

## The Irish Transport & General Workers' Union in County Clare, 1918-1930

The story of trade unionism in Clare remains largely obscure. Local craft workers – like bakers,<sup>1</sup> and smiths – were no doubt members of their respective trade unions but quick searches of general histories of labour often fail to find Clare – or any of its county towns – in their indexes.<sup>2</sup> Histories of teachers – particularly National Teachers – and postal workers where it is known that there were active branches in the county, provide better reward.<sup>3</sup> The Irish Post Office Engineering Union (IPOEU), later Communications Union of Ireland, for example, organised members in Clare from its Limerick base until the 1970s when Ennis Branch opened with 73 members, a number rising to 207 by 1985. From 1923, the Post Office Workers' Union (POWU) recorded Indoor and Outdoor branches in Ennis and Kilrush with subsequent branches operating in Rineanna and Shannon. When the two unions came together to form the Communications Workers' Union, Ennis and Kilrush were merged with 89 members.<sup>4</sup> Agricultural and general labourers – and later drapery and distributive workers – as will be noted had a longer tradition.

### The Coming of the ITGWU

In 1900, the Irish labour movement – such as it was – consisted primarily of unions catering for craft workers, many with headquarters in Britain. The movement was predominantly masculine, cautious and conservative, with a small c. Politically, trade unions supported either Unionist or Nationalist politicians, although were not averse to enlisting all shades of political opinion in support of their memorials to employers, local authorities or Government. After James Larkin's arrival in Belfast as a representative of the Liverpool-based National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) in January 1907, matters quickly changed.<sup>5</sup> That summer's Belfast Dockers' and Carters' Strike triggered a chain of events that led, inexorably, to Larkin's expulsion from the NUDL. He then became founding Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (ITGWU) General Secretary in December 1908.<sup>6</sup>

The ITGWU transformed a supine labour movement informed by four principles which, while not in themselves new, were applied vigorously and consistently for the first time: an Irish Union for Irish workers; a policy of militant industrial unionism encapsulated in the phrase 'Each for All and All for Each'; a socialist perspective with a vision of an independent Workers' Republic [not just the then promised Home Rule]; and, a key element, an internationalism. The ITGWU's impact is well known and culminated in the Dublin Lockout of 1913-1914. The capital's social tinder – poorly paid casual labour, unemployment, chronic housing conditions, poverty and desperate public health - was ignited by the new phenomenon of 'Larkinism' whose key ingredient was to bring hope and belief that things could be changed where before there was acceptance and despair.

ITGWU membership peaked in 1913, however, and, although they survived the Lockout, its existence became precarious with a falling membership until, by Easter Week, it was down to 5,000 with finances considerably strained, Table 1. Many dockers' unions had been formed before the ITGWU only to collapse after a major strike, downturn in trade or through administrative incompetence. The Lockout's after-effect was key to the ITGWU's downward fortunes, although the union had become a significant force within the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC).

**Table 1: ITGWU & Irish Trade Union Congress Membership. 1909-1916**

Year	ITGWU	ITUC
1909	1,200	89,000
1910	5,000	75,000
1911	18,089	50,000
1912	22,000	70,000

1913	30,000	100,000
1914	15,000	110,000
1915	10,000	150,000
1916	5,000	120,000

**Source:** Francis Devine, *Organising History: A Centenary of SIPTU, 1909-2009*, (Dublin, 2009), pp. 1,004-1,005.

The formation of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) as a workers' defence force during the Lockout and Larkin's departure for America in October 1914, paved the way for ITGWU Acting General Secretary James Connolly to transform the ICA into a body that would fight for the Republic. Liberty Hall was central to the Easter Rising, the Proclamation was printed there and the bulk of the insurgents' weaponry held in the Hall. Whilst the ITGWU played no formal role in the Rising, in the union's first published Annual Report for 1918, it stated unequivocally,

'Easter Week saved the Union. It cancelled out the reaction from 1913, and removed bitter prejudices which had blocked its progress. It linked up the Labour Movement with the age-long aspirations of the Irish people for emancipation from political and social thralldom, and formed a natural moratorium under cover of which it was able to make a fresh start on better terms with increased membership.'<sup>7</sup>

ITGWU expansion after 1917 was extraordinary. Driven by wage militancy – and Government policy encouraged the granting of wage increases to meet rising wartime inflation rather than risk strikes – members flooded into the union, Table 2. In addition, there is no doubt that the ITGWU was, broadly, identified with the 'national cause', encouraging many to join by abandoning British-based unions, merging their local organisations into the ITGWU, or as first-time trade unionists. From its east coast origins, the ITGWU became, and remained, a truly national union with branches in every county, albeit few in north-eastern areas.

