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THE SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF
TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IN IRELAND:
A CASE STUDY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Trade unions, despite their prominent position in Western society, have received little attention in geographical studies, a neglect typified by the Irish situation. This omission appears all the more remarkable given that the spatial patterns of trade union organisation, as evidenced by branch structure, provide useful material for examination as it may be assumed that any trade union, at a given point in time, will portray distinctive spatial characteristics. These will depend on what sections of the workforce the union organises, where these workers are predominantly located, the level of organisation of the union itself and the level of organisation of competing unions.

Trade unions trace their early roots to the Middle Ages, but have undergone subsequent changes in form and in aims. However, it is only in this century that trade unions have, by and large, assumed their present form. Since World War Two, they have become an accepted element in the socio-economic fabric of Western society and,

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notwithstanding the impact of recession and mass unemployment, they have achieved a position of some considerable power and influence. Membership levels vary, eg., about 20% of the workforce in the USA is unionised while the figure rises to about 60% in the EEC countries (Hardiman, 1983, 42). In most countries there has been a tendency for centralisation of membership and of decision-making to occur. This has been paralleled and, some would say, necessitated by the development of the multinational corporation, replacing the smaller individually-owned concern, whose decisions, taken in one centre, can affect workers in many different countries; and, also, the state as employer of, and provider of services to trade union members. To the charge that they have become excessively centralised, thus tending to reduce the influence on decision-making of the majority of members, trade unions have been able to reply that a greater degree of central co-ordination is necessary to meet the challenges posed by big business and government and, anyway, union members appear less likely to become active in the affairs of their union due to the counter-attractions of consumer society which tend to make involvement in their local branch outside of working hours seem like an excessive burden.

These, and other, themes have received considerable attention in the economic, sociological, political science, business and historical literature, but this has not been reflected in the geographic literature. This thesis seeks to help redress this neglect in the Irish context. From a position of being an adjunct to the British trade union movement in the last century, the Irish trade union movement has managed throughout the twentieth century to forge a separate identity for itself, while still accomodating the British-based unions. At present there are over 90 unions affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the umbrella union organisation, with a combined membership of 498,000 in 1979 (Hardiman, 1983, 42). Of these the largest proportion of membership is in general workers' unions, followed by white-collar unions and lastly by the craft unions, of which there tends to be a large number of smaller units. Membership has grown considerably in the post-war period, largely due to the increase in the number of white-collar workers joining trade unions, be they either general or specifically white-collar unions. As in other Western countries, the trade union movement in Ireland has become a central element in national life, as evidenced by the appointment of senior officials to the boards of semi-state bodies and the introduction of centralised wage negotiations between representatives from the trade union movement and employer organisations and chaired by

government appointees. Also, as in other countries, a considerable literature of trade unionism has been amassed in a number of disciplines, much of it by people directly involved in the movement.

This study will examine the spatial characteristics of the organisational structure of Ireland's largest and most important trade union, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (henceforth ITGWU), as a pioneering effort in the spatial analysis of trade union organisation. By its pre-eminence in size, its geographical extent and the wide cross-section of the workforce that it organises, the ITGWU appears to be the union which comes closest to being representative of the very varied Irish trade union movement. The aims of the study are to identify and explain the union's changing patterns of spatial organisation over time, as expressed in branch distribution and density of membership. Explanation of patterns involves relating them to the number of employees in the categories of workers that the union has organised at any given time and its level of success in organising them, and the union's own stated growth targets and its own perception of its degree of success in meeting these. Associated with this is an analysis of the union's growth in relation to its stated claims to be a national union and also, closely related, to its aspirations towards being the " One Big Union ".

The period of study will be from 1909, the year of the ITGWU's foundation, to 1979, the most recent year for which industrial employment figures have been published in the Census of Industrial Production. This period has seen major developments in the union's organisational structure and branch numbers (v. fig. 1.1)(broken lines represent years for which data is unavailable) and encompasses the major economic, social and political changes in twentieth century Ireland, providing a suitable time-span in which to explore the changes wrought on the union's structure by changes in internal and external economic conditions which have left a marked imprint on the spatial distribution of economic activity. This factor underlies the basic hypothesis, namely that union members and branches would tend to be located in counties and towns where waged employees, the potential members of the union, are most heavily concentrated. Ireland has undergone a number of transformations in economic organisation at both the national and regional levels since the start of the century, with resultant changes in workforce composition and distribution. It is to be expected that these changes in the workforce will have been reflected in the ITGWU's branch and membership distribution, with some branches contracting or closing, as their membership base in a declining industry disappears, and others opening or expanding where they have been able to gain a foothold in new sectors of activity.

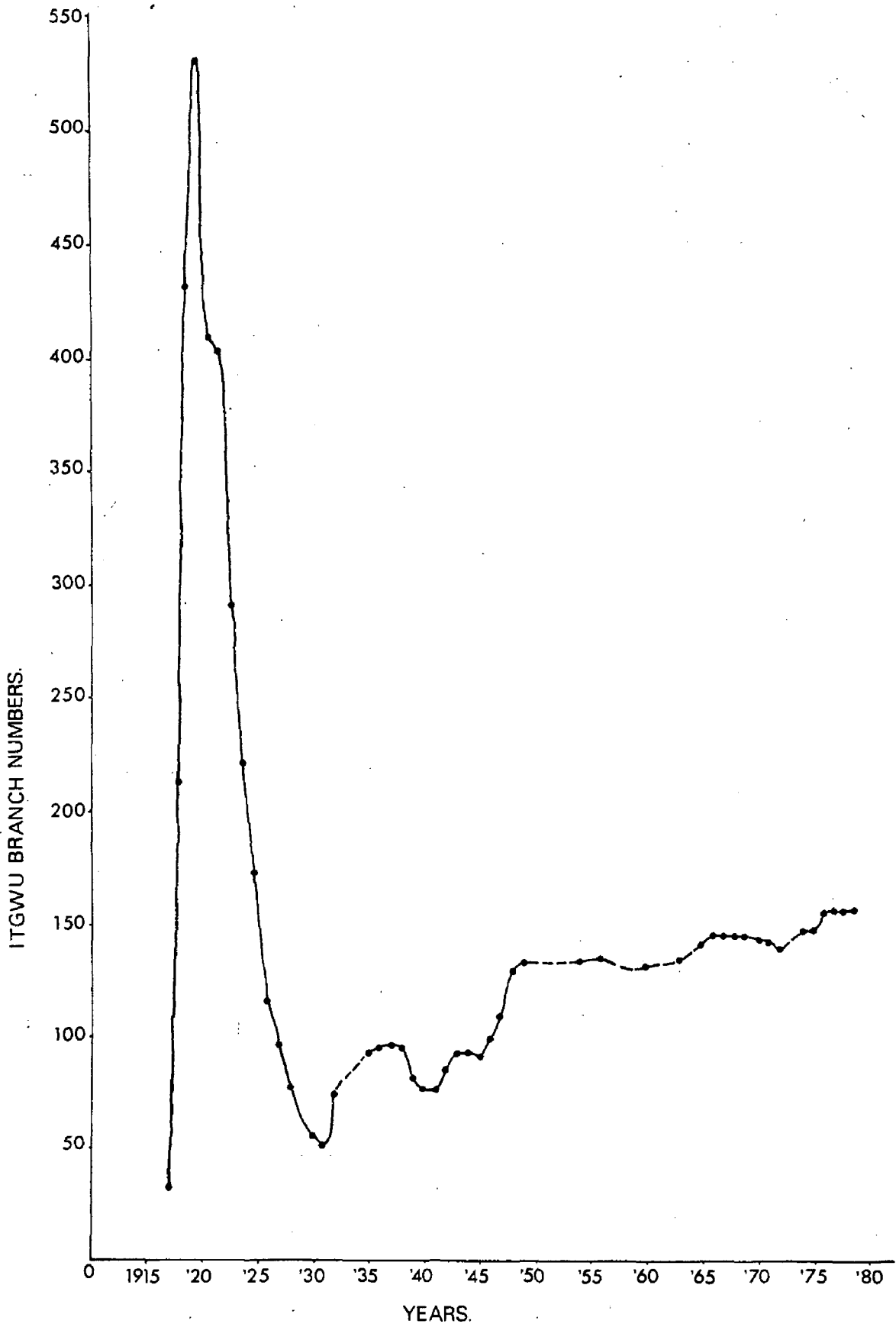


FIG 1.1 ITGWU BRANCH NUMBERS 1917 - 1979

This would also have been expected to have led to a change in the sectors that the union has tried to organise as the disappearance or contraction of a sector of industry may remove a major source of membership, the loss of which may force the union to turn its attention to other sectors to offset a decline in membership. The hypothesis will be modified to take account of changes in the sectors on which the union has concentrated its organisational attention.

Because of the changing socio-economic backdrop against which the union's development has taken place, the period of study has been divided into three distinct sub-periods, each identified by dominant national reliance on a particular form of economic activity. Thus the periods of study will be as follows :

A:- 1909-1931 - A period characterised by dependence on agriculture under both the British and Irish Free State governments with manufacturing being very limited in extent. These years saw the early growth of the union's branches in the largest towns, based mainly on dock and other transport workers. However, the late war and immediate post-war years saw a large growth in membership and branch numbers as the union organised among agricultural and other rural workers. However, the post-war recession led to a major falling-off in membership which continued until 1931.

B:- 1932-1957 - These years saw the inauguration of a tariff-based industrial policy behind which manufacturing industry developed considerably. The union was able to take advantage of the new opportunities to launch a number of organisational campaigns among industrial workers although growth slowed in the 1950s as the limits to protectionist policy led to economic stagnation.

C:- 1958-1979 - These years saw a resumption of economic growth as the state gradually adopted free trade policies designed to encourage production for export by both Irish and foreign-owned industries. This period also saw a tendency for industry to relocate as traditional industries in established centres closed down and new companies opened branch plants in hitherto relatively un-industrialised areas in the west and south of the country. The union was able to counter losses in industrial membership in Dublin and Cork by organising among service-sector workers whose numbers expanded notably in the post-war period.

Because of the greater amount of background information relating to the union available for the 1909-1931 period, this will receive more in depth coverage than the years between 1932 and 1979, for which the treatment will necessarily be more descriptive in character.

Apart from this introductory chapter, the thesis will contain five major chapters :

Chapter 2 will provide an outline of Irish economic history in the twentieth century, broken down according to the three sections mentioned above; it will also locate the ITGWU within the context of Irish and British trade union history and will detail the circumstances of the union's foundation, given that it was in many ways an innovatory development. Finally the chapter will provide an overview of the sources used in the study, difficulties encountered and how these were overcome.

Chapter 3 will analyse the union's spatial development in the period 1909- 1931.

Chapter 4 will detail the union's development in the years 1932-1957.

Chapter 5 will detail the union's development in the years 1958-1979.

Chapter 6 will summarise the findings of the research with a general conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND SOURCES

PREAMBLE.

This chapter will be in three sections:

SECTION 1 will outline Irish economic history in the twentieth century, broken down according to the three sections, as outlined in the introduction.

SECTION 2 will locate the ITGWU within the context of Irish and British trade union history and will detail the circumstances of the union's foundation, given that it was in many ways an innovatory development.

SECTION 3 will provide an overview of the sources used in the study, difficulties encountered and how these were overcome.

SECTION 1 - SETTING THE CONTEXT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE IRISH ECONOMY 1909-1979.

Vital to an understanding of trade union organisation is an awareness of the economic context within which it takes place. As discussed above, trade unions have their membership base among paid employees with certain unions usually organising among certain sections of the workforce. Thus, the spatial organisation of a given trade union is likely to be conditioned by the location of the type of employment that it predominantly organises. Irish economic activity has undergone several identifiable changes in form and location pattern during the lifespan of the ITGWU and these have been used as the basis of study of the union's development. Three separate periods may be identified:

1 Free trade and an agriculture based economy
1909-1931:

The situation obtaining in Ireland in the early part of the twentieth century, when the country was still under British rule, has its roots in the eighteenth century when the Industrial Revolution was getting off the ground in Britain. The only area of Ireland to experience sustained industrial

growth comparable to that of Lancashire and Yorkshire was the north-east with the linen industry centred on Belfast. Industry in the south generally remained small scale and dispersed and agriculture was the mainstay of the economy. The Act of Union, passed in 1800, introduced free trade between Britain and Ireland and this opened up Irish industry to competition from cheap mass-produced British goods. Although free trade may have militated against Irish industry the cheaper British goods could have probably retained their competitive edge even if tariff barriers had been retained (O'Tuathaigh, 1972, 121) as the only major industries were brewing (at Guinness's) and biscuit-making (at Jacob's). Most other industries remained small scale and mainly based on agricultural produce from the immediate hinterland.

The weakness of manufacturing industry left agriculture in a dominant position in the southern economy. A reliance on pasture, which provided fewer jobs than the more labour-intensive tillage farming, gave rise to heavy emigration right up to the twentieth century. Ready markets for produce were provided by Britain's industrial population which needed a steady supply of cheap food. A series of land acts between 1870 and 1906 gave control of the land to the tenant farmers and helped create a conservative property-conscious rural peasant-proprietor class whose

ethos was to dominate Irish life for much of the twentieth century.

Thus, Ireland in the early twentieth century had an agriculture-dependent economy with industry confined largely to the north-east, with a few pockets along the east coast and in some of the other major towns. The First World War led to temporary prosperity in certain sectors of the economy. Although it also put a stop to traditional forms of emigration this excess of people either joined the British army or went to work in British munitions factories, leading to a net drop in the workforce (Fitzpatrick, 1977, 242). There was also an increase in the acreage given to more labour intensive tillage farming to meet the increased demand from Britain caused by the pressure on its supply lines from overseas producers. The drop in the workforce, co-inciding with an increased demand for labour, led to an improved bargaining position for labour throughout the war years. The benefits of increased demand for agricultural produce were felt predominantly by farmers and shopkeepers and merchants in the rural towns and the agricultural price index rose from 100 in 1911-1913 to 288 by 1920 (Meenan, 1970, 91). However, the end of the war signalled the beginning of the end of this boom period, as supplies from overseas were again available, and the price index dropped after 1920, reaching 160 by 1924 (Meenan, 1970, 91) and

pushing agriculture into a recession which persisted after the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

However, with the coming of independence the possibility of native control of Ireland's economic destiny seemed to hold out hope for industrial development and the all-round raising of living standards. The Population Census of 1926 showed that, having lost the most heavily industrialised part of the island, the north-east, only 10% of the workforce was engaged in manufacturing industry, with 53% being engaged in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (Gillmor, 1982, 7). It was hoped that the proportion of industrial employment and output could be substantially raised if the right incentives and conditions were provided. It was a tenet of nationalist belief that Ireland's lack of industrialisation was primarily due to the existence of free trade with Britain. Accordingly, many nationalists advocated protective tariffs behind which Irish industry would be free to develop without the rigours of competition from British industry: the ending of the political link with Britain seemed to offer the opportunity to pursue such a protectionist policy. However, the Cumann na nGaedheal government was reluctant to impose full scale tariffs and the Tariff Commission set up in 1925 left the onus of proof with those seeking a tariff and it had dealt with only 15 applications by 1939 (Meenan, 1970, 140). Thus, agriculture

remained the most important sector of the economy under the Cosgrave government with little being done to encourage manufacturing and emigration continuing at a high level.

2 Protectionism and industrial expansion 1932-1957:

The coming to power of the Fianna Fail party in 1932 ushered in an era of much stronger and more widespread tariffs against a backdrop of world recession and the adoption of protectionist policies by most countries in an effort to boost home production. In Ireland, the initiation of the Economic War with Britain over the question of land annuity payments helped place protectionism in an explicitly nationalist context and helped the government to win support for it in the country (O'Hagan and McStay, 1981, 14). The aim was to achieve national self-sufficiency in industry as well as agriculture. Tariffs were introduced, in a very short space of time, on a wide range of products and often at higher levels than were necessary to provide adequate protection against imports. Indeed, Irish tariffs were among the highest in the world.

A further element in the pursuit of self-sufficiency was the introduction of the Control of Manufacturers Acts of 1932 and 1934 which were intended to restrict to minority positions the degree of foreign ownership and board control

of Irish companies (O'Hagan and McStay, 1981, 14). However, the limiting of access of foreign capital to Ireland meant a danger of scarcity of investment capital and this was compounded by a reluctance on the part of Irish capitalists to invest in Ireland, many preferring to invest outside the country. To counteract this the government established the Industrial Credit Company in 1933 to provide investment loans to Irish industry (Gillmor, 1982, 12).

Associated with the self-sufficiency ideal was a desire to curb emigration by providing enough employment at home. It was hoped to encourage industry to locate in rural areas and especially in the underdeveloped west of the country where emigration levels were highest, largely due to the lack of alternative employment opportunities outside of agriculture. The tariff policy was used to encourage decentralisation of industry by making the granting of a tariff dependent on its locating in an area approved by the government. The state itself also became directly involved in manufacturing through the establishment of state-sponsored companies such as Comhlacht Siuicre Eireann Teo (the Irish Sugar Company) and Ceimici Teoranta and factories for these concerns were often located in areas where there was a shortage of alternative industrial employment.

This policy of economic autarchy did lead to major development of Irish industry in the 1930s, although there was also a partially off-setting decline in small handcraft industries. Census of Industrial Production figures, which exclude many of these handcraft industries, show that the volume of output of transportable goods rose by 258% in the period 1926-1960 and that employment rose by 177% (Gillmor, 1982, 10). This led to a fall in emigration during the 1930s as more jobs became available at home.

