt were diverting his attention from the interests of the United Trades.¹ Now his prominent role on the anti-Parnellite side, and particularly his leadership of the anti-Parnellite faction of the Democratic Labour Federation, sealed his unpopularity among the Parnellite force in the United Trades, who ousted him from office.²

The ditching of Crean and Austen was applauded by several Parnellite pressure groups in the south, but it increased the resentment of those among the trades who were anti-Parnellites, and it roused fear among many members, both pro- and anti-Parnellites that the United Trades Association was about to split along political lines as the Democratic Labour Federation had done.³ The Painters' Society, even before the removal of Crean and Austen, had asked that political debate be banned from the United Trades meetings,⁴ but as the majority of delegates on the United Trades' council were committed Parnellites, confident of swaying the association in their own favour, the ban was not implemented. For over three months, therefore, the United Trades meetings were marked by constant political tension and occasional flare-ups, each side having its victories and defeats. Late in January 1891 a minority of five anti-Parnellites failed to reverse the council's decision to make their meeting hall available for a meeting of the Parnellite National League.⁵ A week later, an

1. Typographical Society Minute Book, 5, 19 Apr., 1890.

2. CE, 16 Jan., 10 Apr., 1891; Labour World, 3 Jan., 1891.

3. CE, 13, 18, 23, 30 Dec., 1890; Labour World, 3 Jan., 1891.

4. CE, 6 Jan., 1891.

5. CE, 30 Jan., 1891.

attempt to force through a vote of confidence in Parnell was defeated. At the next meeting, when some delegates proposed a vote of censure on Parnell the meeting dissolved in chaos, and three weeks later similar scenes occurred when the Parnellites tried to pass another vote of confidence in their hero.¹ On each occasion, political debate was quashed and order restored by the intervention of the Parnellite president, Robert S. McNamara, but the prospect of a political split within the United Trades was becoming every day more likely.

The main Parnellite pressure groups in the city at this time were the National League and the Irish National Foresters, as well as the Parnellite members of the town council. These groups took control of the Patrick's Day public demonstration in 1891 and organized it as a demonstration in favour of Parnell. This move was condemned by the Catholic bishop and by the anti-Parnellite town councillors led by Eugene Crean,² but the United Trades majority decided to participate in the demonstration and to arrange a special deputation to Parnell to discuss his attitude to labour interests. This proposed deputation seemed likely to drive a final wedge between the Parnellites and anti-Parnellites in the United Trades, and delegates from the societies of masons, bootmakers, painters, engineers, farriers and corkcutters met to denounce this move as an attempt to publicly connect the United Trades with the Parnellite side. This meeting protested against the recent replacement of Crean and Austen and called for a remodelling

1. CE, 20 Feb., 14 Mar., 1891.

2. CE, 26, 28 Feb., 9 Mar., 1891.

of the United Trades' committee to exclude politically motivated officers like the Parnellite president, McNamara.¹

It is not clear whether this was an anti-Parnellite meeting or simply a meeting to protest against the politicization of the United Trades. At the meeting, delegates from the societies involved admitted that their respective societies were divided on the Parnell issue, but they also claimed that the majority of their members agreed on the need to ban political discussions from the United Trades and from the individual trade societies, and they threatened to withdraw from the United Trades Association unless the ban on politics was implemented immediately.

These demands were ignored. The United Trades officers, together with the delegates from twelve of the nineteen affiliated societies took part in the deputation to Parnell. But several trade societies and local nationalist organizations took no part in either the procession or the deputation, while the bishop's opposition and the non-participation of a number of influential local public men detracted much from the success of the affair.²

Many members of the United Trades were dissatisfied with their treatment at Parnell's hands during the previous decade. Parnell, the honorary president of the United Trades since its inception in 1881 had, after the failure of his initial attempt to harness the trades to the land agitation, left the association strictly to its own devices. Apart from paying lip service to the interests of

1. CE, 16 Mar., 1891.

2. CE, 16, 18 Mar., 1891.

labour during his visits to Cork in the early 'eighties,¹ Parnell had never concerned himself with the interests or ambitions of the Cork trade societies. For a very long time any criticism of Parnell's neglect of the trades had been hushed up, though discontent was brewing as early as 1882 over Parnell's failure to answer United Trades' letters and his support, in the face of United Trades protests, for the National League's ban on hunting.² In the bitterness following the split, this resentment came into the open, as Parnell's failure to answer United Trades letters and to bring trade interests before Parliament were cited as reasons for opposing his continued leadership of the Parliamentary Party.³ Even Parnell's warmest supporters in the United Trades offered no defense of his lack of interest in their association, and the controversial deputation of 1891, while rightly viewed by the anti-Parnellites as an attempt to tie the United Trades to Parnell, was in itself a criticism of his past treatment of the United Trades. While the deputation assured Parnell of the loyalty of the Trades, such reassurances could not hide the fact that the real function of the deputation was to quiz the Chief on his attitude to the problems facing organized labour. Questioned closely as to his views on railway workers' grievances, night work in bakeries, the future of mining in Ireland and the controversial eight-hour day, Parnell appeared ill at ease, and his discomfiture was increased when insistent questioning on his attitude

1. CE, 11 Apr., 1881; CDH, 22, 23, 24 Feb., 1885.

2. CE, 1 Nov., 11 Dec., 1882.

3. CE, 28, 30 Jan., 16 Mar., 1891.

to the hoped-for revival of the local Haulbowline dockyard revealed that he, the city's parliamentary representative, was utterly ignorant of the subject.¹

Yet even so unsatisfactory a performance, while further alienating those United Trades members opposed to Parnell, could not shake the political faith of his staunch supporters. During the following months the trouble between the two factions in the United Trades abated as the association's attention was engaged by other issues - the setting up of the Royal Commission on Labour, the impending Sunday Closing Act, a strike by the builders' labourers, and renewed agitation by the printers against the continuing lock-out of their members in the Cork Constitution office.² But within the city, the fragmentation of the nationalist side went on. The anti-Parnellites formed the Cork National Committee³ while the Parnellites revived the National League and elected Parnell as its president. Members of the United Trades were prominent in each body. Eugene Crean took a leading part in the National Committee and Robert S. McNamara in the National League, and it is certain that other individual members of the United Trades were in the rank-and-file of both parties, for the split was very deep, extending even to the different musical bands of the city, whose membership was largely drawn from the trades and working classes.⁴

Though the different trade societies split along the lines of Parnellite and anti-Parnellite (the engineers and farriers admitted

1. CE, 18 Mar., 1891.
2. CE, 10, 20, 23, 24 Apr., 2, 6, 8, 9 May; 8 Sept., 1891.
3. CE, 10, 12 Dec., 1890; CDH, 13 Dec., 1890.
4. CE, 7, 12 May, 1891; CDH, 19 Dec., 1890.

that their societies were so divided), it seems that some trades were more strongly Parnellite than others. The carpenters, for example, asserted their loyalty to Parnell by refusing to re-elect Eugene Crean as their United Trades delegate when he took the anti-Parnellite side,¹ and their society's band, along with that of the tailors, played in honour of Parnell when he visited Cork in the early weeks of the split.²

Participation in a Parnellite demonstration was a trade's best opportunity to show its loyalty to the Chief. The first such demonstration in Cork was that held on Patrick's Day 1891, during Parnell's support-seeking visit to the city.³ A similar demonstration in honour of Parnell's successor, John Redmond, took place in 1895,⁴ while every year the anniversary of Parnell's death, Ivy Day, was marked by a big demonstration in Dublin. In the Cork demonstration of 1891 eight trade societies had paraded their loyalty to Parnell - the societies of coopers, carpenters, cabinetmakers, plasterers, pork butchers, builders' labourers, brewery workmen, and the dock labourers of Passage West. The ban on politics in the United Trades from 1892 onwards, together with the expense of participation, deterred many societies from further public manifestations of Parnellism. But some old faithfuls remained, the coopers and plasterers marching in the Redmond demonstration of 1895, and the coopers' loyalty extended to lending their scarves to a local band

1. CE, 16 Jan., 1891.

2. CE, 19 Dec., 1890.

3. CE, 18 Mar., 1891.

4. CE, 18 Mar., 1895.

playing at the Dublin Ivy Day demonstration of 1893 and to sending seventy of their own society men to a similar Dublin demonstration in 1895.¹ Likewise, the Cork Stonecutters' Society sent a delegation and wreath to the Dublin Ivy Day demonstration for at least three years in succession.²

Over the country as a whole there was a close connection between the Parnellites and the members of the separatist revolutionary movement. Though some leading members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood took the anti-Parnellite side, most sided with the discredited leader.³ Cork was no exception. There, Patrick H. Meade, a confidant of leading Fenians and a leading light in the Young Ireland Society, a Fenian front-group, took a leading part on the Parnellite side.⁴ Moreover when the United Trades secretary, Michael Austen (himself an IRB man) took the anti-Parnellite side, the greatest opposition to his action came from among the ranks of the IRB in the city.⁵

The ditching of Austen and Crean by the United Trades does suggest that the IRB element was strong in the association. But because not all Parnellites were IRB men, and because the United Trades

1. CE, 7 Oct., 1895; Coopers' Minute Book, 5 Oct., 1893. The plasters who marched in the demonstration were those who remained with the local Cork society when a number of members joined the National Association of Operative Plasterers in 1894.
2. CE, 8 Oct., 1894; 7 Oct., 1895; 12 Oct., 1896; PP, 1897, xcix (275), pp. 2-3; 1898, xiii (127), pp. 2-3. The Cork Stonecutters' Society was a local society which remained independent when the majority of local stonecutters joined the Operative Stonecutters of Ireland, an Irish amalgamated union set up in the early 1890s.
3. Leon O'Broin, Revolutionary Underground, p. 48.
4. Crime Branch Special Reports (hereafter cited as CBS), 1891: 9001/S; CE, 4 Oct., 1883.
5. CE, 16, 17 Dec., 1890; CBS, 1891: 2792/S.

membership was itself deeply divided on the Parnell issue, the strength of IRB representation in the trades remains unclear. Yet there is an apparent continuity between those trades which in the 1860s had been strongly Fenian, and those which in the '90s were predominantly Parnellite. The coopers, carpenters and tailors, who had been well represented in the Fenian ranks were all strongly Parnellite in sympathy, and though there is no evidence to prove it, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the militant separatist tradition in these trades had continued into the 'nineties.

When Parnell died in October 1891 the United Trades meeting adjourned as a mark of respect and the association was represented at the funeral. But the political split within the association was not yet healed. Cork city was particularly affected by the death of Parnell who had represented the city in parliament since 1880, and his removal from the scene opened up the way for political change at representation level. In the election which followed his death the supporters of Parnell chose as their candidate John Redmond, while the anti-Parnellites, by now described as Nationalists, chose as their candidate the local Butter Market official, Martin Flavin. The Unionists' choice, Captain Sarsfield, though he received a sizeable vote, was really out of the running, and the contest lay between the Parnellites and Nationalists.¹ The trades, characteristically, had no communication with the Unionist candidate, but the Parnellite and Nationalist factions in the United Trades Association involved themselves in the rival campaigns of Redmond and Flavin, some United Trades members

1. CDH, 19 Dec., 1890; CE, 20, 21, 24, 27 Oct., 1891.

serving on each of the election committees.¹ Though these artisans participated in the election not as trade representatives but as individuals, the election of 1891 in Cork was the first for many decades in which tradesmen took a distinct and assertive part in the proceedings. When, in 1895, the delegates to the Irish Trades Congress noted that

they had of late years observed a tendency of candidates of various constituencies to appeal to the labour element, with regard at all events to securing their votes²

they were referring to a phenomenon which dated to the fall of Parnell and, in Cork, to the election of 1891. In that election the rival candidates appealed for the first time since 1832 to the working class vote, canvassing the workers in the quayside coal yards, the breweries, the bacon factories, the gas works and the railway termini.³ This concentration on the centres of unskilled and semi-skilled labour was due not alone to the expansion of the electorate since 1884, but also to the fact that politicians and labouring men alike recognized that

workingmen were beginning to feel a good deal more independent; union was becoming more general among them, and the spirit of friendship which was growing between the democracy of Great Britain and Ireland was certainly increasing that spirit of independence, and was giving them a feeling of confidence in themselves they otherwise would not have.⁴

Within the United Trades Association the two factions formed deputations to the rival candidates, quizzing them as to their stand on current labour questions - the eight-hour day and the enforcement of the factory act. As in Parnell's case six months previously, the interrogated

1. CE, 30 Oct., 4 Nov., 1891.

2. Report of the Second Irish Trades Congress, 1895, p. 16.

3. CE, 27 Oct., 2, 4, 5 Nov., 1891.

4. CE, 4 Nov., 1891.

parties responded with pleasing generalities and effusive praise for the patriotism of the trades of Cork.¹ But they made no commitments to the trades, nor, indeed, did the latter appear to expect any commitments. There was at this stage little danger of independent political action by the Cork trade societies. Had there been such a possibility, the rival candidates in the election would have made as vigorous a canvas of the trade societies and United Trades Association as they did in the case of the unskilled workers. As it was, the tradesmen made the first move in approaching the candidates and their deputations were less labour pressure-groups than public demonstrations of the rival trade factions' loyalties to their respective political leaders.

