



trade union information

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THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT
IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY - PART I

THE TRADE UNIONS IN DENMARK
THE TRADE UNIONS IN BRITAIN
THE IRISH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

produced by the trade union information division

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This is the first of three special numbers which between them provide brief descriptions of the trade union movements in the nine countries of the European Community. The descriptions are based on a series of articles produced by the trade union information division at an earlier time.

Increasing numbers of trade union representatives are involved in contacts with their counterparts in other countries and they may wish to have background material for such contacts. Other trade unionists may be interested more generally in seeing how the different trade union movements in the European Community compare with their own.

We have tried to list and to answer questions which trade unionists might ask about West European movements: How did the trade union movement develop? What is its structure? What overall policies does it pursue? What are the relations with political parties? What method of collective bargaining does it employ? Does it have a policy on industrial democracy? Finally, what attitude does the trade union movement adopt towards European unification?

Providing information from nine countries on all these questions is not an easy matter. We shall aim to make frequent revisions, so as to ensure that the items are up-to-date and comprehensive.

The titles in this first part are:

THE TRADE UNIONS IN DENMARK

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THE TRADE UNIONS IN DENMARK

The Danish Federation of Trade Unions Landsorganisationen i Danmark (L.O.), is the biggest labour organisation in Denmark. At 1 January 1974 the L.O. consisted of 930,137 members organised in 43 affiliated trade unions.

The beginnings

Towards the middle of the 19th century the industrial revolution, which had already brought about profound social changes in other countries in Western Europe, caught up with Denmark. During the 1860's new companies appeared - the railways, regular shipping lines etc. Until this period the main feature of the Danish economy had been agriculture plus small-town craftsmen and artisans: now Denmark became a modern industrial society. This change in economic structure did not cause as much disruption in Denmark as in some other countries which were affected by the industrial revolution at the same time. Nevertheless the workers emerged as a new social class. The new economic and social conditions forced them to organise both at political and trade union level.

It was about 1870 that the first Danish trade unions came into being. Their first aim was to collect funds to support strikes and to secure higher wages. From the very beginning the movement was at loggerheads with the establishment and in 1872 a real battle was witnessed when the police and the hussars were given the order to charge the crowd attending an open-air public meeting held in Copenhagen. Union leaders were thrown into prison and the International Workmen's Association (the First International) which had coordinated the movement until this date, was banned.

In 1873 a number of independent trade unions were formed to replace it. The National Federation of Trade Unions - Landsorganisationen De Samvirkende Fagforbund - was founded in 1898. At this time it linked together 38 national trade unions and 25 local unions representing 60,000 members in all. Its strength was first tried as soon as 1899 when the Employers' Confederation (also established in 1898) enforced a lockout in a clash which gradually involved 40,000 workers.

The dispute lasted three months and was resolved by the signing of the "September Agreement" which solved the problems in hand and laid down a number of basic rules for future negotiations. Thus the right of workers to organise themselves in Trade Unions was acknowledged. "The Agreement of 1960" replaced the original "September Agreement".

Since 1910 an industrial court has been given the responsibility of ensuring that this agreement is adhered to, and the post of Government Conciliator was established in the same year. The "general rules for settling industrial disputes" date from the same period. They lay down the procedure for settling disputes on the interpretation of agreements.

During the First World War the trade union movement made real progress which was, however, followed by a set-back in the 1920's, a decade characterised by a high level of unemployment. Ever since then the total strength of the trade union movement has grown continuously:

1900:	96,000	1940:	543,000
1910:	123,000	1950:	714,000
1920:	355,000	1960:	776,000
1930:	339,000	1970:	890,000
		1973:	930,000

LO aims and tasks

The aims and tasks of the LO are described in the constitution in the following way:

The LO aims to unite the trade unions of the country in order to cooperate for the defence of workers' interests and for the achievement of democracy in industry and the economy.

With this in view, the tasks of the LO are as follow:

- support for affiliated trade unions, particularly when employers attempt to hamper organisational work or the efforts of the workers to improve working conditions;
- furtherance of common action and solidarity among the affiliated trade unions, both in general matters and those concerning the employers and their federations;
- unconditional mutual assistance in the case of a strike or a lock-out;
- advice and assistance in trade union questions and labour law, as well as support for trade unions in cases before the labour court;
- informing unions and their members as well as other groups in society and the general public about aims and tasks of the trade union movement. LO retains the meeting centre "Højstrupgård" for this purpose;
- encouragement of efforts to reach new trade union conceptions, in agreement with the affiliated trade unions;
- maintenance and extension of international relations with free trade union organisations of other countries, in particular with a view to providing mutual assistance;
- contributing to the distribution of information about social, economic and similar questions including support to the social democratic press and collaboration in the training and further training of shop stewards;
- publication of a trade union periodical;
- comparison, evaluation and judgment of data on the economy and - if necessary - preparation of statistics of its own);
- collaboration in solving jurisdictional disputes among the affiliated trade unions and in the creation of an organisational structure suited to changes in society;
- joint action with other related free and democratic organisations including the cooperative movement; in collaboration with the social democratic party furtherance of social legislation and other legislation in the interests of the workers.

Structure of the LO

The Congress is the highest decision-making body in the LO and alone can draw up the statutes, repeal or amend them. Its decisions are binding on the Executive Committee and the General Council. It consists of the general secretaries of all the affiliated national trade unions, a representative of each local trade union which is separately affiliated, and a representative of each local federation of workers. The Congress meets for ordinary sessions

once every four years but an extraordinary meeting can be called by the Executive Committee or the General Council as required.

At the ordinary sessions the Congress elects the Executive Committee consisting of a president, a vice president, a treasurer, a number of secretaries and sixteen members.

Between the meetings of the Congress, the General Council is the highest decision-making body. It consists of the Executive Committee plus representatives of the affiliated organisations on the basis of one representative for every 2,000 members or fraction of this number.

The General Council is called together for a meeting at least once a year. Should the need arise it can also be called by the Executive Committee or by at least 50 members of the General Council.

The day-to-day work of the LO is carried out by the Executive Committee to which two members nominated by the Social Democratic Party may be added. The Executive Committee consults the General Council on all important questions.

The largest trade union bodies are the general workers' union, with 257,566 members, the office and commercial workers' union with 154,883 and the engineering workers' union with 103,559. The Danish trade union system is based on confederations, not on industrial unions. At the LO congress in 1967 it was decided to work for creation of nine industrial federations covering the whole of the labour market.

Industrial relations

In early times there were sharp clashes, practically a class struggle between employers and workers. To-day the view is taken that although not all divergences have been overcome, workers' and employers' interests coincide in many fields. Both sides have an interest in improving the organisation of work so that more is produced with the same work effort, in establishing the workplace in such a way that there is a pleasant work atmosphere and in ensuring that adequate safety precautions are taken where machinery is used.