**Table 2: ITGWU & Irish Trade Union Congress Membership. 1917-1916**

Year	ITGWU	ITUC
1917	14,920	150,000
1918	67,827	250,000
1919	102,823	270,000
1920	101,970	229,000
1921	100,000	196,000
1922	82,243	189,000
1923	89,000	183,000
1924	67,000	175,000
1925	50,984	149,000
1926	40,000	123,000
1927	22,000	113,000
1928	18,857	103,000
1929	15,453	92,000
1930	14,608	102,000

**Source:** Francis Devine, *Organising History: A Centenary of SIPTU, 1909-2009*, (Dublin, 2009), pp. 1,004-1,005.

ITGWU membership peaked in 1920 with some sources citing a figure of 130,000. From September, the union was subject to extreme physical assault during the Black & Tan Terror, battles over wage cuts replaced the charge for wage increases, and Saorstát Éireann's creation brought economic downturn. Adding to ITGWU woes was Larkin's return from America in April 1923, leading to his expulsion from the ITGWU and, in June 1924, creation of the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI).<sup>8</sup> An estimated 15,000, mainly Dublin members, left the ITGWU to form the WUI. Depression drove ITGWU membership down to 14,608 in 1930, ITUC membership declining to 102,000. By then, the ITGWU presence in Clare was much diminished.

### The ITGWU in County Clare

ITGWU growth in Clare, its absorption of and relationship with Land & Labour Associations, and its increasing fusion with Republicanism after 1918, has been documented by David Fitzpatrick. In an interesting play on Emmet O'Connor's discussion of the 'colonisation' of Irish labour by British-based, mainly craft trade unions, Fitzpatrick observes that it was 'not always easy to determine whether the ITGWU was colonising Clare, or the old order of Clare colonising the ITGWU'. He further suggests that 'to some extent the union's new spirit was tempered by its desire to win over every worker, however old-fashioned his social aspirations, and by the desire of entrenched Labour organisers to take over and tame the union's branches'.<sup>9</sup> He cited the first ITGWU Branch founded in Clare in Newmarket-on-Fergus in May 1918 – branch number 76, Table 3 below – whose President had previously been involved in the Trade & Labour Union and its successors, the Direct Labour Association and the District Cottiers' Association: 'with each change of wind the same boss appeared under a different banner'. This expansion in Clare was part of a huge spontaneous wave of organisation nationwide – particularly south of 'the Ballina-Newry line'. In 1920, for example, the ITGWU employed eleven organisers but they were, to a considerable extent, surfers toppling on a huge breaker. In other cases, workers – and especially agricultural labourers and local authority road workers – as workers surged to join the banner of the ITGWU's 'One Big Union' ('OBU'). Clare was no different.<sup>10</sup>

What was the ITGWU's attraction? In its Annual Report for 1920, the union noted that the 'amount of Dispute Pay spent in the year 1919 and 1920, amounting to £78,653, or 44% of the total income, formed a record in Irish trade union history'. The union's 'remarkable successes ... on the wages field' in 1920 were a 'natural corollary of its rapid growth, and, in fact, more than kept pace with its development'. Most strikes were 'sharp and of short duration'. In fact, many advances in pay and conditions came 'without strike action', the significance of its threat being sufficient for employers to concede. A rising cost-of-living meant many were 'merely chasing an elusive will-o-the-wisp', though the majority managed to 'overtake it' and a few 'to out-distance it'.<sup>11</sup> Workers joined a winning team, one that could bring instantly improved living and working conditions.

Of the 1,191 sanctioned ITGWU demands in 1920, the 'vast majority' were sent in before September. They covered 59,070 workers and resulted in 'an aggregate annual increase of approximately £1,250,000', an average of about eight shillings a week per member. From then, however, 'the Terrorist Campaign, waged by the forces of the British Government, which chose out the Union as a special object for its malignancy, intensified'. While 'the Union rose superior to it', the attacks halted normal industrial activity. While wages were the prime concern the union saw the expansion as the 'capturing of so many outposts along the highroad to Economic Freedom'.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, 1920 proved to be the union's most successful year if measured in terms not of reported membership but in terms of recorded income, Table 3. From 1923, and especially after 1924 with the WUI's creation and the onset of acute depression, ITGWU income and membership fell continuously until 1933. Income did not again reach six figures until 1951, £106,799. Membership – reported as 120,000 in 1920, although stated by the Registrar of Friendly Societies to be 101,917 – fell to 14,123 by 1932. It did not again reach six figures until 1948, 120,000.<sup>13</sup> To that extent, the effect of the attacks on the union in late 1920/early 1921 may have been under appreciated. By October 1921, a year after the murder of Ennistymon Branch Secretary Thomas Connole in September 1920,<sup>14</sup> the union estimated that 115 of its 583 branches had 'collapsed', as opposed to being rationalised into larger units by ITGWU command. Key factors included the sharp reversal in bargaining power and, especially for the ITGWU dynamic on the land, the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board on 1 October 1920. 1923 proved to be an annus horribilis for the ITGWU and industrial labour generally.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 3: ITGWU Income & Expenditure, 1918-1923**