The boom period was temporarily brought to a halt by the Second World War which caused a fall in output and employment as imported raw materials became harder to obtain. Most tariffs were suspended for the duration of the war, as they were irrelevant in the context of scarcity, but were re-introduced after the end of the war and the re-opening of supply lines. The fall in output, and thus availability of goods, had led to a build up of consumer demand and the effort of meeting this demand led to a rise in the volume of industrial output by 1947 which outstripped the highest pre-war level (O'Hagan and McStay, 1981, 22).

This expansionary phase continued until the early 1950s when, with the post-war demand satisfied, the limits to protectionist policy began to be experienced. Much of the new industry opened since 1932 was based on imported raw materials rather than home produce and because of this

industry still tended to locate predominantly in the major ports and some other large towns, thus, defeating the decentralisation aims of official policy. Reliance on imported raw materials also tended to cause balance of payments problems as the country was not exporting sufficient goods to pay for imports. Furthermore, tariffs often affected goods which were the raw materials or components of other industries, thus, pushing up the cost of production. Despite the Control of Manufacturers Acts, many factories were British branch plants which remitted profits (Meenan, 1970, 322). Thus, the benefits of industrialisation were less than they might have been. At a structural level, there were limits to the growth achievable within the relatively small Irish market and once these were reached industry had no other avenues for expansion. Because of this constraint, industry tended to remain small scale and inward looking and its tendency to produce limited quantities of a large range of products meant it was inefficient.

The years 1926-1961 had seen a rise of 61,000 in industrial employment but this was overwhelmed by the decline of 272,000 in the agricultural workforce in the same period (Gillmor, 1982, 15). The Economic War with Britain from 1932 to 1938 had severely contracted Ireland's major market for agricultural produce and badly affected that sector. This was compounded in the 1950s by the world slump

in the demand for food. As the new industries were not based on agricultural produce, they tended not to be evenly distributed geographically and their benefits did not extend to the farm sector. The combination of these factors, allied to the postwar recovery elsewhere, led to stagnation in the 1950s with emigration reaching the levels of the 1880s, thereby graphically illustrating the defects in Ireland's contemporary economic policies.

3 Open Door Policy 1958 to the present:

By the late 1950s the weaknesses of protectionism had become obvious. The stagnation of that decade was blamed on the failure to develop export markets for industrial goods with the tariff policy and disincentives to foreign capital being major inhibiting factors. Tentative innovations and policy changes leading to greater government involvement in promoting industrial development had been made in the early 1950s. In 1950 the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) was given official responsibility for promoting the development of manufacturing. Coras Tráchtála was established in 1952 to encourage exports. To promote employment in underdeveloped western areas capital grants for industrial undertakings locating there were introduced in 1952, to be administered by An Foras Tionscal. These were extended to the rest of the country in 1956. Also, tax

incentives for new industry were introduced in 1959.

These measures helped set the scene for the re-orientation of policy announced in the seminal document Economic Development (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1958) which outlined the need for an export oriented economic policy based on manufacturing and involving an increased level of government sponsorship of industry. These ideals were subsequently incorporated in the First Programme for Economic Expansion for the period 1958-1962. This strategy required that free trade be introduced so that other countries would reciprocally lower tariff barriers against Irish goods and protectionism was gradually phased out throughout the 1960s. Foreign industry was to be encouraged to locate in Ireland and the Control of Manufacturer's Acts were replaced in 1958 by legislation designed to attract foreign investment (O'Hagan and McStay, 1981, 22). A generous package of incentives to exporting industries was introduced, including tax remission of 100% for 15 years, from 1960 (Gillmor, 1982, 12), and capital grants were provided for established Irish industries to help them prepare for the new challenge opened up by competition from imported foreign goods. The accessibility of Ireland to foreign markets developed progressively with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement in 1965, Irelands accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade (GATT) in 1968 and entry to the EEC in 1973, an opening up which occurred in the context of a world-wide move to free trade.

These moves to encourage foreign investment took place against a backdrop of a restructuring of capital and, in particular, the rise to predominance of the multinational corporation (MNC). These MNCs, through their large size, have achieved a much increased scale of operations and many are consequently able to choose the most profitable locations for branch plants on a global scale. There has been a tendency for factories to close in inner city areas in traditionally industrialised countries, due to factors such as lower productivity in older plants, and the strength of some trade unions which demand higher wages and may be generally militant (Massey, 1977, 44). A further factor is the recent trend towards de-skilling of industrial tasks which makes companies less dependent on skilled workers in traditional industrial centres. Ireland offers favourable investment opportunities in relation to many of the needs of MNCs. The country has a relatively well-educated workforce whose wage levels tend to be lower than in much of the developed world. Outside of the major cities, Ireland has little tradition of consistently militant labour, due to her relatively recent industrialisation, thus, being more productive than in many other countries. Ireland's

anti-pollution legislation is relatively lax so companies are not unduly hampered by controls on the release of effluent into the natural environment. Also, improvements in transport and communications make Ireland an ideal site for companies seeking a relatively low-cost production site with access to foreign markets, a factor which has become especially important since Ireland's accession to the EEC, to which market firms based here have duty free access.

These factors, allied to the generous incentives offered by the state, have led to a large number of foreign firms opening plants in Ireland. By 1980 about 80,000 people were employed in foreign-owned firms, representing about 34% of total manufacturing employment (NESC, 1982, 134), up from a position of virtually none in 1958. Since 1973 foreign industry jobs rose by about 22,000, while jobs in indigenous industry rose by only 2,000 in the same period (NESC, 1982, 134), demonstrating the important position foreign companies now occupy in the Irish economy.

However, free trade has not been an unqualified success, due to the considerable turnover of jobs in the foreign-owned sector. About 16,800 jobs (29% of the total in foreign-owned companies in 1973) had been lost by 1980 (NESC, 1982, 134), thus tending to reduce the benefit of the total of nearly 39,000 gained in existing and newly opened foreign plants. Also, the rigours of foreign competition

from better organised and more efficient sources has proved too much for many traditional manufacturing concerns whose closure has partly offset the gains made by new industry. Between 1973 and 1981 162,000 new manufacturing jobs were created but a total of 54,000 jobs were lost (Gillmor, 1982, 18) of which the majority were in traditional indigenous industry. This has led to a change of emphasis in Irish industry. Prior to 1958 the bulk of manufacturing was concentrated on labour intensive clothing and textiles, food processing, furniture, footwear and similar industries. However, since then growth has been greatest in sectors such as engineering, metals, chemicals and synthetic textiles and more recently in electrical and electronic engineering, instrumentation and other high technology industries. For instance, by 1980 about 700 MNCs in the electrical and electronics industries had begun operations in Ireland, with an employment of 10,000 people (NESC, 1982, 137), and between 1973 and 1979 the volume of production in chemicals rose from 642 to 1,474 (almost 130%), while in the same period the volume of production in footwear and clothing fell from 180 to 144, while that in wood and furniture fell from 186 to 171 (O'Hagan and McStay, 1981, 37). Foreign-owned companies have tended to be more export-orientated, exporting almost 75% of their production in 1979 while indigenous companies exported only about 30% of their production (NESC, 1982, 295).

This change in emphasis has been reflected in the spatial location of manufacturing industry. For the reasons discussed above the traditional industrial areas of the major ports and larger towns in the east of the country are no longer favoured locations and many new undertakings are locating in hitherto unindustrialised areas, often in the underdeveloped west of the country. This transition has been encouraged by IDA policy which seeks, not only to attract industry to Ireland, but to get it to locate in the less developed areas of the country. This was intended to provide local employment and thus slow down emigration and up to recently this had largely succeeded. This has meant that the Eastern planning region, centred on Dublin, now receives a smaller proportion of new industrial employment. For instance, between 1973 and 1981 manufacturing employment in the Eastern region actually fell from 107,212 to 91,304 (15%) while it increased from 8,266 to 14,895 (80%) in the Western region (Gillmor, 1982, 41), registering increases in all but the North-Western region. Dublin has managed to counteract some of the ill-effects of industrial decline by the rise of the services sector which has paralleled that in most industrialised countries. As most of the headquarters of government departments, semi-state bodies, private business institutions and other organisations continue to be centralised in Dublin, the capital has taken the lion's share of tertiary sector employment eg. in 1981 just over 48% of

all such jobs were located in the Eastern region (Census of Population, 1981). However, this type of employment is not suited to those who lose jobs in the traditional manufacturing sector and the social cost of the high levels of unemployment experienced since the late 1970s has yet to be reckoned as job creation in new industry fails to keep pace with losses in the traditional sector.

Generally, there has been a sectoral re-orientation of national employment as both manufacturing and service sector employment have grown while agricultural employment has experienced decline. In 1961, 35.2% of the employed workforce was engaged in agriculture, 25.5% in manufacturing industry (both sectors comprising productive industry) while 39.3% was engaged in the services sector (non-productive industry) (NESC, 1977, 30)(cf. table 2.1). By 1981 this situation had been dramatically altered. Only 16.4% of the workforce remained in agricultural employment, while industrial employment had risen to 31.7% and 51.9% of the workforce was now employed in the services sector (Census of Population, 1981).

Conclusion:

This traces Ireland's twentieth century evolution from an agriculture-dependent economy with little manufacturing industry and high emigration through its phase of protected industrialisation which had significant, but ultimately limited, success to the present day situation of an increasingly important role for industry and services. This period has seen an evolution in industrial location patterns with a tendency for decline to occur in the traditional centres in the east (whose industrial employment levels fell from 47% of the total in 1973 to just under 39% in 1981) (Gillmor, 1982, 41) and became more evenly spread across the rest of the country. A more diversified industrial base has been achieved although at the expense of loss of control of much new industry to sources outside the country. The dependence on Britain for trade has also been lessened, especially since accession to the EEC. On balance, these factors probably leave the economy in a stronger structural position than at any other stage this century.

SECTION 2 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONISM IN IRELAND.

An awareness of the origins and history of trade unionism in general in Ireland is important for an understanding of the ITGWU's organisational development which differed in some respects from, and was really a reaction to, the form of trade unionism prevalent in Ireland before its advent.

Irish trade unionism traces its origins to Britain, whose proximity allowed Irish workers follow the example set by their British counterparts. The earliest form of trade unions were the combinations which, still illegal, had spread to most parts of the British Isles by the end of the eighteenth century, often using the friendly societies, which insured workers against accident, old age and death, as a front for their activities. At this time most combinations consisted of skilled craftsmen, with unskilled labourers being generally unorganised.

In Ireland combinations developed initially in Dublin and by the 1820s there were about 25 in the capital. They were given a qualified legality in 1825 under the Combination Law. By this time they were also beginning to

be called unions and they were now able to spread more openly, making considerable progress in larger provincial centres. They usually consisted of workers whose position had not been undermined by the new practises and techniques of the Industrial Revolution or who got jobs in newly established factories.

From around the 1840s onwards many Irish emigrants in Britain were becoming involved in union affairs there and the influence of those who returned to Ireland was important in popularising the British amalgamated unions, to which the Irish unions affiliated in large numbers from mid century onwards (McCarthy, 1977, 5). This was a logical part of the extension of trade unions throughout the United Kingdom. This concentration of control was reflected in a desire for a more unified movement, necessitated also by the increasing concentration of ownership of industry. In 1868 these aspirations were given expression with the foundation of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) (Pelling, 1976, 71), to which Irish unions and Irish branches of British unions sent delegates

In Ireland itself a constant problem was the relationship between Belfast and Dublin. Trade unionists in the two had different motivations and objectives, reflecting their differing economic and social backgrounds, and these divergences were to cause problems well into the present

century. On an economic level, Belfast trade unionists, working in thriving linen, shipbuilding and related industries, wanted protection in industrial disputes, while Dublin trade unionists, dependent on less secure food, drink and tobacco industries, were more concerned with protection against foreign goods which might undercut their jobs (McCarthy, 1977, 4). On the social and political level, these differences found expression in religious adherence and attitudes to Home Rule, which would, if granted, have denied Belfast unrestricted access to the British market. Despite these problems, there was a felt need for greater co-operation at the national level, especially by the Trades Councils, which represented the different trades in each town but were excluded from the British TUC. In 1894 the Belfast and Dublin Trades Councils joined together to form the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC) representing 21,000 workers directly and 39,000 indirectly (McCarthy, 1977, 8). The Congress mainly represented craft workers with labourers having very little representation.

This new step did little to change the basically conservative nature of the Irish trade union movement around the turn of the twentieth century. It tended to be a reserved movement made up predominantly of craft workers, who had little interest in confrontation with their employers. The worker's craft gave him a certain status in

the community and he felt a sense of superiority over the unskilled labourer who had little in which to feel any sense of social pride. This reflected a rather static view of the world in which everyone had their rightful place. By the beginning of the twentieth century this was coming to be questioned, both in Britain and to a lesser extent in Ireland, by changes in attitudes to old Victorian values. Of most relevance for labour organisation was the change in the basis of unionism - there was now an increasing level of organisation among general unskilled workers in Britain. This paralleled the tendency in industry to become larger in scale, thus undermining the position of craft workers. The Labour presence in Parliament was growing and Socialists were voicing opposition to free market ideas. There were demands for wages to be based on human criteria, influenced and supported by the poverty surveys of Booth and Rowntree. There was a growing awareness of the need for more state intervention in social and economic life, on the part of Liberals as well as Socialists, reflected in the election of a reformist Liberal government in 1906 after 20 years of almost unbroken Tory Party rule.

This was the background against which the foundation of the ITGWU took place. The central figure in the events leading up to this was James Larkin. He arrived in Belfast in 1907 as Irish organiser for the British based National

Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) which had been established in the 1890s, gaining a foothold in many of the major ports, and which wanted to resurrect its, by now, moribund Irish branches. Having organised the dock workers of Belfast, Newry and Dublin and conducted strikes in the two northern ports, Larkin moved to Dublin early in 1908. Here the conditions were ripe for the organisation of workers to fight for improvements in wages and conditions of employment. In 1891 72,000 people (25% of the population) lived in 22,000 single rooms, and this situation had changed little by 1908 (Redmond, 1984, 19). The pawnshop was an essential element in survival for many and the crime rate was among the highest in the British Isles. To make things worse, purchasing power had fallen since 1906 due to inflation. These hardships bore most heavily on the unskilled general labourers who, due to their large numbers and lack of marketable skills, had no security of employment. As yet, the only general workers to have been unionised were the municipal employee members of the United Corporation Workmen of Dublin Trades Union but, as this was restricted to one employment, albeit a relatively large one, the majority of general workers would have been outside its organisational scope.

Early in 1908 an attempt was made by a number of Dublin trade unionists to form a Dublin branch of the Workers' Union, a small English general union. However, a lack of enthusiasm for joining a British union led to suggestions for setting up an Irish-based general workers' union, the first time this possibility had been raised. Although Larkin rejected the idea on this occasion, not wanting to "split the workers on the industrial front", (Greaves, 1982, 20), his increasing estrangement from the English leadership of the NUDL, which failed to support him in some disputes, encouraged him to change his attitude. At a meeting on December 28th., 1908, of disaffected NUDL representatives from Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Dundalk and Waterford it was decided to found an Irish union for general workers. On January 4th, 1909, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was officially launched, with most of the NUDL membership in the above mentioned branches transferring to the new union (Greaves, 1982, 25). Given its NUDL background, the new union consisted initially of dock workers. However, Larkin intended the union to extend beyond these confines to include all sections of unskilled workers. In this aim, despite a few setbacks, the ITGWU was to be singularly successful over the next eleven years, as illustrated in the following chapter.

SECTION 3 - SOURCES.

A factor that became immediately obvious regarding research into trade union affairs is that there is no central repository of trade union information such as annual reports, membership figures, branch names, minutes of meetings and other relevant material, although the Irish Labour History Society has opened an archive which does contain records of some unions. This means that most material must be obtained from the head office of a union and availability depends on how diligent various officials have been in collecting and storing the aforementioned material. This varies from union to union. Occasionally, the retention of files was not given a high priority; this may have depended on the size of the clerical/administrative staff employed by the union or on what stage an information officer was appointed. In the case of a small union with only a small staff, collection of records may have depended on the interest of an official who was prepared to do this outside of normal working hours and for no immediate reward. An example of this is shown by the publication of the history of the Irish Municipal Employees Trade Union (IMETU) by its General Secretary (Redmond, 1984). The ITGWU, on the other hand, being Ireland's largest union for most of its

history, has had a staff of sufficient size to maintain most material intact and an impetus has been provided by the leadership which, in its annual reports, has consistently stressed the need for worker education, an integral part of which is an awareness of the origins and development of its own organisations.

For this study the first, and most basic, objective has been to determine the size of union membership, as this indicates the general level of growth or decline within a union. It could also be expected that it would give indications of expansion or contraction in branch numbers as increases in members give rise to a need for more branches to adequately cater to the needs of the membership. There are two sources containing this information, although it is not published directly by the union itself on a regular basis. One is the Registry of Friendly Societies; the other is the annual reports of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the umbrella trade union organisation, and of the earlier Congresses, namely the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC) and the Congress of Irish Unions (CIU). The ITGWU has been affiliated to all three organisations - to the ITUC from 1909 to 1944, to the breakaway CIU from 1944 to 1958 and to the new amalgamation of the two, the ICTU, from 1959 to the present, and their annual reports have published membership totals for each affiliated union,

including the ITGWU. A less consistent source is the annual report of the union itself which occasionally gives the membership totals for that year. These figures must be used with caution as they do not always agree and sometimes they appear to be convenience figures which may hide the true total. This may be partly because the union sometimes found it difficult to determine exactly what the membership was in periods of high membership turnover, while since the 1950s it has consistently claimed a membership of only 150,000 to the CIU and ICTU, when figures in the Registry of Friendly Societies files record a higher member. These apparently contradictory data have meant that considerable care has been needed in their interpretation but it has been possible to deduce the general trends in membership, if not always the exact figure.

