TRADE UNIONS IN IRELAND 1894·1960

CHARLES McCARTHY

The Irish Trades Union Congress, created in 1894 by the two trades councils of Belfast and Dublin, was part of the United Kingdom movement, but from 1916 to 1919, under the influence of Sinn Fein, not only did membership increase greatly but so also did a strong millenarian feeling, providing the basis for much of the myth and memory of today.

The nineteen twenties saw fragmentation and the growth of Irish-based unions. In the years that followed, membership fell, and the Congress which, in the Irish Free State, had acted as both a political party and a trade union centre, divided in 1930 to create a separate Labour Party; this probably marked the collapse of the syndicalist idea. Nationalism in the South began to take on a much more introspective character, and the drive for Irish-based trade unionism resulted in a split in the movement in 1945 and the creation of two Congresses. They remained apart until 1959, divided by their fundamentally different views of trade unions - one seeing them as working-class organisations, essentially international in character, the other believing that trade unions must be seen as important but subsidiary organisations in a society based on the nation - in respect of which Northern Ireland presented an irresolvable dilemma.

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The Distasteful Challenge

The Decade of Upheaval: Irish Trade Unions in the Nineteen Sixties

Trade Unions in Ireland 1894-1960

CHARLES McCARTHY

COLLEGE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
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Charles McCarthy

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