	Income	Expenditure	Surplus [ Deficit ]	Credit Balance	Dispute Pay (DP)	DP as % of Expenditure	Mortality Benefit	Org & Admin
1918	27,699	18,986	8,713	17,929	8,407	30.4	321	6,740

1919	74,726	63,379	11,346	29,038	40,571	54.3	3,281	16,157
1920	100,011	62,848	37,163	66,202	36,847	36.8	4,843	18,876
1921	81,593	45,596	35,997	102,199	20,409	25.0	5,275	16,162
1922	96,007	64,506	31,501	133,700	33,139	34.5	5,317	17,695
1923	84,122	160,427	[ 76,305 ]	5,462	128,724	153.0	4,752	21,110

Source: ITGWU, *Annual Report for 1923*, p. 16

From 1918, when the ITGWU first published membership data, the number of branches in Clare rose from six to a peak of eighteen in 1921, after which there was a sharp decline until, by 1928, only Kilrush remained, its members mainly dockers, Table 4. The union's Annual Report detailed each Branch Secretary, the prefix number indicating the order of branch registration with Head Office. Thus, the Ennistymon was the 229th branch founded, with only Newmarket-on-Fergus (76), Killaloe (105) and Kilrush (105) preceding it in Clare.

**Table 4: ITGWU Branches in Clare, 1918-1928**

1918	6	1924	9
1919	16	1925	6
1920	17	1926	4
1921	18	1927	2
1922	14	1928	1
1923	9		

Source: *ITGWU Annual Reports, 1918-1928*

Full-time branches were indicated by an asterisk with only Kilrush ever having a full-time Secretary. Ennistymon Branch Secretaries, for example, were P.J. Guthrie, 1918; Thomas Connole, Church Street, 1919; James O'Brien, Lahinch Road, 1920; and Austin Quigley, Moymore, 1921-1924. Connole, as with all such Secretaries was elected – either in 1918 or 1919 – and appears in the Annual Report as Secretary for 1919, not 1920. However, this is explained by the fact that reports were not published until April or May of the following year, by which time Connole was succeeded by James O'Brien. The branch had disappeared by 1925, Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5: ITGWU Clare Branches & Secretaries, 1918-1928**

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- Clarecastle - E. Russell, Clarecastle, 1921
  - 365 Clonlara - Thomas Maloney, Clonlara, 1919; P. Hyland, Clonlara, 1921
  - 444 Corofin - Martin O'Donoghue, High Street, Corofin, 1919-1920
  - 321 Cratloe - Thomas Gleeson, Cratloe, 1919-1920
  - 499 Doolin - Martin Murphy, Doolin, Ennistymon, 1919
  - 249 Ennis - P. Hogan, 5 Steele's Terrace, Ennis, 1918-1921; Thomas Tuttle, Old Military Barracks, Kilrush Road, Ennis, 1922; Michael Glynn, Doora, Ennis, 1923; James Whelan, Peafield Fountain, Ennis, 1924; James Fitzgerald, Island Avana, Tiermaclane, Ennis, 1925
  - Ennis Mental Hospital – J. Sheridan, Mental Hospital, Ennis, 1925
  - 229 Ennistymon - P.J. Guthrie, Ennistymon, 1918; Thomas Connole, Church Street, Ennistymon, 1919; James O'Brien, Lahinch Road, Ennistymon, 1920; Austin Quigley, Moymore, Ennistymon, 1921-1924
  - Kilfintanane - James McNamara, Rathmore, Sixmilebridge, 1921
  - 428 Kilkee - D.J. Conroy, 14 Grattan Street, Kilkee, 1919
  - 159 Killaloe - E. Mills, Ballina, Killaloe, 1918; Joseph Reddin, Canal Bank, Killaloe, 1919-1920; S.R. Timmons, Church Street, Killaloe, 1921-1923
  - 105 Kilrush - J.P. Hughes [in 1922 styles himself Seosamh Ó hAodha], Kilrush, 1918-1926 [ full-time, 1923\*]; William Copeley, ITGWU Hall, Kilrush, 1927; Michael Reidy, ITGWU Hall, Kilrush, 1928
  - 487 Liscannor - M.J. O'Connor, Ballyhean, Liscannor, 1919-1921; Pat Carey, Liscannor, 1922; John Coughlin, Clahane, Liscannor, 1923; Thomas Qualy, Liscannor, 1924
  - 431 Miltown Malbay - Michael Lynch, Ennis Road, Miltown Malbay, 1919
  - 76 Newmarket-on-Fergus - M. Greene, Newmarket-on-Fergus, 1918; Patrick Reidy, Carrigarry, Newmarket-on-Fergus, 1919-1920; T. Cullinan, Dromoland, Newmarket-on-Fergus, 1921-1922
  - 506 O'Brien's Bridge - Francis Duggan, Bridgetown, 1919; E. Power, O'Brien's Bridge, 1921
  - 449 Quilty - McCarthy, Coore, Miltown Malbay, 1919

