



LEAVING CERTIFICATE HISTORY CASE STUDY

Dublin 1913: strike and lockout

LATER MODERN IRELAND: TOPIC 2 MOVEMENTS FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORM, 1870-1914

A resource for teachers of Leaving Certificate History,
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Introduction

The violent industrial dispute that convulsed Dublin in the Autumn of 1913 commonly called the 'The Lockout' took place against a backdrop of unremitting urban poverty. It is hard to imagine the overcrowded slums and poverty which characterised Dublin in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Unemployment amongst unskilled labourers was chronic. Poor diet and disorder brought about by the overcrowding (Document 1) were compounded by the complete inability of local authorities to provide even a small measure of social services to relieve the appalling destitution in the city. Accompanied by considerable incidences of street disorder this violent and bitter strike was fought as much in the local pubs and on the streets of Dublin as it was in the printed press and across trade union committee rooms. The documents in this case study have been selected with a view to showing that the lockout was more than a dispute over wages and conditions. Assuming a momentum of its own, the strike evolved into a colossal struggle centred upon such core issues as worker mobilisation, the spread of *syndicalist or socialist doctrines and union recognition. The dispute also took on the character of a personal vendetta between *Jim Larkin, General Secretary of the *Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), and *William Martin Murphy, head of the city's *Employers' Federation.

The arrangement of documents follows a sequence designed to illustrate the differing viewpoints of these two principal protagonists. Jim Larkin had hitherto enjoyed considerable success in securing substantial pay rises for dockers in both Belfast and Dublin, but in setting his sights on the Murphy-owned concern, the Dublin United Tramways Company, he was tackling a very intimidating opponent. Murphy made it patently clear that he would not stand idly by and allow Larkin attain an ascendancy over the workers in his employment and vowed not to recognise either Larkin or his union (Document 2). A man of remarkable gifts and qualities, Larkin too was an energetic leader but an extremely petulant and unpredictable streak in his character ensured that he did not always enjoy the full support or approval of his colleagues (Document 3). Murphy's dismissal of 200 tramway men ignited what would become the most famous dispute in Irish labour history but discontent amongst workers in Dublin had been simmering for months (Document 4). The strike spread rapidly as the union leader at once hit back by calling out all the tramway men on 26 August. For Larkin the unionisation of the tramway company was essential to his *syndicalist strategy of creating one large union of unskilled and general workers. The lockout of the tramway men and the huge industrial conflict that grew out of it was an unequal struggle for, as the workers were soon to learn to their cost, the employers could rely on the forces of the state to back up their position. There was a massive police and military presence on the streets of the capital to ensure that the tram service and other businesses were not unduly interrupted. The tense situation soon erupted into violence and the police baton charge on O'Connell Street after Larkin's dramatic appearance to address the crowd (Documents 5, 6) was just one incident in a dispute in which little quarter was given.

One of the reasons the lockout assumed the proportions it did was Larkin's advocacy of the tactic of the sympathetic strike. As dockers, with Larkin's approval, began to refuse to handle 'tainted goods' from companies involved in the lockout of transport workers, the employers, intent upon breaking the power of the ITGWU, prepared to fight a prolonged struggle. A total lockout was enforced by employers and by the

middle of October some 20,000 men were off work whilst their families faced up to the prospect of a bleak winter with inadequate warmth or nourishment. The sympathetic strike tactic was backed by Dublin's workers not only because they saw it as a powerful weapon in their campaign for better wages but because it seemed to offer a means of protecting their basic rights to combine and join the union of their choice. It was in this climate of intimidation and conflict that a plan was proposed to send the children of striking workers to England (Document 7). Strident criticism from the Catholic Church, however, ensured that the scheme foundered. Larkinism guaranteed workers' rights to union recognition, the right to freedom of association and expression and most importantly of all it gave hope to the working classes of Dublin that a fairer and more equitable distribution of wealth was possible. This vision was endorsed by members of Dublin's intellectual and artistic elite who viewed the activities of businessmen as an assault on individual freedom (Document 8). Having acquired the *Irish Independent* in 1900 William Martin Murphy used it as a platform to launch stinging attacks on Larkin and his union. However, journalism was used on both sides in opportunistic and scathing visual propaganda to lampoon and defame opponents (Documents 9, 10). In newspapers aimed at middle class Dubliners the employers continuously took advantage of Larkin's tempestuous and wild outbursts to discredit the workers' campaign.

The eventual failure of the workers' campaign left an immediate legacy of bitterness and a sense of betrayal amongst the union leaders. Larkin may have set out with the *syndicalist agenda of creating a brotherhood of man but his *fiery cross speeches designed to elicit sympathetic strike action from union brethren in Britain met with a subdued response. As labour solidarity began to crumble (Document 11) and sympathy from English workers weakened, union leaders were faced with the unpalatable prospect of defeat. It was a painful and agonising capitulation for thousands of workers and their families who were left on the breadline. It was also devastating for men and women who had spent four months on strike to find that they could not now get work as they were blacklisted by employers (Document 12). While union leaders referred to the lockout as a 'drawn battle' the sense of isolation and defeat after the failure of the strike was unmistakable. For the employers, on the other hand, and particularly for William Martin Murphy, who had always seen Larkinism as the embodiment of radicalism and disruption, nothing less than the avoidance of a social revolution had been achieved.

An edited transcript is included with each document. The *Biographical Notes* section contains short character sketches on the principal figures involved in the dispute. A *Glossary* has also been added and should be integrated at the reading and initial comprehension stages of document study. Cross references with both the *Biographical Notes* and *Glossary* sections are indicated by an asterisk (*) and have been added in the document descriptions and transcripts where they seem most likely to assist the student. The questions associated with each document range from description and commentary questions on the source to assessments of reliability and accuracy. Students should first consider where, when and why a document was produced before moving to more analytical questions which include the element of interpretation. The visual documents include photographs and cartoons. Like other classes of historical documents, a visual source has a creator with a distinct point of view. Using visual documents requires careful analysis of both the content and point of view; students should also consider the symbols, caricatures and captions

employed by cartoonists. It is obvious that the cartoons presented in this case study do not reflect a balanced or impartial view of the event to which they refer; students will need to identify the artist's viewpoint before making interpretative judgements on the content and accuracy of the source. Finally, students should be encouraged to place the subject matter of the document in a wider historical context and, if possible, make comparisons and correlations with other sources of evidence.

Biographical Notes

James Connolly (1868-1916)

Labour leader. Born to Irish immigrant parents in Edinburgh, Connolly joined the British army as a boy and, ironically, served in Ireland in the 1880s. Profoundly influenced by the writings of Marx and other socialists, he moved to Dublin in 1896 and founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He also edited the party's newspaper, the *Worker's Republic*. Connolly was a gifted pamphleteer but initial progress towards his vision of a socialist republic was slow and in 1902 he emigrated to the United States. In 1910 he returned to Ireland and joined the newly formed Socialist Party of Ireland. Appointed by William O'Brien as organiser of the ITGWU in Belfast, he worked hard to improve conditions and increase the wages of striking dockers. Together with Larkin, Connolly was involved in the founding of the Irish Labour Party in 1912. As the most single-minded of the union leaders, he played a prominent role in the Dublin lockout of 1913, helping to establish the Irish Citizen Army to protect striking workers against police repression. He served time in jail on charges of sedition. After the defeat of the lockout, Connolly (who had become acting General Secretary of the ITGWU in Larkin's absence) became increasingly involved in the revolutionary nationalist struggle which culminated in his leading role in the Easter Rising of 1916. Having sustained a serious leg wound in fighting in the General Post Office, Connolly was strapped to a chair and shot by firing squad, which earned him iconic status in the republican movement.