The election was a victory for the Nationalists, Martin Flavin polling 3,669 votes to John Redmond's 2,159. For the remainder of the century the parliamentary representation of Cork remained in Nationalist hands, though the Parnellites (or Redmondites, as they had now become) constantly fought back.² The aftermath of the 1891 election, moreover, saw the effective healing of the political divisions within the United Trades Association. In 1892 the term of presidency of the Parnellite McNamara expired, and in a poll which crossed party lines, Timothy Harrington of the Masons' Society was elected president. Harrington was an anti-Parnellite, but he was determined to ban all politics from the United Trades, and his determination, together with the passage of time, made the ban complete and effective.³ The

1. CE, 30 Oct., 4 Nov., 1891.

2. CE, 8 Jan., 26 Feb., 1 July, 1892; 5 Oct., 1894.

3. CE, 8 Jan., 26 Feb., 1 July, 1892; 5 Oct., 1894.

effectiveness of this reunification effort was evident when, in the election of 1895, the United Trades again sent deputations to quiz the rival candidates on labour matters. The deputations were more forceful than those of 1891, demanding certain pledges from the rival candidates which the latter signed with more speed than conviction.¹ But the main advance was that on this occasion, unlike the situation in 1891, both Parnellites and anti-Parnellites served together on the deputations and the United Trades, in spite of its individual members' rival political loyalties, appeared as a unified body.² But the political ban was not intended to cut the trades off from all political involvement. It aimed to erase the classifications of Parnellite and anti-Parnellite from the United Trades' ranks, but not to dilute the association's basic nationalism. By 1892 the 'political ban' in the United Trades Association had succeeded, not in cutting the association off from politics but in restoring it to the position it had held in the 1880s - a strongly pro-Home Rule body undivided by the Parnell issue.

The Trades' Reaction to Fenian Activity, 1890-98

The Parnellite split produced in Ireland two rival nationalist groups - Redmondites and Nationalists - whose common aim was to achieve Home Rule by constitutional means. Beside these groups, the underground separatist movement descended from the Fenianism of the 1860s

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1. The pledges, drawn up by the United Trades, committed the candidates to work in parliament for an increase in the number of local factory inspectors, a fair wages clause in all government and local authority contracts, an Employers' Liability Bill, an an increased share for Ireland in the navy's provision contracts.
 2. CDH, 10 July, 1895; CE, 12 July, 1895.

was still very much alive. In 1890 Castle agents in Cork reported that 'some efforts /had/ recently been made to revive the IRB in the city'.¹ The opposing factions within the IRB (ever a fissiparous body) had begun to come together, infiltrating the Irish National Foresters, and turning that body into a limb of the IRB, which later formed the nucleus of Parnellism in the city.² Outwardly the only evidence of IRB presence in Cork in the early 1890s was the staging of public funerals and the erection of memorials in honour of dead Fenians,³ but the revolutionary movement was growing.

In 1893 the United Trades Association was approached by a deputation from a group calling itself the Manchester Memorial Committee, with the request for cooperation in the erection of a monument to the Manchester Martyrs of 1867. Because the project was 'non-political' - i.e. it was supported by both Redmondites and Nationalists - the trades agreed to subscribe, promising a total of two-hundred pounds towards the monument.⁴ It seems that by this stage, whatever individual tradesmen or trade societies had IRB links, the United Trades as a body was not in the confidence of the extreme nationalists of the city. The Manchester Memorial Committee was, in fact, an IRB front. One United Trades member, Robert S. McNamara, stonecutters' delegate and die-hard Parnellite, was on this committee, but though it is not clear whether he was an IRB man, the majority of

1. CBS, 1890: 631/S.

2. CBS, 1890: 94/S, 631/S; CE, 9, 12 Dec., 1890.

3. CE, 27 Aug., 1888; 11 Sept., 1891; 14 Aug., 1893; CBS, 1890: 631/S.

4. CE, 10, 24 Feb., 13 May, 15 Sept., 1893. The recorded trades' subscriptions were as follows: Tailors - £30; Masons - £25; Builders' Labourers - £25; Plasterers - £20; Bootmakers - £5; Boottrivettors - £2; Balance unaccounted for - £93.

the committee members had IRB affiliations.¹ This became evident when, late in 1893, the committee split, ostensibly because the United Trades and the original Committee members disagreed over the design of the proposed memorial, but in reality because the committee had re-formed itself to weaken the trades' role and ensure a majority of IRB men in its ranks. The trade societies had originally been allotted two representatives each on the committee, but under the new arrangements the several reading rooms and musical bands of the city - reputedly Parnellite and IRB strongholds - were each allowed four representatives.² A split appeared in the committee, the United Trades on one side and the extreme nationalist element on the other. Six months of desultory discussions followed, the trades refusing to sit on the reconstituted committee and - more important - refusing to hand up their two-hundred pound subscription until the matter had been settled to their satisfaction. By mid-1894 the Manchester Memorial had fallen through.³

In 1898 a similar confrontation occurred between the United Trades and the IRB element in the city. The occasion was the centenary of the Rebellion of 1798 which had been looked forward to for over a decade by all shades of nationalists in Ireland as a time to demonstrate their strength and recruit new followers. The extreme nationalist element was particularly active in arranging the celebration of the centenary. Local Centenary Committees were set up all over Ireland, mainly as fronts for the different factions of extremists, including the IRB. The erection of the Wolfe Tone Monument in Dublin, an affair

1. CE, 2 Feb., 1893.

2. CE, 15 Sept., 1893.

3. CE, 22 Sept., 13 Oct., 1893; 20 Apr., 1894; CBS, 1898: 17582/S.

managed by the IRB, was the highlight of the celebrations,¹ but very many Irish towns and cities had their own local demonstrations and erected their own local monuments which are still part of the average Irish town-scape today.

In Cork the local '98 Committee was composed of a mixed group of Parnellites, anti-Parnellites, trades representatives and a few budding socialists, but it was dominated by the IRB. Of the six original officers of the Committee, four were IRB men, members of the local Bryan Dillon Branch of the National Foresters. When the committee membership was increased to twelve, at least eight members, and probably nine, were IRB men.² The exceptions were J.C. Flynn, MP; Eugene Crean, MP, members and ex-president of the United Trades; and Joseph O'Brien, secretary of the United Trades. The divide between the predominant IRB element and the United Trades representatives was obvious from the first meeting of the committee. The IRB men had objected to Crean's admission to the committee, not on personal grounds, but because he was a sitting member of the Imperial Parliament, and so 'had the collar of the Castle around him'. The United Trades delegates, considering the criticism of Crean to be a reflection on the whole body of the trades, withdrew from the committee. When the committee was resuscitated six months later, relations had not improved. A number of trade societies stood aloof, and though Crean was allowed to remain on the committee, the IRB counteracted the trades' victory

1. O'Broin, Revolutionary Underground, pp. 84-90; CE, 16 Aug., 1898.⁴

2. CBS, 1897: 14851/S; 1898: 15192/S, 17345/S, 17582/S; CDH, 15 May, 1897. The IRB men on the committee were P.H. Meade, Mayor; John O'Keefe; John Slattery; G.S. Crowley; A. O'Driscoll; D. O'Leary; Michael Power; David Walsh; Patrick Corcoran. Corcoran was not listed as an IRB man by the Castle, but he had been present among a number of committed Fenians at the unveiling of a monument to a local Fenian in 1890 (CBS, 1890: 631/S).

* The Dublin memorial was not in fact erected: O'Broin ^{Fenian Fever} p. 94

by removing the United Trades' secretary to a subordinate position on the committee.¹ The dispute over Crean's place on the '98 Committee was but one of a series of squabbles within the committee ranks.

Further disruption occurred when the IRB element attempted, against the wish of the United Trades' delegates, to tie the committee to that of Dublin - a body equally dominated by the IRB.² Later, yet another dispute occurred when the Wolfe Tone Literary Club members, socialist followers of James Connolly, quarrelled with and withdrew from the committee.³ Even on the day when the foundation stone of the Cork '98 monument was laid, a petty squabble broke out between the IRB committee members and the president of the United Trades.⁴

The internal disputes within the Cork '98 Committee were a constant source of amazement and amusement to the vigilant authorities in Dublin Castle. In September 1898, viewing yet another row in the Cork '98 committee, one Castle official confided to another -

It is difficult to follow these squabbles between extremists in Cork ...,

to which the second official wrote back,

I am unable to treat all this seriously - I regret it, but I can't ...⁵

To the individual tradesman the squabbles between the United Trades executive and the IRB probably had little relevance, though IRB members within the trade societies would no doubt have been aware of the issues

1. CBS, 1898: 14851/S; CDH, 22 Nov., 1897; CE, 11 Dec., 1897.

2. CE, 3 Mar., 2 Apr., 1898; CBS, 1898: 15567/S, 17345/S.

3. CBS, 1898: 17582/S. The quarrel involved the '98 committee's refusal to place under the foundation stone of the '98 monument with other nationalist publications the newspaper published by the Irish Socialist Republican Party, the Worker's Republic.

4. CE, 8 Oct., 1898.

5. CBS, 1898: 17582/S.

in question. But the nationalistic enthusiasm generated by the events of the centenary year gripped most trade societies and prompted them to participate in the traditional manner in the public demonstrations held to commemorate the events of '98. The entry in the coopers' minute book for 24 May 1898 characterized the enthusiasm roused in the average Cork trade society's ranks by the '98 memories:

Last night, May 23rd, being the Centenary anniversary of the rising in Ireland, was celebrated in Cork by all nationalists illuminating their houses /and this/ was splendidly carried out. Bands and tar barrels through the streets. We had our rooms got up on the outside, illuminated with fairy lamps, chinese lanterns, with a beautiful banneret, pictures of the United Irishmen of '98, evergreens, etc., all of which was much admired so that the Cork Coopers' Society were not behind in paying a tribute of respect to the glorious Heroes of '98.¹

After all, the fascination of politics had not really declined since the artisans first marched in the O'Connellite demonstrations of 1830.

The Cork Trades and the Town Council, 1840-90

Until the 'eighties connections between the organized trades and the town council were very infrequent. During the 1840s the town council was mentioned in trade circles only in connection with its failure to support the Irish manufacture movement of the day. For the greater part of the 1850s there was no communication between the trades and the council, but late in the decade the council's decision to rebuild two city bridges wakened the interest of the building trades. The stonecutters were the most concerned, canvassing the corporation to

1. Coopers' Minute Book, 24 May, 1898.

have the new bridges built of stone instead of the increasingly popular ironwork, and taking time off from their work to attend corporation meetings on the subject. In the case of Saint Patrick's Bridge, the main bridge in the city, stonework was agreed upon and the stonecutters reciprocated by pledging against strikes or demands for wage rises during the duration of the contract.¹ In the case of the second bridge, the North Gate Bridge, the corporation favoured the less expensive ironwork, and with this the stonecutters had to be content, though not without expressing their general dissatisfaction with the town council's action.²

During the early 1860s individual town councillors made contact with the trades societies in their campaign against night work and Sunday work in the baking trade. This campaign against night work, inspired by a similar campaign in Dublin,³ was strongly supported by the sitting mayor, Sir John Arnott, who earned the odium of the city's master bakers by accusing them of corrupt practices, by enforcing the Act of Parliament against Sunday work, and later by campaigning for re-election as mayor on the issue of cheap bread.⁴ Through his stand on behalf of the journeymen bakers, Arnott became the hero of a section of the trade societies of the city, and though he lost the mayoral election of 1861 he was presented with a laudatory address and publicly chaired through the city by six of the city trades.

1. CE, 21 Apr., 2 June, 1858; CC, 23 Sept., 1862.

2. CE, 22, 26 Wept., 2 Oct., 1862.

3. CE, 11, 27 June, 18 July, 6, 10, 15, 22 Aug., 10, 14 Sept., 1860.

4. CE, 14 Sept., 1860; 3, 6, 10, 11 Dec., 1861; CC, 3 Dec., 1861.

The honouring of Arnott was equally intended as a slight to John Francis Maguire, editor of the Cork Examiner and Arnott's successful opponent in the mayoral election. Maguire, on his election, was hissed and abused, and a letter from the secretary of the United Trades of Cork denounced Maguire and praised Arnott as 'the Man of the People' and the 'Friend of the Working Classes'.¹ It later transpired, however, that the secretary had no mandate from the trades as a whole for his action, and that a number of trade societies supported Maguire.