- 238 **Scariff** – Thomas Wall, Scariff, 1918; Martin Gildea, Bridge Street, Scariff, 1919; Charles Noonan [Acting], Tomgraney, Scariff, 1921; Martin Wilson, Tuamgraney, 1923  
**Sixmilebridge** - William Cusack, ITGWU, Sixmilebridge, 1922  
**Thradaree** - P. Hammill, Clonmoney, Bunratty, 1921; Michael Hickey, Clonmoney, Bunratty, 1922-1923  
504 **Tulla** – Patrick Murphy, Tulla, 1919; M. Tubridy, 1920

**Table 6: ITGWU Clare Branches, Years of Activity, 1918-1928**

Clarecastle	-	-	-	1921	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clonlara	-	1919	1920	1921	1922	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corofin	-	1919	1920	1921	-	-	1924	1925	-	-	-
Cratloe	-	1919	1920	1921	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doolin	-	1919	1920	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ennis	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	-
Ennis Mental Hospital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1925	1926	-	-
Ennistymon	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	-	-	-
Kildysart	-	-	1920	1921	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilfintanane	-	-	-	1921	1922	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilkee	-	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	-	-	-	-
Killaloe	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	-	-	-	-
Kilrush	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Liscannor	-	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	-	-
Miltown Malbay	-	1919	1920	1921	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newmarket-on-Fergus	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	-	-	-	-	-
O'Brien's Bridge	-	1919	1920	1921	1922	-	-	-	-	-	-
Quilty	-	1919	1920	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scariff	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	-	-	-	-
Sixmilebridge	-	-	-	-	1922	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thradaree	-	-	-	1921	1922	1923	1924	-	-	-	-
Tulla	-	1919	1920	1921	1922	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6	16	17	18	14	9	9	6	4	2	1

The ITGWU recorded monies remitted to or received from Head Office. Branches collected weekly members' subscriptions, retaining 25% in a Local Fund from which expenses accruing to Branch Secretary and Collectors were paid, together with any other outlays for administration or organisation. The balance of 75% was remitted to Head Office, Table 7. These Branch Remittances allow for a crude estimate as to branch membership. For most of this period, weekly union subscriptions were four pence, therefore, taking Ennistymon as example, a further 25% can be added to the remitted figure to provide an estimate of annual Branch income.

**Table 7: ITGWU Clare Branch Remittances to ITGWU Head Office, 1918-1928, £**

	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Clarecastle	-	-	-	-	51	40	-	-	-	-	-
Clonlara	-	31	36	6	29	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corofin	-	-	42	9	-	-	8	7	-	-	-
Cratloe	-	70	59	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doolin	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ennis	-	71	136	74	90	63	31	10	22	2	-
Ennis Mental Hospital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-
Ennistymon	-	63	143	60	84	79	46	12	-	-	-
Kildysart	-	-	29	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilfintanane	-	-	-	-	46	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilkee	-	-	74	3	-	5	3	-	-	-	-
Killaloe	-	-	19	19	55	26	10	-	-	-	-
Kilrush	58	313	421	252	334	335	345	306	247	348	254
Liscannor	-	-	31	27	20	14	14	15	5	-	-
Miltown Malbay	-	-	75	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Newmarket-on-Fergus	6	1	187	122	94	71	-	-	-	-	-
O'Brien's Bridge	-	-	14	-	27	-	-	-	-	-	-
Quilty	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scariff	-	52	32	-	35	21	12	-	-	-	-
Thraderee	-	-	-	-	81	127	31	-	-	-	-
Tulla	-	-	-	-	31	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	64	601	1,310	634	977	781	500	350	287	350	254

Annual Ennistymon income was thus: 1919, £84; 1920, £191; 1921, £80; 1922, £112; 1923, £105; 1924, £611 and 1925, £16. Allowing for the four-penny weekly subscription and assuming members paid every week, this indicates the following membership: 1919, 129; 1920, 294; 1921, 123; 1922, 172; 1923, 162; 1924, 94; and 1925, 25. In fact, few members paid every week and arrears were a constant problem for all trade unions, especially as members' were often employed seasonally. So, the resultant figures perhaps understate the numbers 'on the books'. Equally, some paid at lower rates of threepence. All things considered, however, the figures indicate the relative state of the branch, whether membership was rising or falling. If Ennistymon did have a membership that reached nearly 300, it is a remarkable figure. Clare branch membership is given in Table 8.

