

SERVANTS TO THE PUBLIC

A History of the
Local Government and Public Services Union
1901 – 1990



MARTIN MAGUIRE

The history of the LGPSU is not only a history of the trade union. It is also a history of the public service sector in independent Ireland and its often difficult relationship with the state. Born in the War of Independence, the local government officials union played a key role in the victory of the revolutionary forces. It was to find however that, in the drive for economy in the state, it had to defend the salaries and conditions of its members but also at times the very concept of a public service. As it grew from a narrowly-based and exclusively white-collar union to being part of the largest public sector organisation in the state, it has played a unique role in developing the state's response to poverty, unemployment, housing and public health. The LGPSU was central to the emergence of equal pay as a feminist issue in the early 1960s, an issue which deeply divided the membership. Latterly, it played a central role in fostering the concept of social bargaining and in negotiating the centralised agreements which underpin the prosperity of the 1990s. The history of a public sector trade union reacting to, confronting and absorbing changes in the state will be of interest to historians of independent Ireland, trade unionists and public sector workers.

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INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
DUBLIN

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The cover features the banner and presidential medallion of the LGPSU, designed
by Eric Patton in 1975. It comprises a trefoil superimposed on a representation of
a computer ribbon enclosed within a circular band on which the name of the
Union is set out in Irish: AONTAS RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL AGUS SERBHÍSI POIBLÍ.
The symbols on the trefoil illustrate the various activities of the Union membership:
administration represented by the sword; the mortar and pestle and the leech to
represent the health services; and the T-square and set-square to represent the
technical services in local government.

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For Celia, Nora and Betty

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATGWU	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union
CIU	Congress of Irish Union
DMOA	Dublin Municipal Officers Association
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ILGOU	Irish Local Government Officers Trade Union
ILPTUC	Irish Labour Party & Trade Union Congress
IMPACT	Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Union
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers Union
ITUC	Irish Trade Union Congress
LGO(I)TU	Local Government Officers (Ireland) Trade Union
LGPSU	Local Government and Public Services Union
MO(I)TU	Municipal Officers (Ireland) Trade Union
PMOA	Pembroke Municipal Officers Association
UPTCS	Union of Professional and Technical Civil Servants
WUI	Workers Union of Ireland

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Department of the Environment, Secretary's Files, S series

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General council minutes

IMPACT Union, Dublin

Association of Women Officers of Local Authorities.

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