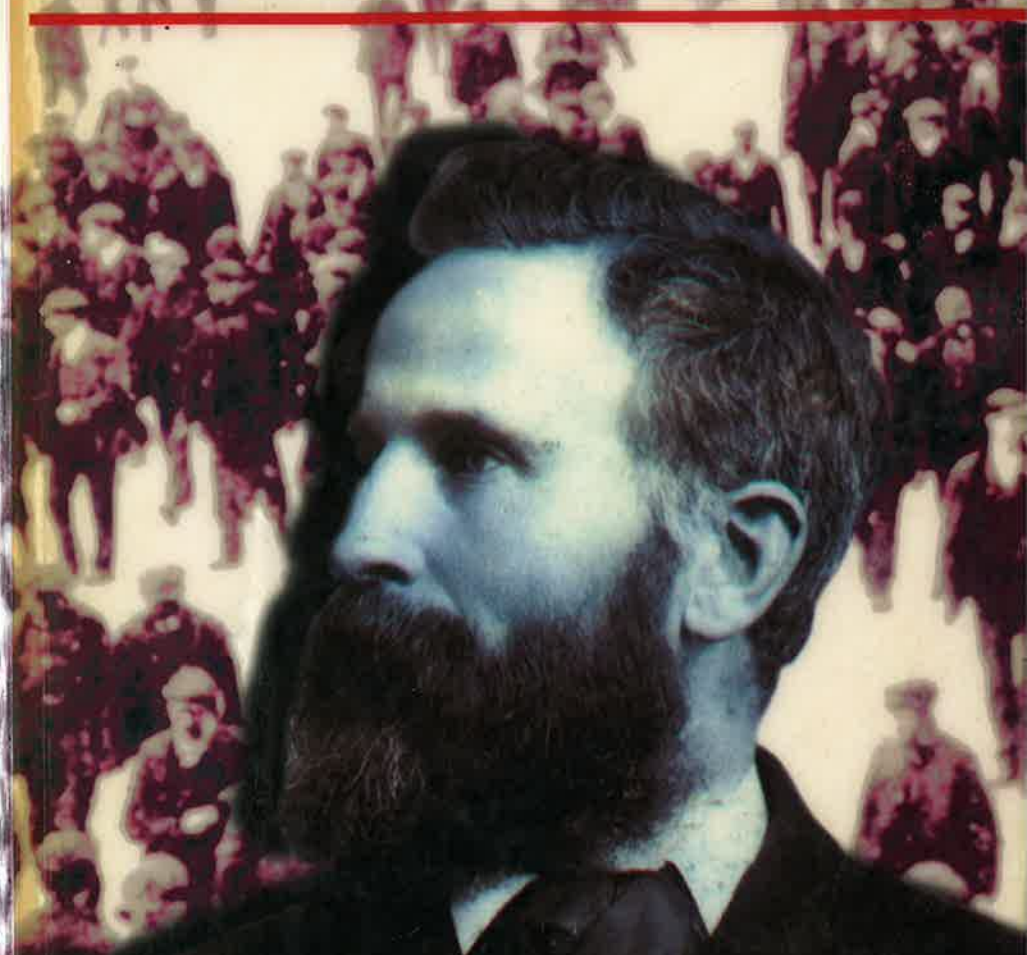


PEOPLE'S CHAMPION



The Life of Alexander Bowman
Pioneer of Labour Politics in Ireland

TERENCE BOWMAN



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Terence Bowman, great-grandson of Alexander Bowman, was born in Bangor in 1957 and attended Bangor Grammar School. He is editor of the *Mourne Observer* in Newcastle, Co. Down, which he joined in 1976, having completed the National Council for the Training of Journalists' pre-entry course at the Belfast College of Business Studies. In 1991 he edited and published *Railway Memories*, which told the recollections of former employees of the railways in Co. Down.

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'Every possible source of information has been researched. This biography of one of the Irish labour movement's true pioneers cannot be surpassed.'

Dr John W. Boyle, author of *The Irish Labour Movement* (Washington, D.C. 1988)





Belfast Telegraph portrait of Alexander Bowman as president of the
Irish Trade Union Congress in 1901

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TERENCE BOWMAN



ULSTER
HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

This book is dedicated to my wife Averil for her patience and understanding during many months of research, and to my late father Hugh. I regret not having had the chance to get to know him as well as I now know my great-grandfather.

Barcode No:	39006041154
Dewey No:	331.88
Date Input:	22nd April 99
Price:	donation

First published 1997
by the Ulster Historical Foundation
12 College Square East, Belfast, BT1 6DD

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© T. Bowman 1997
ISBN 0-901905-82-8

Typeset by the Ulster Historical Foundation
Printed by ColourBooks Ltd.
Cover and Design by Dunbar Design

This book has received support from the Cultural Traditions Programme of the Community Relations Council which aims to encourage acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity.



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ABBREVIATIONS

B(E)T	<i>Belfast (Evening) Telegraph</i>
BNL	<i>Belfast News-Letter</i>
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
BTC	Belfast Trades Council
BWS	<i>Belfast Weekly Star</i>
HGI	Henry George Institute
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IN	<i>Irish News</i>
IPHRA	Irish Protestant Home Rule Association
ITUC	Irish Trade Union Congress
MN	<i>Morning News</i>
MP	Member of Parliament
NW	<i>Northern Whig</i>
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
QUB	Queen's University, Belfast
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCD	University College, Dublin
WG	<i>Walthamstow Guardian</i>
WNW	<i>Weekly Northern Whig</i>
WR	<i>Walthamstow Reporter</i>

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When Alexander Bowman was elected to Belfast Corporation as Labour member for Duncairn in 1897, the very idea that he would still be remembered a century later for his relentless championing of the working-class cause appeared unthinkable. Yet Bowman, a near-penniless flaxdresser from a humble farming background, richly deserves his place in Irish political and labour history.

Twelve years earlier in 1885, following his key role in the birth of organised trade unionism in Belfast, he had been the first working-class Irishman to seek a seat at Westminster. His subsequent support for Gladstone's Home Rule bill and the Dublin parliament which he believed offered the best hope of bringing together Irish people of all persuasions, attracted much criticism. Forced to leave Belfast in 1888, he found himself immersed in the embryonic socialist movements first in Glasgow and then in London. Returning with new ideas to the Belfast trade union fold in 1895, he won the Corporation seat two years later and in 1901 was elected President of the Irish Trade Union Congress.

This biography, by his journalist great-grandson Terence Bowman, pays long-overdue tribute to a labour pioneer who, at great personal cost, dedicated his life sufficiently to the welfare of the working classes to earn their, and now our, respect as a *People's Champion*.

£9.99