A special agreement between the LO and the Employers' Confederation provides for committees of equal numbers of management and workers to examine day-to-day working conditions and to study proposals and plans for improvement. A new agreement on co-operation and bipartite committees in firms was signed in 1970. Both the trade unions and the employers' organisations did their utmost to interest the workers and the employers in the forming of these committees. The trade unions help these committees to function well by appointing their members and supporting them in their daily work.

Collective agreements are usually made between a national trade union and the corresponding employers' organisation. An agreement can, however, be made directly between a trade union and an employer. Most of the agreements are made between the organisations affiliated to the two central organisations - the LO and the Employers' Confederation. They normally run for two years and all terminate on the same date. They are renewed at the same time according to a well-defined procedure. The claims that affect all occupations, or the greater number of them, are negotiated by the two central organisations while the national unions negotiate for the claims of their own particular sector. The Government Conciliator (Forligsmanden) follows these negotiations. This appointment is a government post established by law which can give advice to both sides. Should the need arise he works out a draft agreement which is put to the vote in each organisation. Disputes in breach of an agreement can go to the Industrial Court (Arbejdsretten).

Events took an unusual turn in the biennial bargaining for an overall wages agreement starting on 1 March 1975.

Faced with an imminent labour conflict covering about 300,000 wage-earners in the private sector the newly elected Social Democratic government decided to intervene and managed to make Parliament adopt on 10 March 1975 an overall solution of incomes issues, including enactment of the draft compromise between the labour market parties, submitted one week earlier by the official Conciliator but rejected by both the employers federation DA and the trade union body LO. The draft compromise implies a total wage increase of 1,9 % for the coming 2-years period, excluding indexation of wages. Notices of strikes and lock-outs had been served to such an extent that the whole of Denmark's economic life would have been paralysed in the course of a few days if they had become effective. The government and a majority in Parliament therefore considered it necessary to intervene without delay.

Because of the employment situation which continues to be grave with about 140,000 unemployed (or more than 12 %) the intervention by Parliament in collective bargaining did not arouse vigorous protests in wage-earners' circles. The principal wage-earners' organisations, including LO, largely approved government intervention in the prevailing situation. The decisive reason for the break-down of negotiations was the unresponsive attitude of the employers, as they refused any wage improvements at all in the 2-years period ahead and demanded abolition, wholly or partly, of the present fully automatic cost-of-living adjustment of wages (indexation).

On the part of the trade union movement there was satisfaction that the overall solution of the government included intervention also as regards other income groups and equalisation as between the private and the public sector with regard to indexation of wages and salaries. It took into account also the fact that overall measures would be taken to limit profits in commerce, trade and industry.

The LO and social progress

The high level of social welfare in Denmark is overwhelmingly due to trade union pressure over the years. Collective agreements are the basis of all progress in this sphere, and have often led to legislation. The shorter working week, holidays with pay, industrial injury benefits, public holidays with pay, sickness benefits paid on a day to day basis, provisions for job security, superannuation and supplementary pensions are only a few examples of the advantages which were first achieved by collective bargaining. It was therefore a logical step for the trade union movement to become involved in much cooperation with the government and the employers both in order to put the existing social legislation into practice and to prepare for future legislation. The trade union movement is always consulted when a new law is being drafted, irrespective of the government in power.

The 27th congress of LO (Copenhagen May 1971) passed the following resolutions on the labour market:

The results of the last renewal of the wage agreement were above all improvements for the lower income groups and for women. A further improvement of women's wages will be called for in the next negotiations with the aim of achieving wage equality everywhere where men and women do the same work.

Congress welcomes the introduction of four weeks' annual leave, because increased leisure time is a great priority in the evolution of society.

Congress welcomes the signature of the new cooperation agreement in the private and public sectors.

Economic democracy

The 1971 LO congress took a position on economic democracy which follows.

Congress affirms that the time has now come for a democratisation of property rights. There must be more equality in regard to income, capital and decision-making.

The trade union movement cannot allow that capital, which is certainly necessary for increasing investment and production, is formed in a way that leads to permanent inequality in the distribution of property and capital. "Compulsory saving" through price formation, amortisation and taxes, the main burden of which is borne by the workers, cannot any longer be accepted as a method of deciding who is the owner of capital and who should have the right of decision about the utilisation of capital. The workers must demand a share in the growth of capital, to which they contribute through their work. LO must ensure that workers have influence and co-determination over the running of their firm and joint property rights in the means of production.

Some ways in which the workers' movement can achieve a greater degree of democracy in the economic field are set out in the report of the LO committee for economic democracy. This concerns principles for a profits and investment fund of the workers, which will be central to the efforts of the workers for joint ownership of industry, a share in the growth of capital and codetermination in the running of firms.

The proposal means:

- a measure of democratisation of ownership, and therefore the transfer of ownership rights from existing owners of capital to the workers;
- that all workers should be brought into the plan, independently of whether they are occupied in the private or the public sector;
- that all workers should have a personal, equal share in the total capital of the fund;
- that workers should be entitled to a share in future profits and growth of capital.

The report contains the following further proposals:

- change and extension of the funds for workers' supplementary pensions (ATP) on a democratic basis and with more active placing of capital;
- establishment of a research institute which will be at the disposal of shop stewards and trade union representatives;
- intensified training of trade union representatives and shop stewards in the perspective of economic democracy;
- revision of company law, in order to give workers and the public a greater picture of the economic circumstances of firms;
- proposal for the representation of the workers in the leadership of firms;
- further extension of cooperatives and the workers' bank and
- public examination of concentrations in trade and industry.

Modern industry policy requires a modern conception of the control of the whole economy. Economic progress and further extension of democracy must go hand in hand.

The trade union movement recognises the need for increased saving and the strengthening of investment and capital formation. The time has now come for us to demand a more socially just distribution of welfare and productive capital. The workers demand a share in the growth of capital. We demand the democratisation of ownership rights and decision-making.

The LO and the Social Democratic Party worked closely together on the question of economic democracy, and it became a major part of the election programme of the Social Democrats in 1973. They suffered a reverse in the 1973 election, however, and progress could not be made during the minority Liberal government of 1974. Preoccupation with short-term employment problems has put the issue lower in the list of present priorities. However, discussions have been widened and deepened since the first proposals were made, and new proposals will emerge from these discussions.

Links with the Social Democratic Party and other allied bodies

Since its beginnings the trade union movement has maintained very close links with the Social Democratic Party. Indeed, originally they were one organisation. Though they have long since been separate, the links remain very close. Thus the LO is represented by two members on the Executive Committee of the Party and, by reciprocal agreement, the Social Democratic Party nominates two members to the Executive Committee of the LO. The LO also has extensive links with Denmark's important producer and consumer cooperative movements.