To determine the ITGWU's patterns of spatial organisation the locations of its branches over time have had to be identified and mapped. It might have been expected that the union's annual report would give a list of its branches each year but in fact these lists have only been published between 1918 and 1928 and from 1976 to the present, both of which periods have seen the greatest extension of the union's branch structure. To fill in the missing years the union's Registry of Friendly Society files might have been helpful as each union is supposed to submit

an annual list of branches to it. However, it appears that a list was only submitted on three occasions, each during the 1930s, so that, although giving indications of branch patterns for the 1930s, these files are of no use for the 35 year period from the 1940s to the mid 1970s. It does, however, carry branch totals for most years so it is possible to gauge the numerical extent of the union's branch structure.

The third source of branch locations is the union's own register of branches which does provide very complete information for most branches up until the mid 1950s, including dates of foundation, closure and re-opening (if any). Unfortunately, in a small number of cases, especially in the earlier years, the dates of closure were not noted so it has not been possible to provide a totally accurate picture for any year but the general trends in branch structure do become evident. The register does not deal with branch openings and closures after 1955 so the period from then until 1976 cannot be mapped accurately. However, branch numbers remained static between 1949 and 1963 and it might be inferred that there were relatively few changes in location pattern up until 1963.

Tracing regional changes in membership has proved more difficult. The most obvious way of doing this would have been to get the membership totals for individual branches but unfortunately these figures are not available. The mere observation of existence of branches does not tell much about membership as only 50 members are required to open a new branch while membership of individual branches may extend into the thousands so there are considerable variations in size between the larger and the smaller branches.

Because of this gap in the records, more indirect methods have had to be used to gauge the relative strengths of different branches. Since 1924, the union's annual report has contained a list of delegates to the annual conference and the branches they represent. Delegates are elected on a basis of each branch being allowed one delegate for every 500 members, so it is possible to construct a rough picture of the larger branches and their patterns of change over time. Until about 1950, the majority of branches did not have delegate representation but since then many more branches have gained representation. This feature has become especially marked since the 1960s. Use of delegate lists has thus allowed growth in the larger branches to be traced and is the only indicator of branch structure between 1955 and 1976.

These various sources have been used to achieve the first aim of the research, namely the identification of spatial patterns of union organisation. The second step has been to explain these patterns and in common with the first section there is no one central source of direct information on why union activity has concentrated on certain areas as against others at given points in time. Nevertheless, it has been possible to use information gathered from a number of different sources. The ITGWU, being a general union, has not restricted itself to organising any one section of the workforce as, say, a craft union based on one particular craft will have done. Nonetheless, at different periods it has concentrated largely on certain sectors, with others being considered to be beyond its organisational scope. A good example of this is the agricultural labourers sector. In the years up to about 1923 agricultural labourers formed a major proportion of the membership, but from the 1930s onwards the problems of maintaining full-time membership in this sector had led to a change of policy with no further attempts being made to organise agricultural labourers and, indeed, with overtures from some of these workers being rejected.

It has been possible to determine the categories of workers that the union has attempted to organise by using the report of the National Executive Council (NEC) contained

in the annual report. This report covers the major affairs of the union during the previous year and usually records the organisational strategy over different periods. Thus it has been possible to identify when organisational drives were undertaken, what areas and sections of the workforce these focussed upon and how successful the NEC felt these organisational efforts had been. The quality of information varies, with a general tendency to include more detail in the reports from the mid 1930s onwards when new growth in membership was being experienced. The details of sources for employment growth in the sectors that the union has concentrated its organisational efforts on will be dealt with in each chapter as necessary, as will the sources for information regarding the validity of the union's claim to be a national union and its aspiration towards being the "One Big Union".

These sources allow a comprehensive picture of the ITGWU's spatial organisation to be constructed and explained. Obviously the amount of direct information is limited but it is possible to use more indirect sources. As indicated above this lack of direct information may be due to the union being hampered by lack of adequate resources in previous years with priority being given to its basic concern ie. the material well-being of the membership. Nonetheless more recent years have seen an increasing

awareness of the importance of information gathering throughout society as a whole and this has been reflected in the case of the ITGWU in the establishment of the Liberty Study Group in the 1950s and the opening of the Development Services Division in 1971, both of which have helped increase the amount of information available about the union.

CONCLUSION.

This chapter has outlined the context of the study. Section 1 has provided the economic context within which the ITGWU's development has taken place; section 2 has shown its origins and position in the trade union movement and society of the early twentieth century; and, finally, section 3 has dealt with the sources used. The foundation of the ITGWU was in many ways an innovatory move and its early successes served to highlight the need that existed for it in the trade union movement of the time. Since then, of course, it has undergone a number of transformations in response to changing economic circumstances; however, it is to the evolving spatial pattern of its initial phase of development, in the period 1909-1931, that attention will be

turned in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DIFFUSION AND PARACME 1909-1931.

PREAMBLE.

With the foundation of the ITGWU in 1909 the means were provided for an unprecedented growth in trade unionism in Ireland, both in sectoral and in spatial terms. The union found its initial membership among the dock workers who left the British-based NUDL to found the new Irish union and the early growth was based mainly on workers in the dock and transport sectors. However, the leadership had broader aims and Larkin intended the union to cater for all general workers. This implied that it would concentrate on sectors hitherto ignored by craft unions. By extension, the union would also move into regions as yet unorganised, mostly located in smaller towns and rural areas. In these, the relative absence of manufacturing industry on a large scale meant that there tended to be only small numbers of craft workers. The scarcity of craft workers in many smaller towns meant that it was not feasible for craft unions,

concentrating on workers in one craft, to organise there.

The period from 1909-1931, the subject of this chapter, can be subdivided into three different phases for analytical purposes:

1 1909-1916 - This was characterised by dependence on dock and transport workers for membership, with some general worker members, and still restricted very largely to the major towns, often ports, where most transport workers were located.

2 1917-1920 - This period saw an extension of union organisation from the major towns into the countryside with organisation tending to take place initially in the larger towns in each county and then spreading into surrounding rural areas, to smaller towns and villages. These years saw the ITGWU become a truly general union with the original constituency of dock and transport workers being numerically swamped by members in new sectors. Its expanding membership also made it by far the largest union affiliated to the ITUC by 1920, a position maintained since then.

3 1921-1931 - These years saw the union contract in terms of membership and spatial and sectoral distribution, a process which was speeded up dramatically after 1923 when the newly established Free State government was in a strong enough position to support employers in anti-union campaigns.

SECTION 1 - EARLY GROWTH 1909-1916.

It was not possible to gain access to any primary sources for the years before 1918 as the material is not readily available to researchers. Also the first Annual Report was not published until 1918 so this source is not available for the early years. However, the general pattern of the union's growth in these early years can be gleaned from secondary sources, most notably from C. Desmond Greaves' official history of the union (Greaves, 1982), the author having had access to material held in the union's headquarters.

As previously mentioned, the union found its early membership in the dock and other transport worker sectors. The former were located exclusively and the latter

predominantly in the port towns which also tended to be among the largest towns in Ireland, Kilkenny, Athlone and Clonmel being the only large inland towns. This meant that the union's early growth was restricted to the larger towns and the initial pattern of branch diffusion was roughly hierarchical. However, the intention was to cater to all general workers and although the largest concentrations of these would be found in the larger towns, there were also large numbers in the smaller towns and rural areas. The seeds of the later diffusion, which occurred in a roughly hierarchical but also later in a contiguous fashion, were sown in the years up to 1916 but remained isolated within a broadly hierarchical pattern of branch diffusion.

By the beginning of 1911 the ITGWU was still confined to the two largest cities ie. Dublin and Belfast, where it had three and one branches respectively. However, this year saw it extend into other major centres with most being port towns ie. Wexford, Dundalk, Bray, Sligo, Waterford and New Ross with Kilkenny being the only non-port location to have a branch (Greaves, 1982, 63). This represented the ITGWU making strong inroads into the dock worker membership of the NUDL, although the latter union managed to hold its position in some ports, Drogheda, one of the country's largest ports, possibly being one of them. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine all ports in which the NUDL had

membership and Greaves gives only general indications. Thus, it is not possible to determine precisely the ITGWU's level of success in replacing the NUDL as the major dock labourer union in this period. As yet, the ITGWU was restricted largely to the east and south coast ports with Sligo being the only western port to have a branch. Nonetheless, this does represent a picture of broadly hierarchical diffusion with many of the larger towns now having a branch presence.

By April 1912 there were 4 Dublin branches and 11 others, including one at Cork (Greaves, 1982, 72). Unfortunately, the other 10 are not identified, although the New Ross branch had collapsed, indicating the difficulty of maintaining organisation among unskilled workers. These workers, due to their lack of a skill, had no real security of employment and, as their jobs were easy to fill, employers had little problem in recruiting non-union labour if their unionised employees went on strike, thus making the task of the union difficult.

1912 also saw sections being opened for warehousemen, vanmen, stone polishers and rotary hands, an acknowledgement by the union leadership of the need for specialised attention and service for each different section. In most cases the earliest organised workers in a town were those employed in the dock or transport sector. Their relative

numerical strength, which gave them enhanced bargaining power, enabled their successes to provide a potent example of the benefits of union membership to other workers who were thus encouraged to join the union. The ITGWU used the tactics of syndicalism, namely the picket, the sympathetic strike and the refusal to handle tainted goods, ie. those produced by "blackleg", or non-union, labour for an employer whose workers had gone on strike or been locked out by the employer. In this way the transport workers were able to use the power granted by their large numbers and their key position in defence of those members in weaker positions (ITGWU, 1984, 1). Syndicalist theory provided the ideological motivation behind the objective of establishing the "One Big Union" (OBU), maintaining that all workers should be organised, along industrial lines, in one large union as the industrial wing of the socialist revolution. By 1912 Larkin had probably been converted to syndicalism, coming under the influence of James Connolly, who became Belfast organiser for the union in 1911. This was to be a major driving force behind the expansion later in the decade.

Thus the ITGWU represented a sharp break with the form of craft unionism prevalent in Ireland before its foundation. The new confrontational approach provided a marked contrast with the earlier cautious craft-dominated

situation in which skilled workers felt a degree of common interest with their employer. The value of the craftsman's trade gave him a position as a member of a labour aristocracy, with higher wages and more security of employment than were enjoyed by unskilled workers, while a general recognition of this value by employers meant that there tended to be less need for recourse to strike action. However, the less secure position of unskilled workers meant that much more militant tactics were required to win improvements in wages and conditions. A basic requirement was that general unskilled workers should come to see themselves as a class with common interests and support each other in disputes. The tactics of the ITGWU up until mid 1913 were notably successful in helping to achieve this, with the aforementioned syndicalist methods emphasising the principle of solidarity among workers. As certain groups of workers gained successes, the practical value of collective action came to be seen by other workers who were thus encouraged to join the union.

Up until 1913 the union's diffusion had occurred in a broadly hierarchical fashion. However, the summer of that year witnessed the first example of contiguous diffusion, with the union extending from a major centre into neighbouring smaller centres further down the urban hierarchy before moving into intermediate centres. This

took place in the form of a campaign to enrol rural workers around Dublin as members. Many farm labourers around Swords, Blanchardstown, Lucan and Clondalkin joined, and although the immediate spur was provided by officials canvassing in these areas, the ground had already been cleared by rural workers observing the methods used by city workers and the improvements in wages and conditions of employment gained by their use. It is not clear whether these members were accorded independent branch status at this stage but this does show the beginnings of the contiguous form of diffusion which was to predominate from 1918 onwards, with the example set by urban workers being imitated by rural workers. This also represented an important development in the union's pursuit of the "OBU" ideal and was a hallmark in the development of Irish trade unionism, as never before had rural labourers been organised in a city-based trade union. The summer of 1913 represented the peak period of the ITGWU's early development. Total membership may have been as high as 30,000, with up to 3,600 joining in Dublin alone in that year. There was, in the words of Greaves (p. 91)

"a sense of adventure, of novelty and of historical purpose. The age of the common man was at hand if only he would seize his opportunity."

The truth of this summation is evidenced by the extent of the employer backlash that was to follow.

The unprecedented development of the ITGWU posed a major threat to employer interests, fundamentally so because the unskilled were finally coming to see, firstly, that they were a united class with interests differing from those of their employers, and, secondly, that they had the power to achieve their own separate goals. Once these two factors were grasped by the workers, the employers' position could never be secure. There were two basic options open to the employers: firstly, to reach an accommodation with the ITGWU which would recognise it as the representative of legitimate class interests and would involve concessions to the workers; or, secondly, to attempt to crush it totally, and with it the new-found class consciousness of the workers, thus guaranteeing the employers freedom of movement in dealing with their employees. Given the extent of the challenge posed by the ITGWU under Larkin and the fact that Irish employers were used to running their businesses their own way, largely without reference to the wishes of their workers, it is, perhaps, not surprising that, under the leadership of William Martin Murphy, they chose the latter course, thus perpetrating the Great Lock-out of 1913.

In August, 1913, Murphy, owner of the Dublin United Tramway Company, sacked workers in the firm who were known to have joined the ITGWU. As more men were dismissed, and the company refused even to negotiate, the union called a strike which began on the first day of the Dublin Horse Show. Murphy's response was to bring together over 400 employers in Dublin who demanded of their workers that they sign a document promising to leave the ITGWU (if they were members) or promising not to join if they had not already done so (ITGWU, 1984, 2). This was a direct attack on the right of workers to join the union of their choice and most refused to sign it. Thus the dispute gradually spread throughout the city as workers refusing to sign the document were locked out and others came out on strike in sympathy with them. Eventually 20,000 workers were involved. The union paid for the legal defence of its members; this was another innovatory feature in Ireland, further evidence of the ITGWU's new approach to industrial relations. However, as the Lock-out dragged on into winter and food supplies for strikers and their families became more difficult to obtain, the morale of the strikers began to ebb and by January, 1914, people were drifting back to work on whatever terms they could get. While some managed to get reasonably favourable terms, many were forced to sign the document. The employers had won a victory in that, by and large, they had achieved the immediate aim of forcing their workers to

leave the ITGWU. However, on another level, the union had won a moral victory in that the workers now saw their strength as being on the same level as that of the employers.

However, this was a largely psychological gain which would not be realised until later years and the union was, for the time being, in a weakened position. Most of its finances had been used up in meeting the various costs of the Lock-out and membership had fallen dramatically since many had left to regain admission to their old jobs. This was further compounded with the coming of war in September, 1914 when many members joined the British army. The malaise was, perhaps, best represented when the dynamic Larkin left for America in mid 1914, on what was initially supposed to have been a fund-raising tour, not returning until 1923. James Connolly became Acting General Secretary from this date until April 1916 and managed to keep the union going in difficult circumstances. During 1914 there were few gains in membership. Indeed, an attempt to organise a branch in the port town of Limerick in the summer of that year failed, indicating that, even among its most likely constituents, the union did not have whole-hearted support. Branches fell into difficulty and some may have been forced to close. The ITGWU was still very much a union of urban workers with rural workers largely excluded.

The situation improved somewhat in 1915 with about 1,700 new members joining in that year. The relative regional strength of the union was reflected in the composition of the executive, with each province being represented in proportion to the size of its membership. Leinster had four representatives while Ulster had two and Munster and Connacht had one each, so, although individual branches cannot be identified, the ITGWU's membership was still predominantly eastern-based. Although the membership increase was not as dramatic as in the years up to 1913 it was probably sufficient to encourage the leadership to begin another organisational drive. This began in late 1915 in Kerry. This effort got off to a good start when the Tralee Branch of the Workers' Union transferred to the ITGWU in October, after a recruiting visit by Connolly, this presumably being a branch of the union which had received so little support in Dublin in 1908 (v. ch. 2). This was a continuation of the method by which the ITGWU was originally established, namely the absorption of the membership of other unions, whose methods and objectives were less attractive than those of the new militant union. Greaves refers to branches being established at the ports of Dingle and Fenit by January, 1916 and at Listowel in February of that year, while the union's register records the dates of foundation as being after 1918. It may have been that there was membership in these centres from the date Greaves

records but that it was initially incorporated in the Tralee branch and did not achieve branch status until later, as suggested by an ITGWU official in personal communication. An alternative possibility is that there may indeed have been branches in these centres which may have folded after a short while. Unfortunately, as the register was not commenced until 1917, it only records the existence of the larger branches such as those in Dublin, Belfast, Sligo and Waterford before that year and it is impossible to say what actually happened, in the case of certain branches, without access to the material Greaves used.

