Unit 3:

The Growth of the Irish Labour Movement and the 1913 Strike & Lockout

Part 1

Senior Cycle Worksheets
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Comprehension Questions, Docs D, E and F
UNIT 3:

LC Worksheet, Lesson 1: Contextualising the Lockout

Background:
In 1900 Dublin was a city of sharp social divisions. The more prosperous south of the city including the suburbs of Rathmines, Rathgar, Pembroke and Monkstown were home to the largely Protestant professional, business and administrative elite. In late nineteenth century, they were joined by some upper middle-class Catholic families from the worlds of business and the professions.

The 31% increase in the population of Dublin city between 1841 and 1911 led to intense competition for housing among the expanding urban poor. The dilapidated Georgian houses, abandoned by their original owners, were purchased by speculating landlords who converted them into multiple, single-room dwellings. By 1911, there were approximately 21,000 people living in badly maintained tenement dwellings centered on Dublin's shabby medieval core and the former Georgian quarter north of the Liffey. Overcrowding, poor diet and lack of sanitation made these tenements a breeding ground for contagious diseases. At the end of the nineteenth century, Dublin had the highest infant mortality level and general death rate of any city in the United Kingdom.

Many of the inhabitants of these tenements were members of Dublin’s large unskilled workforce. 7,000 of Dublin’s 30,000 unskilled workers were employed on a casual day-to-day basis as dockers or carters. The vast oversupply of unskilled labour in the city meant that unemployment rates sometimes reached 20%. In this context employers wielded enormous power. They paid low wages, could hire or fire at will and ‘blacklisted’ workers if they were suspected of organising protests for better pay and conditions.

Task 1: ‘A Tenement City

Step 1: Individually, scan the documents-based questions on page 6 before carefully reading Documents A and B.

Step 2: Working in pairs, complete the Documents Based Study questions 1-3.

Step 3: Using the infographic on page 2 and Documents A and B as the basis for your answers, individually complete the contextualisation question, (4) for homework.

And/Or Gather statistical data from Document B, your own research and the Central Statistics Office publication, ‘Stories from Statistics’, to create your own infographic on tenement life in Dublin in 1900.
“1913” is memorable because it is an epic of the human spirit, of the unconquerable fortitude and determination of the working class ... But that courage is even more remarkable when one looks back to the conditions in which the Dublin working man lived ...

Dublin of the first decade of the century was not a city to take pride in. It was a city of economic and social degradation ... and for the mass of workers, a city of dire poverty, inhuman housing conditions, and a feeling of living outside the bounds of civilised society. The workers lacked organisations to defend and protect them, they lacked faith in themselves, they lacked leaders of courage and honesty ...

Some 300,000 people lived in Dublin. It was a city of few industries, wherein the people made a livelihood by handling the country’s exports and imports, and in the service of the gentry. The old crafts were dying, the craftsmen living in a narrow limited, insecure life their main hope and purpose to keep themselves above the swarming mass of casual, unskilled workers.

Those 50,000 unskilled workers were dependent on casual work at the docks, in transport and in the building trade and in the limited number of factories and workshops. The unskilled worker depended for his few days casual work each week on the favour of the employer, the foremen or the stevedore, and his economic existence and the welfare and security of his family was in the final analysis determined by the slum landlord, the publican and the pawnbroker.

The unskilled workers of the city not only competed among themselves for the available jobs but were under continuous pressure from the never ending influx of labourers from the countryside who with their inherent memories of the Famine, their servility and readiness to work for any wages and under any conditions were a ready means by which the employers could keep any impertinent town worker in his place. For his family the unskilled worker could not provide either decency of living or security for the future, and the outlets for his children were the British Army for his sons and the fortunate chance of a job in “service” for his daughters.

This was the Dublin of the first decade of the twentieth century, a Dublin of brutal, soul destroying poverty; of horrible housing; of disease and ignorance; of inhumanity and slavery; of desperate, helpless unorganised workers...
The Report defined tenement houses as follows:

Class A: Those which appeared structurally sound. (1,518)

Class B: Those so decayed as to be on the borderline of being unfit for human habitation. (2,288)

Class C: Those unfit for human habitation and incapable of begin rendered fit for habitation. (1,518)

It was estimated that 27,052 people resided in Class A houses, 37,552 people lived in Class B houses, and 23,710 lived in Class C houses.

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Class A: Those which appeared structurally sound. (1,518)

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63% of the 304,802 people living in Dublin, belonged to the working class.

The total number of labouring class and their dependents in Dublin, (excluding domestic servants) was 194,250 in 1913.