The actual details of the quarrel were obscure. Maguire's own paper, the Cork Examiner, glossed over the affair as much as possible, but the conservative Cork Constitution and the Examiner's liberal rival, the Cork Herald made it clear that the degree of illfeeling against Maguire was quite considerable. On the surface, the affair of 1861 was just a personal quarrel between two public men. Arnott, Scottish by birth, a conservative in politics, had become a public figure in Cork and had won much public popularity by his donations towards the relief of the local poor. He seemed likely to be re-elected mayor to ensure further donations to public charities, and his defeat by Maguire was much regretted, particularly by the United Trades Association of which he was the honorary president.² But a political element entered the essentially personal quarrel. Some months previously, Maguire had earned the enmity of the local Fenian element when he denounced the National Brotherhood, a Fenian cover group, to a visiting Catholic American cleric. This churchman, who

1. CE, 2 Jan., 1862; CDH, 2 Jan., 1862.

2. CC, 3 Dec., 1861; Morning News (Dublin), 3, 11, 13, 17 Jan., 1862.

shortly beforehand praised the Brotherhood as a patriotic and honourable body, became aware, through Maguire's information, that it was a secret society, linked to the condemned Fenian movement, and he became the bitter opponent of the movement he had previously admired. Riled by Maguire's role in depriving them of potential support in an influential quarter, the Cork Fenians henceforth painted Maguire as a traitor to the cause, and it seems very likely that the anti-Maguire stand by some of the trade societies was due largely to the influence of the Fenians within their ranks.¹

But at this stage, as during the following two decades, trades' contact was with individual town councillors rather than with the town council as a body. Individuals were supported by the trades for their personal and political qualities rather than for their ability as municipal officers. Thus, the trades gave their support to Daniel O'Sullivan, a pro-Fenian mayor who was pressurized to resign his office in 1869 because of his attendance at a banquet in honour of released Fenian prisoners.² They also supported individual mayors and town councillors who assisted the newly established Mechanics' Hall in the early '70s and the United Trades Association of the 1880s.³

Not until the early 1880s did open confrontation take place between the trades and the Cork town council. Such open confrontation was made possible only when the trades had provided themselves with a central organization through which they could articulate their grievances.

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1. Information received from Sean Daly (author of Cork: A City in Crisis).
 2. Sean Daly, op. cit., p. 73; CSORP, 1869: 6779, 7461; Fenian Papers, 1869: 4235R.
 3. CE, 3 Feb., 1870; 2 Jan., 1872; 5 Jan., 1882.

The United Trades Association of the 'eighties was such an organization, and at its meetings the different trade societies aired their respective complaints against individual employers and against the public boards of the city, chief among which was the town council. Between 1881 and 1889, three issues headed the list of trades' grievances against the town council. These issues were firstly the employment of fair labour in corporation contracts, secondly the use of imported goods in such contracts, and thirdly the corporation's failure to set up public building works which would provide employment for tradesmen and labourers in times of depression.

Since the closure of the Mansion House in the early 1840s,¹ Cork had no official civic centre. The so-called Municipal Buildings on the South Mall were unimpressive, and the lack of a city hall was considered a blow to civic pride. The town council was divided on the city hall issue. Some members, backed by the local Ratepayers' Association, opposed any expenditure on a new city hall as an inexcusable extra burden on the city rates. Others insisted that a city hall was a necessity in a city of Cork's size, and with this section the trade societies took their stand, arguing that the additional rate load would be justified by the amount of extra employment provided by the building of the hall.² But those who opposed the hall project won their case and resentment mounted among the trades, particularly among those of the building sector who in the mid-'eighties were passing through a depressed period. By 1886,

1. M. Murphy, 'Municipal Reform and the Repeal Movement in Cork, 1833-44', in J.C.H.A.S., Vol. lxxi, 1976, pp. 9-10.

2. CE, 24 Apr., 1882; 21, 23 Nov., 1883.

United Trades' resentment against the town council had reached its peak. Unemployment was on the increase, building work in the city was at a standstill, and the town council was turning a deaf ear to the trades' calls for support of the Irish manufacture drive in the city and for the promotion of building works.¹ The United Trades began a concerted canvas of the town councillors and the members of the local Harbour Board, calling for the setting up of public works, the demolition of old buildings, painting of bridges, flagging of streets, and the building of housing schemes under the provisions of the labourers' act of 1883.²

Though the corporation took sufficient notice of the trades' demands to appoint a special committee to look into unemployment in the building trade, action went no further than the giving of a few paving and painting contracts to local employers.³ Some of these employers were actually employers of un-fair labour and others were reputedly given the contracts solely because of their friendship with members of the city's public boards.⁴ The trades were furious at the unsatisfactory response of the corporation to their canvas for employment, and this was the first occasion of an openly anti-corporation outburst by the trades. The corporation, the United Trades' delegates asserted,

would drive the trades of Cork into secret societies and organizations if they were not fairly dealt with, and it would ultimately come to that if they did not get fair play ...

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1. CE, 12 Feb., 1886.
 2. CE, 12, 24 Feb., 11 Mar., 1886.
 3. CE, CDH, 10, 15 Mar., 1886.
 4. CE, 23 Mar., 1886; CDH, 13, 15 Mar., 1886. One such contractor was Edward Fitzgerald, a member of the town council and later Lord Mayor of Cork during the Great Exhibition of 1902.

It was the first time, too, that the organized trades articulated their sense of being unrepresented on the town council. Some delegates called for a trades' canvas of the municipal electors against the re-election of the sitting councillors, while others asserted:

We won't allow /the corporation/ to humbug us again. We will work ourselves into one knot and not allow them to humbug us any longer.¹

Later in the same year, when some of the town councillors opposed the sale of a portion of corporation land for the building of a new match factory, a similar outburst came from the trades:

They /the trades/ should uphold themselves and not be so apathetic, and show what they could do. And if the trades would band themselves together for the common benefit, as they did in other cities, they could compel the mayor and corporation not to be going against them, as they /were/ doing at present.²

The corporation's delay in setting up housing schemes was regarded by the trades less as a failure to resolve the housing problem than as a failure to foster employment in the building trade. The late 'eighties and early 'nineties saw continued pressure by the trades on the public boards to speed up these building works. In 1887 they pressed the local National Leaguers to shake the Cork Poor Law Guardians into action on a scheme for 200 labourers' cottages, and this pressure was renewed in 1889.³ But by 1891 work had not yet begun on the scheme and the corporation's lack of funds seemed likely to postpone the scheme sine die.⁴

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1. CE, 23 Mar., 1886.
 2. CE, 14 Oct., 1886.
 3. CE, 7, 9 July, 1887; 3 May, 1889.
 4. CE, 24 Jan., 3 Apr., 4 Sept., 1891.

The importation issue was a constant source of grievance between the trades and the corporation. From the late 'eighties onwards there went forth from the United Trades an unbroken series of complaints against the public boards' importation policy. Imported timber and bricks were used in corporation building works; the plastering contract for the Lunatic Asylum was given to Dublin and London firms; the building of jetties was promised to an English firm; the furniture for the new Court House was imported.¹ The case of the Court House furniture caused the greatest furore. In response to trades' pressure, the town council had included in the furnishing and plumbing contracts for the new Court House a clause guaranteeing the use of only locally made work.² When it was discovered that the plumbing contract had been given to a Scottish firm, and that many of the large city establishments supplying the furniture had evaded the local manufacture clause, the United Trades, the Plumbers' Society and the Cabinetmakers' Society were up in arms. The plumbers failed to gain any satisfaction, but the cabinet makers placed pickets on the Court House to watch all furniture deliveries, and they pressed the corporation so hard that they secured the removal of all imported furniture from the building, and the substitution of locally made items.³

Trades and town council parted on fairly good terms on this occasion, mainly because the responsibility for importation lay with the architect and contractors and not with the council.⁴ But in 1896

1. CE, 28 Sept., 1888; 19 Aug., 11 Nov., 1892; 2, 9 Mar., 1894.

2. CE, 30 Mar., 25 May, 20 July, 1894; 26 July, 1895.

3. CE, 14 Sept., 1894; 8 Mar., 5, 13 Sept., 1895.

4. CE, 4 Sept., 1894.

the onus was transferred to the town council when the mayor, John Scott, regarded hitherto as a friend to local manufacture, refused to fulfil his predecessor's undertaking to sign Court House contract cheques only for locally made furniture. He added insult to injury when he gave a protesting carpenters' deputation a very curt reception.¹

Together with the issues of importation and the failure to set up building works, the question of unfair labour adversely affected the trades' relations with the town council. Since the mid-1860s the local Poor Law Board had given its printing contracts to houses employing society men,² but the town council and Cork Harbour Board frequently allowed employment of unfair labour, particularly in painting and building contracts.³ By the early 'nineties the United Trades Association was pushing for the inclusion of a fair labour clause in public board contracts.⁴ The tailors were among the trades most affected by this issue, for there were extensive clothing contracts for the corporation, the Poor Law Union and the Cork Lunatic Asylum. Trades' pressure, exerted mainly through the meetings of the United Trades Association and through the efforts of the United Trades' member, Eugene Crean, who had sat as a Home Ruler town councillor since 1886, bore fruit in 1894-96, when the Asylum and Poor Law clothing contracts were given to fair houses.⁵ But in 1897

1. CE, 15 Mar., 1895; 10 Jan., 15, 16, 22 May, 1896.

2. CE, 24 Sept., 1897.

3. CE, 23, 24 Mar., 1886; 28 Sept., 1888.

4. CE, 2 Dec., 1892.

5. CE, 25 May, 1894; 21 Aug., 10 Sept., 1896.

the corporation contract went to the lowest tender - a non-union employer. The trades were furious. Their dignity had been offended by the corporation's failure to wait the arrival of their deputation before signing the contract, and the mayor's support for the 'unfair' contract on economy grounds only aggravated the trades' indignation. Though a majority of the Cork corporation eventually voted in favour of a fair labour clause, contracts for clothing and footwear continued to go, as late as 1898, to contractors who avoided the fair labour clause.¹ Since the early 'eighties the United Trades Association had been trying to build up its influence in municipal politics, and not without a certain degree of success. At the local elections of 1881 and 1883 the association used its influence to defeat one candidate hostile to the trades and to secure the election of one favourable to their interests.² But up to the mid-'eighties the trades did not make any call for a change in the social composition of the town council, concentrating instead on securing the election of parties who, though favourable to the trades, belonged to the political divisions and social classes which had traditionally dominated the council. But the trade depression of the mid-'eighties and the sitting town council's failure to deal with unemployment prompted the trades to question the relevance of the established town council to the needs of skilled labour. When in 1886 the corporation refused to pay the building trades working on corporation contracts extra wages for Saturday work, some United Trades delegates proposed

1. CE, 27 Aug., 24 Sept., 1, 15 Oct., 1897; 14 Nov., 1898.

2. CE, 19, 23 Nov., 1881; 13 July, 1883.

that a deputation wait on the corporation to settle the matter. But others, weary of such ineffective means of redress and becoming increasingly inimical towards the town council, made their dissatisfaction clear, one man exclaiming:

I tell you what it is, the way we are treated /by the town council/ will make Socialists of us soon ... /by/ going after the Lord Mayor's Carriage.¹

The town councillors singled out for most criticism by the trades were the master bakers, the greatest offenders in employing unfair labour.² Consequently the trade societies most vocal in demanding United Trades' intervention in municipal elections were the bakers and tailors, the two trades most affected by the incursions of unfair labour. They were instrumental in pressing the United Trades to oppose John Twomey, a master baker employing non-union men, when he stood for the North West Ward in 1892. Twomey was elected by a small majority but nine months later the United Trades were more successful in securing the defeat of another master baker employing unfair labour, James Fitzgibbon of the South Ward.³ Again in 1894, in answer to calls from the Tailors' Society, the United Trades successfully opposed two municipal candidates who had opposed the tailors' in the strike of 1893, and when one of these men stood in a different ward in 1896 the United Trades renewed its campaign against him.⁴

Though the influence of the trades in municipal politics was obviously considerable, enabling them to secure the defeat or election of a candidate, it is not known how many members of the trades were

1. CE, 21 Oct., 1886.
2. CE, 21, 28 Oct., 25 Nov., 1886.
3. CE, 5, 6, 13 Feb., 18 Nov., 2 Dec., 1892.
4. CE, 16 Oct., 30 Nov., 1894; 21 Nov., 1896.

themselves municipal electors. Their influence was apparently exerted less in the polling booths than through deputations to prominent individuals who possessed the municipal franchise,¹ and whose voting behaviour was likely to influence that of less prominent voters. But the trades' influence in municipal politics was far less powerful than that of the main nationalist political organization of the day - the National League, successor of the Land League, and a body between which and the trades there was little sympathy.² The trades, in dealing with candidates for municipal office, were no respecters of political loyalties. Though the United Trades was largely a pro-nationalist body, most of the municipal candidates it opposed were themselves nationalists. Following the Parnellite split of 1890 the trades continued to ignore the political issue when municipal elections were in question, opposing Parnellites and Nationalists alike when the individual candidates' activities failed to meet with trades' approval.³ Yet the only town councillor who acted on the trades' behalf in the council, himself a member of the United Trades, was elected less through trades' influence than through that of the local National League. This was Eugene Crean, carpenter, elected to the town council in 1886.⁴ Crean acted as the trades' spokesman and watchdog on the council, pressing for the establishment of public building works, and campaigning for a fair labour clause in the contracts

1. CE, 30 Nov., 1894.

2. See above, pp. 394-402.

3. CE, 30 Nov., 1894. In the case of the two candidates opposed by the United Trades on account of their hostility towards the striking tailors, one was a Nationalist and the other a Parnellite.