What is beyond dispute is that a branch was founded in Killarney in January 1916. This was the beginning of spontaneous organisation in that the members of the Tralee Trades Council were responsible for setting it up. Before this, most branches had been founded after a visit to a town by an official of the union. The potential membership was there on the ground but the leadership realised that it had to be encouraged to join. This involved the use of paid organisers who toured selected areas, canvassing workers to join and sometimes, as in the case of Connolly in Tralee, using a visit by a senior official as the launching pad for a new branch. Greaves has suggested that Kerry was selected by an Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) inspired leadership with a rising against the British government in Ireland in

mind. This would necessitate control of ports and rail towns in the south for the importation of arms for use by the insurgents, and, indeed, an attempt was made by Roger Casement to import arms through Kerry in early 1916. This may have been the motivation behind the selection of Kerry as the influence of the IRB and its political wing, Sinn Fein, in the union was considerable.

Whether or not the ITGWU did organise Kerry with an insurrection in mind, the Sinn Fein Rising, when it did come in April 1916, put a temporary halt to the union's activities. The union lost its Acting General Secretary, Connolly, to a firing squad and many of its other leaders, officials and supporters were among those deported to England as the authorities attempted to restore order throughout the country. The union's known Sinn Fein sympathies and its militant record made it an obvious target for the government, and its organisation received a further setback when, in a raid on its Liberty Hall headquarters in mid 1916, most of its books and papers were destroyed. Despite this disruption, the Rising and its aftermath proved to be the salvation of the union. The membership advances of 1915 had not wiped out the deficit from 1913 and in early 1916 the union had only 96 to its credit (ITGWU, 1918, 6). Employers had regained a lot of the ground lost before 1913 and a lot of the early fire seemed to have gone out of the

union. However, once the initial storm of arrests had been weathered, the ITGWU was able to reorganise itself. The whole political climate in Ireland had changed, especially the attitudes of people to what was perceived as an excessively brutal reaction to the Rising. In the words of the ITGWU report for 1918 the Rising

"linked up the Labour Movement with the age-long aspirations of the Irish people for emancipation from political and social thralldom and formed a natural moratorium under cover of which it was able to make a fresh start on better terms with increased membership" (ITGWU, 1918, 6).

While the surviving ITGWU officials may not have seen it quite like this at the time, by the Autumn of 1916 the union was functioning again under the leadership of Thomas Foran. An organiser was sent to the south to rally the membership, taking in most of the urban centres. By now the union, well aware of the national re-awakening sweeping the country, had realised that its aspiration towards being the One Big Union was capable of fulfillment. This involved even more ambitious organisational efforts than heretofore and in early 1917 an expansion into previously untouched

rural areas began in earnest.

SECTION 2 - RAPID DIFFUSION 1917-1920.

Before exploring the details of the ITGWU's extension into the countryside it is important to understand the social and economic circumstances in which it took place. The organisation of rural workers by a hitherto urban-based trade union had no precedent in Ireland and raises certain questions ie. what inspired the union to undertake this task, what problems had to be overcome in winning the support of rural workers for the union and what conditions made it possible? In answer to the first question, the desire of the leadership was to develop the ITGWU into the One Big Union, catering to all workers, as dealt with above. If this was to be achieved the agricultural labourers could not be ignored as they accounted for just over 25% of the country's total workforce and just under 50% of the manual workforce, which provided the union with its main source of membership (Fitzpatrick, 1977, 236). Any attempt to organise the bulk of Irish workers thus could not afford to ignore the agricultural sector.

A further practical reason of almost equal importance was the interconnectedness of urban and rural labour interests. Bad conditions, low wages and underemployment in the countryside all tended to drive workers into the towns looking for work, thus endangering the position of urban union members by creating greater competition for jobs and accepting wages fixed below union rates. The ITGWU leadership recognised that it would benefit both sectors if rural workers were organised so that they did not have to go to the towns in search of work. This was the major reason given by Foran in announcing the intention of organising rural workers. This was the first attempt to tackle the basic antagonism between town and country workers (Greaves, 1982, 180) and is indicative of a union thinking on a broad scale with a vision of the future extending beyond the basic concerns of wages and conditions, while still incorporating them.

However it was by no means automatic that rural labourers would see a trade union as representing their best interests. In the pre-war period their interests had tended to be modest and they occupied a position of subordination to employer and to government. In the former instance many labourers tended to be thankful to paternalistic bosses for what they were given and did not see themselves as having any particular rights to set wages and conditions. In the

latter case government whetted the appetites of many labourers for land by giving out half acre plots. Although the importance of this was felt mainly outside commercial agricultural areas, such as Meath, Kildare and Dublin, where most land was already intensively utilised, it did tend to defuse the demand for higher wages in certain areas by fostering envy of farmers. Many labourers, rather than voice the more typically proletarian demands for improved wages and conditions, were concerned with

"improving their social position according to that traditional determinant, the possession of land" (Fitzpatrick, 1977, 236)

This aspiration was fostered also by nationalist ideology which portrayed the labourer as an evicted tenant who would, someday, regain the land of his forefathers. This hunger for land was reflected in the affiliation of many labourers to the Land and Labour Associations which pushed for land ownership rather than improved wages and conditions.

The Land and Labour Associations represented another problem for those hoping to encourage a sense of class consciousness among agricultural labourers, namely the blurring of the line between labourers and small farmers.

Many of the latter group, especially in the west of the country, due to their inability to make a living from their small-holdings, had to labour part-time for neighbouring large farmers or migrate in the harvest months to commercial farming areas in the east and south of the country, or in Britain. Thus it was often difficult to distinguish one group from the other. This problem was complicated by the relatively small size of the labouring class in the countryside which further militated against them developing a sense of pride in themselves as a separate class.

Thus the task of the ITGWU was to achieve in the countryside what had already been largely achieved in many of the larger urban areas, namely to instil in the labourers a perception of themselves as an independent but exploited class; this involved moving them away from apparently unattainable hopes of land ownership to more typically proletarian aspirations of bettering their lot in terms of wages and working conditions. This was not difficult to achieve in the prosperous agricultural counties such as Meath, Kildare and Dublin where the full utilisation of the land for commercial agriculture meant that the large labouring workforces had little prospect of having land subdivided among them. In other areas where commercial agriculture was not as well developed, such as Connacht and Donegal, this took longer to achieve. It was helped by

wartime economic conditions which increased the importance of the labourer in the rural economy. These conditions also raised, without satisfying them, the expectations of the labourers through the spectacle of the growing wealth of employers, especially farmers and shopkeepers, and also the growing demand for labour in Ireland. With the switch to more labour intensive tillage farming to help feed the British war effort, accompanied by the closing of supply lines from other sources, there was an increased demand for agricultural workers. This co-incided with an overall decline in the labour force, again caused by wartime conditions. The overall emigration rate rose due to the numbers joining the British army (about 150,000) and those going to work in British munitions factories. These two factors caused the pre-war male labour force to shrink by 9% by 1915 (Fitzpatrick, 1977, 242) thus giving labourers an enhanced bargaining position, a benefit also enjoyed by urban workers. This improved bargaining position was of major importance in allowing the ITGWU to organise successfully in rural areas as it enabled concerted demands by labourers for better wages and conditions be granted more easily, thus demonstrating the benefit of union organisation. Under normal conditions the union's demands might not have been granted so relatively easily.

These were the circumstances whereby the ITGWU was able to carry out its campaign of rural organisation. This involved both hierarchical and contiguous modes of diffusion with a general tendency for larger centres to be organised earliest. Although spontaneous organisation probably occurred from late 1918 onwards, with local groups of workers asking for branches to be set up in their area, the early growth owed much to the union's strategy of using the aforementioned paid organisers. Considering that trade unionism, and especially the militant version exemplified by the ITGWU, was very much an unknown quantity to many workers in smaller towns and rural areas this was only to be expected. Workers still had to be persuaded of the benefits of joining what may have appeared to them to be a rather dubious city-based organisation. This was achieved by sending organisers initially to the larger towns where a concentration of workers in larger employments offered the best hopes for organisation. These workers, often occupying a strategic position, such as in transport, had a better chance of sustaining a successful strike than smaller groups of more dispersed workers and the successes achieved by many such groups acted as a most effective spur to other workers, both in the towns and the surrounding rural areas, to enrol in the union. A further factor aiding the union was the cost of living index, which, by 1917, had risen to 125% above pre-war levels (ITGWU, 1918, 7), with no corresponding

increases in wages. This ensured support for any organisation which offered workers the chance of improving the value of their wages. In this strategy the union was employing the methods used, with such success, in the organisation of the agricultural workers in Dublin county in the Summer of 1913 when the example set by the city workers was imitated by the rural labourers.

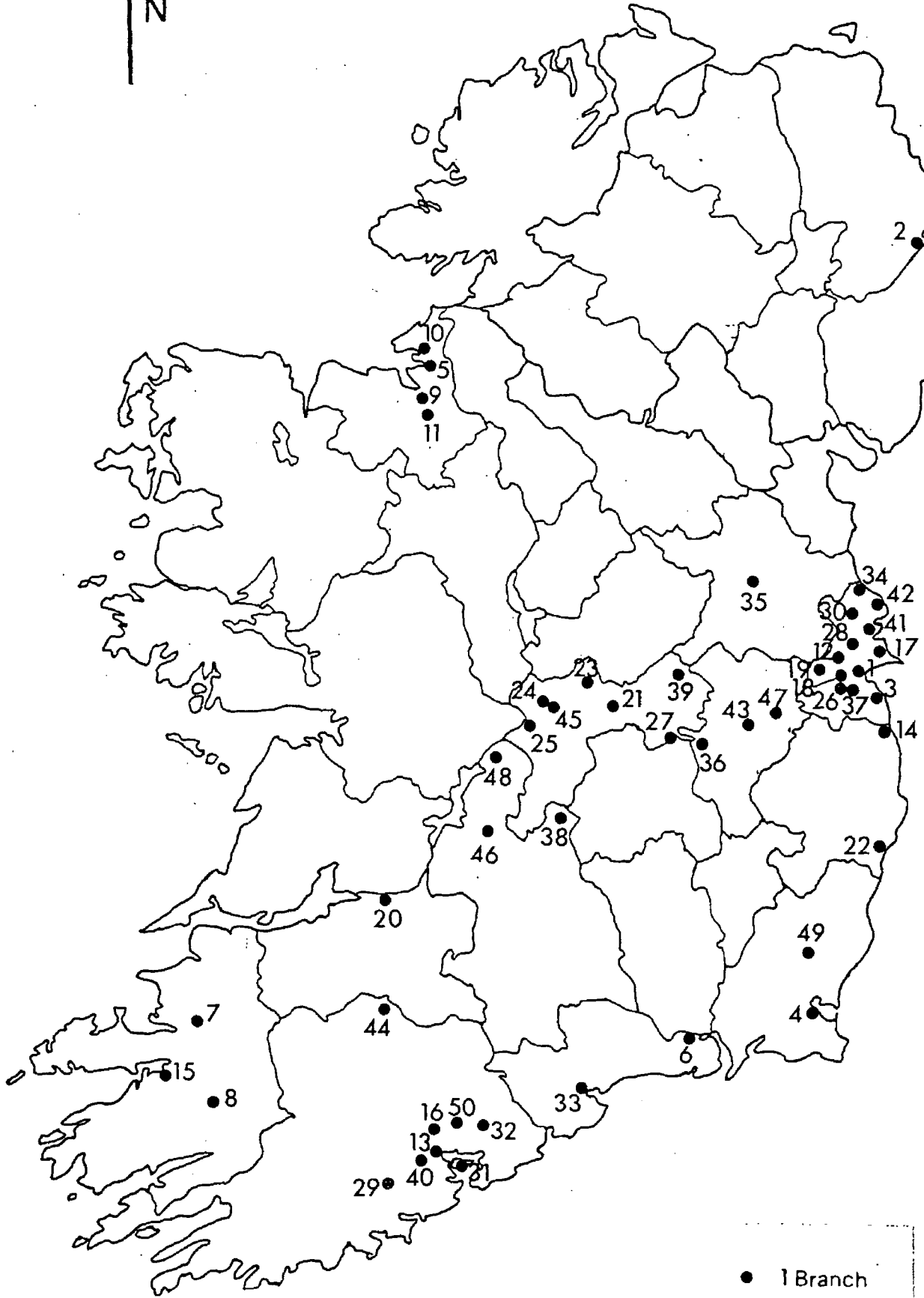
As stated in chapter 2 the ITGWU register is the major source of information on branch locations. While it provides information on dates of branch foundation, closure and re-opening, there is a substantial number for which the information is incomplete. This means that for many branches only the year of foundation is available so it is impossible to say, with accuracy, at what point in time or at what size of centre did the mode of diffusion switch from hierarchical to contiguous. However, the indications are that, although there was a marked tendency for diffusion to occur initially in a hierarchical manner, there were instances of contiguous diffusion occurring simultaneously. Similarly, there are instances of large towns only gaining their first branch long after smaller towns had begun to be organised. Thus, it appears that the two types of diffusion did not occur in mutually exclusive time periods and that there was a considerable degree of overlap between the two, much of which can be ascribed to the use of organisers who

were assigned to particular geographic locales rather than to specific categories of towns.

By the Spring of 1918 the ITGWU had organised its first 50 branches (v. MAP 1). The branches are numbered according to the date of their foundation, as recorded in the register, although 15 of them had no date of foundation recorded. In some of these cases Greaves has quoted foundation dates, probably gained from the minutes of union meetings, to which the present writer did not have access, while others are presumed dates based on the foundation dates of adjacent branches. Of the first 50, only the branches in Dublin, Belfast, Dun Laoghaire, Wexford, Sligo, Waterford, Tralee, Killarney and Cork were in existence at the start of 1917. However, by the end of that year 21 had been added, giving a total of 30.

It can be seen from MAP 1 that, south of a line from Meath to Limerick, most counties had at least one branch, usually located in one of the largest, if not the largest, towns. This reflects the union's initial concentration on the most populous part of the county where most workers were located, therefore providing the best prospects for organisation. There are significant gaps in coverage in this area, most notably Westmeath, Carlow, Kilkenny City and County and the Golden Vale area stretching from Limerick to Waterford but these were to have significant branch

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MAP 1. FIRST 50 ITGWU BRANCHES 1909 - 1918

presences by the end of 1918; their exclusion simply reflects the fact that organisers had not, as yet, been appointed in these areas. Athlone represents something of an anomaly in that, in spite of its large size, it did not have a branch until October 1919, but this may be partly due to its position as a garrison town in that the dependence of substantial sections of the community on the garrison for business and employment may have made it harder for the union to gain a foothold. Alternatively, the guaranteed patronage of the garrison may have enabled many employers to pay relatively higher wages to their workers than in other towns, thus tending to undermine the potential support for a union. The two other most likely centres where branches could be expected to have been located but were not were the port towns of Drogheda and Dundalk, in the latter of which there had been a branch in the early years. This may have been due to a resurrection of the NUDL after the ITGWU setbacks of 1913 but there was a branch of the latter union in Drogheda (the eightieth branch) by June of 1918. However, these tended to be more the exception than the rule and the first 50 branches do represent substantial gains in the country's major urban centres.

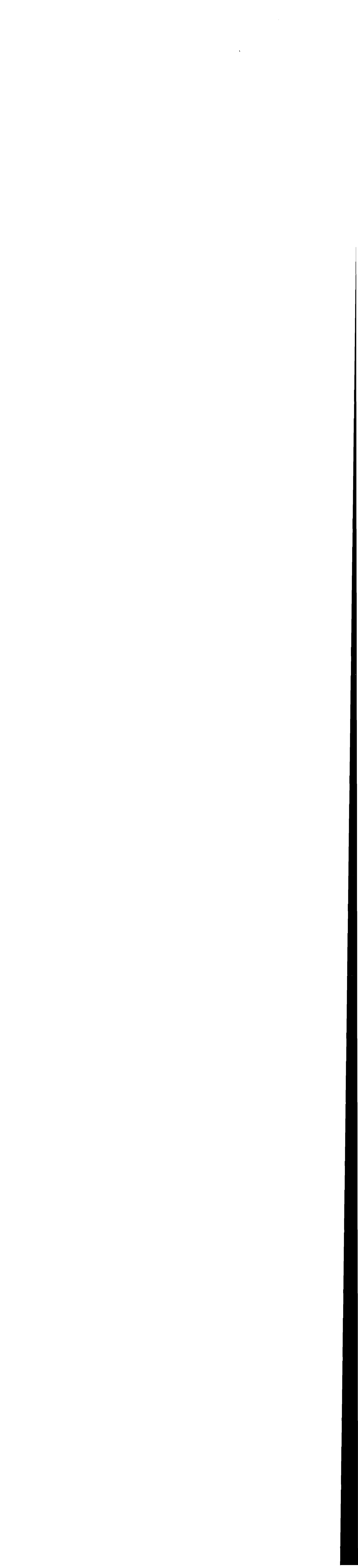
Apart from gains at the upper end of the urban hierarchy, there is also substantial evidence of contiguous diffusion, most notably in counties Dublin, Cork, Offaly,

Kerry and Sligo. In the cases of Dublin, with twelve branches outside the city, and Cork, with 5 outside the city, the proximity of the major urban centres was a marked influence, with many of these new branches occurring in small agricultural villages such as Blanchardstown and Lucan (branches 12 and 19 respectively). The officials of Sligo branch, one of the early docker branches, had also been canvassing for membership in the surrounding area and branches had been set up in Ballisodare, Maugherow and Collooney (9, 10 and 11), with the Maugherow branch composed entirely of workers on one large estate, that of the Gore-Booths (Greaves, 1982, 183). Kerry had already had two branches before 1917, at Tralee and Killarney (see above)(7 and 8) and they probably influenced the foundation of the branch at Killorglin (15).