The three wings of the labour movement also share a special economic information service. The "Economic Council of the Labour Movement" collects and collates basic data which are used to support wage claims and negotiations. It represents the interests of workers on a number of economic committees. The LO devotes much time and effort to the provision of educational opportunities for the workers, and also to making their point of view known. The LO's journal, the Social-Democratic newspapers and some others ensure that this information reaches the public.

Jointly with the other workers' organisations the trade unions have formed a Workers' Education Association (Arbejdernes Oplysningsforbund - A.O.F.), through which the LO contributes to the education of both union officials and ordinary members. The labour movement as a whole is responsible for three education institutions, at Esbjerg, Roskilde and Elsinore. These are further education colleges open to all young people, but in addition to ordinary courses they give special courses for trade unionists. The LO also has at its disposal a conference centre at Elsinore where it organises special information sessions.

Civil servants' and salaried employees' organisation FTF

The LO works more and more closely with the powerful federation of Danish civil servants and salaried employees organisations - Faellesradet for danske Tjenestemands - og Funktionaerorganisationer (FTF). It has a membership of 250,000. The two organisations have often affirmed their common interest in the face of employers and public authorities.

In recent years the FTF has actively participated in international trade union work. Like LO, the FTF is a member of the Scandinavian trade union confederation (NFS), the European Trade Union Confederation and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

International links

The Danish trade unions have always had close contacts with the free trade union organisations throughout the world, and especially with those in the other Scandinavian countries. The LO is an active member of the Scandinavian trade union confederation (NFS). The LO is one of the founding members of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and it strongly encourages the increase in intergovernmental cooperation through the United Nations Organisation and its specialised agencies.

The LO leadership strongly supported the Social Democrat government during Denmark's negotiations to join the European Community, though there were naturally dissident voices too. At its special congress on May 18, 1972, it approved the entry terms by a vote of 524 to 406. The resolution adopted states that "... Congress considers Denmark's participation in enlarged cooperation within the EEC and a strengthening of trade union cooperation across frontiers to be the best basis of a solution to these problems and thereby of a further development of society in conformity with the fundamental interests of the labour movement!"

The LO is a founder member of the new European Trade Union Confederation which came into being on February 9, 1973.

As Denmark has become a member of the EEC, the Danish trade union movement must accomplish new tasks; LO is in particular represented on the Economic and Social Committee, the Standing Committee on Employment and in various other national and European committees dealing with the Community.

In these committees the LO has played a positive role in the creation of better conditions of work and life for Danish workers and in the other members countries.

Next four-yearly LO congress

The next congress of LO will take place from 12 to 16 May 1975. A series of important questions for Danish workers will be presented to it : a proposal for a programme of trade union activity directed towards improvement of the atmosphere at the workplace, a trade union proposal for a new system of taxes and a proposal for further decentralisation of trade union activity.

THE TRADE UNIONS IN BRITAIN

The British trade unions are divided into three types; general unions, those recruiting workers at any level in any industry: craft unions, recruiting craftsmen normally in engineering or similar industry: industrial unions confined to a particular industry (ceramics, seamen).

The British trade union movement is characterized by its unity within one national centre, the Trades Union Congress (TUC). Though the various unions are sovereign the TUC is the national spokesman on most trades union matters.

The TUC is by constitution and nature pledged to change by reform and legislation. The British trade unions have in most circumstances avoided introducing law or lawyers into industrial relations, relying upon moderation and conciliation rather than legal compulsion.

History of the movement

The foundations of the British trade union movement were laid in 1868 when the first ever Trades Union Congress was held. At this meeting 34 delegates representing 118,000 trade unionists met to discuss problems affecting the working people as a class. Previous to this the various craft associations and City Trades Councils had acted unilaterally and rather spasmodically. The effective history of the trade union movement started with the first TUC meeting and is underlined by a resolution passed at the first meeting which declared that "it is highly desirable that the trades of the United Kingdom should hold an annual Congress for the purpose of bringing the trades into closer alliance and to take action in all parliamentary matters pertaining to the general interests of the working classes".

For the first few decades the TUC and its constituent unions were concerned to alleviate many of the appalling hardships under which the working people laboured. The TUC lobbied for improved social conditions, better education, factory safety etc., whilst at the same time the unions themselves were as of these days concerned with the immediate living standard of their members. The TUC was always frustrated by having to use liberal Members of Parliament for putting forward working class opinions on parliamentary legislation. The parliamentary Committee of the TUC reported in 1899 "Your committee again wishes to point out that with the present mode of procedure of the House of Commons it is almost impossible to get any useful Bill through the House unless the Government allows it to pass by withdrawing its opposition and in our opinion of any remedy is to effected it must be done by the working class at the polls". From these opinions a political party representing the interests of the working class was formed: the Labour Party.

Up to and immediately prior to the 1914-18 war, a significant part of the trade union movement was syndicalist (believing that the trade unions should take over industry and government) in attitude. However by 1916 the reformist element was in control of the TUC and its unions, and reformism has been the dominating philosophy to this day.

After the first world war the TUC was firmly part of the national scene. Through the TUC the unions were part of the national governing system, the unions provided members of government committees and so on.

The economic depression of the 1920s caused much industrial unrest and in 1926 the coal miners unions led a strike - the first and only general (national) strike of trade unionists in Britain. This display of unity and power lasted 9 days. The miners' cause was not won and the bitterness caused by the actions of the Government led to great arguments between the politically motivated (syndicalist and Communist) unionists and the industrial-minded unionists who saw trade unionism in terms of industrial affairs only. The latter won and the unions ever since have generally left the political aspects of the working class advance to the Labour Party, limiting union activity to industrial affairs.

During the rest of the 1920s and 30s unemployment was a constant fear; the TUC proposed measures of public control in some industries and an acceptance of Keynesian economic policies by the government. The government however allowed unemployment and economic stagnation to continue. The then attractive theories of fascism or communism were combatted by the middle of the road policies of the TUC, so that neither communism or fascism gained significant support.

During the years of the 1939-45 war a political coalition was formed between the Conservative and Labour parties. Cooperation between government and trade unions was at a new high level. It was during the final period of the war that the TUC defined its policies for a new system of national welfare and economic controls. The election to power in 1945 of the Labour Party led to the establishment of a National Health Service and the Welfare State, and public ownership of coal mining, transport, electricity steel, etc. - all of which had been called for by the TUC.

The TUC advocated and played a major part in the 1950s in the promotion of increased industrial productivity. In 1955 it was given the power by its affiliated unions, to intervene in a dispute before negotiations have broken down if there was a likelihood of other work people being affected. This in effect has meant that the TUC has often been a fireman in industrial disputes.