In 1840 there were 353 tenement houses in Dublin city. By 1913, there was a total of 5,322 tenement houses in the city.

45% of the working class population lived in tenement houses. That amounted to 118,000 people or 25,822 families.

Of the 25,822 families living in tenement houses, 20,108 lived in one room.

There was an average of 22 persons per tenement house.

A further 10,000 lived in second and third class housing, and 32,000 lived in dwellings provided by companies and the corporation.

Using testimony from 76 witnesses, their own inspections and information from the Census Returns of 1911, the authors of an enquiry into housing conditions in Dublin in 1914 made the following observations:

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Inspections of tenements by the authors of the report, led to the following observations:

- We visited one house that we found to be occupied by 98 persons, another by 74, and a third by 73.
- The entrance to all tenement houses is by a common door off [the] street, and in most cases the door is never shut, day or night.
- Generally the only water supply of the house is furnished by a single water tap which is in the yard.
- The common closet [toilet] accommodation is to be found in the yard [and is also used by] ... anyone who likes to come in off the street, and is, of course, common to both sexes. We cannot conceive how any self-respecting male or female could be expected to use accommodation such as we have seen.
- In some cases, the roofs of the tenement house appears good in front but the backs of the houses are very dilapidated and almost ruinous.
- The passages, landings and stairs are, in many cases, cramped and narrow, and the woodwork defective.
- The floors of the rooms are often out of repair, and ... fireplaces in the rooms are small open ones, unsuited for general use.
- It is no uncommon thing to find halls and landings, yards and closets of the houses in a filthy condition.
Later Modern Ireland: Topic 2
Movements for Political and Social Reform, 1870-1914

Study Documents A and B on the previous pages and answer the questions below.

Comprehension

1. (a) According to Document A, what three important things were the Dublin workers lacking in the first decade of the century?
(b) On what people were Dublin’s unskilled workers dependent for casual labour and the security and welfare of their families?
(c) According to Document B, how many people were living in buildings that were ‘unfit for human habitation’?
(d) On what sources of information did the writers of Document B rely for their data?

Comparison

2. (a) Do both documents reflect the extreme hardship of tenement living in Dublin at early 1900s? Explain your answer with reference to both documents.
(b) Which document shows greater outrage at the living situation of Dublin’s unskilled labourers? Explain your answer, referring to both documents.

Criticism

3. (a) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Document B as a historical source?
(b) Do you consider Document A to be an objective source? Give reasons for your answer, referring to the document.

Contextualisation

4. What were the problems facing Ireland’s urban poor in the first decade of the twentieth century?
Task 2. The Connolly Case File

As a socialist activist and writer, James Connolly was of enormous interest to the authorities in Dublin. You are a Dublin Metropolitan Police Inspector and have gathered information from among your police force. You are now ready to complete the case file on James Connolly, with particular focus on his activities in Britain and Ireland between 1896 and 1912.

Step 1: Using information the biographical map below and your own research, complete the Police Case File on James Connolly included in this worksheet.

Step 2: When you have completed the worksheet, you should gather into groups of six and compare your case files.

Step 3: Your teacher will ask a representative from each group to participate in a briefing session about James Connolly for the constables on the force (i.e. the rest of the class).

- Document C -

Locations in Ireland and Britain associated with James Connolly (1868–1916)

Dublin
- Arrives as organiser for Dublin Socialist Club – establishes Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), elected Secretary at first meeting, 1896
- Arrested at demonstration against Queen Victoria jubilee celebrations, June 1897
- Founds '98 Rank and File Club, Dec. 1897
- First issue of Workers' Republic, edited by Connolly published, Aug. 1898
- Organises protest against Boer War, Aug. 1899
- Stands unsuccessfully as Labour candidate, Wood Quay Ward, municipal elections, Jan. 1902
- Stands unsuccessfully as Labour candidate, Wood Quay Ward, municipal elections, Jan. 1903
- Addresses final open-air meeting of IRSP, Aug. 1903
- Returns from US, July 1910
- Elected as organiser of IVWU, appointed national organiser of IVWU, Nov. 1910
- Elected to National Executive Committee of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, Jan. 1914
- Appointed President of the Irish Freedom League, acting General Secretary of the ITGWU, editor of Irish Worker and Commander-in-Chief, Irish Citizen Army, Oct. 1914
- Becomes member of the Military Council, IRB that is planning a rising, Jan. 1916
- Leads secession of GPO, is wounded and arrested, Apr. 1916
- Court-martialled, sentenced to death and executed, May 1916
- Serves with the First Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment, 1902-1889