Offaly, perhaps, best represents the pattern of contiguous diffusion which resulted from the use of an organiser. There was no Midlands branch presence before 1917 but in October of that year an organiser succeeded in founding a branch in Tullamore (21), the largest town in Offaly (current place names are used in cases where names have been changed since independence). Branches were established in quick succession in Clara (23), Turraun (24), Banagher (25), Portarlinton (27), Edenderry (39) and Ferbane (45), giving Offaly a total of 7 branches. This impetus

extended also to Tipperary with branches being established in Roscrea (38), Nenagh (46) and Lorrha (48). This illustrates the classic organising strategy, with the ITGWU concentrating its initial efforts on the largest centre with the strongest workforce. A strike in Tullamore attracted attention to the union, its methods and its objectives and this encouraged workers in smaller neighbouring centres to join, impressed by the success of those in the larger centre. This formula was repeated in other counties over the next three years with resounding success. Apart from this contiguous diffusion within Offaly itself, the county also proved to be a good choice for early organisational efforts in that its geographically central position allowed its example extend into a large number of surrounding counties.

Elsewhere, Wicklow had gained branches at either end of the county in Bray (14) and Arklow (22), Meath had a branch at Navan (35), Kildare had three branches, at Monasterevan (36), Newbridge (43) and Naas (47) while Wexford had gained a second at Enniscorthy (49). In Munster, Dungarvan (33) became the second town in Waterford to have a branch, while the branch at Charleville (44) became the first in north Cork. a branch had finally been established in Limerick City (20) in late September 1917. That month saw the establishment, by the government, of Agricultural Wages



Boards in each county. These wage-fixing bodies were of considerable benefit to the ITGWU as it could now fight to compel employers to adhere to legal obligations and in this sense they helped to remove much of the "anti-state" stigma attaching to the union (Greaves, 1982, 188), as well as making it easier to win wage increases.

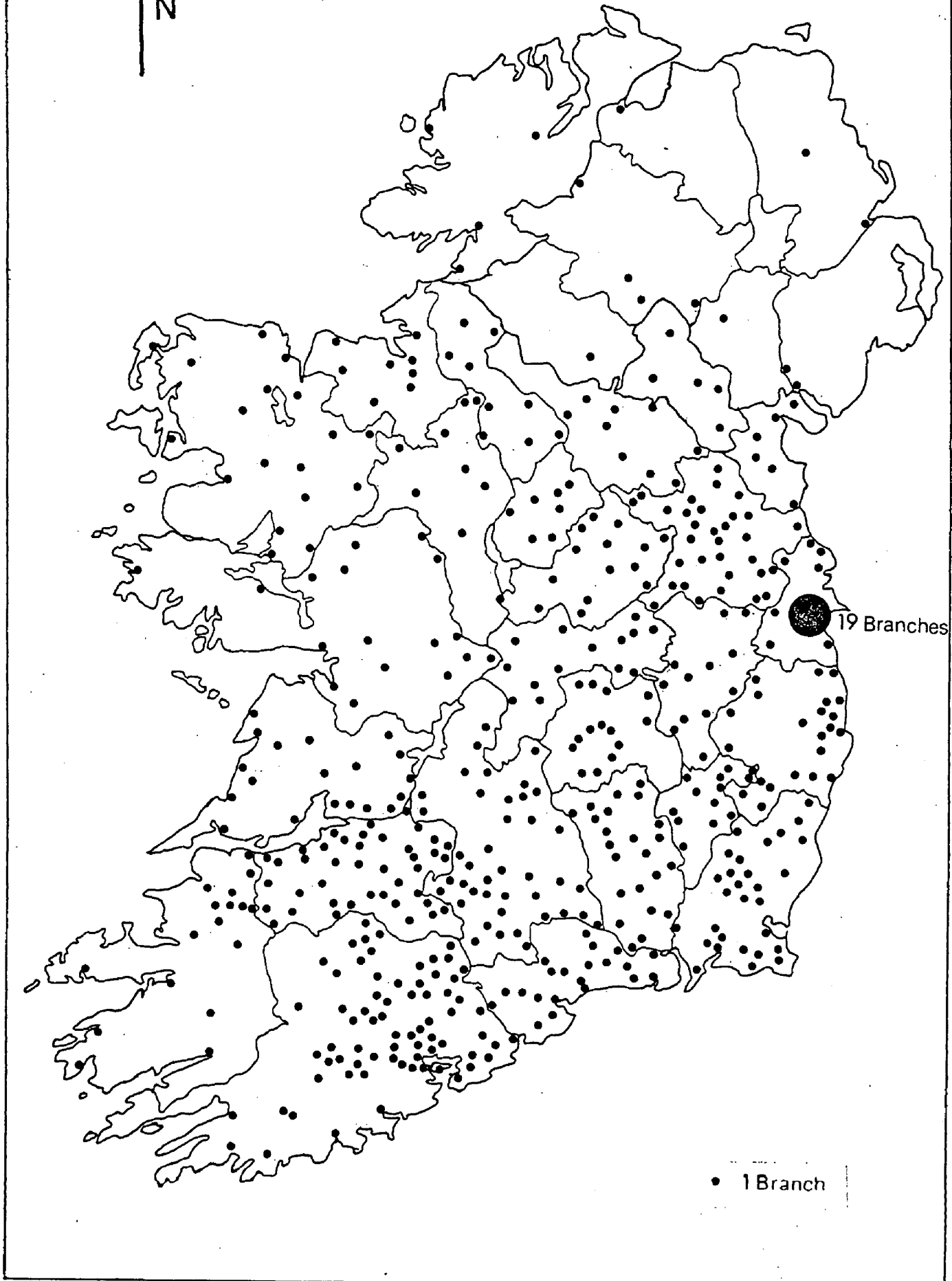
This growth in branch totals saw membership increase substantially, with the 30 branches established by the end of 1917 containing a total of 12,000 members. An awareness of the need for increased levels of service for the expanding membership led to the introduction of organisational reforms at top level. Hitherto, most of the administrative work had devolved upon the General President and the staff of Dublin NO.1 branch but now an elected executive committee was set up, along with a permanent head office staff of two and an organising staff of five, which was constantly expanded over the next three years, as the organisational workload increased. Thus, the basis was laid for the structure that was to enable the union to develop to its position of pre-eminence in the trade union movement.

By the end of 1918 there were 183 new branches, giving a total of 213. During 1919 this total more than doubled to 466 branches, with 188 of these in Leinster, 195 in Munster, 52 in Connacht and 31 in Ulster. Although the growth rate slowed down in 1920, with only 69 new branches being added,

that year saw the ITGWU reach its highest total and its greatest extent with 535 branches. These years saw the ITGWU transformed into a truly general union with members joining from many different sectors of economic activity, the largest single one being the agricultural labourers section which made up about 40% of the membership by 1919 (ITGWU, 1919). The membership was now organised in sections, according to industrial classification, in keeping with the plan as laid out by the leadership in the "Lines of Progress" document, published in 1918 as the blueprint of the syndicalist trade union which aimed to change the social system with the ITGWU as the OBU (Greaves, 1982, 208).

The branch pattern as shown on MAP 2 is one of great dispersal. Despite the efforts of head office to achieve a more centralised structure, many small villages and hamlets had their own branch. This was possible because the union rules allowed a minimum of 50 members to form a branch, and, rather than join a branch in a town quite close by, many groups of agricultural labourers started one up in their own immediate locality. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine the size of individual branches because these figures were not published. A method that might have been useful would have been to estimate from the financial remittances, based on membership, sent by each branch to head office. However in many cases, reflecting the degree

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MAP 2. ITGWU BRANCHES 1920

of spontaneously involved in some foundations, branches did not seem to be sufficiently organised to send any, while others may not have been able to collect the full amount from members. However, it is probable that, outside of larger towns, membership would not have been much above 100 with many branches in smaller centres probably having between 50 and 100. Nevertheless, even 50 members in a small village represents a very substantial proportion of the employed workforce, thus implying that the union occupied a very important position in these centres. Head office was keen that branch officials should educate the members in the idea of the union as a social centre (ITGWU, 1919, 9) but the degree to which this was achieved probably depended on local factors, including the level of commitment of the officials. The desire to concentrate membership in larger branches, as expressed in the Lines of Progress document, was countered by the policy of allowing a considerable degree of local autonomy to branches, with each one having a local fund and being allowed look after its own accounts. In general, though, the tendency to dispersal probably reflects the new mood of self-reliance and the general willingness of workers to see themselves as equal to anyone else (Fitzpatrick, 1977, 235) which would have encouraged them to organise locally as soon as possible, rather than wait for a busy urban branch to get around to dealing with their problems.

Another important element allowing the ITGWU to extend into so many small centres was the nature of the union itself. It organised so many different sections of the workforce that it was able to get a foothold in small villages where the narrow constituency of the craft unions had meant that they were excluded. Often it was the only union in a town, with its branch committee being effectively a trades council (the body on which members of every trade had representation) in a town (ITGWU, 1919, 5). The union also seems to have been breaking down some of the craft worker's aversion to organising alongside unskilled workers, with craftsmen being numbered in the thousands (ITGWU, 1919, 5). The organisation of craft workers would have been a major aim of any union hoping to unite the working class, as the interests of craft workers had tended to be perceived to differ from those of the unskilled.

1920

MAP 2 shows the union as having penetrated deeply into most parts of the country outside of Ulster, where its known nationalist sympathies probably alienated much of Unionist labour. These workers may have joined British-based unions but information on this is not available. Of the six

counties which were to remain within the United Kingdom after the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, only Tyrone had a substantial number of branches, with four, it being a county with a relatively high proportion of Catholic Nationalists. In the rest of the country most branches were concentrated south of a line from Louth to Limerick, where commercial agriculture predominated. Munster, with 219 branches, led the way, although Leinster, with 212 branches, was not far behind. Connacht's relative lack of commercial farming was reflected in its 61 branches while the relative absence of large farms, allied to the aforementioned Nationalist/Unionist split, accounted for Ulster's low total of 33. Most of Munster's branches were agriculture-based, located in the Golden Vale area, and reflect the union's success in organising the agricultural workforces of this prosperous agricultural region. In Leinster, many of the branches were also agriculture-based. Virtually every major town had a branch, probably since early 1919, and the diffusion pattern was now contiguous, with branches opening up in close proximity to each other. Much of the success in winning the rural labourers may be ascribed to the militant methods employed by the union which won significant wage increases for members, often above the rate set by the Agricultural Wages Boards (ITGWU, 1918, 7). This encouraged many branches of the land-redistribution oriented Irish Land and Labour Associations to affiliate themselves as ITGWU

branches from early 1919, when the first county affiliation took place in Laois, onwards (Greaves, 1982, 245). This reflected the final realisation on the part of many labourers that there was little chance of being given land and that they should now see themselves as propertyless labourers whose interests lay in improved wages and conditions.

Provincial Review:

Branch patterns are now examined on a provincial and county basis. As most of the new branches founded in the years up to 1920 were agricultural labourer branches, located in smaller towns and villages, it is assumed that the most suitable reference frame against which to measure the ITGWU's growth in this period is development in the agricultural sector. Ideally, the level of growth could be measured against the number of agricultural labourers by county but this would tend to ignore regional differences in farm size and in the prevalence of commercial farming. Some counties with relatively large agricultural workforces had comparatively few branches because of the absence of commercial farming and the blurring of the distinguishing line between labourer and small farmer. A further drawback in the use of labourer numbers is that the only source for

this information, the Census of Population, was not carried out between 1911 and 1926 and reliance on figures for either of these years would ignore the distorting effects of the war, when more people left the country than under peace-time conditions. Instead, the acreage of tillage land has been used to indicate the counties where the growth in demand for agricultural labourers would have been highest. Tillage tends to be more labour intensive than pastoral farming so it is assumed that where tillage acreage rose the demand for labourers rose accordingly, thereby improving their bargaining position. Figures on tillage acreage have been obtained from statistics published by the Department of Industry and Commerce and, although figures for every year are not available, the coverage of the years 1911, 1916-1918 and 1925 is of relevance for the purposes of this study. The total acreage of tillage land rose from just under 1,700,000 acres in 1911 to nearly 2,382,000 acres in 1918, an increase of just over 40%, suggesting that the ITGWU's overall growth did owe very much to the substantial increase in tillage land.

Leinster: The tillage acreage in Leinster had risen from 607,000 acres in 1911 to 873,000 acres in 1918 (v. Table 3.1), an increase of nearly 44% and higher than the national average. This large increase gave rise to a much

TABLE 3.1 TILLAGE ACREAGE 1911 AND 1918 AND ITGWU BRANCHES 1920

	Tillage Acreage				Branches
	1911	1918	Increase	%	1920
Leinster	607,266	873,009	265,743	43.8%	212
Carlow	39,549	49,867	10,318	26.1%	5
Dublin	26,634	41,020	14,406	54.0%	26
Kildare	44,349	72,244	27,895	62.9%	12
Kilkenny	69,745	94,676	24,931	35.7%	23
Laois	67,985	88,606	20,711	30.5%	14
Longford	21,693	31,182	9,489	43.7%	7
Louth	49,618	61,095	11,477	23.1%	6
Meath	36,557	86,753	50,196	137.3%	32
Offaly	57,267	73,621	16,354	28.6%	13
Westmeath	26,722	48,385	21,663	81.1%	15
Wexford	129,295	168,252	38,957	30.1%	29
Wicklow	37,852	57,308	19,456	51.4%	22
Munster	521,700	713,380	191,680	36.7%	219
Clare	40,295	59,665	19,370	48.1%	19
Cork	230,281	288,660	58,379	25.4%	75
Kerry	31,765	58,235	26,470	83.3%	17
Limerick	63,433	85,829	22,396	35.3%	42
Tipperary	102,960	151,631	48,671	47.3%	42
Waterford	52,966	69,360	16,394	31.0%	24
Connacht	296,373	448,370	151,997	51.3%	61
Galway	103,329	160,724	57,395	55.5%	17
Leitrim	23,197	32,982	9,785	42.2%	9
Mayo	94,647	136,945	42,298	44.7%	18
Roscommon	42,937	69,855	26,918	62.7%	8
Sligo	32,263	47,864	15,601	48.4%	9
Ulster	271,999	348,017	76,018	27.9%	33
Cavan	58,593	80,243	21,650	36.9%	12
Donegal	146,829	175,382	28,553	19.4%	4
Monaghan	66,577	91,942	25,365	38.1%	5
Antrim					3
Armagh					1
Derry					1
Down					2
Fermanagh					1
Tyrone					-

improved bargaining position for agricultural labourers and thus played an important part in the province having 212 branches in 1920, as compulsory tillage orders did not begin to be withdrawn until mid 1919. Within the province, there was great variety in the acreage given to tillage and the percentage increase. Generally, the counties with the highest tillage acreage had seen the greatest improvement in the labourers bargaining position and tended to have the greatest number of branches. For instance, Meath's tillage acreage was one of the province's highest, at nearly 87,000 acres, and it had grown by nearly 137% since 1911, the highest proportional rise in the country. The county had 32 branches, the highest number of any Leinster county and, apart from the branches at Navan, Kells, Trim, Athboy and Oldcastle, most of these were located in small agriculture based villages, such as Dunboyne, Kilmessan and Julianstown, which did not have any major secondary industry. This made Meath a classic example of the union's success in organising the agricultural labourers. The presence of large scale commercial farming meant land subdivision was not a viable proposition in this county. Thus, most labourers had little difficulty in identifying improved wages and conditions as their main concern, and the ITGWU as the ideal means of achieving this, with the growing demand for labour occasioned by the huge rise in tillage acreage dramatically improving their bargaining position. The spontaneity of

many of the branch foundations is reflected in the close proximity of many branches to each other, especially in the centre and north-west of the county. A more considered policy of organisation might have amalgamated some of these branches at an early stage to reduce duplication of services but this pattern was repeated throughout much of the country.

The tendency for tillage-oriented counties to have more branches is reflected elsewhere in Leinster. Wexford had the province's highest tillage acreage (nearly 170,000) and this was 30% higher than in 1911. This enabled the county to have 29 branches, again mainly in small centres, and the figure might have been higher but for residual support for the Land and Labour Associations in the county. Kilkenny had nearly 95,000 acres under tillage, over 35% up on 1911 and this was reflected in its total of 23 branches, the province's fourth highest total. Wicklow, with 57,000 acres under tillage, had seen its acreage rise by over 50% and it had 22 branches, again mainly in small centres. Although Dublin had the provinces second lowest tillage acreage (41,000), this did represent an increase of 54% since 1911 and the county and city had 26 branches. However, of great importance here, as in much of Meath, was the willingness with which labourers identified with the aims of trade unionism, partly influenced by the traditional presence of

commercial farming and also by the proximity of the city where the militant example given by transport and other workers could easily be observed. Kildare also had a high tillage acreage (72,000) and this was nearly 63% up on 1911, yet despite this and its tradition of commercial farming the county had only 12 branches. This is a relatively low total but it is likely that the union was able to have a more rationalised branch structure there from an early date with the larger towns organising a large number of agricultural workers. The Newbridge branch had 200 agricultural labourers out of a total of 590 members in 1918 (Greaves, 1982, 208) and this pattern may have been repeated in other substantial towns such as Naas, Athy and Kildare town.