Major recent issues

The framework of industrial relations has come under review several times since the second world war. A number of strikes in the 50s and 60s had a disproportionate effect on the country's economic activities and irritated public opinion. The Labour Government elected in 1964 set up a Royal Commission on the trade unions, headed by Lord Donovan. Its report published in 1968 made a large number of useful suggestions for the improvement of industrial relations, but had no formulae for dramatic improvements. It favoured the existing voluntary approach, with recognition by employers' federations and unions of the realities of piecemeal collective bargaining at factory level; it accordingly rejected a legal framework for industrial relations.

In spite of that the Labour Government produced a white paper "In place of strife", which, besides other measures, brought forward three involving penal sanctions against unions or strikers. After many discussions between the TUC and the Government the proposals were withdrawn, on the understanding that the TUC would take on new powers to deal with inter-union disputes and with unofficial strikes where these involved a substantial body of workers being laid off.

The Conservative Government elected in 1970 made a new and much more radical attempt to reform industrial relations and place them in a legal context. The TUC was informed that there could be no bargaining about matters of substance, only on details. The TUC replied with a boycott of consultations with the Government. The Industrial Relations Act became law in September 1971. However, practically all unions refused to register under the Act, thereby excluding themselves from tax exemption and a range of privileges under the Act. A policy of non-cooperation was pursued. Industrial relations went on much as before, except for certain trials of strength and certain distortions of normal industrial relations caused by unexpected effects of the Act.

The need to change large parts of the Act was widely recognised after three years of its existence, and the minority Labour Government of 1974 repealed it.

A major problem since the 1960s has been that of bringing some order into the wages system. Individual unions undertook their own bargaining without reference to others, and the strongest unions could achieve the highest increases. In a time of economic expansion such increases could be passed on consumers in the form of higher prices, and all the difficulties associated with inflation ensued. The Conservative Government of 1959-1964, alarmed at a growing balance of payments deficit, instituted a wage freeze. This measure led to inequities and cost the Conservatives a lot of popularity. The Labour Government in 1966 introduced a pay standstill

with the reluctant acquiescence of the annual Congress of the TUC. This measure did not however prevent the Government having to devalue the pound sterling in 1967. Later the trade union movement, after talks with the government, agreed that the TUC should examine all wage claims, to ensure that they complied with norms set by the TUC. This system worked well for a time.

However, by 1970 the system was under strain, and a round of major wage increases ensued. The Conservative Government elected in 1970 at first relaxed controls on the economy but at the end of 1972 put into operation statutory control of prices and a three-phase system of wage freeze and controlled rises. The Government resigned in February 1974 in connection with a claim by the Miners' Union to the National Coal Board for an increase going beyond the limits of phase three.

In September 1974 the annual congress of the TUC agreed on a "social contract" which the General Council had discussed with the Labour Government. The principle behind it was that one section, the workers, should be asked to make sacrifices only if other sections were also making sacrifices and if action was taken to achieve greater social justice. Given the high rate of inflation prevailing in Britain at that time, it was clear that the application of a policy of voluntary wage restraint would not be easy.

The TUC and industrial democracy

A subject which has come up for debate in the last two years after decades of absence from the agenda, is that of workers' participation in controlling their firms.

The General Council's proposals on industrial democracy were published in 1973. These foresee the gradual introduction of a new two-tier system in companies, with supervisory boards and management boards. One half of the supervisory board would be elected through the trade union machinery. The 1974 Congress both approved these proposals and adopted a resolution on industrial democracy sponsored by several trade unions, stressing rather the need to "extend the area of collective bargaining giving union representatives increasing control over elements of management including dismissals, discipline, introduction of new techniques, forward planning of manpower rationalisation, etc."

The effect of these decisions is to establish maximum flexibility in regard to the extension of industrial democracy. TUC legislative proposals embodying the decisions would oblige companies employing more than 2,000 workers to set up a two-tier board structure if there is trade union recognition and if the unions choose to exercise their right to have such a system. If the unions do not exercise that right, they can negotiate to extend collective bargaining to areas hitherto regarded as management prerogatives.

TUC structure and nature of the unions

The TUC is composed of 107 trade unions representing just over 10 million workers (7.5m men, 2.5m women) or about 40% of the total full time working population (23 million). There are no major trade unions not affiliated to the TUC. Traditionally, most unions organise workers with the same trade or skill, irrespective of the industry in which they work. Hence the name "trade union".

The trend in recent years has been for some of the smaller unions to join in with larger unions; these amalgamations mean that 70% of the total membership of the TUC is in only 12 unions.

The number of unions is a source of some friction, particularly when there are competing trade unions in the same industry. For example, in the TUC section dealing with engineering there are ten unions representing 1.5 million trade union members. The dominant union is the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW) with 1,374,866 members. The smallest unions in the engineering section are the Society of Shuttlemakers with 128 members and the Military and Orchestral Musical Instrument Makers Trades Society with 126 members. Some other unions in this section are Patternmakers 12,000, Metal Mechanics 47,000, Metalworkers 6,000, Sheetmetal Workers 76,000. Moreover, the Transport and General Workers' Union (1,785,496 members) covers a large part of the engineering industry. A certain amount of overlapping and rivalry among unions exists. However, where several unions exist in the same firm, they form a committee for the purpose of bargaining with the employer. Moreover, there is a TUC procedure for settling disputes between unions.

Under the TUC's "Bridlington Agreement", when a dispute concerning demarcation or inter-union recognition arises, the trade unions concerned put their case to a small committee of other disinterested trade unionists, nominated by the TUC, who judge the case on its merits. Judgements, backed by the full weight of the TUC, have always been accepted, and the "Bridlington" procedure has come to play an important role in inter-union relations.

The multiplicity of trade unions has been of great concern to the TUC since the beginning of the century. The number of unions went as high as 267 in 1917, but in recent years there has been a clear if slow trend towards reducing the number.

In the last few years there have been several major amalgamations, usually taking the form of smaller unions linking with one of the bigger ones, though they have not always been in the direction of industrial unions. The Amalgamated Engineering Union has successfully linked with the Constructional Engineering Union, the Foundry Workers Union and the Draughtsmans' Union to form a new giant union, the AUEW, with 1,374,866 members.

However, amongst the printing unions antagonism between traditionally rival crafts and conflicting personalities have caused the break of the merger between the two largest unions.

In the building industry there is now one major union, UCATT, with 257, 224 members, where there were 16 in 1960.

The Transport and General Workers' Unions (TGWU), the largest union in the TUC (1,785,496) has grown over the years largely through mergers. Recently it has absorbed the Plasterers Union, the Chemical Workers Union and the Vehicle Builders Union. Overtures made in 1970/71 to the National Union of Seamen were rejected.

