

THE DUBLIN LOCKOUT

Introduction to the Dublin Lockout

Ireland in 1913 was a country in turmoil, divided by the issue of Home Rule: self-government for Ireland. Nationalists saw their goal within reach whereas Ulster Unionists, led by Dublin MP Edward Carson, prepared for resistance by force. It was against this backdrop that a violent industrial conflict was to take centre stage: the Dublin Lockout.

At 9.40am on 26 August, drivers and conductors left their trams on O'Connell Street and began the strike that would become the Dublin Lockout.

The tramworkers' protest was by way of a response to William Martin Murphy, owner of the Dublin United

Tramways Company (DUTC), who had sacked hundreds of staff suspected of Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) membership in the preceding weeks. He aimed to stamp out the influence of ITGWU leader Jim Larkin, who had organised Dublin's unskilled and semi-skilled workforce and given voice to their pent-up anger.

Following the tram workers' actions, Murphy 'locked out' strikers and installed non-union workers, called 'scabs' by trade unionists. Disputes spread across Dublin until, ultimately, some 20,000 workers were involved in strikes and lockouts. Violence also spread quickly. The final five days of

August saw an increasing sense of disorder in Dublin, culminating in the events of 'Bloody Sunday' (31 August 1913). This led the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) to support the strikers and transformed a local dispute into a major industrial battle. Undeterred, Murphy persuaded 400 Dublin employers to adopt his 'lock out' strategy and up to 25,000 workers were laid off.

The dispute continued until early 1914. It was unprecedented in scale and ferocity and remains the largest industrial conflict in Irish history.

Frithdhúnadh Bhaile Átha Cliath

Tír ina cíor thuathail ba ea Éire i 1913, í roinnte ag ceist an Rialtais Dúchais – is é sin, féinrialtas d'Éirinn. Chreid náisiúnaithe nach raibh a sprioc i bhfad uathu. Ag an am céanna, bhí Aontachtaithe Uladh, faoi cheannas Edward Carson, MP Bhaile Átha Cliath, ag ullmhú chun cur ina aghaidh sin trí fhoréigean. In aghaidh an chúlra sin, bhí coinbhleacht fhoréigneach thionsclaíoch ar tí teacht chun cinn agus aird an phobail a tharraingt; ba í an choimbhleacht sin Frithdhúnadh Bhaile Átha Cliath.

Ag 9.40am ar an 26 Lúnasa, d'imigh tiománaithe agus stiúrthóirí óna gcuid tramanna ar Sráid Uí Chonaill agus thosaigh siad an stailc ar a dtabharfaí Frithdhúnadh Bhaile Átha Cliath uirthi.

Rinneadh agóid na n-oibrithe tram mar fhreagairt do William Martin Murphy, úinéir Chomhlacht Trambhealaí Aontaithe Bhaile Átha Cliath (DUTC), a bhí tar éis an bóthar a thabhairt do na céadta ball foirne a measadh a bheith páirteach i gCeardchumann Oibrithe Iompair agus Ilsaothair na hÉireann (ITGWU) sna seachtainí roimhe. Bhí sé mar aidhm aige deireadh a chur leis an tionchar a bhí ag Jim Larkin, ceannaire ITGWU, a d'eagraigh lucht saothair neamhoilte agus leathoilte Bhaile Átha Cliath agus a chuir in iúl a gcuid feirge a bhí brúite faoi chois.

Tar éis ghníomhartha na dtiománaithe tram, 'd'fhrithdhún' Murphy na stailceoirí agus thug sé a gcuid post d'oibrithe nach raibh páirteach i gceardchumann, nó 'sáraitheoirí stailce'. Leath na díospóidí ar fud Bhaile Átha Cliath go dtí go raibh 20,000 oibrí

páirteach i stailceanna agus i bhfrithdhúntaí. Leath an foréigean go gasta freisin. Tháinig méadú ar an ainriail i mBaile Átha Cliath le linn na cúig lá dheireanacha de mhí Lúnasa, a tháinig chun buaice le heachtraí 'Dhomhnach na Fola' (an 31 Lúnasa 1913).

Is é an toradh a bhí aige sin gur thug Comhdháil Ceardchumann na Breataine tacaíocht do na stailceoirí agus go ndearnadh mórchomhrac tionsclaíoch de dhíospóid áitiúil. É diongbháilte, chuir Murphy ina luí ar 400 fostóir i mBaile Átha Cliath glacadh lena straitéis 'frithdhúnta' agus leagadh suas le 25,000 oibrí as.

Bhí an díospóid ar siúl go dtí go luath sa bhliain 1914. Bhí sí gan fasach ó thaobh scála agus fíochmhaire de agus tá sí fós ar an gcoinbhleacht thionsclaíoch is mó i stair na hÉireann.

Dublin 1913: a divided city. The city centre contained tenements and small dwellings where a third of the population lived, often in abject poverty. Unskilled labourers earned between 15 shillings and £1 for working 60 hours a week.

Of the 25,882 families living in tenements, 80% lived in one room and 1560 families lived in cellars.

Death rates were much higher than in other British cities, including Belfast. The infant mortality rate was especially high at 160 per 1000 live births, compared with 153 in Belfast and 96 in Bristol.

Yet, the Irish capital also had gracious suburbs with clean air, modern sanitation and access to the surrounding mountains and sea. A child born into an upper-middle-class professional family was 22 times more likely to celebrate its first birthday than a child who was born in the slums.

Housing and health were the responsibility of local government. However, almost a quarter of slum landlords were city councillors. Conflicts of interest, complacency and corruption were commonplace. Inevitably, the authorities' failure to address these issues led to increasingly vocal discontent and organised protest.

Baile Átha Cliath 1913: Cathair Roinnte

Baile Átha Cliath 1913: cathair roinnte. Is é a bhí i lár na cathrach ná tionóntáin agus teachíní inar mhair aon trian den daonra, agus mhair siad go fórbhocht go minic. Fuair oibrithe neamhoilte idir 15s agus £1 ar son 60 uair oibre in aghaidh na seachtaine.

I gcás na 25,882 teaghlach a chónaigh sna tionóntáin, chónaigh 80% díobh i seomra amháin agus chónaigh 1560 teaghlach i siléir.

Bhí rátaí báis i bhfad níos airde i mBaile Átha Cliath ná mar a bhí siad i gcathracha na Breataine nó i mBéal Feirste. Bhí ráta mortlaíochta na naíonán go háirithe ard, agus é cothrom le 160 bás in aghaidh 1000 breith beo, i gcomparáid le 153 bás i mBéal Feirste agus le 96 bás in Bristol.

Ach bhí bruachbhailte breátha i bpríomhchathair na hÉireann freisin – áit ina raibh aer glan, sláintíocht nua-aimseartha agus rochtain ar na sléibhte agus ar an trá máguaird. Bhí leanbh a tógadh i dteaghlach gairmiúil uachtarach a 22 oiread níos dóchúla a chéad bhreithlá a cheiliúradh ná mar a bhí leanbh a tógadh sna plódcheantair.

Bhí an rialtas áitiúil freagrach as tithíocht agus as sláinte. Mar sin féin, bhí beagnach aon cheathrú de na tiarnaí talún sna plódcheantair ina gComhairleoirí Cathrach freisin. Coitianta a bhí coinbhleachtaí leasa, bolgás agus éilliú. Ós rud é gur theip ar na húdaráis áitiúla dul i ngleic leis na ceisteanna sin, bhí sé dosheachanta go dtiocfadh méadú ar an míshásamh agus ar an agóid eagraithe.