Other counties tended to have lower numbers of branches, despite some of them having relatively large tillage acreages. This is probably due to a comparative absence of commercial farming with more farms being run by family labour and also a blurring of the lines between small farmers and labourers. Westmeath had seen its tillage acreage rise by 81% to over 48,000 acres and, while the total is quite low, the proportional increase might have been expected to give rise to more than the 15 branches that the county had. Laois had Leinster's third highest tillage acreage (88,000), 30% up on 1911, yet it only had 14 branches, while Offaly, the centre of early growth, only

managed to have 13 branches, despite a tillage acreage of nearly 74,000 which was almost 29% more than in 1911. Longford had only 7 branches, a reflection of its mere 31,000 acres under tillage, the lowest in the country. Carlow, with just under 50,000 acres of tillage land, only 26% more than in 1911, had 13 branches, probably as many as could be expected, given its small size which meant that even this absolutely low total of branches tended to quite clustered. Finally Louth only had 6 branches, although it had over 61,000 acres of tillage land, possibly because of a less finely drawn dividing line between labourers and small farmers.

Generally, then, Leinster's branch structure tended to reflect a combination of a high tillage acreage and a longer tradition of commercial agriculture. Counties in the east where commercial farming was most established and tillage acreages relatively high tended to have the greatest number of branches, with labourers there being quite willing to abandon their hopes of land subdivision. In the Midland counties, however, there tended to be fewer branches, probably due partly to the smaller populations in each and partly to residual support for the Land and Labour Associations, although in Longford an additional factor was the small tillage acreage.

Munster: In Munster, the tillage acreage had risen from 521,000 acres in 1911 to 713,000 in 1918, a rise of almost 37%. Although the percentage increase was slightly less than the national average, Cork and Tipperary's tillage acreages were first and third highest respectively in the country while Limerick's percentage increase was the second highest in the country. This was reflected in the high branch totals in each county, with Munster in general having 219 branches, the country's largest provincial total.

Cork had 288,000 acres of tilled land, 25% more than in 1911 and the ITGWU had a total of 75 branches. Most of these were concentrated in the middle and northern parts of the county with few branches in the south-west where farms tended to be smaller and labourers thus probably retained the traditional land subdivision aspirations of smaller farmers in the western part of the country. North Cork had been one of the first areas where labourers expressed proletarian demands (Greaves, 1982, 180) and by 1920 the area was very heavily unionised, with most branches again being in small villages, although larger towns such as Mallow, Mitchelstown, Fermoy and Macroom had also had branches from an early stage.

In Tipperary, the tilled acreage had risen by 47% to over 151,000 between 1911 and 1918 and this had enabled the ITGWU to open 42 branches. Most of these were in the south of the county, part of the rich agricultural Golden Vale area extending from Limerick through North Cork and South Tipperary and where commercial agriculture predominated. The other Golden Vale county, Limerick, had only 58,000 acres under tillage but this was 83% more than in 1911 and would have meant that the demand for labour almost doubled. This allowed the county to also have 42 branches. Waterford, having nearly 70,000 acres of tillage land, had only 24 branches, low by the standards of the other three counties, but it is likely that, as in Kildare, membership may have been concentrated more heavily in some of the larger branches. For instance, 453 of the 544 members in the Kilmacthomas branch and 281 of the 582 members in the Dungarvan branch were agricultural workers (Greaves, 1982, 208).

In both Kerry and Clare, the ITGWU had difficulty in winning members due to the relative survival of land division aspirations among the agricultural workforce. In both counties, there tended to be a less defined distinction between labourers and small farmers, and this accounted for the relatively low branch totals in comparison to the rest of Munster. Clare had nearly 60,000 acres of tilled land,

more than Limerick, yet it only had 19 branches, while Kerry, with 85,000 acres of tilled land, had only 17 branches. Clare's higher total may be due to the fact that its increase in tillage was 13% higher than Kerry's, but it may also be simply that the mountainous nature of much of Kerry meant that branches were largely concentrated into the northern third of the county.

Overall, then, Munster's branch pattern displayed similar characteristics to that of Leinster with the commercial agricultural counties, with either, or both of, a large tillage acreage or a large increase in tillage since 1911 tending to have a large number of branches. Here the labourers were willing to take responsibility for their own situation, and try to change it, without waiting for a lead from others. Thus, many founded branches in their own villages, often quite close to a neighbouring large town which already had a branch. In the two western counties, where commercial farming was not as well developed, the union's success rate was not as high, again repeating the experience in Leinster.

Connacht: The situation in Connacht was very different from that in Leinster and Munster. Despite increases in tillage land of over 40% in every county none had more than 18 branches. This was due to the low level of development

of commercial farming in the province with many labourers also being small farmers who were probably reluctant to join the ITGWU. Thus, Galway, where tillage had increased by 55% since 1911 to over 160,000 acres, the fourth highest total in the country, had only 17 branches. Similarly, in Mayo, with almost 137,000 acres under tillage, 45% up since 1911, there were only 18 branches. Roscommon, with just under 70,000 acres of tillage land, had only 8 branches, while Sligo, with nearly 48,000 acres, and Leitrim, with nearly 33,000 acres of tillage, had 9 branches each. Due to its small size and its low population, 9 branches was probably as many as could be expected in Leitrim but in the other counties the figures were relatively small, although within the province the tillage acreage of each county was broadly reflected in the branch totals. In each county, the gaps between each branch tended to be larger than in most Leinster and Munster counties, reflecting the thinner population and the lower propensity of workers to join a trade union.

Ulster: The branch pattern in Ulster was similar to that in Connacht. Total tillage acreage in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan had risen from 272,000 acres in 1911 to 348,000 in 1918, an increase of almost 28%, and although figures for the six counties now in Northern Ireland are not available

the increase there was probably comparable. Cavan, with over 80,000 acres of tillage, 37% more than in 1911, had only 12 branches. Monaghan, with nearly 92,000 acres of tillage land, 38% more than in 1911, had only five branches while Donegal, with 175,000 acres, the second highest total in the country, had only four branches. In each of these, commercial farming was not well developed and, as in Connacht many labourers still harboured some hope of land subdivision, not having a full appreciation of themselves as labourers. In the other six counties only Tyrone, with four branches, had a real ITGWU presence in the countryside, with most of the other branches being in larger centres such as Belfast, Derry and Newry. This largely reflected the suspicion with which Loyalist labour viewed the nationalist union but was also influenced by the smaller size of many farms in Ulster which needed fewer labourers.

Summary: Thus, the major trend in the branch pattern up to 1920 was for branches to be located predominantly in the east and south of the country where most of the larger towns tended to be, and where commercial agriculture predominated, thus making labourers more concerned with winning improvements in wages and conditions than with getting parcels of land. The greatest numbers of branches tended to be located in counties where the wartime increase

in tillage acreage was greatest or where the total acreage was large, as this necessitated more labourers, thus enhancing their bargaining position. The end result was a very dispersed branch pattern, with the aims of the leadership to achieve a more centralised branch structure going largely unheeded in many areas. These small branches were able to survive as the union had the upper hand against employers who were restrained from launching an offensive against the union for fear of the backlash against "anyone menacing the essential unity of the nation" (ITGWU, 1921, 5). Of course the high prices that farmers and other employers were getting for their goods meant that, despite the bitterness of many disputes, they could afford to grant many of their employees' demands, further stimulating growth in the union. The union was able to successfully pursue a wide range of demands regarding wages and conditions which allowed their members be treated as equal human beings and gave them guaranteed conditions of employment, usually for one year. An example of what the union was asking for in these years can be seen in the accompanying copy of a County Waterford Agricultural Agreement from 1923, in which different categories of workers were awarded different rates and any extra tasks performed were to be rewarded on a predetermined basis. This challenged old paternalist notions of the employer looking after his or her workers and the employment relationship was to be conducted on strictly

COUNTY WATERFORD AGRICULTURAL AGREEMENT

IT is mutually agreed between..... farmer, of on the one part and The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union on the other part, that the following be the terms of Agreement as regards Wages, Harvest Bonus, and other conditions of employment to be observed from this until July 1st, 1924.

1.—MALE WORKERS OVER 20 YEARS OF AGE: WAGES FOR SIX DAYS.

- Without Board or Lodging, 7 days 38s. 6d.
- Without Board or Lodging, 6 days 35s.
- With 6 (six) days' Board only 21s. 6d.
- With 6 (six) days' Board and Lodging 19s. 6d.
- Men working 6 days and doing Sunday work, morning and evening, be entitled to 21s. with board and lodging.
- Men working 6 days and doing work on Sunday morning only be paid 19s. 6d., with board and lodging.
- Men working 6 days only, but getting 7 days' board and lodging, be paid 17s. 6d.
- Men working 6 days and doing Sunday work, morning and evening, with board only, 23s.

MALE WORKERS, AGED FROM 18 TO 20 YEARS, WAGES FOR SIX DAYS.

- With board or lodging 32s. 6d.
- With 6 (six) days' board only 18s. 9d.
- With 6 (six) days' board and lodging 16s. 9d.
- With 7 (seven) days' board only 16s. 9d.
- With 7 (seven) days' board and lodging 14s. 6d.

MALE WORKERS, AGED 16 TO 18 YEARS, WAGES FOR SIX DAYS.

- With board or lodging 22s. 0d.
- With 6 (six) days' board only 11s. 6d.
- With 6 (six) days' board and lodging 10s. 0d.
- With 7 (seven) days' board only 10s. 0d.
- With 7 (seven) days' board and lodging 8s. 6d.

Other perquisites per Agricultural Wages Board Rates.

All workers under 18 to receive 6d. per hour for Sunday work; least payment for Sunday work shall be 1s.

AGRICULTURAL WOMEN WORKERS.

IT IS AGREED that women workers, doing purely agricultural work, be paid 22s. per week of 54 hours without board or lodging.

It is further agreed that women milkers be paid 1s. for each milking meal.

HARVEST BONUS.

- Men over 18 years to receive £2 (two pounds)
- Men under 18 to receive £1 (one pound)

Men who have been in the same employment for at least 13 weeks prior to Harvest will be entitled to Harvest Bonus.

Harvest Bonus to be paid by the 1st October, except in cases where Harvest is not gathered, period may be extended to the 15th October, but not later.

Threshing allowance of 2s. 6d. to be given in lieu of drink.

That men at threshing be allowed over-time at a rate of 2s. per hour.

Casual Harvest workers to be paid at a rate of 10s. per day without diet, or 8s. per day with diet, during Harvest period of 5 weeks, from the 15th August to 1st October.

In calculating Harvest employment for casuals, 4½ hours or less be paid for as a half-day. Any excess work to be reckoned as a day.

No permanent man be allowed to leave his employer to work as a casual.

It is agreed that owing to the large number of casual workers in Portlaw, that the question of casuals be left to the Portlaw Branch of the County Waterford Farmers' Association and the Portlaw Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union for settlement;

Farmers may employ any machine provided that no dispute exists between owner and Transport Union.

Signed

Witness

Address

Dated.....

NOTE.— In the event of lower rates being arranged by the Transport Union and the Farmers' Union, signatories of this Agreement shall pay those agreed rates in lieu of the rates set out in this Agreement.

The working hours shall be as follows: 10 hours per day during the months of July, August and September. 8 hours per day during the months of November, December and January. 9 hours per day during the remainder of the year.

business lines. Even farm labourers who lodged with their employer could now look on themselves properly as equal individuals, rather than as some lowly member of the farmer's household. In this way did the ITGWU set about changing the whole basis of employment in the countryside. However, although moving the employment relationship onto a business footing did increase the status and conditions of employees it also, perhaps, increased, or at least did not diminish, their vulnerability if there was a decline in the prices which farmers got for their produce because now they tended to be even more of an economic statistic for the farmers to deal with, once they were in a position to do so. For the farmers the desirability of doing just that increased from late 1920 onwards.

SECTION 3 - CONTRACTION AND RETRENCHMENT 1921-1931.

The ITGWU had reached its organisational peak by mid 1920, with a total of 535 branches and somewhere between 100,000 and 120,000 members (ITUC, 1920). However, the conditions which had allowed this dramatic growth take place was to change considerably from late 1920 onwards. The ending of the World war in November 1918 had made it

inevitable that substantial numbers of soldiers would have to re-integrate into civilian life, and civilian jobs, after demobilisation; by 1920 this problem was being fully felt. This exacerbated the situation in which unemployment was beginning to rise as the war economy was wound down. The pressure of unemployment increased as the policy of encouraging tillage was ended. The return to pastoral farming meant a large drop in the demand for agricultural labour as the agricultural price index fell from 288 in 1920 to 160 by 1924 (Meenan, 1970, 90). This meant that pressure gradually mounted for employees to accept wage reductions as profit levels tended to fall and competition increased for fewer jobs. The union could withstand this pressure as long as government wage policy was maintained, but, with the ending of the war, the need to guarantee production, by setting minimum wage levels, was removed and it became inevitable that these would be discontinued. By August 1921 the Agricultural Wages Boards were being dismantled and from now on the union found that it had to defend what had already been gained, rather than try to win further improvements. It now also had to rely solely on its own strength in defending members' positions, as there were no longer any legally ordained levels to which it could refer.

The first defeats in confrontations with employers began to be experienced by the Autumn of 1920 and this signalled the beginning of a decline in membership. It is not possible to tell at what rate membership fell as the figures quoted in the ITUC reports record a constant membership of 100,000 up to, and including, 1923, despite admissions in the union's own annual reports that membership was falling. The union had to face not alone employers but also government forces as the authorities clamped down on dissident forces during the escalating War of Independence. As described above, the union was still very closely identified with Sinn Fein and the authorities

"everywhere singled out the union, its officials and active members for special attack" (ITGWU, 1921, 5)

The drain on membership, brought on by rising unemployment, a perception that the union was less effective in defending its members positions in some areas and harassment by government placed much pressure on many of the union's smaller branches. This resulted in a number of closures from 1920 onwards. Unfortunately, 101 of the branches which closed during the 1920s do not have any closure date recorded in the register so it is not possible

to give exact figures for the rate of closure per year. However, it may be assumed that these closures were distributed in much the same proportion as those for which dates are given so the branches for which dates of closure are available can be used to give an indication of the rate of closure.

The union was not prepared to let its gains be lost without an effort to save some branches, and from late 1920 attempts were made to amalgamate branches to cover a wider area ie. up to 10 miles from a central town (ITGWU, 1920, 9). This meant that smaller weaker branches which would not have the finances to keep going if they lost too many members could benefit from the reduction of costs involved in amalgamating with one, or more, other branches. Thus, from 1920 onwards amalgamations and closures occurred side by side until around 1925, when straightforward closures became the order of the day. Up until 1925 a number of branches which had closed, and less often those which had been amalgamated, re-opened after a few months or even after a few years so, although the picture is one of an overall tendency to contraction, the process was by no means an uninterrupted one.

1920 saw a total of 22 closures, of which 6 involved amalgamations. Most of these branches were located in smaller centres, demonstrating the vulnerability of smaller branches in adverse circumstances, as outlined above. However, a total of 11 were to re-open before the end of 1923. Six of the closures took place in Munster, 11 in Leinster, 2 in Connacht and 3 in Ulster.

By the end of 1921 the union was in much more serious difficulties. For most of the year the situation remained fairly stable with only 14 closures and amalgamations by the end of September. However, in October the floodgates were opened with a total of 75 closures and amalgamations in that month and a further 33 in November and December. Many of the September closures were probably belated official recognitions, facilitated by the ceasefire in the War of Independence which allowed lines of communication be re-opened, of the collapse of branches which had been moribund for a few months but the high figure for the last three months of the year does indicate that, by mid 1921, the conditions in which the union was operating had become very unfavourable. Only 11 of the 122 cases involved amalgamation, which could indicate that membership was falling at such a rate that it was not worthwhile to amalgamate branches but this hypothesis is undermined by the fact that 31 of the branches which closed had re-opened

before the end of the year and a further 31 re-opened during 1922 and 1923, indicating that branches could continue, given adequate support from head office. As indicated above, the war conditions obtaining throughout much of 1921 made communications with some branches difficult to maintain, which probably accounts for some of the difficulties branches experienced. Indeed, the evidence indicates that the October closure programme was probably a major trimming of "deadwood" in that, not alone was a large number of branches closed but many were re-opened. This suggests that many branches which had fallen into difficulties earlier in the year were simply wound up and then re-started on a new footing, once Truce conditions allowed. Again, the majority of these closures were in smaller centres, reflecting the battering that wages were taking as farmers, and other smaller employers, tried to push their losses onto their employees.

The total of closures in 1922 was lower than in 1921, at 102, including 35 amalgamations. Up until then most amalgamations had involved one or two branches but 1922 saw the beginnings of a policy of creating big branches by amalgamating a number of smaller ones or incorporating them as sections of a branch in a relatively large neighbouring town. Fermoy, in Cork, was the best example, with 6 neighbouring branches being made sections of it. Similarly,

Tinahely, in Wicklow, was enlarged when four smaller branches were amalgamated with it. Other examples were Mid Louth and Tipperary Town (3 branches each) and Newbridge, Nenagh, Ballinasloe and Ballina (2 branches each). Amalgamations tended to take place largely among the agricultural branches and this is reflected in the regional breakdown, with 16 in Munster, 14 in Leinster and only 5 in Connacht.