James Larkin (1876-1947)

Labour leader. The son of Irish parents, Larkin was born in Liverpool. From an early age he worked on the docks and became a committed trade unionist. In January 1907 he was sent by his union, the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL), to Belfast to organise workers. Renowned for his unbounded energy, Larkin was a charismatic and extremely enthusiastic speaker. He recruited over 400 members for the union in his first three weeks in the city. The employers responded with a lockout of workers provoking a long and bitter strike. The resulting defeat of the workers left Larkin embittered at the inaction of his colleagues in England. He moved to Dublin soon afterwards and in 1909 founded the ITGWU. He was also to the fore in the establishment of the trade-union based Irish Labour Party in 1912. Larkin also edited the socialist newspaper, the highly successful *Irish Worker*. Largely due to his own efforts the ITGWU saw its membership rise to 10,000 by 1913. During the lockout, Larkin was arrested and sentenced to a harsh seven-month term of imprisonment, which was subsequently quashed after a public outcry. Larkin's notorious personality traits and his support for unconventional tactics such as sympathetic strikes led to denunciations of Larkinite militancy. After the defeat suffered by the workers in the lockout, an embittered Larkin emigrated to the United States. His return to Ireland in 1923 occasioned an intensely bitter power struggle with William O'Brien, the treasurer of ITGWU during the lockout, which left the labour movement divided for years. Branded an extremist, Larkin was suspended as General Secretary of the union. Having left a unique mark on Irish labour, Larkin died in 1947.

Countess Markievicz (Constance Gore-Booth) (1868-1927)

Feminist, socialist and nationalist leader. From a well-off landed gentry family in County Sligo, Markievicz was an admirer of Jim Larkin and a strident supporter of the labour movement. She assisted in the distribution of food from Liberty Hall during the lockout. She became a lieutenant in the Irish Citizen Army and was sentenced to death (later commuted to life) for her involvement in the Easter Rising of 1916. On her release in 1917 she actively canvassed on the Sinn Féin platform and was the first woman elected to the House of Commons; she declined to take her seat, becoming instead the minister for labour in the first Dáil.

William Martin Murphy (1844-1919)

Entrepreneur, capitalist and leading figure on the employers' side in the 1913 lockout. Having amassed a huge fortune in building railways all over the British Empire, Murphy established the Dublin United Tramways Company (DUTC) before becoming proprietor of the *Irish Independent* and *Irish Catholic* newspapers in 1900. At the helm of huge business interests, Murphy became the embodiment of a new breed of entrepreneurial capitalist. He founded the Employers' Federation in 1912 to combat the spread of militant trade unionism and was later president of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. Intolerant of any outside interference in his business affairs, Murphy's sense of superiority and cold detachment contributed much to the bitterness of the lockout which he saw as a personal duel with the ITGWU, personified by its leader, Jim Larkin. Murphy's unyielding defence of the rights of capital over any consideration of the rights of his workers may seem distasteful to modern eyes, but he maintained that his motivation was to protect his own powers of personal management rather than exploit his employees.

William O'Brien (1881-1968)

Labour leader. A tailor by profession, O'Brien was involved from an early date in the organisation of unskilled labourers and ably abetted Larkin in the setting up of the ITGWU in December 1908. Under the stewardship of Larkin and O'Brien, the ITGWU became the pre-eminent union in the Dublin Trades Council (DTC). In 1913 O'Brien was the vice-president of the DTC and worked hard in pursuit of workers' demands during the great labour dispute of that year, acting as secretary of the lockout committee dealing with the financing and distribution of strike pay. He was arrested on charges of seditious libel and of participation in illegal meetings in late August 1913. Taking over the reins at the head of the ITGWU after Larkin's self-imposed exile in America and Connolly's execution in 1916, O'Brien built up the union's membership to around 100,000 and succeeded in turning it into a powerful and acceptable force on the Irish political scene. O'Brien subscribed to a more balanced and reform-minded approach to socialism than Larkin who preferred direct confrontation with employers. On Larkin's return to Ireland in 1923, O'Brien accused him of Communist sympathies and of fracturing the union movement with his relentless ambition for personal control. The resulting schism in the Irish labour movement went unhealed for years. O'Brien remained the dominant personality in the Irish labour movement until his retirement from the post of General Secretary of the ITGWU in 1946, having served twenty-two years in that post.

Francis Sheehy Skeffington (1878-1916)

A leading Dublin intellectual, pacifist and journalist, Sheehy Skeffington was an advocate of women's suffrage and a firm friend to James Connolly and the trade

union movement. He was active in the Irish Women's Franchise League which was founded by his wife, Hanna. He was also a participant in meetings of the Socialist Party of Ireland and the United Irish League. He founded the *Irish Citizen* in 1912 to highlight the campaign for women's rights, and he supported both the Dublin Civic League and the Irish Citizen Army during the lockout of 1913. His campaign against conscription during the First World War earned him the enmity of the English authorities while his murder by a deranged British officer as he tried to prevent looting during the Easter Rising of 1916 was proclaimed by nationalists as an example of state-sponsored repression.

Archbishop William Joseph Walsh (1841-1921)

A long-standing advocate of Home Rule, Walsh had a consistent record of support for constitutional nationalism, which stretched back to Parnell and the land war. Mortified by the spectacle of street violence, his role during the Dublin lockout was ambiguous. Mindful of the need to foster conciliation and to promote a negotiated end to the dispute, Walsh preached against the dangers posed by Larkinite socialism. His most decisive intervention was his fierce admonishment of mothers who consented to send their children abroad for the duration of the lockout.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

The attitude of celebrated poet W.B. Yeats to the lockout was influenced by the failure of employers represented in the Dublin Chamber of Commerce to provide financial support for the Hugh Lane bequest of Impressionist paintings. Disillusioned by the leaders of Irish nationalism and the Catholic bourgeoisie, Yeats penned the poem 'September 1913' which contained a veiled attack upon Dublin's miserly capitalists accusing them of having no regard for artistic endeavour. William Martin Murphy's newspapers responded by portraying a foppish Yeats as an eerie caricature lamenting a dead past.

Glossary

Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.)

Formed in New York in 1836, the Ancient Order of Hibernians is the oldest and largest Irish-American organisation. Its origins can be traced to the rural secret society tradition of late eighteenth-century Ireland and early efforts were directed towards the protection of church property and the defence of the Irish emigrant community in America. By the early twentieth century, the organisation was closely associated with nationalist politics. Its president, Joe Devlin, was a member of John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party. The order's charitable work was underscored by a predominantly Catholic ethos. Unionists referred to members of the order contemptuously as the 'Molly Maguires' (after the Irish emigrant secret society which operated in Pennsylvania). The role of the A.O.H. in the Dublin lockout was contentious as Larkin accused it of giving assistance to striker-breakers. The involvement of its members in sabotaging the scheme to send the children of striking workers to England indicated its opposition to militant socialism and its perception of Irish identity as nationalist and Catholic.

Askwith Inquiry

Established by the British government on 24 September 1913, the Askwith inquiry was the most determined attempt to find a negotiated resolution to the lockout. Sir George Askwith and the Board of Trade conducted meetings with the employers and workers and examined the causes of the conflict. While the employers did not welcome the outside scrutiny of their affairs the workers were generally more enthusiastic especially when Askwith reported in his findings that they had significant grievances. His report also included, however, a condemnation of the sympathetic strike tactic and suggested that committees be established to negotiate an end to the strike. The employers subsequently rejected the inquiry's recommendations.

Blackleg

A slang term for a worker who works during a dispute.

Dublin Metropolitan Police (D.M.P.)

A uniformed but unarmed government-controlled police force, the D.M.P. was mainly concerned with petty crime and the apprehension of common criminals. It was recruited locally and was reasonably popular until its brutal action against strikers during the lockout alienated public opinion.

Employers' Agreement

In an attempt to force their employees to repudiate their membership of the ITGWU, employers posted circulars and forms of agreement to their workers in July 1913 threatening them with dismissal if they did not sign. It was the refusal of the union's members to sign these undertakings which led to the lockout of some 20,000 Dublin workers. At the Askwith inquiry it was concluded that the agreement imposed conditions upon workers which were 'contrary to individual liberty and which no workman ... could reasonably be expected to accept.' The agreement usually took the following form:

'I hereby undertake to carry out all instructions given to me by or on behalf of my employers, and I further agree to immediately resign my membership of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (if a member) and I further undertake that I will not join or in any way support this Union.'