**Table 8: ITGWU Clare Branch Membership, 1918-1928**

	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Clarecastle	-	-	-	-	105	83	-	-	-	-	-
Clonlara	-	65	74	12	60	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corofin	-	-	86	18	-	-	17	15	-	-	-
Cratloe	-	143	122	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doolin	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ennis	-	146	278	151	185	129	65	20	46	5	-
Ennis Mental Hospital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	-	-
Ennistymon	-	129	294	123	172	162	94	25	-	-	-
Kildysart	-	-	57	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilfintiaane	-	-	-	-	94	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilkee	-	-	152	6	-	11	6	-	-	-	-
Killaloe	-	-	40	40	112	54	20	-	-	-	-
Kilrush	129	642	865	514	685	688	708	628	508	714	518
Liscannor	-	-	63	55	42	29	29	31	11	-	-
Miltown Malbay	-	-	151	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newmarket-on-Fergus	12	3	383	251	192	145	-	-	-	-	-
O'Brien's Bridge	-	-	29	-	55	-	-	-	-	-	-
Quilty	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scariff	-	106	66	-	72	43	25	-	-	-	-
Thraderee	-	-	-	-	166	260	63	-	-	-	-
Tulla	-	-	-	-	63	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	141	1,234	2,685	1,298	2,003	1,600	1,027	719	591	719	518

Using the same method, membership for Clare can be calculated and contrasted with national ITGWU membership. Clare's lack of industry was reflected in that the county, at best in 1927, represented 3.2% of the ITGWU total and that was down to Kilrush's remnant strength, Table 9. The ITGWU had failed to absorb the Ennis United Labourers' Association & Protective Benefit Society which had been formed on 10 November 1910. On 31 December 1912, over 500 followed the United Labourers' Band in procession in Ennis, indication of a significant membership. The union was dissolved on 29 January 1944 before finally folding into the ITGWU.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 9: ITGWU Membership, Clare & National, 1918-1928**

Year	Clare	National	Clare as % of Total
1918	141	67,827	0.20
1919	1,234	102,823	1.20

1920	2,685	120,000	2.23
1921	1,298	100,000	1.28
1922	2,003	82,243	2.43
1923	1,600	89,000	1.79
1924	1,027	67,000	1.53
1925	719	50,984	1.41
1926	591	40,000	1.47
1927	719	22,000	3.26
1928	518	18,857	2.74

ITGWU data for cash received by branches from Head Office allows a view of branch industrial activity. The only cash sent from Head Office were for Mortality Benefit and Strike Pay. In Ennistymon, it is likely that the meagre sums remitted back were for Mortality, whereas for Kilrush, the figures for 1920 and 1923, most probably indicate strikes. This was probable too for Cratloe, 1919; Killaloe, 1922; and Tharadaree, 1924, Table 10. Again, financial data acts as indicator of the ITGWU's general health in Clare. Ennistymon was, by county standards, a substantial branch, the sharp membership dip after 1920 possibly in part a reaction to Connole's killing.

**Table 10: Cash Received From ITGWU Head Office by Clare Branches, 1918-1928**

	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Clarecastle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clonlara	1	21	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corofin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cratloe	160	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doolin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ennis	38	74	8	-	35	-	-	4	22	-
Ennis Mental Hospital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ennistymon	-	14	9	-	2	16	-	-	-	-
Kildysart	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilfintinane	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kilkee	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Killaloe	-	-	-	80	22	-	-	-	-	-
Kilrush	12	334	33	57	343	40	97	50	74	60
Liscannor	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miltown Malbay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newmarket-on-Fergus	-	32	29	31	55	-	-	-	-	-
O'Brien's Bridge	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Quilty	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scariff	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tharadaree	-	-	-	-	20	65	-	-	-	-
Tulla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
									-	-
Total	211	484	83	205	477	121	97	54	96	60

In 1920, the union began, through necessity and desire, to bring order to its chaotic membership and branch explosion. By year end, apart from the 'evil effect' of the physical attacks on union members and property, unemployment was biting and bringing a 'tendency to 'rot [setting] in' among 'our small and isolated branches'. This was matched by attempts to rationalise branches and to 'amalgamate on an industrial basis' branches within eight to ten miles of their 'pivot town'. The intention was to create National Industrial Divisions. Such organisation had 'naturally been the wonder of the workers of other countries, while the malignant vituperation of its enemies testified splendidly to its efficiency and power'.

Such plans were thwarted by the 'Black & Tan War'. The union felt it had 'reason to be proud of the manner' in which it resisted the employer and military attacks and congratulated its members and Officials for their courageous stands. The ITGWU Annual Report described attacks on Liberty Hall, the

arrest of senior staff and the acquisition of new Head Office premises at 35 Parnell Square, Dublin. There was no mention of Connole or indeed any other ITGWU members killed in the terror.<sup>17</sup>

### The Union in Clare After 1930

According to internal ITGWU figures, membership in ‘Connacht & Clare’ in 1925 was 2,013 and in Clare, Galway, Kerry and Roscommon’ in 1920, 459. Only 23 of this figure were cited as being in Galway. By June 1932, the only ITGWU branch was in Kilrush with M. Reidy as Secretary, a situation unchanged in July 1938. In April 1940, Kilrush had 259 members. In 1953, three ITGWU branches were recorded in Clare: at Ennis, 170; Ennis Mental Hospital, 72; and Kilrush, 134, a total of 376. This had risen dramatically to 2,675 by December 1967. After SIPTU’s creation in 1990, Clare was placed in 6 (West) and, in 2000, Clare County had 1,811 members; Shannon Aviation, 1,034; Shannon Free Airport Development Company, 155; and Shannon Industrial, 1,491: an impressive total of 4,491.<sup>18</sup>

ITGWU fortunes in Clare can be gauged by the numbers attending Annual Conference. As delegates were selected on the basis of one for every 500 financial members, a rough estimate of membership can be made. Full-time Officials in this period included: Clare County, Flan Honan, Frank Prendergast, Seán Buckley, Colin Thomas and Gerry McMahon; Shannon, Frank Prendergast; Shannon Airport, Jack Culbert; and Shannon Industrial Estate, John Doyle.