Of the total of 102 branches which closed or were amalgamated in 1922, 21 re-opened that year and 20 the following year. This repeated pattern of closure and re-opening suggests that, although the tendency was for many more branches to close than eventually re-opened there was still much support for the ITGWU in the countryside and that, if it looked like being advantageous to do so, ex-members would rejoin. Fifty per cent of members still had the peak wage rates achieved in the years up to 1920 when the union was in the ascendant (ITGWU, 1922, 6), a high proportion given the difficult conditions in which the union was now operating. This meant that the union still offered a substantial level of defence against the actions of employers. In general, though, struggles in the rural sector were tough, with the Irish Farmers' Union (IFU), the umbrella organisation for farmers, threatening a major assault on the wages and conditions of farm employees.

There were major disputes in counties Laois, Westmeath, Wicklow, Cork, Tipperary, Limerick and other counties in which the union claimed success (ITGWU, 1922, 9). However, the wage rates of city workers were probably better maintained, thus partly accounting for the higher survival rate of branches in these centres, although the greater pool of membership was also important. Almost paradoxically, although the severe economic stagnation may have driven some members to leave the union, it may have encouraged others to rejoin, or join for the first time, in anticipation of the threat to their position posed by employers. The union also realised that while the disruption caused by the War of Independence, and later the Civil War, had not helped its organisation, it had tended to protect the union, in that employers could not enlist the active support of government in anti-union campaigns, as there was no effective government over much of the country until 1923, when the Civil War had almost ended. The Irish situation contrasted markedly with that in Britain where unions had been forced by government-backed employers to accept major wage reductions for their members. These reductions were also passed on to members of British unions in Ireland and the ITGWU cited this as an unhelpful factor in dealing with employers. Thus, the union was able to re-iterate its claim that Irish workers could only be effectively represented by Irish unions.

1923

By 1923, with the ending of the Civil War, the scene was set for the government to take an active part in supporting employers in disputes with unions. The Cumann na nGaedheal government saw agriculture as the basis for prosperity and this involved raising farmers incomes as a priority. One element in achieving this would be to lower the wages farmers paid their labourers, as part of a general cost-cutting effort. It became only a matter of time before the IFU, along with the other employer organisations, launched a concerted wage- reduction campaign.

The union leadership was well aware that it faced its toughest challenge for years in 1923 and the policy of consolidation was continued. There was a total of 50 amalgamations, only four less than the number of closures, and many of these took place early in the year, in anticipation of the looming struggle. Twenty eight amalgamations took place in Munster, with 11 branches being consolidated into three big branches in Limerick and 13 being made sections of four big branches in Waterford. Twenty amalgamations were carried out in Leinster with Kilkenny, Offaly and Wexford leading the way. In the latter county 7, branches were amalgamated into the two big

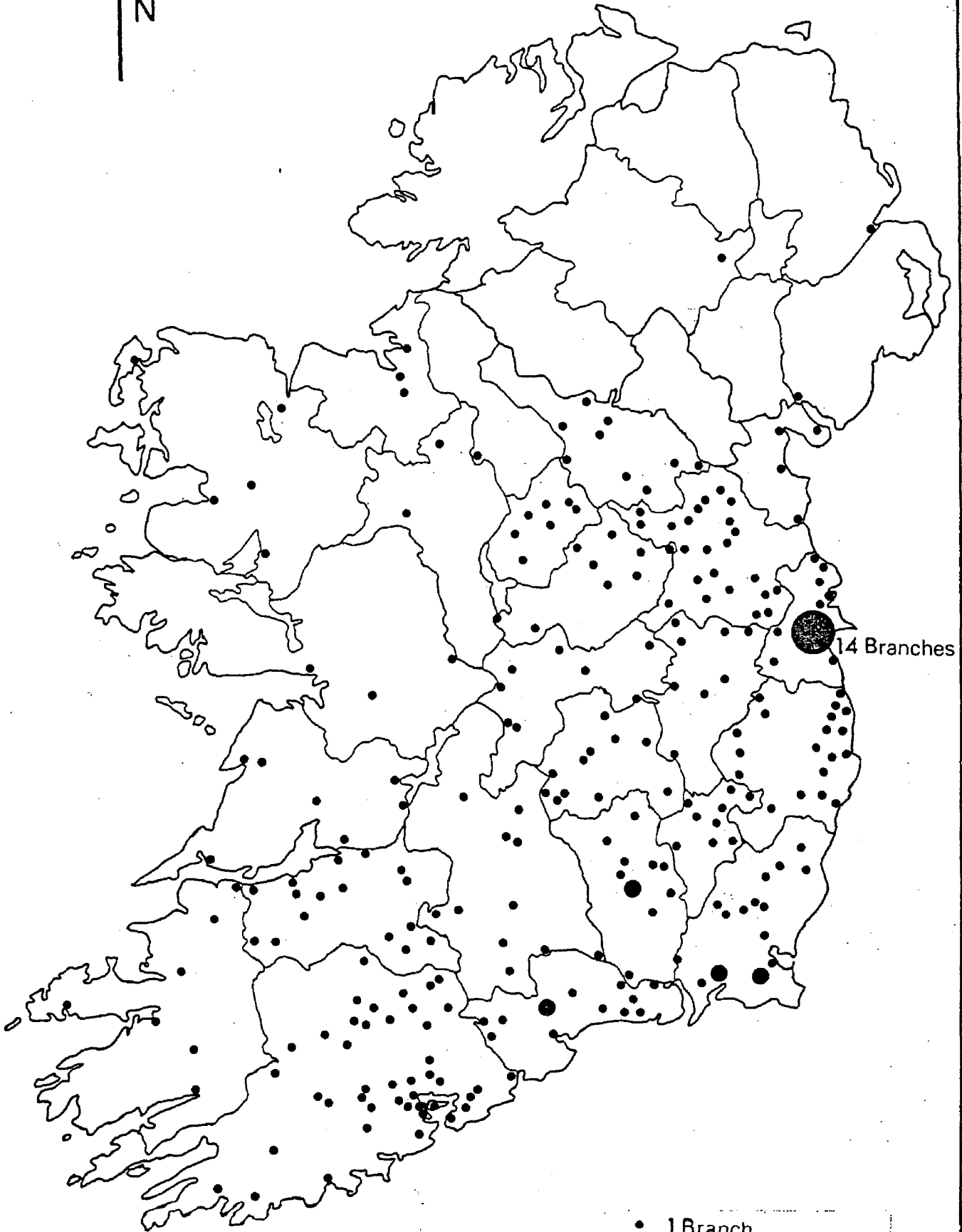
branches of South Wexford and South West Wexford. The number of branches re-opening that year was only 25 so the branch total registered a net drop of 79.

Map 3 has been constructed from the list of branches contained in the union's annual report for 1923 which lists 268 branches with secretaries. This has been used, instead of the register, because over 100 of the closures recorded in the latter do not bear dates, and thus render difficult the task of determining whether they closed before, or after, 1923.

Provincial Review

The map shows a marked decline in branch numbers with a total of 268 as opposed to 535 in 1920, an almost exact halving. This decline did not spare any part of the country, although Munster, with its greater number of small agriculture-based branches, had suffered more than Leinster, the totals being 98 and 144 branches respectively. Connacht's total had been more than quartered, with only 14 out of the original 61 branches left, while Ulster's total had fallen from 33 to 12, 9 of which were in Cavan. The consolidation of branches was accompanied by a corresponding tendency for branches to be located in towns higher up the

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14 Branches

- 1 Branch
- County/area branch

MAP 3. ITGWU BRANCHES 1923

urban hierachy, a process which was to continue throughout the rest of the 1920s. Unfortunately, tillage figures for 1923 are not available so it is not possible to relate branch decline to tillage decline.

Leinster: The figure of 14 branches was relatively high, considering that branches in many counties were coming under severe pressure. Meath had lost 9 branches, to leave it with 23, while Wicklow had lost only three, leaving it with 19, Dublin had also lost three, leaving it with 23, and Kildare had lost four, leaving it with eight. These counties were all areas of traditionally strong commercial farming so it may be that labourers here were in a stronger position, through their longer experience of dealing with employers. Labourers close to Dublin did have the highest wage rates (O'Connor, 1980, 41) and those in Meath and Dublin were able to fight off wage reduction attempts (ITGWU, 1923, 10). By 1925 Leinster's acreage of tillage had fallen by 36% so it is likely that by 1923 the decline had been nearly as marked, thus undermining the position of labourers. Thus, although many of the surviving branches were probably reduced in membership, the labourers retained an ability to protect their positions, most likely due to their experience in dealing with employers which may have meant that precedents for wage levels had been established

at an earlier stage. Wexford had seen its branch total almost halved, from 29 to 15, much of which was accounted for by the creation of two big branches early in 1923. Nonetheless workers in Wexford were apparently less able to defend their position than those closer to Dublin.

In other Leinster counties, apart from Longford which still had 7 branches, as in 1920, branch decline had been quite marked. Kilkenny had seen its total fall from 23 to 9, Offaly's had fallen from 13 to 8, Westmeath's from 15 to 9, Laois's from 14 to 11, Carlow's from 13 to 9 and Louth's from 6 to 4. As with Wexford it is likely that the novelty of trade unionism in these counties probably made farmers less reconcilable to it than was the case in counties close to Dublin, thus making them more determined in their anti-union campaigns. A further factor may have been that they were less prosperous than farmers in the Dublin hinterland, thus making it appear imperative for them to push wage reductions onto their employers at an early stage. Although no branches in Longford, closed membership was probably much reduced.

Munster: The 98 branches remaining out of the original 219 indicates the extent of the battering the ITGWU had taken in the Munster countryside. Waterford provides a good example of the type of opposition the union faced from

farmers and government in the post Civil War period. The county now had only 12 branches, as opposed to 24 in 1920, mostly due to the creation of the three big branches of Mid Waterford, West waterford and Decies in April, 1923. This was an attempt to bolster the union's organisation in anticipation of a major struggle, and to counter the debilitating effect of a countywide drop in membership from 2,350 in 1922 to 1,500 in 1923 (O'Connor, 1980, 48). The IFU had been trying to get the union to accept a reduction in wages, from the relatively good rates it had won earlier, throughout 1921 and 1922 but had not been sufficiently strong to enforce cuts. By 1923 the farmers saw that their chance had come with the prospect of government support, now that the Civil War was virtually ended. A strike for higher wages began in May and this developed into a test of strength between the two sides. However, it was not to be an equal struggle as the governmnt intervened on behalf of the farmers by sending in the army and civic guard to protect their produce, escort blackleg labour and raid union offices. This support stiffened the resolve of the farmers who wanted to finally crush the union (O'Connor, 1980, 51). As the strike dragged on, the union leadership tried to bring it to a negotiated conclusion, not wanting to put too much of its resources into defending one section of its membership - the strike was costing 1,500 per week by the time the leadership finally accepted defeat in December

(O'Connor, 1980, 54). This move, seen as a sellout in some quarters, spelt the end of the union in the Waterford countryside and from this time on its decline became inexorable.

In Cork, there were now 45 branches, 30 less than in 1920. Quite a few of these were still in smaller centres, a similar pattern to Limerick, where 16 of the original 42 branches had survived. In Tipperary, only 11 of the original 42 branches remained open, mainly in larger centres. Kerry and Clare had only 7 branches each, as opposed to 17 and 19 respectively in 1920. Generally, farmers in Munster appear to have been very determined in opposing the ITGWU. Again, this level of resoluteness is probably explained by them not being as prepared to accept at least some of the demands of trade unionism as farmers in East Leinster.

Connacht: The weak position of labourers in Connacht was reflected in the quartering of the branch total from 61, in 1920, to 14 in 1923. Agricultural labourers in Connacht had been less likely to join the ITGWU and once farmers began to suffer from falling prices they were forced to accede to demands for reduced wages. Farmers in Connacht, with smaller farms, probably came under greater pressure from falling prices and were also more likely to be able to

rely on family labour, thus enabling them to dispense with the services of their paid employees. In each county, branches were now overwhelmingly located in larger towns. Mayo now had 5 branches (18 in 1920), Galway had 3 (17 in 1920) Sligo had 3 (9 in 1920), Roscommon had 2 (8 in 1920) while Leitrim had one (9 in 1920).

Ulster: The situation in Ulster was similar to that in Connacht, although Cavan had lost only 3 branches, leaving it with 9. However, Donegal and Monaghan had lost all their branches, reflecting the weakness of the agricultural labourers and also the town workers in both. In Northern Ireland there were only 3 branches left out of 12, in Belfast, Newry and Coalisland in Tyrone, the latter possibly based on coal mining and being the only one in a small centre. The generally weak position of labourers in the Northern counties meant that the union was unable to maintain branches in any other area.

Summary: In general, then, by 1923, the ITGWU was experiencing serious difficulties in all sectors, but especially among agricultural workers whose previous gains were now being eroded by their employers. By the end of the year nearly all sections had suffered "more or less severe reductions" (ITGWU, 1923, 10), and this apparent inability

of the union to continue to defend its members' positions was to accelerate the decline in membership and branch numbers. Apart from difficult economic circumstances, the union's problems were exacerbated after the return of James Larkin from America during 1923. He still held the post of General Secretary but was now out of touch with the situation in Ireland. After trying, and failing, to win control of the union from the more cautious William O'Brien, whose

"sharp shrewd mind....was ever boring a silent way through all opposition to the regulation and control of the movement"

(O'Casey, 1973, 13)

Larkin challenged the union rules in court. On the defeat of his case, he decided to found a new general workers' union and in 1924 the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI) was founded. Some members left the ITGWU to join the new union, out of loyalty to the charismatic Larkin, still regarded by many as the hero of the early years. However, these defections took place mainly in Dublin and found little echo outside the capital, reflecting the fact that most members had joined a few years after Larkin left for America in 1914. These members would thus not have felt the

same degree of loyalty to Larkin as would some of the original Dublin members, to whom he had appealed in the years up to 1913.

Town size distribution of branches: The process of contraction happened in the reverse manner to the union's diffusion throughout the country. The process can be described as one of paracme ie. the process of spatial contraction which innovations may undergo having reached their diffusion peak (Barker, 1977, 260). It is possible to determine whether the paracmatic process was hierarchical or contiguous from 1921 onwards because, by this time, the population had settled into its more normal pattern, after the disruption of wartime, and the 1926 Census of Population may be used to plot the incidence of towns with branches against the size of towns. If the proportion of towns with branches in all, or most, of the town size categories remains much the same over time, then the pattern of paracme is likely to be contiguous, with town size having little impact on the closure or amalgamation of branches. If, on the other hand, there is a tendency for branches to concentrate in towns in the larger size categories over time, then the pattern will be one of hierarchic paracme, with branch services being offered at fewer, but higher order, centres.

By 1923, out of the ITGWU's 268 branches, 79 were located in towns of 1,500 people or more (v. Table 3.2). All 12 of the towns in the largest size category (over 10,000) had at least one branch. All 14 of the towns in the 5,-10,000 category also had a branch. Twenty of the 22 towns in the 3-5,000 category had a branch (90.9% of all towns), while 28 of the 48 towns in the 1,500-5,000 category had a branch (58.3% of all towns). This reflects the tendency of the union to leave smaller centres in favour of larger ones, with branches in the three largest categories surviving extremely well.