Signed _____

Address _____

Witness _____

Date _____

Source: *Freeman's Journal*, 8 October 1913.

Employers' Federation

Founded by William Martin Murphy in 1911, the Dublin Employers' Federation included many prominent owners and proprietors of leading companies and was set up with the intention of co-ordinating the actions of employers in response to the spread of militant trade unionism.

Fiery Cross

During the lockout, Larkin and the ITGWU campaigned across Britain for union solidarity and sympathetic strike action in order to pressurize the employers. To this end Larkin spoke at large union meetings in many industrial cities in what was called his 'Fiery Cross' campaign. The imagery like the content of his speeches was provocative: a burning cross was used by Highland clans during wartime as a call to arms. Although railway workers in South Wales took some unofficial action, Larkin's campaign met with little success as the British trade union leadership refused to endorse the tactic of sympathetic strikes.

Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU)

Established in late 1908 by Jim Larkin who had broken away from the Liverpool-based National Union of Dock Labourers, the ITGWU set up offices in Dublin (Beresford Place), Belfast, Cork and Waterford. Its desire to recruit unskilled workers across a broad range of trades allowed it to react to the growing sense of working class militancy in a city racked by appalling poverty and housing conditions. The membership of the union had risen to 10,000 by the time of the Dublin lockout. Employers, concerned at the increasing stridency of worker demands, combined to compel employees to sign an agreement with the intention of forcing them to withdraw from the ITGWU. The union responded by calling a strike and soon 20,000 workers were out on sympathetic strikes or locked out by their employers. Lacking the finances or organisational ability to fight a protracted dispute, the ITGWU was left in ruins and nearly bankrupt after the lockout. The union, however, survived and having shed its Larkinite image went on to become a significant voice in the struggle for political independence.

Irish Women's Franchise League

Founded in 1908 by the celebrated feminist, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, one of the first female university graduates in Ireland, the League was a militant organisation set up with the aim of persuading Irish M.P.s to support women's suffrage. Many of the ITGWU leaders during the lockout were keen advocates of the enfranchisement of women. James Connolly was a frequent speaker at meetings of the Irish Women's

Franchise League in Dublin. For Connolly, a woman's right to play a part in the struggle for workers' rights and for political independence was a simple matter of social justice and equality.

Scab

A derogatory or slang term for a strike-breaker or person who continues to work during a strike. The term became a part of popular jargon in Dublin during the lockout. One commentator remarked that it was 'even being used by children on the street; if a boy takes another's spinning top he is called a scab.'

Syndicalism

Refers to a revolutionary political doctrine that advocated the seizure of the means of production from employers by workers organised in trade unions. For many employers during the lockout the fight against Larkinism was synonymous with the wider struggle of capitalism against syndicalism as the ITGWU seemed intent upon not only wrecking Dublin's industry but also bringing about a socialist revolution. Syndicalists argued that the interests of workers and employers were diametrically opposed and that their primary goal should be the overthrow of a system which preserved inequality in society. There was little doubt that syndicalist ideas influenced Larkin and that the tactic of sympathetic strikes bore the hallmark of his brand of socialist-syndicalist thinking.

Documents included in case study

Employers

1. A description of conditions in Dublin's slums (Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin, the story of the great strike of 1913-14, with a description of the industries of the Irish capital*, New York, 1914), pp 14-16.
2. An extract from a speech by *William Martin Murphy (*Meeting of motormen, conductors of the Dublin United Tramways Company held in the Antient Concert Rooms on 19th July 1913*, Dublin, 1913).

Workers

3. A letter from *James Connolly to *William O'Brien reflecting upon Jim Larkin's personality, 29 July 1913 (N.L.I. *William O'Brien Papers, MS 13,908/1).
4. A handbill from the Dublin branches of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors opposing un-unionised labour and publishing the names of those tailors engaged in the sweating system (July 1913; N.L.I. *William O'Brien Papers, MS 13,913/1).

Strike and Lockout on the streets of Dublin

5. A report on *Jim Larkin's arrest and the disturbances on the day known as 'Bloody Sunday' (*Evening Telegraph*, 1 September 1913).
6. Photographs of the disturbances on O'Connell Street on the day known as 'Bloody Sunday' (R.T.É. Archives, Cashman Collection).
7. A letter from Dora Montefiore to the archbishop of Dublin, *William Walsh, giving details about the 'Dublin kiddies scheme,' 21 October 1913 (D.D.A. Walsh Papers, laity file).
8. An article, 'Dublin Fanaticism,' by *William Butler Yeats condemning the brutality of the police and accusing the employers of stirring up religious hysteria (*Irish Worker*, 1 November 1913).
9. A cartoon, 'On the rocks' (*The Irish Worker*, 8 November 1913).
10. A cartoon, 'Bang! Goes Jim' (*Sunday Independent*, 30 November 1913).

The worker's defeat: recrimination and bitterness

11. A letter from *James Connolly describing the tensions between the unions during the lockout, 30 December 1913 (N.L.I. Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, MS 33,624/2).
12. Draft copy of a letter from *William O'Brien to Charles W. Bowerman on the destitution of workers who were locked out, [c. March 1914] (N.L.I. *William O'Brien Papers, MS 13,913/1).

Document 1

A description of conditions in Dublin's slums (Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin, the story of the great strike of 1913-14, with a description of the industries of the Irish capital*, New York, 1914), pp 14-16.

Description of Document

Arnold Wright wrote the first history of the lockout soon after its cessation. Writing at the behest of the employers who reportedly paid him £500 to write their version of the lockout, Wright was very much an apologist for the actions of *William Martin Murphy and the *Employers' Federation during the dispute. In this extract, however, even Wright was forced to concede that the appalling degeneracy of living conditions in Dublin's slum tenements might have contributed to support for the lockout amongst the city's working class. The labour dispute took place against a backdrop of unremitting urban poverty. There was a chronic failure by local government to provide adequate housing, sanitation and health services. Many of the inhabitants of the slums were unskilled workers who were poorly paid and subject to the whims of unsympathetic employers. Thousands of lives were lost in the cramped and squalid slums every year from what were preventable diseases. Cleanliness was rendered impossible in such conditions and was exacerbated by extreme poverty which in turn resulted in Dublin having one of the worst mortality rates in Europe at the time of the lockout. Wright freely admitted in his book that these slums acted as fertile breeding grounds for Larkinite recruits who, in the absence of any help from official organisations like Dublin Corporation, saw Larkin's social militancy as a means of improving their conditions.

Edited Transcript of Document

The Dublin slum, in fact, is a thing apart in the inferno of social degradation...In buildings – old, rotten, and permeated with both physical and moral corruption – they crowd in incredible numbers. At the Government Inquiry into Dublin housing conditions, held in November and December 1913, some astounding facts were brought to public prominence relative to the extent to which human beings are herded together in the Irish capital. Altogether there appears to be in the city 5,322 tenement houses, accommodating, if such a word can be used, 25,822 families, or a total population of 87,205. No fewer than 20,108 families occupy one room each, 4,402 of the remainder have only two rooms each. But this is only part of the terrible record.

In the official report of the inquiry, the houses are divided into three classes: **(a)** houses which appear structurally sound; **(b)** houses which are so decayed, or so badly constructed, as to be on or past approaching border-line of being unfit for human habitation; and **(c)** houses unfit for human habitation ... In the first category are included 1,516 tenements occupied by 8,295 families and by 27,052 persons. The second dubious class comprises 2,288 tenements occupied by 10,696 families and 37,552 persons. In the last section of all are included 1,518 tenements occupied by 6,831 families and 22,701 persons ... Probably we might say, without any over statement, that the majority of the occupiers of these tenement houses – approximately a third of the population – live under conditions which are injurious to physique and mortality.