**Table 8: Clare Delegates to ITGWU Annual Conference, 1940-1989**

Year	Delegates	Number
1940	Kilrush - J.P. Hughes	500
1945	Ennis – T. Curtin	500
1950	Ennis – D. Bourke Kilrush – Michael Keane	1,000
1955	Kilrush – Michael Keane	500
1960	Kilrush – John Loughlan	500
1965	Kilrush – John Enright	500
1970	Clare County – Flan Honan Kilrush – John Enright Shannon – Luke Carey, Con Foley, A. Gooney, Joseph Power, Bruce Savage	3,500
1975	Clare County – Flan Honan Ennis Mental Hospital – Tom McGrath Kilrush – John Enright Shannon – Frank Prendergast, L. Carey, D. Leahy, Denis McCarthy, J. Murnane	4,000
1980	Clare County – Seán Buckley, Bríd Farrell, Dermot Hayes, Michael Woods Ennis Mental Hospital – Tom McGrath Shannon Airport – Jack Culbert, Mary Kerrigan Shannon Industrial Estate – John Doyle, Denis McCarthy, John Moroney, Gerry Ryan	5,500
1985	Clare County – Colin Thomas, J. Clarke, Bríd Farrell, J. Slattery Ennis Psychiatric Hospital – Joe Arkins Shannon Airport – Jack Culbert, John Murray Shannon Industrial Estate – D. Hayes, Michael Hayes, Tommy Tambling	5,000
1989	Clare County - Gerry McMahon, B. Burne, Noel Clune Ennis Psychiatric Hospital – Joe Arkins Shannon Airport – Jack Culbert, John Anglim Shannon Industrial Estate – Thomas O’Shaughnessy	3,500

**Source:** ITGWU, *Annual Reports, 1930-1989*, passim

### The ITGWU & the Labour Party in Clare

Connections between the ITGWU and Labour Party in Clare were periodically strong. Patrick Hogan had close ITGWU associations. He first won a seat for Labour in 1923, his 2,083 votes taking the fifth and final seat, his running mate Patrick MacNamara polling 2,140. He may well have won a seat in 1922 but was effectively intimidated into not standing by anti-Treatyites.<sup>19</sup> In June 1927 as a single candidate, Hogan again claimed the last seat, although third on first preference votes with 4,147, holding it in the year’s second election in September when fourth elected, 4,683. He was second



elected in 1932, 5,701; fourth in 1933, 4,307; and fifth in 1937, 5,262. He lost his seat in 1938, although third on first preference votes with 5,713. From 1938-1943, he was elected to Seanad Éireann on the Labour Panel. In 1943, Hogan regained the seat, 5,177, with running mate Joseph Hughes from Kilrush bottom of the poll with 543. In 1944, Hogan again lost the seat, although third on first preference votes 5,376. In 1948, Hogan regained the seat, 4,586, a big success in what was now a four-seat constituency, with new Clann na Poblachta candidates polling 3,344. In 1951, Hogan was again fourth elected, 5,213, and, while serving as Ceann Comhairle, 1951-1967, was automatically returned in 1954 – when Gerard Griffin polled the fifth highest with 4,714 – and 1957 and 1961 when Labour ran no candidates.<sup>20</sup> Still returned automatically in 1965, Labour's P.A. Ó Síocháin trailed in last but with a respectable 2,362.

Patrick Damien Hogan was born in Kilmaley on 10 October 1885, only son of Patrick Hogan, a labourer, and Bridget O'Connor of Culleen (Killaniv), Kilmaley, a dressmaker. In the 1901 Census, he lived with his blind father aged 75 and an Army Pensioner, and mother, 57, with his employment described as a 'house to house postman'. Interestingly, while his parents entered 'Irish & English' into the appropriate box, for Patrick they only entered 'English'. He was sixteen, although when entering the King's Inns in 1932, he gave his birth as 8 October 1891.<sup>21</sup> In 1911 and now as Pádraig Ó hÓgáin, he gave his age as 24. He was one of two boarders of Brighid Ní Núnáin, 66, and her daughter Máire, 30, both born in Limerick, at 5 New Square, Mitchelstown, County Cork. The Household Return is written over with 'Refused to fill this form in the English language' and is completed in gaelic script. Máire's occupation was given as biadhach ['grocer']; lodger Cork-born Pádraig de Búrc as báicéir ['baker']; and Hogan's as 'oide na gaedhilge' [tutor of Irish].<sup>22</sup>