4. CE, 22 Oct., 1886.

of the local public boards.¹ He had but limited success, and in 1887 complained that 'the members of the /town council/ cared no more for his opinion than they did for that of a common donkey boy'.² But Crean's role as trades' spokesman continued. Even when he sided with the anti-Parnellites in the split of 1890³ and was in consequence removed from his position as president of the United Trades,⁴ the trades continued to regard him as their voice in the town council. By 1897, when the trades had begun to articulate their demands for a fair labour clause in corporation contracts, and for the assimilation of the parliamentary and municipal franchises, Crean was the one to bring these motions forward in the town council,⁵ and in 1897 he led the narrow majority of councillors who pledged support for the measures.⁶

The Municipal Election of 1899

In early 1898 the move towards labour representation on the town council accelerated, when the local government act threw open to popular election most of the public bodies hitherto elected on a restricted franchise. Belfast and Dublin had already been active in the field for some years, pressing for labour representation on local councils. The Belfast Trades Council had, in 1892, created a parliamentary and municipal election fund, and in 1897 elected the

1. CE, 17 Feb., 1887; 9 May, 1890; 2 Dec., 1892.

2. CE, 17 Feb., 1887.

3. CE, 10 Dec., 1890; 28 Jan., 1892.

4. CE, 16 Jan, 1891; see above, pp. 412-14.

5. CE, 24 Sept., 1897.

6. CE, 1, 15 Oct., 1897.

first labour group to the city's corporation. Moreover, since 1892 the city had its own local labour party which affiliated in 1893 with the newly-formed Independent Labour Party which later formed branches in Dublin and Waterford. In Dublin the Trades Council formed its own labour electoral association in 1895, and put forward labour candidates to the city council in 1895 and 1896, but both men were defeated.¹ Cork was far behind these developments. Though the local United Trades Association had been represented since 1886 on the town council by Eugene Crean, his position was not that of a labour representative proper, but a pro-trades nationalist councillor. Moreover Cork had no branch of the Independent Labour Party. Its labour organizations were inward-looking and lacking in enthusiasm for any broadly-based labour movement, as evident in their lack of interest in the Trades Union Congress. The local trades' wish for labour representation on the town council, though no doubt influenced by the advances of the Dublin and Belfast trades, was more immediately caused by their resentment against the local town council's ineffectiveness in promoting trade interests. In April 1898 the United Trades Association, in response to the urging of the Parliamentary Committee of the Irish Trades Congress, agreed in principle to work for labour representation on the reformed town council and to recoup elected labour representatives for any financial loss incurred by them in the discharge of their duties. To this end, it was agreed that each affiliated trade society should pay towards the Trades' Congress fund the sum of ten shillings for each one-hundred members in their society.² By the time the municipal elections under the

1. Arthur Mitchell, op. cit., p. 18.

2. CE, 23 Apr., 1898.

reformed system came around, the United Trades' enthusiasm to enter the contest had been sharpened by further controversy with the sitting town council. This confrontation concerned the town council's failure to provide the public swimming baths for which the trades had long been calling, and the council's refusal to give financial aid to the city's musical bands, whose membership was largely drawn from among the trades and working classes. The council's lack of interest in the swimming baths and bands projects was interpreted by the United Trades as an instance of the council's middle-class bias, and the trades contrasted their disinterest in the bands with their recent generous grant to the middle-class patronized School of Music.¹

When the Cork labour candidates entered the contest, their canvas was based not on any abstract ideas of the rights of labour, but on the practical issues which had caused friction between the trades and the town council since the early 1880s. High on that list came the town council's failure to adopt the fair labour clause in its contracts and to provide employment on public works for the building trades and the labouring classes.² Equally important on the labour canvas was the town council's recent rejection, by a majority of one, of the motion to have council sittings changed from afternoon to night, to facilitate the attendance of working men. The call for night sittings had been strongly urged by the United Trades as well as by the trades councils of other cities and its rejection was a major disappointment.³

1. CE, 17 June, 23, 30 July, 8 Oct., 1898.

2. CE, 14 Nov., 5 Dec., 1898.

3. Boyle, Rise of Irish Labour Movement, pp. 188-91; CE, 14 Nov., 10 Dec., 1898; Workers' Republic, 3 Sept., p. 4; 17 Sept., p. 1, 1898.

At the same time, the trades condemned the low wage rates paid to corporation labourers - a rate two to three shillings per week lower than the city standard - and condemned the corporation's failure to deal with the housing and sanitation problems of the working class areas of the city.¹

The issue of working class housing had not assumed any public importance in Cork city until the 1870s, though overcrowding had long been a serious problem. In the early 1830s, the efforts of the local Irish manufacture movement and the series of government enquiries into the state of the Irish poor had first publicized the squalid living conditions of the city's lower classes. In 1830, witnesses before the Select Committee on the State of the Poor in Ireland claimed that urban distress in Cork was greatly aggravated by the influx of evicted rural tenants who rented corners of rooms in suburban cabins:

The misery of the lower orders in the towns is worse than in any of the towns in England; I speak of Waterford and Cork particularly I think there is a great deal more misery in Cork than in any large town in Ireland ...²

A few years later, Jonathon Binns, a visitor to the city, elaborated on this theme:

Cork now resembles a modern English city ... /It/ is not without that which every Irish town possesses - its numerous company of wretched cabins; but unlike the rest of Irish towns, which generally have these miserable dwellings in the suburbs, Cork has collected them in the very centre of her populous community, but in a part through which there is no very public thoroughfare; and it is quite possible that a stranger, unless in search of the abodes of the poor, might miss them altogether, and leave Cork with an impression that it contained proportionably /sic/ a smaller share of misery than other

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1. CE, 14, 28 Nov., 1, 5 Dec., 1898; Workers' Republic, 17 Sept., 1898, p. 1.
 2. Report of the Select Committee on the State of the Poor in Ireland, PP, 1830, vii (667), pp. 4, 668, 707.

places. Nay, a person might reside here for months, and even years, without suspecting that Cork was not, in every part, a peculiarly neat, comfortable and prosperous city. I, however, forced myself among these narrow, filthy streets, and equally filthy habitations, the broken windows and doors of which, together with a variety of other infallible evidences of wretchedness and destitution, too plainly informed me that Cork, though she made less display of her miseries than some towns which I had visited, was far from being exempt from the appalling horrors of poverty.¹

The suburban cabins were generally occupied by labourers at an annual rent of forty shillings, while the city-centre tenement rooms were taken by artisans at weekly rents from a shilling to one-and-sixpence, two families frequently living in one room and sharing the rent.²

In the mid-1830s some 34% of the city's population were described as 'poor', a classification which included a figure of 7% 'utterly destitute'.³ The following table shows the regional distribution of poverty within Cork city in the early '30s.

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1. Jonathon Binns, The Miseries and Beauties of Ireland (London, 1837), Vol. II, pp. 146-7.
 2. Royal Commission on the State of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, App. C, First Report, pp. 24-5, 28.
 3. Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, First Report, App. C, p. 88. The term destitution was defined by the Dean of Limerick as follows:

'By destitution I mean that they don't know where they will get their breakfast or their dinner. I believe they do not die of actual starvation, but they die of complaints produced by bad feeding ... The accommodation of their dwellings is horrible, they are worse a thousand times than any of the cabins in the country; they have not a sod of turf to warm them, nor even a straw to lie upon'.

TABLE 43¹

Parochial Distribution of Poverty in Cork City, 1832

| Parish | Total Population | % Destitute | % Distressed | % comfortably situated |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| St Anne Shandon | 18,475 | 5 | 28 | 67 |
| St Nicholas | 17,642 | 11 | 32 | 57 |
| St Finbar | 14,522 | 7 | 22 | 71 |
| St Mary Shandon | 13,357 | 16 | 40 | 44 |
| Holy Trinity | 9,567 | 4 | 13 | 83 |
| St Peter | 7,943 | 8 | 24 | 68 |
| St Paul | 5,028 | 9 | 9 | 82 |
| CITY TOTAL | 86,534 | 7 | 27 | 66 |

The greatest poverty prevailed in the 'narrow filthy streets' described by Jonathon Binns - crowded lanes and alleys which had apparently not improved in cleanliness or spaciousness as late as the 1870s,² and in which the houses accommodated up to eighty individuals each, sometimes as many as eleven persons inhabiting a single room measuring eight feet square.³ Moreover, as the Cork Town Clerk informed the Municipal Commissioners in 1833, the inhabitants of the fever-ridden lanes were

not the vicious nor the paupers of the city, nor the casual vagrants from other places. They are the lower orders of the resident industrious tradesmen and labourers - persons who willingly use all their efforts to gain a livelihood, and submit to any privations, however great, rather than become beggars in our streets.⁴

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1. *ibid.*, p. 24.
 2. *CSORP*, 1870: 16,317. During the riots accompanying the tailors' strike of 1870, the police were attacked by the mobs which sallied forth from the lanes and alleys 'which honeycomb the centre of the city', lanes which were not demolished until the 1930s.
 3. *CMC*, 4, 11, 23 Jan., 1832; *CC*, 28 Nov., 1833; M.V, Conlon, 'The Census of the Parish of Saint Mary Shandon, Cork (circa 1830)', in *J.C.H.A.S.*, xlix, 1944, pp. 10-18.
 4. *CC*, 28 Nov., 1833.

From the mid-century feeble attempts were made to alleviate the housing problem in the city. The Cork Local Improvement Act of 1853 enabled the corporation to build new streets and provide a certain amount of working class accommodation,¹ but nothing further was done during the next two decades. The Labouring Classes Lodging Houses and Dwellings Act (Ireland) of 1866, which made provision for local authority purchase of building land and the erection of dwellings for the labouring classes was a dead letter in Cork.² In the mid-seventies the act known as Crosses' Act settled a housing scheme for Cork,³ and the Public Health Act of 1878 made provision for the clearance of slums and the provision of adequate sanitary facilities in the city.⁴

Acting under the acts of 1875 and 1878 the Cork corporation launched in the late 'seventies a campaign of slum clearance in the face of bitter opposition from slum landlords and tenants alike.⁵ Initially, 107 houses were demolished, followed within two years by a further four-hundred.⁶ By 1897 well over one-thousand houses had been demolished in the city, a great number of them being in the highly populated North-West Ward which comprised the parishes of St.

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1. Third Report of His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, PP, 1884-5, xxxi /C - 4547/, Qs 23,624.
 2. ibid., p. iv.
 3. CE, 23 Oct., 1877. Enid Gauldie, Cruel Habitations: A History of Working Class Housing, 1780-1918 (London, 1974), pp. 267-76.
 4. Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, p. iv.
 5. CE, 2, 21 Mar., 1878.
 6. Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, Qs 23,645.

Mary Shandon and St. Anne Shandon. In the decade between 1881 and 1891, of the 1,726 houses demolished in the city, 689 were in the North West Ward.¹

The main housing advances were made not by the corporation but by private enterprise. The land made available by the slum clearances was let to the Improved Dwellings Company, a group set up in 1870 as a profit-making enterprise to provide housing for the working classes. This company made considerable progress. Already by 1875 fifty-four families had been housed,² by 1879 250 houses had been built, and by 1884 the company had built 419 houses.³

The corporation directly entered the housing scheme in the late 1880s. Their demolition scheme far outpaced their building achievements, and by 1901 only 318 houses had been completed.⁴ The overcrowding situation was only aggravated by their efforts, for no provision was made to rehouse the families evicted during the clearances. The only recourse of these displaced persons was to move into other already overcrowded tenements, thus causing an even greater overcrowding problem.⁵ The delay in providing housing was due, the corporation claimed, to the peculiar legal difficulties involved in buying out leases and freeholds in Cork, and to the exorbitant sums demanded by the ground landlords of the building land.⁶

1. CE, 27 Mar., 1897.

2. CE, 23 Jan., 1875.

3. CE, 18 July, 1879; Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes, Qs 23,658-62.

4. CE, 10 Nov., 1890; Boyle, Rise of the Irish Labour Movement, p. 77; Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, Qs 23,763-82.

5. *ibid.*, Qs 23,645.