The TGWU is divided into eleven "trade groups": employees, car industry, construction, chemicals and oil, road transport (freight), road transport (passenger), ports and water transport, food and drink, energy and engineering, public services, general workers. Today only a small proportion of its members in in the transport sector. Perhaps the most fragmented sector is that of textiles and clothing; 22 unions have in total 321,787 members. However even here the reality is different because four unions account for 90 per cent of this membership.

Trade union mergers are dictated by the obvious necessity of having a large strong union to defend the workers' interests, but also sometimes by large unions competing with their rivals to form even larger ones.

The political colouring of the TUC has in the last few years become more radical. In particular the two giants, the TGWU and AUEW, have elected more left-wing leaders, and this trend has been repeated in some other unions.

Method of collective bargaining

Traditionally, British trade unions have relied upon the services of voluntary union workers, i.e. shop stewards, to run the union. The number of trade union members to each fulltime officer has therefore been very high. In engineering the ratio is one full officer to 6,807 members with each officer performing on an average over 60 hours per week union work. There are about 3,000 full time trade union officers in Britain, that is one officer to every 3,800 trade union members. In the USA the ratio is 1 : 1,400, in West Germany 1 : 800, and in Italy and France 1 : 1,500.

The average officer has 172 shop stewards within his responsibility and on average is in contact of some sort only once in every 8 weeks with each shop steward. The result of this is that the shop steward has a large amount of responsibility put upon him. The average of the (175,000) shop stewards holds his position for about six years.

Until recent times there were many unofficial strikes led by shop stewards without the official backing of the union. The slowness of reaching agreements at national level led to impatience among the rank and file in particular situations. Even if the strike was contrary to union rules, the shop stewards leading it were rarely disciplined by the union, because it realised that they were in touch with the real feelings of the members. The new leadership in the unions has recognized the power and the relevance of the shop steward and is now attempting to negotiate agreements and disputes procedures that give more attention to the shop floor than in the previous national agreements. The older type of national agreement kept the power and decision-making for industrial relations at the top, the newer agreements give much more power and flexibility to factory managers and shop stewards.

White collar trade unionism

With the decline in membership of some of the older unions (coalminers, railwaymen, steel workers, shipbuilding, textile workers, etc.) there has been a corresponding increase in white collar trade unionism. The last 10 years has seen the number of non-manual (white collar) workers in the TUC increased by 2 million, whilst the number of manual workers has decreased.

Of the 6,000,000 non-manual workers in the private sector only 900,000 were in trade unions ten years ago. However, within the TUC the white collar unions, civil servants, teachers, local government employees, clerks, etc. are now growing in importance. These unions have brought newer ideas and traditions into the TUC meetings.

White collar trade unions have increased their representation on the General Council and the fastest-growing of them all, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (310,000 members) now has a seat.

There is strong competition among white-collar unions to recruit new membership. Most of the cases which come before the disputes machinery of the TUC nowadays concern either disputes between white-collar unions or between a white-collar union and an industrial union in respect of office-workers in the sector concerned.

Unions in the public sector are much more militant than hitherto. The National and Local Government Officers Association (with 518,117 members, the fourth largest union in the TUC) held its first ever strike in 1974. In times of government-imposed wage-freezes, public service unions have always done badly, because the government can control the sectors where it is the employer much more strictly than private industry.

Labour Party - trade union relations

The majority of trade unions affiliate to the Labour Party - the exceptions being the civil service unions and some other professional workers unions. A small part of each union member's weekly or monthly contribution is paid to the Labour Party. This is voluntary and if he does not wish to pay the "political levy", he can contract out.

The trade unions pay via their affiliation fees the greater part of the administrative costs of the Labour Party. Half of the National Executive of the Labour Party is elected by the trade unions themselves and they speak and use their votes at the Labour Party Conferences. The unions, with their large votes (called block votes) at Labour Party Conference, have been demanding that greater attention be paid to the "industrial voice" of the Party. On important issues such as British entry into the EEC the trade union votes are the determining factor in deciding Party policy.

The TUC has to have relations with governments of any political colour and its relationships with Governments since the war have generally been good. The struggle in 1968 between the Labour Government and the TUC over the introduction of penal sanctions in industrial relations caused bitterness between the two sides, and close collaboration was resumed only after Labour went into opposition in 1970. Meanwhile the Conservative Government aroused hostility through legislation on industrial relations and a statutory incomes policy, and drove congress closer to the Labour Party than it had been for a long time.

European policy of the TUC

In recent years a majority of the membership represented at the annual congress has been hostile towards Britain's membership of the European Economic Community. On the economic side, TUC statements have expressed doubt as to whether Britain's annual financial contribution to the Community would be matched by corresponding economic advantages.

At the 1973 annual congress a motion urging the TUC "to join, work with and nominate members for all committees, institutions and organisations with which it is entitled to participate within the EEC in accordance with its responsibility to promote the British trade union view" was lost by the narrow margin of 4,452,000 against 4,922,000.

The 1974 annual congress again expressed opposition to Britain's membership of the EEC. It proposed stringent conditions for the Labour Government's renegotiation of Britain's terms of entry to the EEC and stressed the need for a referendum on the issue.

At the same time Congress expressed the belief that "our opposition to membership of the EEC should not deter us from endeavouring to utilise the ties that already exist between British trade unions and trade unions in Europe to defend the rights and interests of our members"; cooperation with them should therefore be a matter of priority.

THE IRISH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Milestones in Irish union history

During the 19th century when local trade unions arose and started to combine into national bodies, all Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. Irish union membership played its due part in the foundation of the British Trades Union Congress in 1868. The TUC annual congress was held in Dublin in 1880 and in Belfast in 1893 (as well as in Belfast again in 1929).

Irish unions found that little time was available for discussing Irish affairs at these meetings and they decided to set up an Irish Trade Union Congress in 1894. The Irish part of individual unions remained united with the British part; there were very few purely Irish unions. The unions at the turn of the century were mainly craft unions.

The situation changed decisively in 1909, with the formation of the Irish Transport Workers' Union (soon after to be known as the Irish Transport and General Workers' union). Jim Larkin, a gifted orator and organiser, had had difficulties with his union, the National Union of Dock Labourers, since 1907 when a bitter strike had taken place in Belfast docks over union membership; a refusal of the NUDL to support a carters' strike in Dublin in November 1908 led to a final break. He founded a new union in January 1909, based on two principles which ensured rapid organisational success - industrial unionism and Irish nationalism. The great Irish socialist and trade union leader James Connolly wrote about the ITGWU:

"It found the workers of Ireland on their knees, and has striven to raise them to the erect position of manhood; it found them with all the vices of slavery in their souls, and it strove to eradicate these vices and replace them with some of the virtues of free men; it found them with no other weapons of defence than the arts of the liar, the lick-spittle and the toady, and it combined them and taught them to abhor these arts and rely proudly on the defensive power of combination".