Human nature, being what it is, revolts against the tyranny of circumstances which condemns it to existence in the infernos of modern civilisation. The feeling may lie dormant for a long time, but it is always there to be called into activity by demagogic influence ... With little to gain and nothing to lose, with stunted understandings wedded to impressionable natures, the tens of thousands of unfortunates who go to make up the bulk of the working population of the Irish capital are easy prey to the glib orator of the street corner who poses in the familiar role of the Friend of Humanity. They are caught up readily by his windy appeals and carried away by his specious arguments, while their fancies are tickled by the examples of capitalist cruelty and greed which are never wanting to paint the moral and adorn his tale.

To most of the slum denizens [inhabitants] the intrusion into their lives of a labour movement of the more strenuous kind – with its marches and its counter-marches, its shouting and cheering and its periodic thrills – is a welcome change from the drab monotony of ordinary existence in which the normal excitement is provided by a wedding or a funeral or a drunken brawl on Saturday night ... The people simply needed a leader. The occasion speedily made one of a remarkable kind in the person of Mr. James Larkin – or as he prefers to be called – *Jim Larkin.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

For what purpose was it written?

What does Wright say about living conditions in Dublin's slums? [Paragraph, The Dublin slum...]

What conclusions did the official government report into Dublin's housing reach? [Paragraph, In the official report...]

Why, according to Wright, did the inhabitants of Dublin's slum tenements rally to support Jim Larkin? [Paragraphs, Human nature...and To most of slum denizens...]

Interpretation and Criticism

Is this a primary or secondary source? Was it written at the time of the lockout, or after some lapse of time?

Are there any words and/or phrases that indicate that Wright may have had a bias in favour of the employers?

Define the term 'tenement' as used in Wright's account of urban poverty in Dublin. To what extent does this source reveal the extent of the housing problem which existed in Dublin in 1913?

Wider Context

Using your textbook and Wright's account as your main sources, try to account for what lay at the heart of the problem of urban poverty in Dublin.

How did the social conditions of workers in Dublin contribute to the discontent which led to the lockout?

Why did Jim Larkin's charismatic leadership of the labour movement give such hope to Dublin's labouring class?

Document 2

An extract from a speech by *William Martin Murphy (*Meeting of motormen, conductors of the Dublin United Tramways Company held in the Antient Concert Rooms on 19th July 1913*, Dublin, 1913).

Description of Document

The Dublin United Tramways Company (DUTC) was part of the extensive business empire controlled by Dublin's leading capitalist entrepreneur, *William Martin Murphy. The tramway boss was also president of the Employer's Federation and chairman of the city's chamber of commerce. An introverted self-made businessman, Murphy was the proprietor of the Nationalist newspapers, the *Irish Independent*, *Evening Herald* and *Irish Catholic* and managed the department store, Clery's, and the Imperial Hotel on O'Connell Street. It was the DUTC, however, which represented the jewel in Murphy's business crown making him a fortune and raising him to the pinnacle of the business community in the city. Discontent in the company was, however, rife as workers had to deal with long hours and extremely harsh working conditions for pay which fell below what their counterparts on the Belfast trams were receiving. *Jim Larkin of the transport union skillfully exploited this anger through the summer of 1913 and forcefully made the point that the success of the company was due to the sweat and hard labour of the workers. The unrest in Murphy-controlled interests led to active support for the *ITGWU in both the tramways company and in the distribution department of the *Irish Independent*. Murphy, seeing that a potentially dangerous situation was developing, called a meeting of 700 of his tramway staff at which he made clear his determination not to negotiate with Larkin or anyone from the *ITGWU. His speech was subsequently printed in this pamphlet. Describing himself as a benevolent employer, Murphy told his men that he had no objection to their forming a union along accepted and traditional lines, but that he would not be held to ransom by 'strike mongers' and become a tool of Larkin whom he called 'the labour dictator of Dublin.'

Edited Transcript of Document

My Friends – and I may truly call you my friends, because every employee of any undertaking that I am connected with I look upon as a friend (applause) ... the occasion on which we meet is rather unusual; in fact, I think it is without precedent. We cannot disguise from ourselves the fact that an attempt is being made by an organizer, outside the company, to seduce men for the purpose of inducing them to go on strike. Well, I can tell you, when I ask you to come here to meet me to-night, I have not the least apprehension that there is even a remote possibility of such an event occurring. But I know there are hot heads – young men, who have very little experience of the world – among you who might be seduced and who are endeavouring to seduce other people to go against what I may call their bread and butter.

I want you to clearly understand that the directors of this company have not the smallest objection to the men forming a legitimate union (applause). And I would think there is talent enough amongst the men in the service to form a union of their own, without allying themselves under the feet of an unscrupulous man (applause)

who claims the right to give you the word of command and issue his orders to you, and to use you as tools to make him the labour dictator of Dublin.

Now, we are aware of all that is going on. We know perfectly well the people, and the number of people, who are taking an active part in fomenting this strike. What is demanded of you is that you bow down before this gentleman; you are to answer his call and obey his commands. (Voices – “We never will”) I am here to tell you that this word of command will never be given, and if it is that it will be the Waterloo for Mr. Larkin.

The directors, therefore, intend to stamp out this incipient rebellion which is being organised outside the company’s staff. We have heard that certain hot-headed young men have been attempting to coerce, by force and threats, other men in the service to join the association, and we certainly shall prevent any man in our service using threats and intimidation against any other man to force him to join the association [*ITGWU]. We have given authority to the manager to summarily dismiss any man who is guilty of that conduct, and he can go to Mr. Larkin for his pay.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

Who produced the document?

Why did Murphy call a meeting of his tramway staff? [Paragraph, My friends...]

What allegations does he make against Jim Larkin? [Paragraphs, I want you to...and Now, we are...]

What will happen to any employee who is caught attempting to solicit support for the ITGWU? [Paragraph, The Directors...]

Interpretation and Criticism

How had the relationship between the management and the workers changed as a result of the appearance of the ITGWU members amongst DUTC staff?

Is Murphy’s approach even-handed? Why does he say he has nothing against traditional or ‘legitimate unions’?

Murphy claimed that the tramway workers were the unwitting dupes of Larkin’s organisation. Is this an accurate assertion?

Do you think Murphy is guilty of over-personalising the dispute with Larkin?

Wider Context

How does the document add to your knowledge of the conditions of employment in Murphy-owned businesses?

Using the documents you have studied and the information you have obtained from other sources, judge the credibility of Murphy's declaration that Larkin was organising a labour conspiracy?

Suggest a question about Murphy that is left unanswered by the document? What other sources might be useful in filling in the gaps about his character?

Document 3

A letter from *James Connolly to *William O'Brien reflecting upon *Jim Larkin's personality, 29 July 1913 (N.L.I. *William O'Brien Papers, MS 13,908/1).

Description of Document

'Big Jim' Larkin displayed a remarkable energy in his union activity (*Countess Markevicz referred to him as 'some great primeval force rather than a man'). The more unappealing facets of his character, however, resulted in clashes with his colleagues. In this letter *James Connolly explains how Larkin's authoritarian personality led him to despair. Continuous taunts from Larkin about his success as a general organiser for the British National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) in Belfast during a bitter strike in 1907 irritated Connolly who felt undermined by the constant badgering. Larkin regarded the *ITGWU as his own creation and was deeply resentful when others tried to interfere with the direction in which he was taking the union. A charismatic and unconventional orator, Larkin, as a 'man of the people,' had little time for committee meetings or day-to-day organisation, preferring instead direct action. Larkin's very public displays of contempt towards his union associates returned to haunt him when, during the lockout, he appealed for all workers to unite around his militant and syndicalist approach to labour relations. The overriding tone of the letter suggests Connolly's growing weariness at Larkin's jealousy.

Edited Transcript of Document

I confess to you in confidence that I don't think I can stand Larkin as a boss much longer. He is simply unbearable. He is forever snarling at me and drawing comparisons between what he accomplished in Belfast 1907, and what I have done, conveniently ignoring the fact that he was then the secretary of an English organisation, and that as soon as he started an Irish one his union fell to pieces, and he had to leave the members to their fate. He is consumed with jealousy and hatred against anyone who will not cringe to him and slaver him all over.