6. Boyle, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

By the early 'eighties, though the housing conditions of the poorer classes in the city had improved since the early decades of the century, overcrowding was still serious. Over 22,000 individuals or 27% of the population occupied tenement accommodation, with an average of 3.5 families to each house and an average of two individuals to each room. This was a slightly better situation than in Dublin, where 59% of families lived in tenement accommodation, averaging 4.4 families to each house.¹ In Cork, rent for one or two rooms in the large ten to twelve room tenement houses on the flat of the city was between ninepence and a shilling per week, while the suburban cabins, still surviving since the 1830s, fetched similar rents.²

Neither the houses of the Improved Dwellings Company nor those erected by the corporation adequately met the overcrowding problem, for they accommodated a higher income group than that evicted during the slum clearances. This was partly because rents for such houses were far higher than those charged for tenement rooms. the rents of the Improved Dwellings Company houses varying from three shillings to three-and-sixpence a week and those of the corporation averaging one shilling and sixpence while a tenement room cost less than a shilling.³ The disparity between tenement and corporation house rents was not great, but the exclusion of lower income groups from the new housing was due less to financial than to social considerations. The planners

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1. Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, pp. v-vii; Qs 23,557-62.
 2. ibid., Qs 23,564-71, 23,625, 23,713; Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Local Government and Taxation of Towns, Ireland; PP, 1877 (357), xii, Qs 2,936, 2,991.
 3. CE, 18 July, 1879; 10 Nov., 1890; Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, Qs 23,713.

of both private and corporation housing schemes preferred a higher class of tenant than those cleared from the tenements. This was most evident in the case of the Improved Dwellings Company which openly expressed preference for 'respectable artisans and working people', sought in its tenants the virtues of sobriety and industry, and, as its chairman pointed out, combined its profit making objective with a drive for social reform:

Our company is one in which no prudent man need hesitate to put his money. But in addition to the consideration of a man getting a fair return for his money, it is the duty of every person resident in a community to do as much good to his neighbour as he possibly can, without doing any harm to himself. Now, how can a man do more good in a large city like this than by raising the self-respect of the poorer classes, and how can he accomplish that better than by providing for them decent dwellings?¹

Similarly, the corporation houses which had initially been intended for labourers, were soon taken over by 'a class of tenants far above that for which they were intended'. Of the seventy-five tenants accommodated in Madden's Buildings in Blackpool, only eleven were labourers, the majority being 'clerks, insurance agents, painters, coopers, railway porters, dressmakers, stokers, carmen, a linesman, a goodsguard, a barman, a teacher, a carpenter, a blacksmith, and so on ...'.² The overcrowding problem survived the century, though less serious by 1900 than it had been twenty years beforehand. By 1901 some 10.62% of the total number of families in the city lived in one-roomed tenements, whereas in the early 'eighties the proportion had been 28%. But even in 1901 the density of overcrowding was very

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1. CE, 23 Jan., 1875; Third Report ... Housing of the Working Classes in Ireland, pp. viii-ix.
 2. CE, 10 Nov., 1890; 27 Mar., 1897.

serious among the poorest classes of the city, and over 1.34% of the population lived five or more to a room in conditions not very different from those which had prevailed in the 1830s.¹

The labour candidates' use of the housing issue in their anti-town council canvas in 1898 was decidedly opportunist. The organized trades had never before concerned themselves with the housing issue which had been conspicuous by its absence for discussions at United Trades meetings, while other issues like importation, fair wages and fair labour had dominated the proceedings. Apart from one isolated instance in 1877 when the trades called on the corporation to enforce Crosses' Act by starting a housing scheme for Cork,² the housing issue was not mentioned. When the trades next resurrected the question in 1886 their motive was to foster employment in the building trade and not to better the living conditions of the working classes in general.³ The housing issue was then forgotten by the trades for another ten years, and brought forward again only when labour representation on the town council was about to become a reality. The trades' spokesmen suddenly took up the housing question with enthusiasm, denouncing the town council's delay in settling housing schemes, and asserting that the members of the council - 'that pack of jobbers' - delayed the scheme because they were themselves slum landlords, fearful that further slum clearance and rehousing would cost them their rents. Even those houses built by the town council on the outskirts of the city were severely criticized by the trades' spokesmen. The houses

1. Boyle, Rise of the Irish Labour Movement, pp. 59-60.

2. CE, 23 Oct., 1877.

3. CE, 12 Feb., 1886.

were too small - mere 'bandboxes', the rents were too high, and the houses were too far from the work places in the city centre (the distance was, in reality, little over a mile).¹

The housing issue was indeed a serious one in Cork, but the trades' sudden use of the question simply as an election canvas, following years of silence on the matter, indicated that it was not one of the major concerns of organized labour. Certainly many artisans and labourers lived in squalid tenement conditions, but the trades' silence on the housing issue suggests that the most vocal representatives of the trades were perhaps themselves an elite, well-housed and ignorant of the squalid living conditions of the poorer classes. This is suggested by the fact that all the labour candidates in the 1899 election, their proposers and seconders, had relatively 'respectable' addresses; only one lived in a back lane, and even this was not one of the slum lanes of the city. On the other hand, there is no indication whether the parties in question rented an entire house or were merely lodgers in one or more rooms.²

Moreover, post-election speeches by the labour candidates, as well as those by other parties, suggested that the city-centre house to house canvas had been to all parties a frightening revelation of the extent of hidden poverty in Cork. In the North-West Ward, where the toll of demolition had been highest and where the labour candidates

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1. CE, 27 Mar., 1897; 17 June, 28 Nov., 1898; Workers' Republic, 3 Sept., 1898.
 2. CE, 6 Jan., 1899. The distribution of candidates, their proposers and seconders was as follows: Evergreen Street, 4; Friar Street, Walsh's Square, Drawbridge Street, Fair Lane, Ballyhooley Road, Mary Street, 2 each; Cove Street, Magazine Road, Nile Street, Bachelors' Quay, Commons' Road, Blarney Street, Lloyd's Lane, Grattan Street, Maylor Street, 1 each. The only address qualifying as a back lane was Lloyd's Lane.

got their greatest support, candidates admitted that

they never saw anything so disgraceful as the condition of some of the houses of the poor ...hovels, out of which rich people are drawing high rents ...¹

When the time came to choose labour candidates to contest the election, the choice of candidates lay ultimately with the individual trade societies. Each candidate had to be nominated by his own trade, and the Cork United Trades Association, like the trades councils of Dublin and Belfast, had no direct part in the selection of candidates.² But the unskilled labouring sector was unrepresented in the election. Of the nineteen individuals put forward by fourteen trade societies, seventeen were members of the skilled trades. Even the two exceptions were not strictly unskilled labourers; they were members of the hackney car owners' society, a body affiliated to the United Trades at an unknown date in the late 'nineties. Of the skilled trades, the carpenters, smiths and bakers each put forward two candidates, while one candidate came from each of the societies of bootmakers, coachmakers, cabinet-makers, plumbers, plasterers, printers, stonecutters and tailors. The coopers and painters were in a strange position, the coopers being represented by the strongly pro-Fenian master cooper, Cornelius P. O'Sullivan, while the painters put forward both a journeyman and a master.³

While deliberately avoiding the political involvements of pro- and anti-Parnellism, the labour candidates took care to re-assert their commitment to nationalism. Their opposition, they stressed, was not

1. CE, 18 Jan., 1899.

2. Arthur Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

3. CE, 18 Jan., 1899; PP, 1899, xcii (493), pp. 204-5.

to nationalism per se, but to the type of 'feather-bed nationalists', the 'scoundrels and hypocrites' produced by the town council.¹ Yet most labour candidates did on the hustings assert their commitment to nationalism,² and one candidate in the North East Ward made his nationalistic sympathies clear by addressing his audience from the house of the Fenian Brian Dillon, while a green flag floated above him on a '98 pike.³

The entry of the trades into the field of municipal politics was viewed with considerable concern by other parties, and in particular by some business interests in the city. In the name of the ratepayers, this group, on the premise that labour was about to secure direct representation on the town council, organized itself to secure equal representation for the city business interests and employers.⁴ Though this group, which called itself the Commercial Group, claimed that it included some of the best employers in the country in its ranks, it was seen by the labour candidates as a direct counter-movement to the labour case. It was

an attempt to crush the working classes, from whom directly or indirectly they earn their livelihood...⁵

Yet, in spite of their mutual hostility, the labour group and the Commercial Group had one element in common. They had both abandoned the traditional political alignments of the day in favour of an alignment based on social and occupational elements. Thus, while the labour ranks included Parnellites and anti-Parnellites, the

1. CE, 17 Sept., 1 Dec., 1898; Workers' Republic, 17 Sept., 1898, p. 1.

2. CE, 12 Dec., 1898.

3. CE, 1, 5 Dec., 1898.

4. CE, 19, 21 Dec., 1898.

5. CE, 20 Dec., 1898.

Commercial Group included nationalists and Unionists. Of the Commercial candidates, three were nationalists and four were Unionists,¹ while professionally five were merchants, one was an accountant and one a land agent. In their occupational background the Commercial candidates had more in common with the Nationalist, Parnellite and Unionist groups than with the labour candidates, as Table 44 shows:

TABLE 44²

Occupations of all Candidates contesting the Cork municipal election,
1899

| | Nat. | Parnell. | Unionist. | Comm. | Lbr. | Indep. | Total |
|-----------------------|------|----------|-----------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| Merchants | 11 | 16 | 10 | 5 | | 2 | 44 |
| Manufacturers | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Master tradesmen | 9 | 3 | | | 1 | | 13 |
| Journeyman | 2 | | | | 17 | | 19 |
| Vintners | 2 | 3 | | | | | 5 |
| Shopkeepers | 5 | 6 | 1 | | | | 12 |
| Legal, professions | 4 | 6 | 3 | 2 | | 1 | 16 |
| Gentlemen | 5 | | 1 | | | | 6 |
| Others | 4 | 3 | | | 2 | | 9 |
| TOTAL | 43 | 37 | 15 | 7 | 20 | 3 | 125 |

Of the twenty candidates put forward on the labour ticket, nine were elected - a 45% success rate. Though their entry into the council was a development of major importance in the labour history of the city, it did not greatly alter the social composition of the municipal government of Cork. The absence of any revolutionary change in that body was evident in the anti-labour Cork Constitution's summing up of

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1. CE, 6 Jan., 1899.
 2. CE, 15 Dec., 1898; 6 Jan., 1899.

the effects of the election:

So far as the future government of the urban communities is concerned, there is no reason to feel in any way dissatisfied at the manner in which the enfranchised masses have exercised the franchise. In the City of Limerick, and in some of the country towns in the South of Ireland, there is, it is true, a good deal of room left for improvement ... /In those places/ labour was returned to/ the exclusion of the representatives of other classes in the community, and the exclusion, moreover, of the men of education and business capacity, and those who are well-versed in public affairs ... /In Cork, however/ ... the electorate have exercised a wise discrimination, and one which redounds very much to their credit ... Among those who sought re-election several of the best administrators have been retained in the public service, while of the new members several will help to decidedly strengthen the business capacity of the Council. Some have not received the recognition we would have desired, and a little of the new blood introduced could well have been spared, but, all things considered, there is no very serious ground for grumbling.¹

There was, in fact, very little difference between the social composition of the reformed town council of 1899 and the first council elected under the Municipal Reform Act of 1840, as Table 45, based on ten-yearly checks of the town council membership between 1840 and 1899 suggests:

TABLE 45²

Social Composition of the Cork Town Council, 1840-1899

| | 1841 | 1853 | 1863 | 1871 | 1883 | 1891 | 1898 | 1899 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Merchants | 23 | 23 | 23 | 25 | 22 | 17 | 29 | 24 |
| Manufacturers | 16 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Master trades | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Journeyman | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Vintners | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Shopkeepers | 10 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 5 |
| Legal, professions | 6 | 13 | 14 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| Gentlemen | 4 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 4 | 5 |
| Others | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Unidentified | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

1. CC, 18 Jan., 1899.

2. Information in table taken from newspapers and trade directories, 1840-1900. The council membership was cut from 64 to 56 in 1852.

By the end of the nineteenth century merchants still dominated the Cork town council, and though the proportion of retailers had fallen by some fifty percent since 1841, it had remained almost constant since the 1850s, while the proportion of master tradesmen, gentlemen, legal and professional men remained fairly constant since the 1850s. The greatest difference between the social make-up of the council of 1841 and that of 1899 was in the class of large manufacturers. By 1899 this sector had fallen to zero, but the decline had already been evident in the 1850s and '60s, thus reflecting the general stagnation of manufacturing industry in Cork in the nineteenth century.

The major change in the Cork town council in 1899 was the injection of the labour element. Though this did little to change the social tone of the council, it was nonetheless a sign that social and political change was afoot. Moreover, the geographical distribution of labour support within the city was an interesting illustration of class distribution among the Cork urban wards in the late 'nineties. Table 46 shows the number of seats won by each party in each of the city wards.

TABLE 46¹

Number of seats secured by each party in each of the Cork City Wards,
Municipal Election, 1899

| | North Centre Ward | Centre Ward | North East Ward | North West Ward | South Ward | South Centre Ward | West Ward | Total |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Nationalist | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 18 |
| Parnellite | 5 | 4 | - | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 18 |
| Unionist | - | - | 2 | - | - | 3 | - | 5 |
| Labour | 1 | - | - | 4 | - | - | 4 | 9 |
| Commercial | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | - | 5 |
| Independent | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| TOTAL | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 56 |

1. CC, 18 Jan., 1899.

The greatest support for labour came, predictably, from the predominantly working class areas of the North West and West Wards, in each of which half the seats were secured by the labour candidates. In the North Ward labour won one seat. Equally revealing was the placing of labour in the poll in the city wards. In the North Centre Labour had come seventh in a poll for sixteen candidates, but in both the North West and the West Wards labour secured the first four places on the poll with, in addition, the twenty-first place in the West Ward poll. In the other four wards, labour was placed between fourteenth and nineteenth on the poll - a level far below that required for election to a seat on the council.