Belfast
- Visits to organise branch of Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI), Aug. 1910
- Moves to live, joint ITGWU, Mar. 1911
- Appointed Ulster District Organiser, ITGWU, July 1911
- Leads strike by female mill workers, Oct. 1911
- Delegates to Belfast Trades Council, Nov. 1911
- Speaks at Independent Labour Party of Ireland meeting on Home Rule Bill, demanding women's suffrage, Apr. 1912
- Unsuccessfully contests North Belfast, municipal elections, Jan. 1913
- Organises protest meeting against partition, April 1914

Perth
- Married 1st wife, Mary Reynolds, 13 March 1899

Edinburgh
- Born 107 Cowgate, 5 June 1868
- Returns after leaving British army, employed as carter with the city's Cleansing Department, 1889
- Visits to organise branch of Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI), Aug. 1910
- Moves to live, joint ITGWU, Mar. 1911
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- Unsuccessfully contests North Belfast, municipal elections, Jan. 1913
- Organises protest meeting against partition, April 1914

Dundee
- Sells for New York for lecture tour sponsored by the Socialist Labour Party, Aug. 1902
- Returns to Ireland from USA, July 1916

Newcastle
- Serves as Secretary of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP), Oct. 1897
- Fundraisers for the ISRP's Workers' Republic paper, June 1898
- Lectures, June-July 1911
- Addresses May Day meeting, May 1902
- Chairs inaugural meeting of the Socialist Labour Party, June 1903
- Visits as part of 'Fairy Cross' tour canvassing British TUC support for locked-out workers in Dublin, Dec. 1913

Colour Key to locations in Britain

Talks, lectures, meetings, Apr. – Aug. 1892
Talks, lectures, meetings, Apr. – June. 1901
Speaks at public meetings in relation to the Lockout, Oct. – Dec. 1913

Locations with multiple names had events on more than one occasion, denoted by colour

Notes of the Irish Revolution Resources for Schools p. 7
D.M.P CASE FILE
NO. 198729

SUSPECT:
James Connolly

Age: __________________________ Gender: __________________________
Marital Status: __________________________ Spouse’s Name: __________________________
Parents’ Nationality: __________________________ Place of Birth: __________________________
Occupation(s): __________________________
Countries Visited Outside of Ireland: __________________________

Year: __________________________ Purpose: __________________________

Known Publications: __________________________

Political Beliefs: __________________________

Details of Socialist Activity 1898-1912: __________________________

Known Associates: __________________________

Links to Organisations: __________________________
My union was a craft trade, the bakery trade and there was a general feeling among the craft unions at the time that this new type of union catering for dockers and almost non-descript kind of workers, was a kind of feeling of contempt for this type of worker - a snobbishness among the craftsmen. That it was only they that should have the privilege of having trade unions, you see. Because this was a new development, and it developed in England of course with the organisation general workers and gas workers and all the others who were not specifically tradesmen or craftsmen, you see.

Larkin could start a meeting at a street corner, wherever he could get a few people to talk to. And of course we were captivated by Larkin, you see. He had the most compelling presence. He was a very big man, a giant of a man, he was well over six feet tall, you know, very broad, very marked features, angular features. And, of course, he was a great orator, I suppose he was a great natural orator - certainly that I ever heard.

When Larkin became emotional, which was quite frequently - he could call up emotions very, very quickly, but particularly anger. His oratory had the genuine content of emotion genuinely felt. In most cases oratory, as we know from our public representatives, anger or strong emotion is usually worked up. But with Larkin, when he was annoyed, he was really annoyed. It wasn’t pretence at all. He could call up these emotions quite spontaneously so that we were quite attracted to his meetings.

Now, often he would have other colleagues on the platform: O’Brien, P.T. Daly. Foran, Farran, and others who were colleagues of his at the time. But I don’t remember even one of those. Larkin’s presence was so compelling that you didn’t notice or listen to anybody else on the platform.

Sitting there listening to Larkin, I realised that I was in the presence of something that I have never come across before, some great primeval force rather than a man. A tornado, a storm-driven wave, the rush into life of a spring, and the blasting breath of autumn, all seemed to emanate from the power that spoke. It seemed as if his personality caught up, assimilated, and threw back to the vast crowd that surrounded him every emotion that swayed them, every pain and joy that they had ever felt made articulate and sanctified. Only the great elemental force that is in all crowds had passed into his nature forever.
A report in William Martin Murphy's Irish Independent published the day Larkin called the 200 tramway-men in his union out on strike.