He tried to bully me out of the monies due to my branches for administration ag[ainst] the Insurance Act and it was this that brought me to Dublin last week. He did not succeed, and had to pay £37.0.0 which was due my staff as wages. I told him if he was Larkin twenty times over he couldn't bully me, that I was charging for no more than he had contracted to pay for, and that I was not going to him [illegible], and leave them without their wages to suit them. He tried to confuse me by charging the amount due for the sanatorium benefit from my branch, against the amount due to my branch as administration benefit. Of course I told him that the sanatorium benefit was distinct from the value of the stamps, and that as the stamps were all turned over to him that charge was between him and this government. I would previously have trusted to his generosity in financial matters, now I would not trust him at all. Larkin seems to think he can use socialists as he pleases, and then when his end is served throw them out, if they will now bow down to his majesty. He will never get me to bow to him.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

Who produced the document?

When was it written?

In what circumstances was it written?

Why is Connolly particularly concerned to draw attention to the fact that Larkin's greatest success came when he has head of an English rather than an Irish trade union? [Paragraph, To make matters worse...]

What charges in respect of union finances does Connolly level at Larkin? [Paragraph, He tried to bully me...]

What does he say about Larkin's use of socialists? [Paragraph, Larkin seems to think...]

Interpretation and Criticism

Did Connolly have first hand knowledge of Larkin's flaws?

Was this source meant to be private or public? Did Connolly write the letter for personal use, for one or more individuals, or for a larger audience?

Having read the document, what does the evidence reveal about Connolly's estimation of Larkin's leadership in the summer of 1913?

Using the knowledge you have obtained from other sources and from your textbook, evaluate the accuracy of this account of Larkin's character?

Wider Context

Given your reading of both the textbook and the documents, give an assessment of how united the trade union movement was during the Dublin lockout?

As you review the assertions of workers and observers in the documents, consider how weaknesses in Larkin's character may have contributed to the worker's defeat in the lockout?

Document 4

*A handbill from the Dublin branches of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors opposing un-unionised labour and publishing the names of those tailors engaged in the sweating system (July 1913; N.L.I. *William O'Brien Papers, MS 13,913/1).*

Description of Document

In striving to improve the conditions of workers, the traditional, more conventional craft-based unions strove hard to represent the interests of their members. This handbill produced by one such local body, the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, is typical. Distributed to the public just in advance of the lockout, the society backs up its claim for a fair, unionised wage by highlighting the inequalities of the so-called 'sweating system' in the textile trade. 'Sweating' was according to *James Connolly 'the natural child of capitalism' and usually entailed work undertaken by non-union 'outworkers' (frequently female and child labour) operating within the confines of small, poorly ventilated houses. Laborious work in such conditions entailed the great risk of disease and fever in the overcrowded lanes and back alleys of the city. An ordinary worker received little assistance from his employer and relied upon the brotherhood of the society for assistance. The handbill asserts that the 'sweating system' was inimical not only to the livelihood of workers but also potentially damaging to public health. Significantly, the document includes a list of 'fair' and 'unfair' employers.

Edited Transcript of Document

Amalgamated Society of Tailors (Dublin Branches).
Trades Hall, Capel Street,
Dublin, July 1913.

Dear Sir (or Madam),

In publishing a list of "Fair" and "Unfair" tailoring firms in Dublin, we desire to urge upon all those leaving orders for clothing, to satisfy themselves before doing so, that they will be made by members of the above society, which is a guarantee of them being made in sanitary workshops by competent tailors in receipt of a trade union wage.

We feel confident that the public generally would insist upon this if they fully realized the grave danger incurred by leaving orders for clothes in firms which get them made under sweating conditions. In this connection we would direct your attention to the following extract from a lecture by that eminent Medical Authority, Dr. Antony Roche: -

"It was admitted by all medical authorities that clothes could carry the infection of disease...Through the Sweating System in London infectious diseases had been carried in clothes...The danger was greater in Dublin...If the public mind could be impressed with the reality of the danger which might result to them from the system...it would have a greater effect than anything else in making the public insist that the clothes they bought were manufactured under sanitary conditions and not in sweating dens."

When any of our members or any of their families, are suffering from Infectious disease, they are not allowed to work, and are supported by our society until their recovery.

It will therefore be seen that in issuing this appeal, while we are actuated by a desire to maintain a decent standard of living for the journeyman tailor, we are also working to safeguard the public from the spread of infectious diseases, and we, therefore, ask the co-operation of the public in our campaign to stamp out the sweating system in the tailoring trade.

We are, faithfully yours,
THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

Why was this document written?

Why are the tailors publishing a list of 'fair' and 'unfair' employers? [Paragraph, In publishing a list of...]

Do the tailors consider the 'sweating system' a threat to public health? [Paragraph, We feel confident...]

What is the proportion of 'fair' to 'unfair' employers? [List of employers]

Interpretation and Criticism

What is meant by the term the 'sweating system'? What does this document reveal about workers' perception of the 'sweating system' and its implications for the tailoring trade of Dublin?

What points of view are the tailors expressing in this document?

Do the demands of the tailors seem reasonable?

What interests may have influenced the tailors to write this document?

Wider Context

To what extent did genuine grievances about poor working conditions motivate Dublin's workers during the lockout?

Was Connolly justified in calling the 'sweating system' practiced by some of Dublin's employers 'the natural child of capitalism'?

To what extent did socialist ideology act as a driving force behind the workers' action? What evidence in the documents or in your textbook supports your conclusion?

Document 5

A report on *Jim Larkin's arrest and the disturbances on the day known as 'Bloody Sunday' (*Evening Telegraph*, 1 September 1913).

Description of Document

Although some of Dublin's trams had been brought to a halt, support for the strike appeared to be waning when the authorities miscalculated badly and had Larkin and three others arrested on charges of seditious libel, conspiracy to hold seditious meetings and unlawful assembly. Larkin had already spoken in inflammatory terms of defending workers from police assault, insisting that if authorities wanted war 'they would get it.' Released on bail, he announced that he would address a monster meeting on O'Connell Street on Sunday 31 August. Dublin Castle reacted immediately and issued a proclamation proscribing the meeting. A defiant Larkin announced from Liberty Hall that he would not adhere to the restriction and would speak on O'Connell Street. Thus the scene was set for a potentially explosive standoff and for an event which was to enter into union folklore. On Sunday, a large force of police was deployed on O'Connell Street while a large crowd gathered, eagerly awaiting the appearance of the union leader. Fearing, perhaps, that the crowd would hold a demonstration in support of Larkin, the police baton-charged bystanders, leaving hundreds injured. The next day the newspapers were filled with denunciations of police brutality. One union member, James Nolan, later died as a result of his injuries whilst another, John Byrne, was also a casualty of clashes with the police in the city over the weekend. The public revulsion against the police resulted in a wave of sympathy for the striking workers. A re-energised union movement under Larkin's leadership was now prepared to fight on the streets to win its demands.

Edited Transcript of Document

**SUNDAY STOP PRESS
ARREST OF LARKIN
ADDRESSES CROWD FROM IMPERIAL HOTEL
TERRIBLE SCENE IN O'CONNELL STREET
BATON CHARGE ON INOFFENSIVE ONLOOKERS**

The announcement of Mr. Larkin to hold a meeting in O'Connell street to-day, notwithstanding the proclamation which had been issued, was the means of attracting to the vicinity crowds of the citizens who were apparently animated with a desire of witnessing developments...There was great doubts expressed as to whether Mr. Larkin would appear in O'Connell street, as he had stated, and the majority of the people had begun to think that there would be no incident worthy of note.

The whereabouts of Larkin was a mystery to the man in the street and the police as well. When, however, things were normal, there was a dramatic and sensational development, which, coming as it did with startling swiftness, completely took everyone by surprise.