From then on the ITGWU was engaged in bitter struggles both on the industrial front and for Irish independence. A culmination of its industrial efforts came in the "Labour war" of 1913. The Union had been active amongst employees of the Dublin United Tramway Company, who were entirely unorganised, and as a result the Company took steps to dismiss any employee who was known to have joined the Union. Provocative action by the employer led to a strike in August 1913 which sparked off a six-months' titanic struggle in Dublin, during which 400 Dublin employers combined to crush the Union, through the use of the lock-out and blackleg labour, as well as through forcing their employees to sign a document pledging that they would give up membership of the ITGWU or not join it as the case might be. The Union responded with "sympathetic strikes" and it received support from unions all over the world. The dispute dragged on into 1914 and eventually petered out, with the Union reduced in membership but not smashed.

This industrial struggle had become in part also a nationalist struggle, since there was a natural alliance between the British rulers and the employers, and the enhanced status of the ITGWU made it more of a focal point for nationalism. This means not only political action but also a prominent part in the Irish Citizen Army. The great Labour leader and nationalist James Connolly had been associated with the ITGWU from the beginning and he became acting general secretary when James Larkin left on a lecture-tour of the U.S.A. (not to return until 1923). The high point of the nationalist struggle was the Easter 1916 rising, which was put down ruthlessly by the British. Connolly was executed, Liberty Hall (the Union headquarters) was in ruins after being one of the focal points of the military operation, the books, documents and furniture of the Union were confiscated and the officers were imprisoned.

However, the ITGWU made a rapid recovery and set about giving itself a solid organisational basis throughout the country, taking advantage of the masses of workers now joining it. The Union survived the repression of 1920-21 and acted as a force for conciliation in the Civil war of 1922-23, which followed the inception of the Irish Free State.

Problems of a different order arose when James Larkin returned from the U.S.A. in 1923. He lost a struggle with William O'Brien and other general officers for control of the Union and after a legal action had gone against him he was expelled in March 1924. Some Dublin sections left with him and he founded a second general union based in the Irish Free State, the Workers' Union of Ireland. Great personal hostility then existed between the ITGWU general secretary, William O'Brien and James Larkin, and the WUI was kept out of the Irish Trade Union Congress.

In the 20'S other Irish unions were set up. However, British unions continued to be represented in Ireland, both north and south of the border. Besides the two general workers' unions mentioned above, a third one grew in strength - the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union, which is the Irish section of the British TGWU: the Irish headquarters are in Belfast but a substantial membership exists in the Republic of Ireland (as the Irish Free State later became). Other British-based general workers' union are also represented in Ireland.

The overlapping and duplication resulting from the two sets of unions - Irish and British based - led to rivalry which at times erupted into open disputes.

The unions were accordingly not as well placed as they could have been to face the economic difficulties of the 20's, 30's and 40's. The Irish Free State started with a very small industrial base. During the 1930's the Fianna Fail government pursued a protectionist policy, leading to the establishment of many new industries which concentrated on the production of light consumer goods for the home market. By 1939 there was a small industrial sector giving employment to one person in six of the working population. Having this level of industry helped Ireland to survive during the second world war, but through shortages of raw materials and other factors industrial output had fallen by 1944 to three-quarters of its pre-war level. Prices rose but wages were frozen by the wages standstill Order of 1941, which was opposed by the trade unions. Unemployment grew and emigration rose to the abnormally high level of 85,000 in the two-year period between censuses in 1941 and 1943.

Trade union rivalries caused a split in the Labour Party during this period. The ITGWU severed its connection because James Larkin had been accepted as a candidate and elected as a deputy for Dublin. (The breach was healed in 1948). This split in the Labour Party was paralleled by a more serious and long-lasting dispute within the trade union movement.

An attempt was made in part III of the Trade Union Act 1941 (Republic of Ireland) to control inter-union rivalry and gradually to phase out the British-based unions. This part of the 1941 Act never became operative as the Supreme Court held that it was unconstitutional, but certain of the Irish-based unions sympathised with the aims behind the clause.

Differing outlooks led in 1945 to a split in the Irish National Trade Union Congress, which had been the sole national centre since 1894. The issue on which the break came was whether the ITUC should join the World Federation of Trade Unions, certain Irish-based unions refusing to accept a majority decision of the executive that the ICTU should join. While certain Irish unions remained with the British-based ones in the ITUC, others including the ITGWU formed a new Congress of Irish Unions. The ITUC was then able to take into affiliation the Workers' Union of Ireland, which had been kept out before through the presence of the ITGWU.

After many conciliation efforts the two bodies came together in 1959 to form the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Unionisation in the Republic

In a survey undertaken by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 1970 it was shown that there were 95 trade unions operating in the Republic of Ireland.

The six general unions operating in the Republic of Ireland had between them an estimated 56% of total trade union membership. One union, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, is the largest single union. There were 48 unions catering exclusively for office, distributive, professional, and service workers, with a further substantial number of white-collar workers organised in the general unions. The remaining 41 unions catered for manual workers. Many of these were craft unions.

About 96% of the organised workers in the Republic belong to unions which are affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Most of the unions not affiliated cater for white-collar workers. Of these perhaps the most notable is the Irish Bank Officials' Association.

Of the 95 unions operating in the Republic in 1970, 24 had their head offices in Britain. They had about 14% of the total membership.

In view of the large number of unions their average size is small. No fewer than 23 unions had under 250 members each in 1970, 11 had between 250 and 500 members, and 15 had between 500 and 1,000 members. Thus 49 unions had fewer than 1,000 members each. In all they accounted for about 17,700 members or 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the total.

There were 30 unions with more than 2,000 members each and they represented 89% of the total union membership.

Unionisation in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland 77 unions were active in 1970. Of these 17 unions, accounting for 9% of total membership, had their headquarters in Northern Ireland itself, while 5 unions with 6% of total membership had their headquarters in the Republic. The remaining 55 unions had their head offices in Britain. All the unions with headquarters in Northern Ireland catered for white-collar workers and all but one of them were in the public sector.

Of the 77 unions, 35 were affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and they accounted for 88% of all trade unionists in the area.

1974 membership figures

According to 1974 returns to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 91 unions with a total membership of 570,439 are affiliated. Both in the Republic and the North, somewhat more than 50 per cent of the labour force is organised in unions.

