

UNDERSTANDING
TRADE UNIONS
YESTERDAY & TODAY



IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

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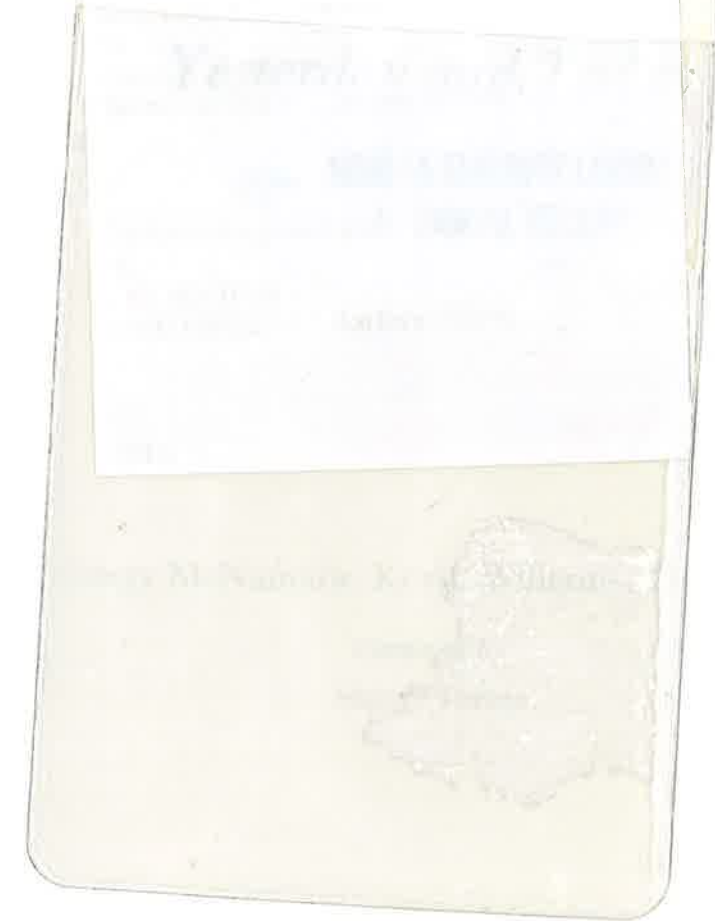
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UNDERSTANDING
TRADE UNIONS
Yesterday and Today



Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams, Des West

Cartoons by
Martyn Turner

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in association with the
IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

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Cartoons by Martyn Turner.

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FOREWORD

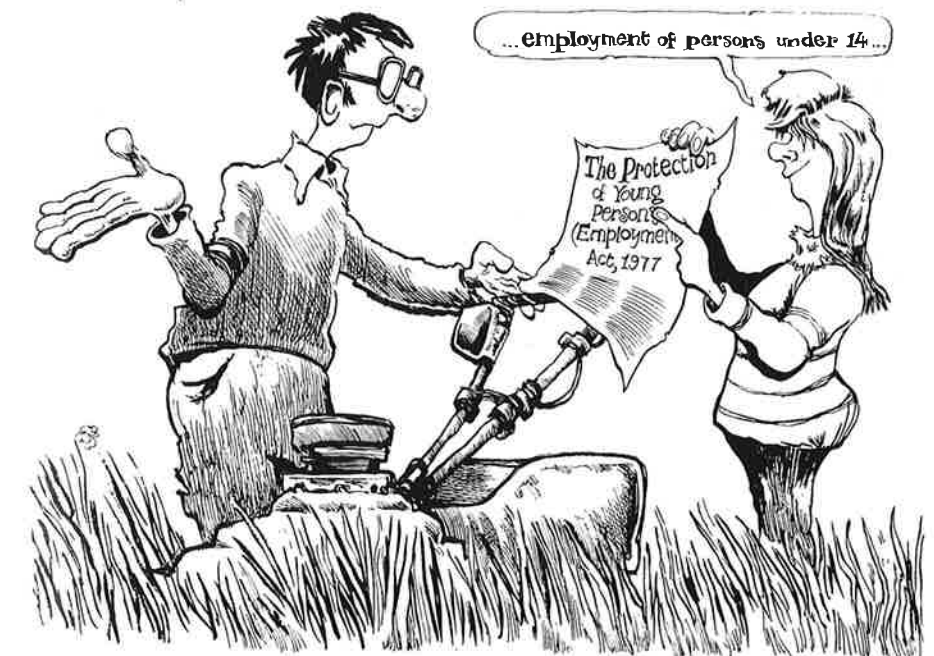
Hardly a day passes without the Congress Information Office getting several queries from young people. Most of the questions are very simple. How can I join a union? Can I be sacked for joining? Should I be paid extra for working on bank holidays? Do I have to use a broken ladder? What is the rate of pay for hairdressers? Should I get a pay slip with my wages? This book should help to answer this type of question.

Any sixteen-year-old could tell you all about the Statutes of Kilkenny but nothing about the statutory minimum wage. School-leavers know more about the courts of Henry VIII than they do about the Labour Court. They are often more familiar with the historic affairs of kings and princes than what life was like for ordinary working people. This book should also help to put the record straight.

Ignorance of the world of work leaves young people vulnerable in the workplace. Unawareness of trade unions deprives them of



Ms. Niamh Bhreathnach, Minister for Education addresses Congress Biennial Youth Conference in Malahide, Co. Dublin.



the support available to help them to help themselves. Special efforts are now rightly being made to prepare our young people for life in the workplace and for handling human and industrial relations.

I am confident that *Understanding Trade Unions – Yesterday and Today* will assist those efforts and prove very useful to pupils, teachers, parents and young people already at work or about to start work. The material was prepared by Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and experienced writers of educational materials.

Oliver Donohoe, our Research and Information Officer, and Barbara Keogh, our Youth Officer, co-ordinated the entire project, seeking material and illustrations from an immense variety of sources, all of whose co-operation we deeply appreciate. As always, Martyn Turner's cartoons spare no one's sensitivities, but I must point out that the characters he depicts are genuinely fictitious, despite their close resemblance to some of my friends.

Peter Cassells

October 1994

UNDERSTANDING **TRADE UNIONS** YESTERDAY & TODAY

Unions affect us all - no matter where we live and work. This book tells us all about them, their past and present. About how they began. Their turbulent years when joining one could cost you your life, their legendary leaders like Jim Larkin and the array of problems facing them. Lockouts, riots and harsh living conditions of the working people at the beginning of this century will become vivid as labour history unfolds.

Students find out what it means to be in a union - what a worker's rights and duties are in and out of the workplace, how unions function, and how modern industrial relations systems work.

Interesting discussions, topics on social and personal issues, role playing situations, case studies and challenging questions at the end of every section help students towards genuinely understanding trade unions and industrial relations.

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