At 1.30 o'clock, almost to the minute, a man wearing a beard and dressed in a frock coat, appeared on the balcony of the Imperial Hotel in O'Connell street. It was *Jim Larkin, general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. So well

was he disguised and so clever his make-up that none in the hotel recognised him, and it was not until he had declared himself that he was recognised in the streets. Immediately a section of the crowd rushed to hear. Police rushed to the scene not realising the cause of the suddenly developed excitement. Then they saw the cause of the excitement. It was the man whom they had been searching all day on Saturday and yesterday morning.

Bowing to the people below, Larkin exclaimed that, as he had promised, he had appeared in O'Connell street to address a public meeting. Again there was a cheer from the crowd. Police rushed to the door of the hotel with batons drawn ...

Cordons of police were drawn around the hotel and Larkin disappeared from the balcony. The succeeding few minutes were those of suspense. At length there was renewed cheering, and Larkin, bareheaded, and still wearing the beard, was brought out of the hotel by about 20 police, all with drawn batons.

Just at this moment a car upon which sat Count Markevicz and the *Countess Markevicz drove up O'Connell Street. The Countess called for cheers for Larkin and led on the cheering herself. A body of police immediately surrounded the car and ordered the driver onto Princes street ... In the meantime the excitement outside in the street had been increasing, and the crowd was rapidly growing in proportions. In a moment things assumed an extremely ugly appearance. The police cordons in Abbey Street and Prince's Street rushed out into O'Connell street and formed a long line extending from the Post Office to the O'Connell Monument.

The cheering became more intense, and before one realised the situation a baton charge was in progress. Some of the police charged down the street towards O'Connell Bridge and others rushed the people into Prince's street ... The people as they rushed were vigorously batoned from all sides, and in a few minutes as many as twenty people were bleeding on the ground at one time ... One middle-aged gentleman got a very severe stroke of a baton on the forehead and was lying partly unconscious on the ground. A youth who was in the middle of the charge was knocked down just at the corner of the Post Office. He managed to get to his feet, and just as he did he was surrounded by four or five constables who piled their batons on him again and followed him up the street past the Post Office. When the scene was over a variety of head-gear littered the street, including three ladies' hats.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

In what circumstances was it written?

What was the mood of the crowd prior to Larkin's appearance? [Paragraph, The announcement of Mr Larkin ...]

How did Larkin manage to avoid detection and address the crowd? [Paragraph, At 1.30 o'clock ...]

What was the sequence of events following Larkin's arrest? [Paragraphs, Just at this moment ... and The cheering became more intense ...]

Interpretation and Criticism

Does the account of the event seem reliable?

Who do you think the paper sympathizes with, the police or the workers?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a contemporary newspaper account?

Do you think the *Evening Telegraph* offered an authentic account of the event? Is the language used dramatic, emotional or detached?

Did Larkin's decision to appear on O'Connell Street lead directly to the riot? Do you think his decision was ill-advised?

Wider Context and Comparison

What other sources can be used to check the reliability and authenticity of the evidence reported in this document?

Consider the argument made by union leaders that police brutality on 'Bloody Sunday' showed that the government backed the employers during the lockout. Why was this clash with the police of such significance for the character and history of the Irish labour movement?

Compare the printed account with the visual record of 'Bloody Sunday' supplied by the photographs in Document 7. Judge which source best captures the events.

Document 6

Note: these photographs are currently unavailable for copyright reasons

Photographs of the disturbances on O’Connell Street on the day known as ‘Bloody Sunday’ (R.T.E. Archives, Cashman Collection).

Description of Photographs

These pictures taken by the photographer, Joseph Cashman, represent the best-known visual record of an incident in the lockout and provide a stark insight into the violence which occurred on O’Connell Street on ‘Bloody Sunday.’ (See the *Evening Telegraph* report, Document 5). The photographs show a street teeming with people. Officers of the *Dublin Metropolitan Police are also visible. Every possible measure was taken to prevent Larkin’s appearance, but, as the *Freeman’s Journal* remarked, the police action on that day left ‘O’Connell Street strewn with stunned and fallen people’ and made it appear ‘not unlike a battlefield.’ Such was the outcry provoked by the ferocity of the police response that the Lord Mayor, Lorcan Sherlock, was forced to call an inquiry, the Dublin Disturbances Commission. Attempts were subsequently made to have these pictures submitted as evidence to the commission but they were rejected as inadmissible. The commission, not unsurprisingly, wholly exonerated the police from any blame in the riot.

The images show in turn

1. A photograph taken from a high vantage point on O’Connell Street just before the commencement of the baton charge. Members of the *Dublin Metropolitan Police (D.M.P.) and the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) can be seen mingling with individual protesters and bystanders outside the Imperial Hotel where Larkin had just been apprehended.
2. A photograph taken from precisely the same vantage point as the previous showing people fleeing from the police baton charge. Some are pinned against the police cordon in the vicinity of Prince’s Street. Many people received serious blows and injuries in this assault. © R.T.É. Stills Library.
3. Mounted police having taken possession of O’Connell Street.
4. A photograph of Inspector Purcell, Inspector Freeman and Superintendent Quinn, who oversaw the baton charge. © R.T.É. Stills Library.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What exactly is happening in each photograph?

Who are the people recorded by the photographer?

What are the circumstances of these photographs?

What seems to have led to these incidents?

Interpretation and Criticism

What do you already know about the events surrounding the scenes in the photographs?

What is unique about the images captured by the photographer?

What can you infer from the action taking place in each photograph?

Wider Context and Comparison

How should the authorities have dealt with the protests on O'Connell Street? Have police methods in dealing with demonstrations and the activities of striking workers changed since 1913?

Compare the scenes depicted in the photographs with the descriptive account provided in the *Evening Telegraph* (Document 6). Identify any areas of agreement and disagreement between the visual and written sources.

Formulate a question about the events of 'Bloody Sunday' that is left unanswered by the two sources.

Document 7

A letter from Dora Montefiore to the archbishop of Dublin, *William Walsh, giving details about the 'Dublin Kiddies Scheme,' 21 October 1913 (D.D.A. Walsh Papers, laity file).

Description of Document

As the workers' campaign progressed it was suggested that it might be possible to ease the suffering of children affected by the lockout by sending them to England for a holiday for the duration of the strike. Dora Montefiore, a prominent London social worker and suffragette who was in Dublin to address a meeting of the *Irish Women's Franchise League, made the proposal which became known as the 'Dublin Kiddies Scheme.' The plan was endorsed by the *ITGWU but was opposed by the Catholic clergy who denounced it. In order to allay the fears of the clergy, Montefiore wrote this letter to the archbishop of Dublin, *William Walsh, who had previously expressed some sympathy for the workers' plight. Walsh, however, had already published a strongly worded appeal to Catholic mothers not to jeopardise their children's faith and morals by sending them to English home. Although the proposal was undoubtedly well intentioned, the reaction to what was labelled the child 'deportation' plan in Dublin's nationalist and Catholic press was extremely hostile. The children's evacuation scheme collapsed before any significant numbers were sent to England.

Edited Transcript of Document

My attention has been called to a letter written by you to the press on the subject of the scheme for placing some of the children who are locked out, in the homes of English or Scotch workers until such time as the Dublin workers have won their fight. As I have the honour to be trusted with the carrying out of this scheme, which, in its inception and development is evidence of their industrial solidarity, I venture to lay before you some of the facts about the scheme, – facts, which might otherwise be brought to your notice in a garbled form. We have had now over 350 offers of working class homes for Dublin boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 14. Most of the parents applying send a reference, or belong to some union or another, which union in many cases is collecting money for defraying the travelling and other expenses of the children. In many cases, when applying, the workers have sent small sums *at once* out of their weekly wage towards our fund for expenses. Many of the applicants state they are Catholics, and many are Irish. A Plymouth working class organisation wrote asking us to send 40 children and 5 mothers to look after them. In most cases, where the children are to be lionized in large centres, they will be able to attend a Catholic school, and we shall write to the parish priest, giving him the addresses of the children, so that he may call upon them in their homes.