Hogan joined Conradh na Gaeilge and the Irish Volunteers. After the Rising, he was deported to England for his activities in Limerick and imprisoned in Wandsworth. Released in the General Amnesty, in 1918, he was elected as ITGWU Ennis Branch Secretary, holding the position until 1921. During the War of Independence he fought against the Black and Tans in Clare, 1919-1921, and was tried by Military Court for possession and 'levying war against the King' in 1921. He took no part in the Civil war. He qualified as a barrister and was called to the bar in 1936. As Ceann Comhairle, he welcomed United States President John F. Kennedy to the house on 28 June 1963 during his visit to Ireland. Hogan published plays, prose and poetry in the ITGWU's *Irish Worker* and other journals, often under the pseudonym 'An Clarín Dubh' [Little Blackboard].<sup>23</sup> His play *Róisín's Robe* was staged in Liberty Hall on Easter Sunday night, 23 April 1916. His song 'The Shawl of Galway Grey' was very popular and his collection of short stories *The Unmarried Daughter* (1928) was well-received and 'made clear his resentment of social injustice'. Hogan was Chair, Clare County Council and Civil Service & Local Appointments Commissions, as well as serving on the Gaeltacht Commission, as President, Irish Tourist Association, and on the Council of State. He was married to Annie Mackey, who predeceased him, and was survived by a daughter and two sons at his death in Mullingar on 22 January 1969.<sup>24</sup> Hogan is immortalised in Peadar and Paula McNamara's Millennium Frieze in Kilmaley Church, his portrait central in the 'Public & Community Service Panel'.<sup>25</sup>

In the March 1968 by-election, Flan Honan, ITGWU Secretary in Ennis, polled 3,799, well behind the winner, Fianna Fáil's Sylvester Barrett, 19,066.<sup>26</sup> In 1969, in anticipation that the 'Seventies Will be Socialist', Honan, 1,597, was accompanied by Terence Higgins, 533, though neither were near a seat. In 1973, Michael Corley, 1,794, and 1977, Agnes McCarthy, 1,495, reflected Labour's struggles. McCarthy polled 2,471 in 1981; 1,957, February 1982; and 2,344, November 1982. In 1987, Thomas O'Shaughnessy's 600 seemed to spell Labour's nadir but no candidate at all was run in 1989. At this time, Brigid Makowski, Irish Republican Socialist, 232, began to contest the seat.

In 1992, carried in by the Spring Tide, Moosajee Bhamjee was third elected, 5,113, one the country's most unlikely results. Brídín Twist drew the short straw of contesting the seat in 1996, polling 1,684.

She was followed in 2002 by Michael Corley, 1,720, and in 2007, Pascal Fitzgerald, 892. In 2011, Michael McNamara was second elected with 8,572, unfortunately losing the seat on the eleventh count in 2016, 4,472.

## Conclusion

Data published in the ITGWU *Annual Reports, 1918-1928*, permits a view of the union's financial and organisational fortunes at local level. Details of branch secretaries and their addresses, remittances to and from Head Office, all provide useful insights. While Clare was never massively significant in numerical or financial terms for the ITGWU's national fortunes, the resilience of organisation in the county provided a bedrock from which significant growth for the ITGWU and SIPTU from the 1970s.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See John Swift, *History of the Dublin Bakers & Others*, (Irish Bakers', Confectionery & Allied Workers' Union, Dublin, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Andrew Boyd, *The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions*, (Anvil Books, Tralee, 1972); Peter Berresford Ellis, *A History of the Irish Working Class*, (Gollancz, London, 1972); Emmet O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-2000*, (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> T.J. O'Connell, *History of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 1868-1968*, (INTO, Dublin, 1970); Niamh Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame: 150 Years of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation*, (Gill, Dublin, 2017); John Coolahan, *The ASTI & Post-primary Education in Ireland, 1909-1984*, (ASTI, Dublin, 1984); John Cunningham, *Unlikely Radicals, Irish Post-Primary Teachers & the ASTI 1909-200*, (Cork University Press, Cork, 2009); John Logan (ed), *Teachers' Union: The TUI and Its Forerunners in Irish Education, 1899-1994*, (A. & A. Farmar, Dublin, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See Francis Devine, *Communicating the Union: A History of the Communications Workers' Union From 1900*, (CWU, Dublin, 2015), pp. 543-5, 57, 133, 286-287, 322, 345-346, 4180420, 477, 534-535, 575, 602-603, 644-645, 687-688.