The geographical distribution of labour support in the 1899 election was significant, for the northern wards from which the new working class voters came were the same localities which, throughout the century, had produced workingman activists in the economic and political spheres. The Irish manufacture movements of 1832 and 1841 had originated in the working class northern parts of the city, as had the most enthusiastic Repeal fervour of the mid-forties and the support for John Mitchel in the election of 1874. This correlation between geographical location on the one hand and economic and political on the other was no accident. The working class areas of the city were the areas most affected by economic distress, bad housing, and social and labour disaffection. In such areas the political panacea - whether it was Repeal, Home Rule or separatism - was firmly believed in. In fact, it was probably more widely believed in than the more immediate measure of trade unionisation, for to socially distressed and politically immature people it promised more than did the narrow and elitist unionism

favoured by the organized Cork artisans. Trade unionism merely narrowed the labour market in favour of the organized working men, but it excluded the most needy of the working class - the unskilled general labourer, the female outworker and the despised country-born immigrant tradesman. The promises of nationalism held something for each of these.

Such nationalism was, at base, economic. Trade unionism, too, was economically motivated. The two movements, though not always in harmony, were really reflections of each other. For the individual skilled workingman, trade unionism was the more practical movement of the two, yet most working men in nineteenth century Cork retained their predilection for nationalist politics even when trade interests would have been better served by political neutrality. The municipal election of 1899 saw one of the first fairly successful attempts to run national and socio-economic politics in Cork on parallel rather than interwoven lines.

CONCLUSION

Trade union history in Cork, as elsewhere, was not simply a tale of conflict between men and employers, nor of progressive consolidation of a unified labour movement in the face of capitalist opposition. Within individual trade unions the enforcement of internal discipline was at least as great a problem as the disputes with employers. The weekly meetings of local trade societies were periodically enlivened by fist fights over real or supposed maladministration of funds or because of members' refusal to pay their union dues. In the 1890s both the plasterers' and coopers' societies split because of disputes about the payment of benefit. The coopers' dispute was particularly dramatic, the rebels from the society repeatedly breaking into the society rooms, wrecking the furniture, and threatening to tear up the union's books and banner.¹

Even where such disputes did not actually fragment the society concerned, they greatly upset internal harmony. Such disputes reveal, in fact, that no trade society was a unified whole, but comprised the employees of several different business concerns, between whom there could be decided rivalry and friction. Indeed, it seems that the basic unit of skilled artisan society was not the trade union but the individual workshop. The coopers' society, for example, had a constant struggle to enforce society rules in its constituent workshops. It waged a five-year struggle with the members in Murphy's brewery over the non-payment of union dues, and similar confrontations occurred between the society committee and the men in Arnott's and

1. See above, p. 362; Coopers' Minute Book, 29 Nov., 1892; CE, 28 Aug., 26 Sept., 1893; Belinda Loftus, Marching Workers (Arts Councils of Ireland, 1978), p. 1.

Beamish and Crawford's breweries and those in certain master coopers' shops.¹ In the printers' society there was apparently less conflict between the society committee and the constituent printing offices, but the traditional system of the 'chapel' predominated, leaving a considerable degree of autonomy in the hands of the individual offices. All matters of importance were voted on in the chapels and the general committee of the society was drawn from the chapel membership, just as the coopers' committee was composed of representatives from the breweries, distilleries, provision stores and the principal coopers' shops in the city.²

Nineteenth century Cork trade unionism was weakened by the internal disputes in trade societies and by the tendency for ex-unionists to cast aside all the principles of unionism once they attained the rank of small masters.³ Yet the strength of trade unionism among the skilled trades of the city certainly grew during the course of the century. It is impossible to calculate the total number of unionized artisans in the city up to the 1890s, but by that time the United Trades Association, which included in its ranks all the unions of the city, claimed a membership of 4,000 men, of whom some 2,000 were skilled artisans.⁴ This means that approximately seven out of every ten skilled men in the city were unionized by the late 1890s. But

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1. Coopers' Minute Book, 19, 25 Jan., 1883; 30 Sept., 1886; 8 Aug., 1888; 30 May, 1889; 19 June, 1895; 17 Feb., 6, 15 July, 1896.
 2. Cork Typographical Society Minute Book, 21 Apr., 1888; 17 Dec., 1891; 23 Apr., 1892; 25 Feb., 1893; 1, 8 June, 1895; Coopers' Minute Book, 1 Feb., 13 Apr., 1886; 18 Jan., 1898; 26 Jan., 1899.
 3. CE, 19 Jan., 1855; 5 Jan., 1882.
 4. Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws, PP, 1898 (C. 8980), xxxviii, Vol. vii, Qs 65,882-4.

among the unskilled the level of unionization was much lower. Perhaps as few as three in every ten unskilled men were unionized by 1900.¹ Moreover, many of the unionized men of this class were not strictly unskilled, for as dockers, pork butchers, and sailors, they had a considerable degree of expertise and strength which marked them off from the unskilled general labourer. The one major attempt by the South of Ireland Labour Union to organize the unskilled general labourers of the city had been defeated, not only by employer opposition but by the determined hostility of the organized skilled trades.² This antipathy of the skilled towards the unskilled was a major weakness in the Cork labour movement. By 1900, it is true, many railway men, gas workers, and shop assistants had been drawn into trade unionism,³ but it was not until the formation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in the first decade of the twentieth century that the majority of unskilled men were effectively organized. Taking the Cork working class as a whole - artisans, labourers, shopmen and general workers - hardly one in three had been unionized by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1899, one unskilled worker, viewing the apparently unified effort to have labour

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1. Census for Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1901; The working population of Cork by 1901, including skilled and unskilled men, was c. 12,000, while the United Trades Association numbered c. 4,000 men.
 2. See above, pp. 292; 382-83.
 3. See above, pp. 284-304. The exact date of the introduction of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers and the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks to Cork is not known. But the former union was organized in the city by 1890 when the gasworkers marched as a unit in the Mathew Centenary of that year. The shop assistants' union was in existence by 1900, when its vice-president shocked the local trades by advocating socialism. CE, 11 Oct., 1890; William O'Brien Papers, Ms. 15,700, Minute Book of the Irish Republican and Socialist Party, 6 Mar., 1900.

representatives returned on the reformed town council, rejoiced that

the time for certain tradesmen considering themselves superior to the labourer was now gone, and labourer and tradesman would in future work unitedly for the advancement of their interests.¹

But such optimism was hardly warranted, for the organized skilled trades generally maintained their opposition towards broad labour movements. The great gas workers' strike in the city in 1901 was settled by the local trades' council in a manner most unacceptable to the Gas Workers' Union, and the trades council remained adamantly opposed to the establishment of a socialist body in the city in the early 1900s.²

Yet Cork trade unionism had gradually been opening out towards the influence of English unionism since at least as early as the 1830s. Some of the amalgamated unions establishing themselves in the city at that time had withered away, but others had rooted themselves firmly and had maintained or even increased their local membership during the course of the century.³ From 1880 onwards the progress of amalgamation accelerated, reaching its peak in the mid-1890s, so that by 1895 over 70% of all unionized men in Cork belonged to English-based unions,⁴ and in 1893 the Cork Examiner remarked:⁵

One of the most remarkable developments in recent political history is the growth of sympathy between working men of the two countries /i.e. Ireland and Britain/ ... The Quay labourer in Cork or Waterford, in Belfast or in Dublin, has today a keener personal interest in the fate of the work men in Bristol or in Hull than their fathers had in the affairs of the neighbouring county.

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1. CE, 16 Jan., 1899.
 2. William O'Brien Papers, Minute Book of the IRSP, 26 Sept., 1901.
 3. See above, pp. 192-209; 355-367.
 4. See above, pp. 284-85.
 5. CE, 16 Oct., 1893.

But many amalgamated unions had met with strong opposition from local societies which regarded them as interlopers in the organized labour structure of the city. In the latter half of the 1890s the triumph of localism was reflected, as Table 47 suggests, in the decline in the number of amalgamated branches in Cork. Between 1895 and 1900 the number of amalgamateds in the city fell from twenty-one to sixteen.

TABLE 47¹

Number of Amalgamated Union Branches in Cork, 1830-1900

| | | | |
|------|---|------|----|
| 1835 | 2 | 1870 | 4 |
| 1840 | 2 | 1875 | 6 |
| 1845 | 6 | 1880 | 7 |
| 1850 | 4 | 1885 | 9 |
| 1855 | 3 | 1890 | 13 |
| 1860 | 3 | 1895 | 21 |
| 1865 | 3 | 1900 | 16 |

In the early 1900s a section of the trade union movement in Ireland, influenced by the growing tide of separatist nationalism, advocated the abandonment of amalgamation in favour of exclusively Irish-based unionism.² And as late as the 1930s connection with English unionism was rejected as a betrayal of national autonomy.³ But the opposition to amalgamation in nineteenth-century Cork was based less on nationalist political beliefs than on narrow localism and practical financial considerations. Though some local unions like the carpenters claimed that their rejection of amalgamation was inspired by the nationalist

1. This table is based on trade union records, press coverage, and parliamentary papers.

2. Mitchel, op. cit., p. 22.

3. Charles McCarthy, Trade Unions in Ireland, 1894-1960 (Dublin, 1977).

principle of Home Rule,¹ their real reason was that amalgamation meant less local control of union funds and of admission to the local labour market.

During the course of the nineteenth century the standard of living for working men generally rose. Wages for skilled men had increased by between sixty and one-hundred percent between 1820 and 1900, so that a tradesman earning three shillings a day in 1820 would earn five to six shillings a day in 1900. For the unskilled labourer the rate of wage increase over the same period was as great as 140%, but the labourer's wages were still, in 1900, scarcely half that of the skilled man.² During the course of the century, food prices, especially those of staple bulk foods like bread and potatoes, were subject to sharp fluctuations from week to week. Bread prices rose and fell with the state of the grain supply, while potato prices varied with the condition and size of the crop. In the early summer lean period between the exhaustion of the old crop and the digging of the new, potato prices rose by as much as 130%, i.e. from around fourpence to tenpence per twenty-one pound weight, and in years of blight or extreme scarcity, prices rose as high as twelve or sixteen pence per weight.³ Bread prices could fluctuate between fivepence and tenpence per four pound loaf, and matters were further complicated by the different prices charged in different areas of the city. In 1861, for instance, the price of the four pound loaf varied by as much as twopence (or 30%) from one area of the city to the next.⁴

1. See above, p. 364.

2. See Tables 21-24, pp. 154-60.

3. CC, 3 Aug., 1847; 4 July, 8 Aug., 2 Sept., 1863; 8 July, 5 Aug., 2 Sept., 1867; 29 Jan., 14 Mar., 3 May, 1 July, 1872; 7 Jan., 1880; 7 Apr., 9 June, 1890. Prices for meat, eggs and coal showed no great seasonal fluctuation.

4. CE, 20 Jan., 1861.

Yet, in spite of these seasonal fluctuations, average year-round prices for provisions and fuel rose but slightly between 1820 and 1900, as suggested by the following table, based on June-July prices in Cork over five-year periods.

TABLE 48¹

Food and Fuel Prices in Cork City, June-July, 1825-1900

| | Bread per 4 lb loaf | Potatoes per 21 lb weight | Meat Per lb | Butter per lb | Oatmeal per cwt | Eggs per doz. | Fish per lb | Coal per ton |
|------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1825 | 9d | 8½d | 3½-6d | 15d | 14s | | | |
| 1830 | 9-10½d | 7-9d | 4½-6d | 8-9d | 18-19s | | | |
| 1835 | 5¾-7½d | 6-8d | | | 13-14s | | | 17-19s |
| 1840 | | 6½-9d | 5-10d | 10-12d | | | | 17-19s |
| 1845 | 6-7d | 3-4½d | 4-10d | 9-10d | 12s-12/6 | | | 13/6-18s |
| 1850 | 5-6d | 10-16d | | 9d | 10/6 | | | 13-14s |
| 1855 | 9-10d | 15d | 5-9d | 12d | 16s | | | 17-20s |
| 1860 | 7-8d | 15d | 5-10d | 13d | 14/6-15s | | | 13/6-18s |
| 1865 | 5½-6½d | 4-5d | 6.10d | 12d | 11-13s | 6-7d | | 15-18s |
| 1870 | 5-6d | 7-8d | 6-12d | 11-13d | 15s | 8-9d | 12-14d | 15-17s |
| 1875 | 5½-6½d | 8-9d | 7½-14d | 12-15d | | 13d | 16d | 17-22s |
| 1880 | | | | | | | | |
| 1886 | 6-7d | 7-8d | 4-11d | 10d | 12s | 9-10d | | |
| 1890 | 6½-7½d | 8d | 4-11d | 12d | 11s | 9-11d | | |
| 1895 | | 14d | | 12-13d | | 9-10d | | |
| 1900 | | | | 13-14d | | 10-11d | | |

On the other hand, there is evidence that working class people with limited means found the cost of living increasing over the years, and outrunning the increase in earnings. A Dublin witness before the Royal

1. CC, 24 July, 1830; 27 June, 1835; 20 June, 1840; 5 July, 1845; 1 June, 1850; 3 July, 1855; 2 July, 1860; 1 July, 1865; 1 July, 1870; 4 Oct., 1875; 3 June, 1886; 9 June, 1890; 15 June, 1895; 5 July, 1900; John B. O'Brien, 'Agricultural Prices and Living Costs in Pre-Famine Cork', in JCHAS, Jan-June, 1977, Vol. lxxxii, No. 235, Pt. I, pp. 1-10. June-July prices were generally the highest during the year, particularly for potatoes, which were then in short supply.