If, my lord, you should wish for further details, I should be happy to call upon you during the stay of my colleagues and myself in Dublin, and lay before you any of the correspondence of the workers on the other side which might throw further light on the subject ...

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

For what purpose was it written?

What does Dora Montefiore say the workers' support for the evacuation scheme demonstrates?

What kind of parents have applied to take the children of striking Dublin workers?

What assurances does she give to Archbishop Walsh in relation to the scheme?

Interpretation and Criticism

What point of view is Dora Montefiore expressing in this document?

Why do you think she felt it was necessary to give assurances to Archbishop Walsh about the scheme?

What features of the evacuation scheme may have led the Catholic clergy to voice their opposition against it?

Wider Context

What does the *Sunday Independent* cartoon '**Saved**' (26 October 1913) tell you about public opposition to the children's evacuation scheme?

Do you think the ITGWU's support for the scheme was ill judged?

What does the document tell you about the participation of women and movements for social reform in the worker's lockout campaign?

Document 8

An article, 'Dublin Fanaticism,' by *William Butler Yeats condemning the brutality of the police and accusing the employers of stirring up religious hysteria (*Irish Worker*, 1 November 1913).

Description of Document

Throughout the lockout there were calls by Dublin's leading intellectuals for recognition of the claims made by workers. In this article *William Butler Yeats denounces the employers and reprobates the police and authorities for not preserving public order during an attempt to send the children of families affected by the dispute to England to alleviate their hardship. (See Document 7). As children attempted to board trains at Westland Row station to journey to Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) and the boat to England, priests and officers of the *Ancient Order of Hibernians besieged and cajoled the families, pleading with mothers not to allow their children to be sent to 'heathen' England. Other priests intervened and protected visibly upset children who had become separated from their parents in the throng. In the event, only a few children were sent and soon afterwards the children's evacuation scheme collapsed but the spectacle at North Wall clearly enraged Yeats and forced him to issue this public reiteration of his support for the workers' cause. Yeats and *William Martin Murphy had already wrangled over the provision of money by Dublin Chamber of Commerce for a gallery to house paintings donated by Sir Hugh Lane. Moreover, Yeats reviled the Dublin Catholic middleclass as it seemed to epitomize the desire for wealth without any consideration of culture and he had developed a special hatred for Murphy. To employers with nationalist aspirations, writers and intellectuals such as Yeats, *Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and George Bernard Shaw were romantic idealists and symbols of a despised Anglo-Irish establishment.

Edited Transcript of Document

Dublin Fanaticism

By W.B. Yeats.

I do not complain of Dublin's capacity for fanaticism whether in priest or layman for you cannot have strong feeling without that capacity, but neither those who directed the police and the editors of our newspapers can plead fanaticism. They are supposed to watch over our civil liberties and I charge our Dublin Nationalist newspapers with deliberately arousing religious passion to break up the organisation of the working man, with appealing to mob law day after day, with publishing the names of workingmen and their wives for purposes of intimidation. And I charge the Unionist press of Dublin and those who directed the police with conniving at this conspiracy. I want to know why the *Daily Express*, which is directly and indirectly inciting Ulster to rebellion in defence of what it calls "Liberty of the subject," is so indifferent to the liberty here in Dublin that it has not made one editorial comment, and I ask the *Irish Times* why a few sentences at the end of the article, too late in the week to be any service has been the measure of its love for civil liberty? I want to know why there are only (according to press reports) two policemen at Kingsbridge on Saturday when Mr. *Francis Sheehy Skeeffington was assaulted and a man prevented from buying a ticket

for his own child? There had been tumults every night at every Dublin railway station, and I can only assume that the police authorities wished those tumults to continue.

I want to know why the mob at North Wall and elsewhere were permitted to drag children from their parents' arms and by what right one woman was compelled to open her box and show a marriage certificate; I want to know by what right the police have refused to accept charges against rioters; I want to know who has ordered the abrogation of the most elementary rights of citizens and why authorities who are bound to protect every man in doing that which he has a legal right to do – even though they have to call upon all the forces of the Crown – have permitted the *Ancient Order of Hibernians to besiege Dublin, taking possession of the railway stations like a foreign army. Prime Ministers have fallen, and ministers of State have been impeached for less than this. I demand the coming police inquiry shall be so widened that we may get to the bottom of a conspiracy, whose like has not been seen in any English-speaking town in living memory. Intriguers have met together somewhere behind the scenes that they might turn religion of Him who thought it hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven into an oppression of the poor.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

In what circumstances was it written?

For what purpose was it written?

What accusations does Yeats make against Dublin's newspapers?

What accusations does he level at the police?

What precise information does he want about the disturbances at North Wall?

Interpretation and Criticism

How did Yeats obtain the evidence for his article? Did he have first-hand knowledge of the event or did he report what others saw and heard?

Is there any sympathy expressed for the workers' cause in the document?

What do you think Yeats meant when he observed that the 'religion of Him who had thought it hard for a rich man to enter into Kingdom of Heaven' had been turned into 'an oppression of the poor'?

Wider Context

How did Yeats' views on religion affect his stance on the Dublin lockout?

How does this document add to your understanding of the wider implications of the strikers' campaign?

Was there any link between Yeats' pursuit of intellectual freedom and the workers' campaign for social equality?

Document 9

A cartoon, 'On the rocks' (*The Irish Worker*, 8 November 1913).

Description of Cartoon

This cartoon by Ernest Kavanagh appeared in the Larkinite newspaper, *The Irish Worker*, in early November 1913. Coming in the aftermath of the aborted attempt to send the children of striking workers to England (Document 7), the cartoonist suggests that it may have been wiser to have Dublin's leading capitalist deported instead. Abandoned by his colleagues aboard the *Employers' Federation's ship, Murphy is cast adrift on a desolate South Pacific outcrop. Kavanagh used partisan imagery in a series of cartoons during the lockout. Personal attacks on Murphy were frequent and complimented the paper's unsophisticated invective against a man characterised as a 'tramway tyrant' or a 'bloodsucking vampire.' From Larkin's standpoint, Murphy was a capitalist ogre who had become rich on the back of ill-gotten gains. This particular cartoon also reflects the view amongst workers that William 'Murderer' Murphy was an obstacle in any attempt to secure an equitable and negotiated end to the lockout.

Caption

On the rocks 'by Oscar'

Speaking of deportation, why not deport Boss Murphy? We put the question to Dublin Employers with all good intentions.

The old ship "Federation" sails
Abreast the stormy sea,
The skipper's angered visage pales –
There's been a mutiny!

He lingers in the wilderness,
With sorrow in his gaze:
He does not wear his evening dress
He dreams of other days.

What triumph have they scored?
The captain does not steer the barque,
They've cast him overboard!

His wailing makes a dismal row,
And echo's answer mocks;
The longshore men are smiling now –
The skippers on the rocks.

Oh, ye who read just pause a while
And offer up a prayer
That on this desolated isle
They'll leave the skipper there!

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

Describe the characters portrayed.

What are they doing?

To what specific event is the cartoon referring?

What knowledge do you already have of the event?

Interpretation and Criticism

Identify the objects which the marooned Murphy has been left with, and describe what each signifies.

What is the cartoonist's point of view?

What is the cartoon's overall message?

Consider the purpose of the *Irish Worker* cartoonist. How successful is he in conveying the desired message?

How does the caption reinforce the non-verbal visual image of the cartoon?

Wider Context

From your wider reading, evaluate how this cartoon supports your evaluation of the workers' rationale for union organisation during the lockout?

Has the cartoon changed your interpretation of the event, issue and persons depicted?

Document 10

A cartoon, 'Bang! Goes Jim' (*Sunday Independent*, 30 November 1913).

