Fermanagh's Labour History

Fermanagh's Labour History dates from at least 1826 when Mason's, Bricklayers and Slater's met to decide the length of their working week.

In 1834 Bakers locally were threatened with deportation if they joined a trade union. In the 1860s and the 1890s local Tailors went on strike to defend their right to organise and earn a decent wage. A number were imprisoned on the flimsiest of evidence during these disputes.

In 1908 Shop Assistants organised themselves to win a half day holiday on a Wednesdays. Around the same time teachers' unions were agitating for adequate funding to be made available for education in Ireland.

After the First World War unskilled workers started to organise and win better wages in the face of huge increases to the cost of living. In 1919 Craft and Unskilled Workers came together to form the Enniskillen Trades and Labour Council. The purpose of the council was to show solidarity and campaign on the broader social issues which affected working class communities.

1920 saw the first election of Labour councillors in Fermanagh during a very turbulent period of our history. In the early 1930s they succeeded in forcing the urban council to build houses in the old streets of Enniskillen.

These are samples of our history. Right up to the present day, the struggle for decent pay and services has continued with the Fermanagh Council of Trade Union's involvement in the Health Service Campaigns in recent months.

The First 100 Years

A new publication detailing the FIRST hundred years of our history and the early years of Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions is available for the first time and can be obtained for £10 plus post & packaging by emailing: FermanaghRed.100@gmail.com or by contacting any of our delegates or your local union representatives.

"Remembering & Commemoration, Decade of Centenaries" project grant aided by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions

Who are we?
The Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions is the body in Fermanagh bringing together delegates from the various Trades Union branches with members in the Fermanagh area.

The council has a long and proud history of progressing workers’ rights both in their workplace and their communities.

Trade unions have been working in Fermanagh since at least the 1820s. Our current council of Trade Unions was founded in February of 1919.

What we do?
We promote the interests of working class people in the Fermanagh area and beyond. Over the years we have been active in supporting the campaigns to protect our local NHS and public services. We were also at the forefront in stopping water rates being imposed on local workers and generally in Northern Ireland. Our council also played an important role in promoting the Better Life for All Campaign, The Peace, Work and Progress Campaign and the work of the Trade Union Anti-Intimidation Unit, Counteract (Now known as Trademark).

Campaigns
These campaigns took place against a background of the sectarianism, oppression and violence which dogged our community for decades.

Our council also organises a yearly event to remember those injured or killed in the workplace, Workers Memorial Day, held in the Brook Park, Enniskillen every April. It is used as a focus point to highlight the need for workers to be protected at work from avoidable accidents and diseases.

Ours was the first council of Trade Unions in Ireland to hold this event which is open to everyone with a concern for better health and safety in the workplace.

Support
We also support the work of other organisations in the community where they share the same objectives of improving the economic and social conditions of working people.

This includes seeking improvements in social services, public education, housing and health and promoting suitable cultural, educational, social and sports facilities for all.

We are affiliated to the ICTUNI and support its work and objectives as its local body, implementing and making more widely known its policies and campaigns.

How can you get involved?
We always welcome participation from the members of local union branches and your branch can affiliate or find out more by contacting

Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions on facebook or through our current secretary, Donal O’Cofaigh tel. 07810 157926

Programme of Activities

Friday 18th of January 2019 — 2pm
Launch of Centenary Events —
Launch of Local Labour History Archive & Commemorative Badge – Enniskillen Library
Partners: Enniskillen Heritage Centre at Enniskillen Library, Enniskillen Castle Museum, Irish Labour History Society

Thursday 21st of February 2019 — 7pm
Launch of Local Labour History Centenary Publication
– Enniskillen Townhall – Lighting of Enniskillen Castle in Labour’s historical colour, RED, to mark the occasion. Social event to follow in Blake’s Atrium Bar at 9pm.

Monday 18th of March 2019
Participation with a Centenary float in Enniskillen St Patrick’s Day, Cross Community Parade.

Saturday 27th April 2019 — 11am
Workers Memorial Day Ceremony
Brooke Park, Enniskillen – Remember the Dead — Fight for the Living!

Saturday 4th May 2019
Fermanagh delegation will lead the Annual Workers Day Parade in Belfast.

September to December 2019
Centenary Exhibition Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions – Enniskillen Castle Museum

Our History – Your History
Although workers have been organised in Fermanagh for a much longer period, Fermanagh Council of Trade Unions celebrates its centenary in 2019.