# MEDIA RELEASE

***Working Lives, 1893-1913*** **exhibition, featuring photographs of men, women and children at their places of work, to be opened this evening by Dinny McGinley, TD, Minister of State for the Gaeltacht24 October 2013** A new exhibition titled ***Working Lives, 1893-1913*** will be opened this evening at the National Photographic Archive, Temple Bar, Dublin by **Dinny McGinley, TD, Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht** .

***Working Lives, 1893-1913*** features 148 contemporary photographs of workers throughout the island of Ireland from 1893 to 1913 – a period of profound transformation in the Irish workplace. The images come from the Poole Collection (1884-1954), comprising some 66,000 photographic glass negatives, and the Mason Collection (1890-1910), comprising 2,000 glass lantern slides.

Many of the lantern slides produced by Mason, a Dublin firm, illustrated Royal Commission or Parliamentary reports, while the glass plate negatives produced by the Waterford-based Poole firm illustrated the lives and events of people in the south-east of Ireland. The design of *Working Lives 1893-1913* is influenced by the concept of an industrial family album, with photographs of women, men and children of most ages, at places of work rather than at play.

The Poole collection places servants as employees of The Big House alongside photographs of ordained priests and professed religious. This section of the exhibition also features photographs ranging from the policing of evictions and the breaking of strikes to images of the uniformed ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the British Army living out their working lives in police barracks and garrisons across Ireland.

The exhibition was curated by social scientist and leading Irish labour history specialist, Mary Jones. Her most recent publication *The Other Ireland: Changing Times, 1870-1920* features photographs developed from glass plate negatives and magic lantern slides sourced from the National Library of Ireland (NLI) photographic collections, which comprise some 5.2 million photographs.

Speaking at the launch of the exhibition, Minister McGinley said

> “The images from the largely unknown Mason Collection are selected from the categories of ‘Irish industry’ and ‘Ireland at work’, and feature photographs developed from magic lantern slides and glass plate negatives which will soon be digitised by the NLI. The working people featured in the Mason Collection photographs look into – or away from – the camera, which in the late 1800s was still novel technology. Maintaining their collective poise, these people silently challenge

any assumption that they, the working people of Ireland, are mere cogs in the wheels of imperious industry."

***Working Lives 1893-1913*** highlights working conditions across Ireland for men, for women and for children, in both public and private spheres, at the end of the 19th and into the 20th century, culminating in 1913 with the Dublin Lockout. The images bear witness to working people as the process of their work is changed, and re-formed, by the development of new technologies; where the pressures eventually lead, through a dynamic if circuitous route, to a 'downing of tools' in 1913. The Dublin Lockout itself is currently the subject of a major mixed media exhibition in the NLI's Kildare Street premises.

The implications of changing technology – within agriculture, in the construction of a labyrinth of railway track, of shirt and collar manufacture and laundries, the linen and poplin industries, bacon and brick curing, biscuit and candle making to name only a few – are presented in this exhibition. These photographs invite visitors to the NPA to enter a pictorial essay, a narrative connecting photographs displayed in clusters across time.

The photos in the exhibition reflect the changing political and administrative climate on industrial conditions of labour. Exhibition visitors will see rare contemporary photographs of industries mapped by the Royal Commissions on Agricultural Labour and on the Employment of Women, both published in 1893. Political and legislative initiatives including the 1902 *Report on Children's Street Trading* and the 1904 establishment of the Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women inform the exhibition narrative framework.

***Working Lives, 1893-1913*** reflects the organisation of the Irish Trades Union Congress in 1894, and the establishing of trade specific bodies such as the Irish Drapers Assistants' Benefit and Protective Association in 1901, and the Shop Act of 1912. The exhibition narrative links images documenting a period of profound change, manifest in industrial tension across Ireland, visible in the photographs of the 1897 Pig Strike in Waterford, the 1906/7 Linen Strike in Belfast, and the 1911 Lockout at Pierce's Foundry in Wexford. Such tensions set the context for the Dublin Lockout in 1913.

The exhibition runs at the NPA in Temple Bar until May 2014. Admission is free.

**Ends**

**For further information, contact Brenda O'Hanlon on 087-258 3292 or Elizabeth Kirwan, Curator, National Photographic Archive on or 01 603 0370 or 086 872 9752. Email emkirwan@nli.ie or visit the National Library of Ireland's website www.nli.ie**