<sup>5</sup> John Gray, *City in Revolt: Jim Larkin & the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907*, (SIPTU/Linenhall Library, Dublin & Belfast, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> See C. Desmond Greaves, *The ITGWU: The Formative Years, 1909-1923*, (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1982) and Francis Devine, *Organising History: A Centenary of SIPTU, 1909-2009*, (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> *ITGWU, Annual Report for 1918*, p. 6. For the ITGWU and 1916 see Devine, *Organising History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-90 and Francis Devine & Manus O'Riordan, *James Connolly, Liberty Hall & the 1916 Rising*, (ILHS, Dublin, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> See Devine, *Organising History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-142, 176-224; Donal Nevin, *James Larkin, Lion of the Fold*, (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1998), especially 'Titan at bay', pp. 74-83, and 'Larkin & the Workers' Union of Ireland', p. 4342-352.

<sup>9</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Politics & Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War & Revolution*, (Cork University Press, Cork, 1998), p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> Devine, *Organising History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-108; Greaves, *op. cit.*, pp. 188ff.

<sup>11</sup> *ITGWU, Annual Report for 1920*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> *ITGWU, Annual Report for 1920*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> Devine, *op. cit.*, pp. 1,007-1,009. Registrar of Friendly Society membership figures differ: 1932, 32,400; 1948, 89,054. The RFS recorded the first six-figure total after 1922, 100,000, in 1949, 101,609.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Devine & Lisa Mullins, 'The Murder of Thomas Connole, Irish Transport & General Workers' Union Branch Secretary Ennistymon, September 1920', *The Other Clare*, vol. 42, 2018, pp. 77-83.

<sup>15</sup> Devine, *op. cit.*, '1923: the worst year in union history', pp. 130-142.

<sup>16</sup> The Ennis United Labourers' Association & Protective Benefit Society was registered on 2 May 1934, 407T. An early President was P.J. MacNamara. The union was dissolved on 29 January 1944; de-registered on 16 June 1944; and accepted into the ITGWU in November, 1943, when referred to as Ennis United Labourers' Association. 'Paid up members of the Association' were granted 'immediate benefit on the basis of one year's membership'. The ITGWU's own account to the Registrar of Friendly Societies was that in October 1943, they became 'Branch of the ITGWU' as the 'members decided that when they were not in a position to take out a Negotiating Licence they had no alternative to dissolve the Association'. EULA&PBS membership was: 1934, 411; 1935, 381; 1936, 351; 1937, 401; 1938, 350 [258 men, 92 women]; 1939, 307 [220, 87]; 1940, 408 [330, 78];

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1941, 414 [273, 141]; 1942, 404 [206, 198]. Its Secretary at the time of its merger was D. Bourke. See Francis Devine & John B. Smethurst, *An Historical Directory of Trade Unions in Ireland*, (Saothar Studies 4, Irish Labour History Society/Working Class Movement Library, Dublin/Salford, 2017). See also Seán Matgamna, 'The revolt of the Ennis Labourers', *Workers' Liberty*, 3/35, 17 November, 2011, [www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-335-revolt-ennis-labourers](http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-335-revolt-ennis-labourers); [www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/wl/wl3-35.pdf](http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/wl/wl3-35.pdf) [both retrieved 21 August, 2017]. A hard copy of this is available in the Local History Archive, Ennis Library. See also Matgamna's 'Working class solidarity in Clare; the Ennis United Labourers' Association in the 1930s', *Saothar* 47, 2022, pp. 61-72.

<sup>16</sup> ITGWU, *Annual Report for 1920*, pp. 9-15.

<sup>17</sup> ITGWU, *Annual Report for 1920*, pp. 9-15.

<sup>18</sup> Devine, *Organising History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 226, 233-234, 292-292, 401-402, 510, 843-847.

<sup>19</sup> Diarmuid Ferriter, 'Hogan, Patrick (1891-1969), Labour politician', *Dictionary of Irish Biography, Volume 4*, (RIA/Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 746-747.

<sup>20</sup> Hogan was Leas-Cheann Comhairle, 27 October 1927-8 March 1928 and served as Ceann Comhairle from 13 June 1951 to 14 November 1967.

<sup>21</sup> [www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai000465438/](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai000465438/) [retrieved 21 March 2018].

<sup>22</sup> [www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai002011813/](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai002011813/) [retrieved 21 March 2018].

<sup>23</sup> Between August 1912 and September 1914, the *Irish Worker* carried nearly thirty of Hogan's poems and songs, see James Curry & Francis Devine, 'Merry May Your Xmas Be & 1913 Free From Care': *The Irish Worker 1912 Christmas Edition*, (Irish Labour History Society, Saothar Studies 3, Christmas 2012), pp. 9-12.

<sup>24</sup> 'Patrick Hogan (1886-1969)' in Barry Desmond & Charles Callan, *Irish Labour Lives: A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Labour Party Deputies, Senators, MPs & MEPs*, (Watchword, Dublin, 2010) pp. 119-120, 282.

<sup>25</sup> Peadar McNamara, *The Kilmaley Frieze: St John the Baptist Church, Kilmaley*, (McNamara, Inch, Magowna, Clare, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Barrett was a Branch Secretary for the Irish Local Government Officials' Union in 1964.