**THE STRIKE THAT FAILED**

With a callous disregard of the interests of the city which was in strict keeping with his public declaration that he did not care twopence for the trade of Dublin, Mr. James Larkin yesterday ordered his dupes in the tramway service to cease work. It being the first day of the Horse Show and the city full of visitors, it was evidently calculated that the maximum of inconvenience would be caused to the public and that thereby the power of the arch-disturber would receive an impressive advertisement.

Mr. Larkin is out now and ever for the notoriety that pays. He has none of the instincts of the genuine labour leader ... The creation, not the settlement, of disputes is his trade. Adjustment of differences between employers and employed by friendly conference would put him out of business. His wild excesses of language and his erratic actions were evidently too much for his former Socialist colleagues across the Channel. When he became a labour union organiser he soon betrayed his ill-disciplined mind and inveterate malice. His incomparable audacity was the mainstay of his ambition. It was an evil day for this country when he determined to make his home here in the hope of thriving on the misfortunes he would inflict upon its industry.

At this hour of the day his record should have been a warning to intelligent men whom he might try to dupe. Nearly two years ago he inveigled Irish railwaymen into a strike to subserve his plans. The strike was as the Irish public will remember a wretched fiasco. Many there are who have reason to curse the day they fell victims to the scheming of Mr. James Larkin ...

An impudent, swaggering bully Mr. James Larkin is known to be, but his audacity never before reached the height of ordering a strike in a service wherein his adherents numbered only one-fifth of the employees. The autocrat of "Liberty Hall" excelled, himself - and at the same time covered himself with ridicule. He must have trusted much to the influence of organised intimidation to gain his ends, but his hopes were falsified by the event.

Indescribably foul of mind and tongue, he has surrounded himself with a staff of professional disturbers who are fit servants of their chief. If the preparedness of the authorities has made mob-rule impossible, Mr. Larkin will resort to his natural weapon of filthy abuse. But the calling of bad names did not intimidate the majority of tramwaymen who remained loyal ...

It is rapidly becoming a question for the whole nation to consider how far the industries of this country shall be exploited to their lasting injury by this imported propagandist of revolutionary Socialism. ... With sane and effective trade unionism the new unionism has nothing in common ... It is an evil out of which no good can come.
Comprehension Questions

Documents D - G

1. According to Document D, what was the feeling among the skilled craftsmen about the 'new kind of union'?

2. Give two reasons why John Swift was 'captivated' by James Larkin. (Doc D)

3. What are the similarities and differences between the two accounts of Larkin? (Doc D & E)

   Similarities

   Differences

4. According to the Irish Independent, why did Larkin organise the Tramway strike on the first day of the Dublin Horse Show? (Doc F)

5. How does the description of Larkin speech-making and language in Document F differ from the description in Document E? Refer to both documents in your answer.

6. Other than Larkin's language, what negative character traits are identified in Document F?

7. Which of the three sources, Documents D, E, and F would you consider the least reliable? Refer to all three of the documents in your answer.
A TITANIC STRUGGLE

What is the truth about the Dublin dispute? What was the origin of the Dublin dispute? ... In the year 1911 the National Seamen's and Firemen's Union, as a last desperate expedient to avoid extinction, resolved upon calling a general strike in all the home ports. The call was in danger of falling upon deaf ears ... until the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union began to take a hand in the game. As ships came into the Port of Dublin ... each was held up by the dockers under the orders of James Larkin until its crew joined the union, and signed on under union conditions and rates of pay. Naturally, this did not please the shipowners and merchants of Dublin.

But the delegates of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union up and down the docks preached most energetically the doctrine of the sympathetic strike, and the doctrine was readily assimilated by the dockers and carters. It brought the union into a long and bitter struggle along the quays, a struggle which ... earned for it the bitterest hatred of every employer in the city, every one of whom swore they would wait their chance to 'get even with Larkin and his crew'...

[The ITGWU] has won for our own members the following increases within the last two years: cross channel dockers got, since the strike in the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, an increase of wages of 3s. per week ... general carriers 25s. to 35s., coal fillers halfpenny per ton, grain bushellers 1d. per ton, men and boys in the bottle-blowing works from 25s. to 10s. per week of an increase, mineral water operatives 4s. to 6s. per week, and a long list of warehouses in which girls were exploited were compelled to give some slight modification of the inhuman conditions under which their employees were labouring ...

The employers, mad with hatred of the power that had been wrested from them, the improved conditions, a few of which I have named, rallied round Murphy, and ... he became the leader and organising spirit of a band of four hundred.