Description of Cartoon

Throughout the lockout the *Irish Independent* acted as the propaganda arm of *William Martin Murphy's business empire. Its cartoons did much to personalise the conflict as the primary target was invariably *Jim Larkin. After his release from jail in the aftermath of 'Bloody Sunday,' Larkin embarked upon a campaign to win support from English trade unionists for radical action in support of the Dublin strikers. Larkin appealed to the conscience of British workers and asked them to stand shoulder to shoulder with their Irish comrades. Amongst trade union leaders, however, the reaction proved to be disappointing. At a national conference of the British Trade Union Congress in November it was decided to continue to provide food and financial support for those locked out in Dublin, but not to give any backing to sympathetic strike action by English workers. This came as a bitter blow to both Connolly and Larkin and was seized upon by their opponents. Delighted by this apparent defeat for Larkinism, this *Sunday Independent* cartoon heaps scorn on Larkin's desperate attempt to light the 'fiery cross' of trade union activism. Seeing his campaign literally explode in his face amidst 'trade union snubs' and 'press castigations,' Larkin is left confined to bed with only a food basket and sympathy provided by the English trade unions. Laying bare the growing dissension in union ranks, this cartoon epitomizes employer propaganda at its most effective.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What is happening in the cartoon?

What particular event or subject does the cartoon deal with?

Why is the cartoonist interested in dealing with this subject?

Interpretation and Criticism

What is the cartoonist's point of view?

What sort of imagery is employed by the cartoonist to illustrate his message?

What precautions must be taken in analysing cartoons such as this?

What does the cartoon reveal about the employers' perception of Larkin's leadership?

Wider Context and Comparison

What other sources can a historian use to check the conclusions drawn from this cartoon?

How effective is this cartoon in relaying the desired message?

Has the cartoon changed your interpretation of Larkin's role in the lockout?

Document 11

A letter from *James Connolly describing the tensions between the unions during the lockout, 30 December 1913 (N.L.I. Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, MS 33,624/2).

Description of Document

On the quayside around 1,000 men were without work as a result of the lockout as traffic of goods by sea came to an almost complete standstill. To evade the stoppage the shipping companies hired *scab labour from English ports to crew their boats. By the time Connolly wrote this letter it was apparent that the workers' campaign had faltered. Daily reports in the press announced the resumption of work by former strikers and the increasing confidence of the employers. In this letter Connolly attacks the activities of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union for working ships manned by the scabs. These labourers, supplied by the employers of the British Shipping Federation, were unloading steamers from the Head Line in Belfast and Dublin. The English leadership of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union had already ordered their members to return to work on condition that their employers withdraw their anti-union pledge. As union camaraderie began to crumble it seemed the defeat of the workers was close at hand.

Edited Transcript of Document

Every day the placards announce "More Men Resuming work," "Strikers Rushing Back," and so on until one is inclined to wonder if there are really any men left out. The sole basis of all this romancing has been that a few small firms have agreed to resume work under union conditions, and by agreement with union officials. But all this is carefully distorted by the capitalist press, and the impression is sought to be conveyed that each body of men who have gone back have broken away from the Union. The conditions of panic amongst the employers must be intense when such desperate lying has to be resorted to in order to keep them in line for Murphy.

This panic amongst the employers is so pronounced that a little sane trade union action in support of the transport men at this junction would win a divisive victory. But the most atrocious trade union *Scabbing is at present the rule in connection with this dispute. In particular the Seamen's and Firemen's Union has signalized itself by its open and persistent violation of every code of honour amongst trade unions in the transport industry. Practically every boat in Dublin worked by *Scab labour is manned by men of that union. If the Dublin members of the Seamen and Firemen's Union refuse to sign on the *Scab boat they are told others will be brought from Liverpool and elsewhere to take their places. The Head Line boats are being worked in Belfast by the lowest class of free labourer, and the seamen and firemen who desired to leave were ordered by the union delegate to remain at their posts. The Seamen and Firemen's Union which owes its existence to the growth of solidarity amongst transport workers is the first to set itself to destroy that solidarity and to indicate to the Shipping Federation that it at least recognises no bond of union with its fellows.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

When was it written?

For what purpose was it written?

Why is Connolly concerned by what is appearing in the 'capitalist press'? [Paragraph, Every day the placards ...]

Why does he say 'desperate lying' is needed to keep the employers in line with the Federation leader, William Martin Murphy? [Line, The conditions of ...]

What is his attitude to the Seamen's and Firemen's Union? [Paragraph, This panic amongst the ...]

Interpretation and Criticism

What interests may have prompted Connolly to write this letter?

List two things the source tells you about why the workers were ultimately defeated in the lockout.

Why do you think the transport union was finding it so difficult to convince members of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union not to return to work?

Wider Context

How does this document add to your understanding of the problems faced by union leaders in maintaining worker solidarity during the lockout? What specific problems does Connolly identify in this source?

From your wider reading on the lockout, do you think Connolly was right to label those who broke the union's 'code of honour' 'scabs'?

Document 12

Draft copy of a letter from *William O'Brien to Charles W. Bowerman on the destitution of workers who were locked out, [c. March 1914] (N.L.I. *William O'Brien Papers, MS 13,913/1).

Description of Document

By the end of January 1914 the Dublin dispute was nearing its end. Commercial activity was returning to a semblance of normality all over the city but there were still some workers on strike. This copy of a letter from *William O'Brien reflects upon a demoralizing postscript to the strike as stories of victimisation of workers came to light. Old scores were being settled as employers frequently refused to re-hire those affiliated to the troublesome but now vanquished transport union. Many former workers, unable to find any work, were threatened with eviction. With requests for rent support and basic sustenance still flooding into Liberty Hall, the *ITGWU continued to go through the motions of distributing what little money was available to the most needy families. Many of their men folk would in the coming months choose emigration or enlistment in the army rather than face prolonged unemployment or humiliation at the hands of the employers. The failure of the lockout was epitomised by the suffering and impoverished condition of Dublin's working class which was, as O'Brien readily admits, appalling.

Edited Transcript of Document

The present situation is that there are about 3,500 men and 500 women and girls still out connected with the Transport Union and the Women Workers union. More than half of these men and all the women are permanently victimised, and must find new employment. The Builders trades are all brisk just now and the vast majority of the men in these trades who were out are all working. The stationary engine drivers have thirty permanent victims but the union has recovered sufficiently to be able to pay ten shillings every week up to this. When last remittance of £800 was received from the Parliamentary Committee fund the transport and women's workers section had not received any strike pay or assistance for over 3 weeks and the men have not received any since. (Yesterday we were able to pay the women workers 2/6 each but the men got nothing.) The poverty and destitution amongst them is simply appalling. I am personally aware of this my self. I am often in Liberty Hall and hear harrowing tales of women and children starving in miserable homes without a fire and from which everything that could be taken in pawn had been pledged. (The work of the Trade Union has been able to do much, its present income is to pay rent for any victimised member threatened with eviction.) Under these circumstances all monies received are to be handed to the Transport and Women's Workers Unions, accordingly the £800 received from the Parliamentary Committee was given to them together with what we received here direct through other channels & we propose to give them any further sums we received also. I trust you must lay these facts before the Parliamentary Committee and urge them to forward whatever balance they have on hand as soon as possible as the money is sorely needed here.

Document Questions

Description and Comprehension

What class of document is this?

Who produced the document?

When was it written?

For what purpose was it written?

How many workers were still on strike?

How desperate was the plight of those still locked out?

What did the strike committee propose to do with any money received?

Interpretation and Criticism

Are there any clues in the document about how O'Brien obtained his information?

List two things the document tells you about the experiences of the workers after their defeat in the lockout.

Why, according to O'Brien, were workers continuing to suffer?

What insights are given in this document into the nature of the workers' defeat?

Wider Context and Comparison

Do you think the leaders' militancy and calls for working-class mobilization was vindicated?

To what extent did union leaders during the lockout confront the social problems faced by workers?

Compare the evidence provided in O'Brien's letter with the account of urban impoverishment given by Arnold Wright in Document 1. Had the workers achieved any real successes during the lockout?

Compare the responses to union organisation found in the documents with modern reactions to labour demands. What similarities and/or differences may be observed? How would you account for them?