The largest unions in Congress are:

- Irish Transport and General Workers' Union	150,000
- Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union	60,000
- Workers' Union of Ireland	35,000
- Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers	32,523
- Irish Union of Distributive Workers and Clerks	21,000
- Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians	17,726
- Irish National Teachers' Organisation	16,265

Legal Status of Trade Unions

The Trade Union Act, 1913, defines a trade union as "any combination whether temporary or permanent, the principal objects of which are under its constitution ... the regulation of the relations between workmen and masters, or between workmen and workmen, or between masters and masters, or the imposing of restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business and also the provision of benefits to members".

An earlier Act, the Trade Union Act, 1871, provided that a trade union may be registered at the Registry of Friendly Societies. Registration confers a certain limited legal existence on a trade union but does not make it a full corporate body. A registered union may sue in its own name and vest property in trustees. Moreover, it is exempt from taxation in regard to its income arising from members' subscriptions. Furthermore, to a very considerable extent a registered union is also free from legal proceedings in regard to its internal affairs. Unions which are not registered possess all the civil and criminal immunities arising from the 1871 Act but do not enjoy the extra privileges of the registered unions, e.g., they can sue and be sued only in the names of representative persons.

A registry of Friendly Societies was established in Dublin when the Irish Free State came into existence. Some years later the High Court held that unions must be registered in Dublin if they wished to enjoy the privileges of registration even though they were already registered in the United Kingdom.

The Trade Union Act, 1941, laid down that no body of persons, with certain minor exceptions, may negotiate in the Republic about wages and working conditions unless it holds what is referred to as a negotiating licence issued by the Minister for Industry and Commerce. Licences may be issued only to unions registered in accordance with Irish law or to unions which, though not registered under Irish law, are recognised as trade unions by the law of

another country provided their headquarters are in that country, and on payment of a deposit to the High Court.

The upshot of the various legal provisions regarding registration and licensing in the Republic is that unions may be (1) unregistered and unlicensed, (2) unregistered and licensed, (3) registered and unlicensed, (4) registered and licensed. The first category includes a number of civil service associations, most "house" unions and unions which form part of a federation. The second category includes all the unions whose headquarters are outside the State. Category three includes registered unions which are members of a licensed federated union. The fourth category includes the ordinary Irish trade unions other than those catering for State employees.

Methods of co-ordination

The problems posed by the multiplicity⁴⁵ of trade unions have been dealt with in a variety of ways. Of these the simplest is that unions, especially those catering for the same type of workers, occasionally enter into agreements covering the areas in which they will operate or the class of worker they will organise. Another method employed is that of common action by all or some of the unions in an industry for the purpose of collective bargaining. Representatives of each union concerned are appointed to a central committee which acts as a common negotiating body. Each component union is free to accept or reject decisions of the committees. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions encourages the formation of such groups. Still another method of overcoming the difficulties created by the multiplicity of unions is the formation of a federation such as the Civil Service Alliance and the Building Workers' Trade Union. A federation is a permanent grouping of separate unions in which each retains its separate existence, funds, officers, and independence in regard to matters which concern it alone, but forms with the others a permanent joint organisation having its own name, funds and officers for purposes concerning all. In some cases separate unions amalgamate with each other to form one new union thereby terminating their own separate existence. Most of the British unions operating in Ireland originated in this way as did the Irish Bakers, Confectioners and Allied Workers' Amalgamated Union and a few other purely Irish unions.

Apart from the foregoing methods of dealing with the problem, the local trades or workers' councils and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions are particularly important in co-ordinating the work of, and speaking on behalf of, the trade unions at local and national level.

Trades' or Workers' Councils are composed of representatives of the trade unions in a particular town or city. No attempt is made to supersede the individual unions nor can decisions made by the councils be enforced on the unions. Nevertheless, the councils are not entirely without power as they can expel an uncooperative union. In practice, the right of expulsion can be an effective weapon; especially where the council has the support of a substantial majority of the unions.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Most of the trade unions in Ireland are affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. A northern Ireland Committee of the Congress exists and a Northern Ireland Conference is held annually. Both of these bodies deal exclusively with local northern affairs.

Congress has no power over the internal affairs of the unions affiliated to it. Decisions taken by Congress at, for example, a delegate meeting, do not bind an affiliated union unless ratified by it.

Hence the Congress depends on the goodwill and cooperation of the unions for the implementation of its decisions. Like the British TUC, the only real power which the ICTU has over member unions is the capacity to expel them. On the other hand, the moral authority of Congress has often been used to good effect especially in regard to the settlement of inter-union disputes. To an increasing extent unions, particularly the smaller unions, look to the Congress for leadership and also for information and assistance in negotiation. As a result the influence exerted by Congress is altogether greater than what might be expected and in fact it is a considerable force in Irish social and economic life.

To be eligible for application to the Congress trade unions must either:-

- have their headquarters in Ireland and have their executive control, in respect of industrial, financial and political matters, vested in and exercised by appropriate executive bodies within Ireland; or
- if their headquarters are not in Ireland, they must (a) provide that only members resident in Ireland may be appointed as delegates to an annual or special delegate conference or nominated for election to any office in Congress; and (b) provide that decisions on matters of an industrial or political nature which arise out of, and are in connection with, the internal economic and political conditions of Ireland and are of direct concern to Irish members only, shall be considered and decided upon by the Irish members provided that the decisions shall have due regard to and shall not prejudice the position of members outside Ireland; and (c) provide that a delegate conference of Irish members or an Irish committee elected by the Irish membership shall make such decisions; and (d) make reasonable provision whereby the Irish committee or conference may exercise financial control and direction over funds collected from the Irish members at least to the extent of payment of local administrative expenses and benefits.

The Government regularly consults the Congress in regard to matters of interest to labour. The Congress is also the body which proposes names representative of labour for Government nomination to the International Labour Organisation and as workers' members of the Labour Court. Officials of Congress also serve on many official and semi-official bodies and are directors of a number of State-owned enterprises.

The I.C.T.U. and national wage agreements

With the duplication among unions in the Republic, many problems could arise in wage bargaining and relations with employers in general. The creation of bargaining groups is dealt with in the section "methods of coordination" above. Before 1970 wage bargaining went in "rounds", covering the whole labour force. A union negotiated a settlement which other unions and managements considered reasonable, and this set the pattern for the remaining negotiations of a particular round.

The Republic went through a strong expansionary phase in the 60's, but there was heavy inflation and during the period 1960-69 Ireland was second-highest in the international table of days lost in industrial disputes per 1000 persons. The twelfth wage round, ending in 1970, provided a high nominal wage rise, but the real benefit turned out to be low because of heavy inflation.

The ICTU accordingly met the Federated Union of Employers and the government as employer in the framework of the employer/labour conference and several special ICTU conferences took place, with a view to concluding a national wages agreement. This thirteenth round national agreement was signed in December 1970 for a period of eighteen months. This had two phases: (1) a flat-rate increase for all workers (thus favouring lower-paid workers) and special arrangements for women as part of a more long-term effort to bring their wages up to those of men; (2) a percentage increase after twelve months, plus a supplement to the second phase increase determined by how much the cost of living had gone up during the first phase.