I have always told our friends in Great Britain that our fight ... was hammered out of the hard necessities of our situation. Here, in this brief synopsis, you can trace its growth for yourselves. First ... we took the fierce beast of capital by the throat all over Dublin, and loosened its hold on the vitals of thousands of our class. Then a rally of the forces of capital to recover their hold, and eventually a titanic struggle, in which the forces of labour in Britain openly, and the forces of capital secretly, became participants. That is where we stand to-day ... To those who criticise us we can only reply: we fight as conditions dictate; we meet new conditions with new policies. Those who choose, may keep old policies ... We cannot and will not try.

By James Connolly

William Martin Murphy [dismissed] two hundred of his tramway traffic employees for being members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and thus forced on the strike of the tramway men. Immediately he appealed to all the Dublin employers who had been forced into a semblance of decency by Larkin and his colleagues ... and lured them on to a desperate effort to combine and destroy the one labour force they feared.

The employers, mad with hatred of the power that had been wrested from them, the improved conditions, a few of which I have named, rallied round Murphy, and ... he became the leader and organising spirit of a band of four hundred.

I have always told our friends in Great Britain that our fight ... was hammered out of the hard necessities of our situation. Here, in this brief synopsis, you can trace its growth for yourselves. First ... we took the fierce beast of capital by the throat all over Dublin, and loosened its hold on the vitals of thousands of our class. Then a rally of the forces of capital to recover their hold, and eventually a titanic struggle, in which the forces of labour in Britain openly, and the forces of capital secretly, became participants. That is where we stand to-day ... To those who criticise us we can only reply: we fight as conditions dictate; we meet new conditions with new policies. Those who choose, may keep old policies ... We cannot and will not try.

By James Connolly
A trade-union poster calling employees of the Dublin United Tramway Company (DUTC) to an Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) mass meeting at Liberty Hall on 26 July 1913. The previous Saturday, William Martin Murphy had called his workers to a midnight meeting where he warned he would sack anyone who was an ITGWU member. On 21 July, workers in the parcels department of the DUTC were sacked and told to reapply but only if they had left the union.
Mr Murphy first disclaimed any leadership of the Dublin employers. 'I am concerned only with the Tramways and the other concerns which I control and what has happened is that the other employers in the city are now following my example. The shipowners, coal merchants and others have endured Larkinism for a long time and it was not until Larkin began to attack the undertaking in which I am interested that I took action. Following my example but not my lead, the other employers have decided to end this tyranny once and for all. It is not a question of an attack on trade unionism at all. I have been in business for nearly fifty years and I have never before known anything like Larkinism. It is not trade unionism in the ordinary sense at all.'...

'So long as the Transport Union stands for syndicalism and Larkinism, it is no use discussing it at all because the position has become intolerable for the trade of the city...'

Larkin's organisation is the only one banned by the employers. There have of course been disputes between employers and other trade unions but these have been dealt with and settled on ordinary lines.

The men concerned have not been under an unscrupulous leader with no sense of responsibility"...

'Supposing', I asked Mr Murphy, 'that in instead of adopting guerrilla tactics the union had prepared a programme asking for general improvement in the wages and conditions, how do you think the employers might have received it?'

'I think,' he replied 'they would have recognised and welcomed a union conducted on those lines if it had been organised in the interests of the men.

The existing union certainly helped them in one way or another in the early days, but the ambition of this man to become dictator has completely destroyed any good effect which the union might originally have had in improving the conditions of the workmen. I have said over and over again that these unorganised men wanted organisation and that they were not as well treated as they ought to be by their employers..."
Comprehension Questions
Documents G - H

1. What event does Document G identify as marking the beginning of the Dublin dispute, and why?

2. What do you think James Connolly meant when he said "all of these increases were the result of the sympathetic strike policy"?

3. According Connolly who was responsible for 'forcing' the tramway strike, and why? (Doc G)

4. For what reason was a mass meeting being held in Liberty Hall on 26 July 1913? (Doc H)

5. How would you describe the tone of the 'New Ragtime' printed on the poster? Refer to (Doc H) in your answer.

6. Identify two ways in which Document I disagrees with points made by James Connolly in Document G.

7. What is William Martin Murphy's viewpoint on 'Larkinism' and on Larkin himself

Larkinism
Larkin
Another concern between employers and workers: the National Health Plan in the UK.

The Dublin Congress of Employers and Professional Organizations (CNTE) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (CIT) warned that the government's plans to introduce a National Health Plan could lead to unfair discrimination and exploitation of workers.

The Dublin Congress of Employers and Professional Organizations (CNTE) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (CIT) have condemned the government's plans to introduce a National Health Plan as a means of exploiting workers and exploiting society.

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