Commission on Friendly Societies in 1872, quoted the provision prices which had applied in 1836, and compared them with those of his own day:

It's easy seen how far two-and-sixpence or three shillings a week would go in them days when a man could get a full meal of floury potatoes and butter-milk for a penny, so that if he got a place in a chimney corner when he got old, in his son's house, or his son-in-law's, or maybe even a friend would not deny him the shelter of his roof, he'd be able to get along first-rate, and have a penny or so to buy tobacco at the end of the week. As to clothes, old men don't wear out their boots much, and a frieze coat went down from father, or grandfather for the matter of that, to son, wanting only occasional repairs and darning as it went along. In the present day a man must keep up appearance more in Dublin. He must be better dressed if he wants to appear dacent /sic/ and not be laughed at. A cardriver was taken before the magistrate the other day, and tould /sic/ that his license would be took away unless he dressed himself better. Everything, then, being so much dearer and worse than it used to be, a pension of three-and-six or three shillings a week won't go half so far as it used.¹

Housing in Cork had improved considerably during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. Over seventy percent of the city's population had lived in slum housing during the 1830s and '40s, and some 60% until 1880. But by 1900 the slum population had been cut to under thirteen percent and increasing numbers were accommodated in artisan housing built either by the corporation or by private companies and contractors. The improved standard of housing was in some cases accompanied by increasing rents which the poorer classes could not pay. The Improved Dwellings Company houses cost from three shillings

1. Royal Commission on Friendly and Benefit Building Societies
Report on Assistant Commissioners (Ireland); PP, 1874 (C 995),
xxiii, Pt II, p. 31.

TABLE 49¹

Percentage of Cork Families living in Slum Accommodation, 1831-1901

| | 1831 | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|------------------------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No. of Families | | 11921 | 12225 | | 10930 | 10577 | 6753 | 1923 |
| % of all city families | | 72.25 | 69.51 | | 63.29 | 64.58 | 44.14 | 12.61 |

to three-and-sixpence a week, and so remained outside the income-range of the labouring classes. But the corporation housing rents averaged one-and-sixpence a week, a level not much higher than that paid for slum tenements.²

Rising wages, relatively stable food prices, improved housing, and moderate rents together made for improved living standards during the course of the nineteenth century. The rise of living standards possibly contributed to the growing 'respectability' of the working man, and particularly to that of the unionized skilled artisan who took his place in the local trades council or in the new Irish Trades Congress. The quest for respectability and social acceptance had, of course, been in progress since the early 1840s when the trades generally eschewed violence in favour of reasoned and moderate appeals to public opinion. It is difficult to calculate how much of this new-found respectability was a spontaneous growth within the ranks of the trades themselves, and how much was pressed on them by paternal employers and concerned middle-class individuals. The middle class

1. Census for Ireland, Munster, City of Cork, 1841-1901.

2. See above, p. 445, 449.

ethos of respectability, temperance and self-improvement, was very evident in most local artisan movements during the course of the century. The successive temperance movements in Cork,¹ primarily religious and spiritual in inspiration, also had connotations of social improvement which eventually formed an integral part of the slum clearance and rehousing drive in the city. The Improved Dwellings Company claimed in 1875 that its housing schemes had greatly facilitated the progress of temperance in the city:

A more beneficial work had never been undertaken. Its moral effects in the neighbourhood of Barrack Street were wonderful. The people now said that a man addicted to drink could not get a cottage there - they would not have him. A man who was in the habit of staggering home drunk must look for a dirty lodging in a back lane, but if he would enjoy the comfort and respectability of such a home as the company gave its tenants, he must change his whole manner of living.²

The growth of small savings banks, friendly societies, and institutions like the Young Mens' Christian Association and the Catholic Young Mens' Society in the city, especially from 1850 onwards, reflected the growth of the self-improvement ideal.³ Nonetheless, the march of temperance and self-betterment did not sweep all before it: in 1853 it was claimed that the Cork working classes were 'singularly and shamefully improvident',⁴ and the very recurrence of attempts to establish temperance movements in the city spoke for the prevalence of drunkenness. In the 1870s it was claimed that young tradesmen in the city

1. CE, 2 July, 1851; 17 May, 1852; 7 Oct., 1857; 10 July, 1863; 1 Mar., 1873; 22 Jan., 1874.

2. CE, 23 Jan., 1875.

3. CE, 5 Nov., 1852; 7 Jan., 1857; 13 Feb., 1860; 3 Oct., 1862; 26 Mar., 1864; 8 Oct., 1874.

4. CE, 21 Dec., 1853.

spent their Saturday half-day in the public houses and that in Cork the demand for whiskey was so great that the whiskey in the stills was sold before it had sufficiently matured.¹ Yet the values of temperance and self-betterment continued to be preached in middle class and skilled trade circles. Every attempt during the century to give the trades a centralized organization at local level was led by middle class men who constantly re-iterated the temperance ideal. Thus the Peoples' Hall of 1835 was intended to establish 'cheerful sobriety and easy order' among the city's working classes,² the Mechanics' Hall of 1870 was first mooted in connection with the revived temperance movement in the city,³ and even the United Trades Association of 1881 seemed for a time likely to become a mild and socially in-offensive mechanics' institute dominated by benevolent employers and clergymen.⁴

But though the skilled trades of the city remained socially conservative, they had, by 1870, begun to shake off the paternal control of employers and clergymen. Thus the attempt to harness the Mechanics' Hall to the temperance movement was rejected. Ten years later the United Trades Association cut its links with any employers who, hitherto benevolent, took an anti-union stand in trade disputes.⁵ Moreover, the United Trades mounted the strongest possible opposition to proposed changes in the public house opening laws. These changes, supported

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1. Proceedings of the Select Committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquor on Sunday (Ireland) Bill; PP, 1877 (198), xvi, Qs 4767-75.
 2. CSORP.OR, 1835, 63/6; see above,
 3. See above, pp. 251-52.
 4. See above, pp. 258-59
 5. See above, pp. 274-75.

by local temperance advocates, aimed to close public houses on Sunday and strictly curtail opening hours on Saturday. It is indicative of the trades' strong feelings on the subject that at the trades meeting held to discuss the issue, only thirty out of six-hundred delegates voted in favour of Sunday closing, and while the question was in the air the United Trades paid little attention at their meetings to any other issue.¹

The public house remained the chief recreational centre of the working man, and continued to serve as a meeting place for individual trade societies, who obviously preferred its informal atmosphere to the rooms specially provided for them in institutions like the Peoples' Hall and the Mechanics' Hall. Moreover, it was the real political forum of the working man who assimilated and debated many of his political beliefs among his peers in the public house. It was in the public house, too that many working men first came in contact with the underground nationalist movement.

The average Cork working man of the nineteenth century was more likely to be involved in politics than in trades unionism. In 1865 there were reputedly four thousand sworn Fenians in the city, while the number of trade unionists in the city reached that number only in 1900. A man's position as a worn Fenian, a member of a constitutional nationalist organization, or simply as participant in an election riot

1. Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ir) Bill, PP, 1867-8 (280), xiv; Proceedings of the Select Committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ir) Bill, PP, 1877 (198), xiv; Proceedings of the Select Committee on Sunday Closing Acts (Ir), PP, 1888 (255), xix, Qs 8,501; Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws, PP, 1898 (C 8,980), xxxviii, Vol. vii; CE, 14, 24 Apr., 1888; 30 Apr., 17 June, 1898.

did not necessarily imply a deep political commitment. Though it is true that most of the city's Fenians turned out in the abortive rebellion of 1867,¹ and on the constitutional scene working class involvement was still weaker, for as late as 1900, one in three adult males had no vote.²

Yet there is no doubt that nineteenth century Cork was a politically aware society. Politics permeated the town council, the Poor Law Board, and the Chamber of Commerce,³ and political events like elections, political court cases and nationalist demonstrations roused popular excitement to a degree unthinkable today. In such a society trade unions were drawn inevitably into politics. Though the degree and nature of involvement varied from year to year and from union to union, the Cork trades were predominantly nationalist in sympathy. The deepest political involvement of the Cork trade societies occurred during the days of O'Connell when the promise of repeal seemed likely to arrest the decline of the local craft trades. This pragmatic economic nationalism was apparently very different to that which motivated the militant separatism of the Irish Confederates of 1848 and the Fenians of the period from 1860 onwards. These movements had little apparent interest in the revival of home manufacture and, moreover, had none of that veneration for the Crown

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1. K.B. Nowlan, 'The Fenian Rising of 1867' in T.W. Moody, The Fenian Movement (Cork, 1968), p. 31.
 2. PP, 1830 (522), xxxi, 321; 1833 (177), xxvii, 289; 1841 (2401), xx, 587; 1857 (393), L., 879; 1868-9 (233), L. 203; 1872 (17), xlvii, 409; 1884 (164), lxiii, 221; 1886 (84-Sess I), lvii, 53; 1894 (126), lxviii, 315; Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1880, 1890, 1898.
 3. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Local Government & Taxation of Towns (Ir), PP, 1879 (357), xii, Qs 2,503.

which had characterized the Repealer tradesmen of 1830-47. Yet the driving force of the separatists, no less than the Repealers, was economic distress, for there is a definite correlation between the predominantly Fenian trades and those in which unemployment and low earnings were most common.¹ On the other hand, economic distress does not in itself adequately explain working class political involvement, particularly in militant nationalism. By the early 1860s the belief had grown that Ireland's destiny was not to be a satellite of the English Crown, but an independent nation in her own right. This belief in Irish separatism, more than any grievance over unemployment, trade depression or land tenure abuses, inspired the popular patriotic songs of the late nineteenth century and drew men into the militant movement. Many individuals most prominent in Fenianism in the 1860s and in the Irish Republican Brotherhood from 1870 to 1900, were not affected by unemployment or economic distress. They were master tradesmen, publicans, shopkeepers, or property owners who sometimes as employers came into conflict with the local trade societies over economic issues.² Thus, though artisans and labourers formed its core group, nineteenth century militant nationalism cannot be associated solely with the working classes, for it attracted men as socially apart as labourers and manufacturers, journeymen and professionals. The emergence of militant separatism in the years

1. See above, pp. 236-38.

2. William O'Carroll, one of the leading Fenians of the city, was a master baker who opposed the abolition of night work in bakeries in 1861; Cornelius P. O'Sullivan, another prominent Fenian, was brought to book by the coopers' society in 1886 for the employment of non-union men; CE, 14 Sept., 1860; 11 Jan., 1861; Coopers' Minute Book, 4 May, 1886.

after 1848 helped to democratise nationalism. Unlike the constitutional movements of Repeal and Home Rule, which were dominated by middle class men - business men and professionals, the militant movement drew most of its leaders and its rank-and-file from among working men. Militant nationalism, too, because of its underground and secretive nature, tended to rely more on the individual than on the trade society for support. Constitutional nationalist movements, particularly in the days of Repeal, tended to use the trade society as its basic unit of organization among the city's working classes. Thus, Repeal meetings and petitions were organized, and the artisans' Repeal Rent contributions collected by the trade societies.¹ Already by the late 1840s, however, the role of the trade society as a political unit was in decline. The Irish Confederate Clubs of 1847-8, organized on a mixed occupational basis,² gave the individual artisan an alternative unit of political expression. When Fenianism developed in the 1860s the artisan found similar alternative political pressure groups in the Irish Republican Brotherhood itself and in its various front groups like the Cork National Reading Room, the Cork Working Mens' Association and, later on, in the National Foresters. Thus, as the century passed and as separatist revolutionary nationalist opinion gained ground, the importance of the trade as a unit of political organization and expression declined.³ To some extent,

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1. This, however, applied less in Cork than in Dublin. See above, pp. 104-09.
 2. See above, pp. 126-27.
 3. For a discussion of a similar 'decline in the importance of the occupational community' in nineteenth century Edinburgh, see R.Q. Gray, Class Structure and the Class Formation of Skilled Workers in Edinburgh, 1850-1900 (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 155-160.

this freed the trade society from political entanglements, allowing it to concentrate on purely labour issues. Yet, as the continuing trade society participation in public political demonstrations proved, the trade remained, though to a less extent than formerly, a political unit. Trade banners continued to mix nationalist, religious and trade emblems, and collections for nationalist purposes continued to receive subscriptions from trade societies. And though individual trade unionists might resent such demands on their pockets, most trades continued, right through the century, to make as flamboyant a display as possible when the occasion of a political demonstration arose.