In return for the wage settlement, the unions agreed to review their strike policy. The measures in no way restricted the right to strike but were designed to bring greater orderliness into industrial relations. The first step towards this was taken by the 1970 ICTU conference. It strengthened Congress authority by instituting "all-out strike rules". Any union can call a strike, but it can bring out only its own membership. A strike even at basic level will usually affect other unions because of the duplication of unions in each sector or because of various crafts being involved. If a union wants strike support including picketing action from other unions concerned, it must apply to the Congress all-out strikes committee, and if the committee approves its application, the other unions must bring their members out on strike. Of course the committee makes every effort to mediate in the dispute, and its approval for all-out action is rarely needed.

Further steps towards improvement of industrial relations were taken in the national agreement. In the case of disputes relating to matters covered by the agreement, a procedure of direct negotiation followed if necessary by conciliation is laid down; the parties agree not to encourage or support any strikes or lock-outs intended to contravene the settlement of claims through these channels.

Whether it be because of the all-out strike rules or the working of the first and subsequent national wages agreements, days of work lost through strikes have dropped to a much lower level than before.

The third national wage agreement is now in force. The salary rises follow much the same principles as previous agreements. The cost of living "threshold" provision has played an important part in a time of heavy inflation.

Much flexibility is built into the agreement. On the one hand a procedure is laid down for special discussions in cases where firms and industries consider that they are unable to apply the terms of the agreement and remain viable. On the other hand trade unions can make claims with a view to removing what they consider to be anomalies in pay between different groups of employees; also new incentive payment schemes, productivity agreements and flexibility agreements may be introduced "on the basis of agreement between the parties and not through any form of industrial action or unilateral enforcement. Such schemes must make a direct contribution towards raising productivity and efficiency".

The agreement runs for only a short time, up to June 1975, and takes into account the need to eliminate wide differences which exist in the terminal dates of industry and company agreements, so that any future national agreement can be simpler in nature.

At a special delegate conference in December 1974, the ICTU decided to enter into negotiations with Irish employers for a new national wages agreement to take effect from June 1975. If an agreement is reached, it will be the fourth successive Irish national wage agreement.

The Irish trade union movement and politics

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is a unique institution. It links trade unions north and south of the border; it brings catholics and protestants together; within its ranks are to be found representatives of all the main political parties of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

With so many diverse political strands within it, the ICTU does not play a spectacular political role. It is recognised by the government as spokesman for the workers and its representatives sit on many governmental bodies. Its strength in the political field lies in pointing out the economic problems underlying many political issues and working for solutions. It emphasizes that workers have to be united if they want to defend their living and working conditions.

A Labour Party has existed since 1912. In that year James Connolly made his first appearance in the Irish Trade Union Congress as a delegate to the annual meeting. Earlier decisions of Congress had been against the adoption of a political programme, but in new political circumstances created that year, Connolly was able to get a majority of delegates in favour of an Irish Labour Party, independent of all other parties (the two main parties were Home Rule and Unionist).

The Labour Party in the Republic has never achieved the same mass ^{support} as the two nationalist parties Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Nevertheless the Labour Party and the union structure cooperate closely and ^{the} Labour Party plays an important part in the life of the Republic.

The Northern Irish unions have always had a difficult task in politics in Northern Ireland. Many politicians have in the past been ready to ally with employers to weaken the unified structure of the trade union movement. Since reunification of the Irish trade union movement in 1959, the reputation and influence of the Northern Ireland Committee have grown steadily. In 1964 agreement was reached between the Government of Northern Ireland and the ICTU which resulted in the recognition by the Government of the Northern Ireland Committee as the central trade union body in Northern Ireland. It has naturally been under severe strain since the beginning of the troubles in 1969. All attempts to divide the movement on sectarian lines have been warded off.

The greatest testing time came in May 1974 in the aftermath of the Sunningdale Agreement on the political future of Northern Ireland : Ulster Workers' Councils were set up and they brought industry to a standstill through concentrating on bringing certain key personnel out on strike. The first experiment in "power-sharing" government had to be abandoned. The unions came through the test and political events have now moved on: the Councils of course never had any industrial mandate or function.

The unions adopted a far-reaching "programme for peace, employment and reconstruction" at a special conference in February 1972. Besides proposing reforms in the field of citizens rights and commenting on a new legislative system, the document analyses the deep-seated problems of unemployment in Northern Ireland and proposes remedies. On the basis of the trade union proposals a new set of state initiatives for creating employment were taken.

The Northern Ireland Committee does not take a stand on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, considering this to be a task of politicians. It works for the realisation of a situation in which views about Northern Ireland's future can be freely and frankly examined and it has repeatedly condemned violence from any quarter.

Along with its policies for increasing industrial development, it takes a stand in favour of equality of access to employment between protestants and catholics in Northern Ireland.

The Trade Unions and the EEC

At its annual conference in 1971 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions adopted a resolution criticizing the Government for not having fulfilled its obligations to the people in respect of the application for entry to the EEC on the grounds that it had not "adequately surveyed and quantified the effects of EEC entry and the various alternatives on employment and on workers' living standards". The resolution also condemned the Government for not having "secured in its negotiations any adequate recognition by the EEC of the dangers to industrial employment involved in the accession of Ireland to EEC". In view of the foregoing and also because of the fear that EEC policies would result in "the loss of effective control of political and economic policy" and might result in "involvement in military commitments" as well as "a substantial increase in the rate of agricultural depopulation, the widespread sale of land to non-nationals, the destruction of or severe damage to the fishing industry" the conference resolved that it was "not in a position at the present time to express any support for the proposed entry of Ireland to the EEC".

Subsequently a special conference was called to consider EEC membership in detail. This again decided against membership and also took steps to organize an anti-EEC campaign before the referendum. In spite of the decision of the Congress some individual unions supported membership on the terms negotiated by the Government.

In the event the vote at the referendum in favour of joining the EEC was overwhelming. It must be concluded that large numbers of trade unionists voted "yes" in spite of the opposition of the trade union leadership.

The Irish trade union movement accepted the verdict of the referendum and it has played a full part in the structure of the Community since 1 January 1973, the date of Irish entry, both directly and through the European Trade Union Confederation, which it joined in March 1974. It has used Community policies as an extra weapon in its fight to achieve improved social benefits and in the drive to secure full equality of salaries between men and women for comparable work. It has worked hard to obtain an appropriate share of the European Social Fund for training and retraining Irish workers. The ICTU has responded to the impulse given by the Community towards workers' participation in the control of firms though it has not yet come down in favour of particular forms of workers' participation.