Though trade society participation remained a vital part of all public political demonstrations during the nineteenth century, and though tradesmen and labourers formed the basis of the militant nationalist movement, the role of the trades as a voting force in elections remained relatively unimportant. Some 150 labourers and 540 tradesmen, including masters and journeymen, voted in the 1835 election in Cork city,¹ but thereafter the non-survival of poll books for Cork prevents any attempt to quantify the artisan and labourer voting strength in the city. But generally, as Table 50 suggests, the parliamentary voting force rose from 14% in 1830 to 67% in 1900. The municipal voting force, which was scarcely half as extensive as the parliamentary electorate, rose from 7% in 1830 to 50% in 1898, when it was assimilated to the parliamentary franchise.

1. See above, p. 71.

TABLE 50¹

Parliamentary and Municipal Electorates in Cork City as % of total adult male population, 1830-1900

| Parliamentary Electorate | | Municipal Electorate | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Numbers | % of total male population | Numbers | % of total male population |
| 1830 | 2,500 | 1,236 | 6.8 |
| 1833 | 4,322 | | |
| 1841 | 4,364 | 3,865 | 19.12 |
| 1851 | 3,039 | | |
| 1859 | 3,073 | | |
| 1872 | 4,307 | 2,005 | 9.97 |
| 1880 | 4,626 | | |
| 1890 | 14,569 | | |
| 1900 | 13,362 | 10,000 | 49.94 |

In spite of their limited nature, the municipal and parliamentary franchise were never, until the mid-1890s, a major issue with the organized trades. The trades attempted to remedy grievances through petitions to parliament and through deputations to local MPs and town councillors, but on no recorded occasion between 1832 and 1895 did they call for the extension of the franchise.² Presumably, the reform acts of 1868 and 1884, by enfranchising the city's ten pound householders, brought many Cork artisans into the electorate. The 1884 reform, act, in particular, increased the city electorate from less than five-thousand to over fourteen thousand, and this new electorate included many working men, for the trades council considered it a satisfactory arrangement.

1. PP, 1830 (522), xxxi, 321; 1833 (177), xxvii, 289; 1841 (240-1), xx, 587; 1851 (393), 1, 879; 1868-9 (233), 1, 203; 1872 (17), xlvii, 409; 1884 (164), lxii, 221; 1886 (84-Sess I), lvii, 53; 1894 (126), lxviii, 35; Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1880, 1890, 1898. The municipal electorate for 1899 was c. 13,000 but this included 3,000 women.
2. CMC, 19 Mar., 1832; in 1832 the Cork trades coupled the demand for parliamentary reform with that for Repeal of the Union.

Even the call for reform of the municipal electorate in the late 1890s was not a spontaneous demand on the part of the Cork trades, but was prompted by the urging of the Dublin trades and the Irish Trades Congress. Yet the dramatic increase in the municipal electorate, following the Local Government Act of 1898, and the consequent sudden influx of labour representatives into the town council, showed that there was a very real spirit of political labour consciousness within the city. Labour entered the town council without any real programme, and only time would tell whether it would prove an able political force. Yet labour's strong showing on the Cork polls was in itself a major landmark in the development of labour as an independent political force at local level. Labour's entry into the hitherto closed town council roused a veritably euphoria among politically conscious working men. Writing to the union headquarters in Leicester, the secretary of the local branch of the Bootrivetters' Union declared the local labour victory to be

a new departure in the public life of the country ...
For the first time in our history, the democracy has
gloriously triumphed over corruption and ascendancy,
and the legitimate choice of the people now
predominates in the administration of all local
affairs.¹

Yet labour's victory in the Cork local election was not the victory of a socially radical group. Already in the early 1890s Cork's trades council had made its social conservatism clear by refusing to follow the Dublin trades' example of holding a Labour Day Demonstration - because, as the delegates put it, 'the time was not ripe'.² The trades

1. National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, Monthly Report, Jan., 1899, p. 6; Mar., 1899, p. 4.

2. CE, 1, 8 Apr., 1892; 8 May, 1894.

council also ignored all attempts to establish a Fabian Society in the city in 1890-91, and actively opposed the unionization of the general labourers.¹ In 1900-01 the trades council re-iterated its social conservatism by opposing the establishment of a local branch of the Irish Republican and Socialist Party, recently set up in Dublin by James Connolly, and it expelled from its ranks the local Shop Assistants' Union delegate, who was organizer of the socialist body in Cork city.² Such hostility towards socialistic ideas was characteristic of the Cork trades. Already in 1872 they had opposed the establishment of the First International in the city,³ and as early as 1838 they had given no support to Chartism and equally little encouragement to the socialist-inclined Irish Democratic Association of 1850.⁴

The Cork trades' opposition to socialist movements was due to a multiplicity of factors. Clerical denunciation of such movements certainly contributed to trades' non-participation. The Irish Democratic Association, the First International, and the Irish Republican and Socialist Party were all denounced by the local Catholic clergy, as well as by the liberal press, and many members consequently fell away.⁵ Yet clerical opposition on its own does not explain the

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1. See above, p. 382; There was no Fabian group in Cork in the late nineteenth century. Belfast had a branch since Feb., 1891, and Dublin's branch was established between August 1892 and December 1893. Fabian News (London), Mar., Aug., Nov., 1892; Dec., 1893-Feb., 1897.
 2. William O'Brien Papers, Ms 15,700 (1), Minute Book of the Irish Republican and Socialist Party, 8 Feb., 1900; 2 Aug., 1901.
 3. See above, pp. 255-57.
 4. See above, pp. 210-11. Irishman, 16 Nov., 1849; 2 Mar., 1859.
 5. Irishman, 16 Nov., 1849; 2 Mar., 1850; William O'Brien Papers, Ms 15,700 (1), 13 Mar., 1900; 2, 9, 29 Oct., 4 Nov., 1901.

Cork working mens' non-support for these bodies. Clerical denunciations of Fenianism were equally severe, yet that movement grew apace in the city from 1860 onwards. The rising standard of living among the city's working classes, and particularly among the skilled trades, probably made them less open to socialistic ideas, since they had more to lose by social disturbance. But while this is no doubt true for the rejection of the Irish Republican and Socialist Party in the early twentieth century, it does not sufficiently explain the lack of support for Chartism and the Irish Democratic Association in a period when the level of unemployment was high and distress and squalor prevalent among the mass of the city's working classes. Possibly the single most important factor militating against socialist development was the strength of nationalism. Chartism was rejected in an era when popular expectations of Repeal were at their height. The Irish Democratic Association was rejected at a time when separatist nationalism was reasserting itself for the first time in fifty years. The First International found its most determined opponents among the Fenians of the city. And the Irish Republican and Socialist Party was cold-shouldered at a time when underground separatism was re-organizing itself on the threshold of the new century.

It is, of course, true that most socialists in Cork were also separatist nationalists. But for many separatists socialism was a foreign growth, incompatible with nationalist aspirations. Moreover, for many separatists even trade unionism was of minor importance; indeed, it could even be a hindrance to the nationalist cause, diverting mens' minds from the cause of national independence to that

of sectional advancement. This supposed incompatibility of nationalism and 'labourism',¹ together with their social conservatism vis-a-vis unskilled labour, accounts for the failure of the Cork trades to form a strong labour movement at the end of the nineteenth century. During the course of the century movements which had started off as purely economic movements had repeatedly become entangled in politics. The Irish Manufacture movements of 1832 and 1841 had soon been engulfed by Repeal. The United Trades Association of 1864 was overshadowed by Fenianism, as was the Mechanics' Hall of 1870. Even the United Trades Association of 1881-1900, which escaped complete politicization, became increasingly identified with the nationalist side in the city, and even when its members entered the municipal contest of 1899 on the labour ticket, they still asserted their commitment to nationalism. The truth was that economic movements which avoided politics generally collapsed. The Irish Manufacture movement of 1850-52, organized on non-political lines, attracted no support among the city trades, and soon lost its initial impetus. The same was largely true of the attempted Cork Trades Association of the late 1850s and of the industrial exhibition movements of the 1880s.

Even in the municipal election of 1899 organized labour frequently reverted to the nationalist theme. Yet, by the late 1890s many representatives of labour had become openly disillusioned by nationalism's failure to benefit their economic condition. This

1. R.Q. Gray, op. cit., p. 255, defines 'labourism' as 'the political expression of the trade union consciousness of British workers' - 'the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation'.

disillusionment was in itself a sign that the political consciousness of the Cork working population was slowly maturing. Though in the late 1890s faith in the political panacea still existed, it was a faith subjected to much questioning. Cork working men were still political creatures, as they had been in the early 1830s, but they were learning to separate the politics of labour from the politics of nationalism. In 1832, nailors refusing to vote for the popular candidates had been ostracized by the rest of the trade.¹ In 1898 such treatment of a political dissident within a trade society was becoming less and less acceptable. Perhaps the best summing up of the movement away from political preoccupations and towards class politics is to be found in the speech of an advocate of independent labour representation in late 1898:

Those gentlemen who posed as Nationalists were bogus, heart and soul, as far as nationality was concerned, and it was to be hoped in God that Home Rule would never be granted under those gentlemen, for if it were, they would crush the life-blood out of the masses of the people ... Let them forget their politics, for unfortunately they were politically mad and socially dead, in the past. The time had come when they should look at the social aspect and not at the political. What had they got by politics? They had so-called Nationalists coming forward, denying them the benefits of an act of parliament given them by a conservative government, and saying that the masses should vote on the political ticket as in the past.²

Class awareness was slowly dawning among Cork's artisans and working men at the threshold of the new century.

1. CMC, 24 Aug., 1832.

2. Workers' Republic, 17 Sept., 1898, p. 1.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX IRepeal Rent, Cork ¹

| | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | June | |
|-------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| 1842 | | | | | | | |
| 1843 | | 8.13. 1 | | 26. 4. 8 | 20. 1. 2 | 200.14.4 | |
| 1844 | 14. 6.11 | 3.18. 3 | 45. 1.3 | | 32.18.10 | 275.16.6 | |
| 1845 | 5.19. 3 | 11. 6. 2 | 11.19.9 | 18.10. 0 | 37.14. 8 | 27.13.5 | |
| 1846 | 23.10. 4 | 10. 3. 0 | 9.17.0 | 28. 2. 6 | 10. 6. 0 | 25. 3.7 | |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | |
| | July | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | Total |
| 1842 | | | | 2.19. 3 | 34. 6.10 | | 37. 6. 1 |
| 1843 | 78. 5.1 | 58. 0.6 | 51.13. 7 | 45. 3. 8 | 31. 9. 6 | 15. 2.5 | 535. 7.11 |
| 1844 | 46.15.5 | 36. 7.3 | 53.16. 6 | 10. 3.10 | 29.16. 3 | 2.16.0 | 551.12. 0 |
| 1845 | 65. 5.4 | 39.10.1 | 38.17.11 | 18. 8. 2 | 4. 4. 5 | 18. 6.9 | 297.15.11 |
| 1846 | 3.14.6 | 18.10.0 | 1. 2.11 | ---- | ---- | ---- | 130. 9.10 |
| | | | | | | | 1,553. 1. 7 |

1. Pilot, 9 Nov., 2, 11, 16 Dec., 1840; 30 June, 18 Aug., 1843;
 15 Nov., 1844; 3 Jan., 5, 19 Dec., 1845; CE, 3, 4 Dec., 1845.

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THE ROLE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF
CORK CITY, 1820-1899.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the parallel development of trade unionism and nationalism among the working men of nineteenth century Cork. Until the 1840s local trade unionism was a subversive movement which pursued its ends through violence and intimidation, but thereafter, it tried to secure public approval for its objectives through reasoned and moderate behaviour. Trade unionism in nineteenth century Cork, as in other Irish centres, was extremely introspective, tradesmen from other centres being excluded as far as possible from the local labour market. However, from the 1830s onwards, the advent of British-based amalgamated unions in Cork helped to broaden the base of local labour organization. Yet, for most of the century unionism was confined to the skilled artisans who, in some cases, actively worked against the unionization of the unskilled. Though in the 1890s many unskilled occupations were organized, effective unionization of the general labourer was not attempted until the early twentieth century.

While trade unionism was slowly developing, nationalism - both constitutional and militant - was putting down roots at popular level. The Repeal movement of 1830-50, the Home Rule movement of 1870-1900, and the Fenian movement of 1860 onwards, all drew their rank-and-file following from the working classes of the city - artisans, labourers, and shopkeepers. In nineteenth century Cork politics tended to engulf all other matters. A number of successive attempts to revive local industry were swamped by the nationalist movement, and the organized trades of the city regarded themselves as the local strongholds of nationalism, tending to spend exorbitant sums of money on political demonstrations. Such involvement was due to the fact that Cork artisan nationalism was at heart economic: political independence was seen as the gateway to economic prosperity, and the most distressed trades in the city were also the most enthusiastically nationalist.

As the century passed, however, the local trades began to separate economic from political matters. Disillusionment with the performance of middle class nationalist politicians set in, and from the 1880s onwards the organized trades of Cork placed their hopes in independent labour representation at local level rather than in the traditional panacea of national independence.