1925

By 1925 the effects of the defeats of 1923 had become evident (v. MAP 4). There had been few strikes during 1924 and most actions had been defensive, a pattern maintained in 1925. The level of unemployment and the falling wage rates of most workers led to a continued decline in membership, reflected in a further decline in branches, whose numbers had fallen to 160 by 1925. Most of the closures had again taken place in smaller centres and by now there were very few amalgamations. This also reflected the decline in tillage land from just under 2,385,000 acres in 1918 to

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TABLE 3.2 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1923

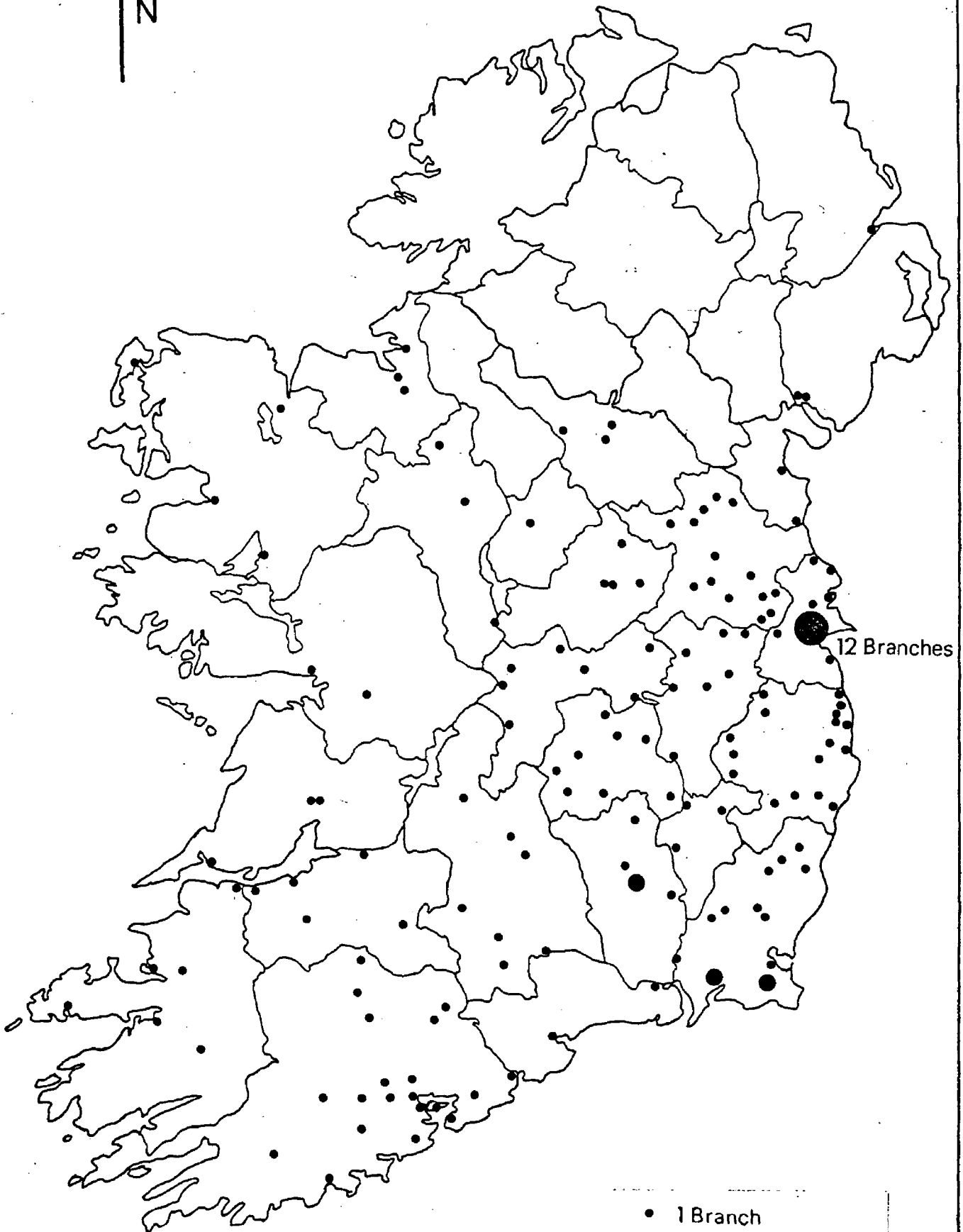
A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each size Category	% of Branches in each size Category
Over 10,000	12	12	100.0%	17	6.3%
5-10,000	14	14	100.0%	14	5.2%
3-5,000	22	20	90.9%	20	7.5%
1,500-3,000	48	28	58.3%	28	10.5%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	189	70.5%
TOTAL	96	74	77.1%	268	100.0%

TABLE 3.4 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1925

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each size Category	% of Branches in each size Category
Over 10,000	12	11	91.7%	16	10.0%
5-10,000	14	13	92.9%	15	9.4%
3-5,000	22	18	81.8%	18	11.3%
1,500-3,000	48	21	43.8%	21	13.1%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	91	56.2%
TOTAL	96	63	65.6%	161	100.0%

All population figures - 1926 Census.

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12 Branches

- 1 Branch
- County/area branch

MAP 4. ITGWU BRANCHES 1925

about 1,671,000 in 1925, a drop of 30%. This was largely due to the decreased demand for farm produce and the 1925 acreage was lower than even the pre-war figure of almost 1,700,000 acres, thus severely undermining the position of farm labourers. However, workers in larger centres were also suffering, reflected in the decline in the number of larger towns with branches. Lists of delegates to the union's annual conference are available from 1925 onwards and these can be used to indicate those branches with 500 members or more as each branch was allowed elect one delegate for every 500 members.

Provincial Review:

Leinster: Leinster had seen its tillage acreage decline by 35.8% to 560,000 acres since 1918 (Table 3.3). Although this was the second highest proportional provincial decline the union's branch decline was not as marked as elsewhere as it still had 99 branches, only 45 less than in 1923, and still nearly half its 1920 peak of 212 branches. Again, counties where commercial agriculture was longest established tended to have the highest branch survival rates, despite large declines in tillage acreage. Dublin, where tillage land had declined by 48%, still had 18 branches, only 6 of which were in the city, 4 less than in

TABLE 3.3 TILLAGE ACREAGE 1918 AND 1925, ITGWU BRANCHES
1920 AND 1925 AND DELEGATE REPRESENTATION 1925

	Tillage Acreage				Branches Delegates		
	1918	1925	Decrease	%	1920	'25	'25
Leinster	873,009	560,709	312,300	35.8%	212	99	26
Carlow	49,867	36,106	13,761	27.6%	5	3	1
Dublin	41,020	21,304	19,616	48.1%	26	18	15
Kildare	72,244	40,381	31,863	44.1%	12	8	2
Kilkenny	94,676	62,586	32,090	33.9%	23	4	-
Laois	88,606	70,312	18,294	20.6%	14	8	1
Longford	31,182	17,886	13,296	42.6%	7	1	-
Louth	61,095	42,275	18,820	30.8%	6	2	1
Meath	86,753	33,940	52,813	60.9%	32	13	1
Offaly	73,621	51,807	21,814	29.6%	13	7	1
Westmeath	48,385	22,892	25,493	52.7%	15	5	1
Wexford	168,252	124,412	43,840	26.1%	29	13	1
Wicklow	57,308	36,808	20,500	35.8%	22	17	2
Munster	713,380	480,509	232,871	32.6%	219	44	17
Clare	59,665	35,182	24,483	41.0%	19	3	1
Cork	288,660	218,012	70,648	24.5%	75	20	9
Kerry	85,829	61,654	24,175	28.2%	17	6	1
Limerick	58,235	28,764	29,471	50.6%	42	5	4
Tipperary	151,631	94,202	57,429	37.9%	42	8	1
Waterford	69,360	42,695	26,665	38.4%	24	2	1
Connacht	448,370	280,353	168,017	37.5%	61	11	1
Galway	160,724	106,852	53,872	33.5%	17	2	-
Leitrim	32,982	19,962	13,020	39.5%	9	2	-
Mayo	136,945	86,960	50,255	36.7%	18	5	-
Roscommon	69,855	40,452	29,403	42.1%	8	2	-
Sligo	47,864	26,397	21,467	44.8%	9	3	1
Ulster	348,017	249,630	98,387	28.3%	33	6	2
Cavan	80,243	49,648	30,595	38.1%	12	3	-
Donegal	175,382	136,387	38,995	22.2%	4	-	-
Monaghan	91,942	63,595	28,347	30.8%	5	-	-
Antrim					3	1	1
Armagh					1	-	-
Derry					1	-	-
Down					2	2	1
Fermanagh					1	-	-
Tyrone					4	-	-

1923. Five of the city branches had 12 delegates between them, representing at least 6,000 members, while 3 of the county branches had one delegate each. This gave Dublin the largest membership as no other county approached this total of delegates. Wicklow still had 17 branches, 2 less than in 1923, but its tillage acreage had fallen by the relatively low total of 35%. Most of its branches were small, with only those in the largest towns of Arklow and Bray having one delegate each. Kildare, where tillage had fallen by 44%, still had 8 branches, of which those in the larger towns of Athy and Newbridge had one delegate each. Of the commercial agricultural counties, only Meath had suffered a major decline in branches with only 13 left out of the 23 extant in 1923, and only the Trim branch having a delegate. However, this was still quite high and the drop could have been more substantial, given that tillage acreage fell by over 60%. Wexford, with 13 branches, had lost only 2 since 1923, probably due to the fact that it was a traditionally tillage oriented county and its acreage fell by only 26% between 1918 and 1925. Thus the fall in the demand for labour was not as marked as elsewhere. Again, most branches were small, with only the Enniscorthy branch having a delegate.

In most other counties the rate of branch closure tended to be higher, reflecting the weaker position of labourers in counties where commercial farming was not as well established and employers were less used to making concessions to their workers. Thus, in Carlow, where tillage acreage only fell by 27%, there were now only 3 branches, as opposed to 9 in 1923. The Carlow town branch was the only one to have a delegate. In Longford, only one of the 7 branches open in both 1920 and 1923 was left, largely due to a nearly 43% decline in tillage land. Kilkenny, having lost 5 branches, had only 4 left, its tillage acreage having fallen by 34%. In Westmeath, where tillage land was 53% down since 1918, 4 branches had closed, leaving it with 5, with only the Mullingar branch having a delegate. Louth had only 2 branches left, its tillage acreage, traditionally low, having fallen by 31%. However, the Dundalk branch was one of the 2 closures since 1923, demonstrating that, even in the largest centres, the union was losing ground, although the Drogheda branch did have a delegate. In Laois, the decline was less marked, with 8 out of the 11 branches surviving, one of which had a delegate. This was largely due to the county having the country's lowest rate of decline of tillage land (21%), thus enabling labourers positions be better maintained than in other counties. Offaly had also had a relatively low rate of tillage decline (29%), and it had lost only one of its 8

branches extant in 1923. However, 5 of the 7 branches were in towns of over 1,500 people and probably had a higher proportion of non-agricultural members than many others, thus enabling them survive longer. Nonetheless, most were probably small as only one had a delegate.

Overall, then, the ITGWU's branch structure in Leinster had shown varying degrees of decline. Generally, branches in counties close to Dublin, where commercial agriculture was longest established, had shown a greater ability to survive, most likely because employers were more used to making concessions to their employees and also because workers had longer experience of defending themselves against wage reduction campaigns. Branches also tended to survive best in counties where the decline in tillage had been smallest eg. Wexford and Laois, while in counties where tillage had declined greatly, and where the dividing line between labourer and small farmer was less clearly defined, the rate of closure had been highest. Leinster had the lion's share of large branches, with 19 of the 99 branches electing delegates, and these accounted for 26 of the 46 delegates elected countrywide. A large majority of these branches were in larger towns where they did not have to rely solely on agricultural labourers for membership, demonstrating the tendency for agricultural labourer branches to be smaller.

Munster: The tillage acreage in Munster had fallen by nearly 33%, to 480,000 acres, by 1925. Its branch total had been more than halved from 98 to 44, although the extent of the decline was not uniform. In Waterford, the effects of the 1923 strike had had a dramatic impact on the union, with only 2 of the original branches still open, these being in the largest centres of Waterford City and Dungarvan. The union had thus lost all support in the countryside, and a fall in tillage acreage of 38% had exacerbated the situation. The Waterford City branch had one delegate, reflecting the union's relative strength in large centres. Some of the effects of the Waterford defeat must have spread into Cork also because, in spite of a decline in tillage acreage of only 24%, the union had only 20 branches left of the 45 open in 1923. Most of the closures had taken place in smaller centres, although branches in some of these had managed to survive. Similarly, Tipperary's branches had tended to survive best in larger centres, although only 3 out of 11 had closed since 1923, despite a drop of 38% in tillage acreage. This high survival rate was probably due to the relatively large number of substantial towns in Tipperary. In both counties, branches in the larger centres were the only ones to have delegates. The Cork City branch elected 6, while 3 others elected one each. In Tipperary, only the branch in Clonmel, the largest town, had a delegate. In Limerick, where tillage had declined by over

50% since 1918, there were only 5 branches left out of 16, although, apart from the Limerick City branch with 2 delegates, two other branches also had one delegate each. Kerry, where tillage acreage had declined by only 28%, still had 6 of the branches open in 1923. However, these were all in either large towns or ports, where agricultural membership was likely to be minimal, and where early support had been gained for the union. As with Tipperary, the only branch with a delegate was in the largest town of Tralee. In Clare, where tillage land fell by 41%, the agricultural labourer branches had fallen away completely, with only 3 branches left of the 7 open in 1923. These were in Kilrush and Ennis, with the union having opened a mental hospital branch in the latter, alongside a general town branch. This was due to the affiliation to the ITGWU of a mental hospital workers' union during 1925, one bright spot in an otherwise depressing membership picture. Of these three, only the Kilrush branch was large enough to have a delegate.

Thus, the general pattern in Munster was one of a dramatic decline in branch numbers. There had been a major retreat of branches from smaller centres, with only some of those in Cork managing to survive. Most of the largest branches, as judged by delegate representation, tended to be in the largest towns in each county. In all, 11 of the province's 44 branches elected 17 delegates between them.

This was a higher proportion of total branches (25%) than in Leinster (about 20%), reflecting Munster's greater number of branches in large centres.

Connacht: The tillage acreage in Connacht had fallen by nearly 38% since 1918 to 280,000 acres. The province had lost only 3 of its branches extant in 1923 but most of these had been in larger centres. Since 1920, it had lost almost 82% of its branches, a dramatic reflection of the weak position of agricultural labourers in the province. Since 1923, Galway, Mayo and Leitrim had each lost one branch, the latter now having none. Virtually all branches were now in the largest towns but the weakness of membership even in these was reflected in the fact that the Sligo Town branch was the only one to have a delegate. Galway now had 2 branches, Mayo 4, Roscommon 2 and Sligo 3.

Ulster: The decline of 28% in Ulster's tillage land had seen its acreage fall to just under 250,000 acres. However, by 1923 the ITGWU had been under heavy pressure and by 1925 it had only 3 branches left in Cavan, 6 less than in 1923, and it had not managed to open any in Monaghan or Donegal, not having had any there in 1923. In Northern Ireland, it was left with one branch in Belfast (with one delegate) and 2 in Newry, one of which had a delegate.

Thus, it had gained one branch in Newry since 1923, compensating for the loss of the branch in Tyrone.

Town size distribution of branches: The tendency for branches to survive best in larger towns had continued. Of 160 branches, 70 were still located in towns of 1,500 people or more, only 9 less than in 1923 (v. Table 3.4). Eleven of the 12 towns in the 10,000 and more category (91.7% of all towns) had at least one branch, with Dundalk being the only town to have lost its branch. Thirteen of the 14 towns in the 5-10,000 category (92.9% of all towns) also had a branch, while 18 of the 22 towns in the 3-5,000 category (81.8% of all towns) had a branch. Finally, 21 of the 48 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category (43.8% of all towns) had a branch. This shows a relatively good survival rate of branches in larger centres, implying that workers in these were still able to defend their positions fairly successfully. It is impossible to say why Dundalk lost its branch because it had quite a large number of dock workers. In the 5-10,000 category the only town to have lost its branch was Ballinasloe, reflecting the union's weakness in Connacht. In the 3-5,000 category, Castlebar in Mayo and Carrick-on-Suir in Tipperary had both lost their branches since 1923, the latter reflecting the growing problems the union had to face in Munster, while the former again

epitomises its weakness in Connacht. In the 1,500-3,000 category, of the 7 towns to lose branches, only one was in Leinster (Greystones) while 6 were in Munster. Thus, those towns losing branches tended largely to be in Munster and Connacht, demonstrating that the union was losing ground in both small and large centres to a greater extent in both these provinces than in Leinster.

Summary: The ITGWU was rapidly losing its agricultural membership and being forced back to its original constituency of the larger towns. It claimed a membership of 61,000 in its returns to the ITUC for 1925, representing about a halving since 1920. The only areas with a substantial number of branches in smaller centres were those close to Dublin and Cork Cities, where commercial farming was best developed and where the members were probably in stronger positions in dealing with their employers. However, the union was losing ground even in some larger centres, particularly in Munster and Connacht, as the unfavourable economic climate began to take its toll of town workers.

1928

The general decline was to continue for the rest of the decade. Increasingly, the ITGWU was becoming confined to the larger centres with membership being restricted to the traditionally-unionised sectors such as woollen mills (eg. Navan and Blarney), docks and other transport sectors. The union tried to put a brave face on this with fairly optimistic accounts of each year's activities in the annual reports. However, there were few gains in any new sectors apart from the aforementioned mental hospital workers. By 1928, the membership had halved again, to 30,000, about a quarter of the peak total of 1920. The major problems were unemployment and emigration, with both especially affecting the general, often part-time, workers who constituted the bulk of the union's actual and potential membership and this fact was lamented thus

"nothing but the spread of employment is needed to restore the union to its old time vigour and strength" (ITGWU, 1828, 7)

Given the economic orientation of the government of the time, with little being done to tackle the unemployment problem, such a hope appeared to bear little prospect of realisation.

By 1928, the branch total had fallen to 78 (v. MAP 5), with 48 of these in Leinster 22 in Munster, 6 in Connacht and 3 in Ulster. By now, the only county to have any substantial number of agricultural branches left was Wexford, with 5 of its 8 remaining branches being agriculture based, again probably reflecting the relative survival of more labour-intensive tillage farming in that county. In all other counties, nearly every branch was in a larger centre, with one or two, at most, being in smaller centres. The tendency for branches to concentrate in the largest towns had continued with 47 of the branches (60%) now being in towns of 1,500 people or more, with each size category having more towns with branches than the one beneath it (Table 3.5).

1:2000000



- 1 Branch
- County/area branch

MAP 5. ITGWU BRANCHES 1928

TABLE 3.5 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1928

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of A	No. of Branches in each Size Category	% of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	12	10	83.3%	15	19.2%
5-10,000	14	8	57.1%	9	11.5%
3-5,000	22	11	50.0%	11	14.1%
1,500-3,000	48	12	25.0%	12	15.4%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	31	39.8%
Total	96	41	42.7%	78	100.0%

TABLE 3.6 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1931

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each size Category	% of Branches in each size Category
Over 10,000	12	10	83.3%	15	28.9%
5-10,000	14	6	42.9%	6	11.5%
3-5,000	22	9	49.9%	9	17.3%
1,500-3,000	48	6	12.5%	6	11.5%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	16	30.8%
Total	96	31	32.3%	52	100.0%

All population figures - 1926 Census.

1931

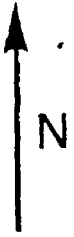
The decline continued until 1931 when the union reached its nadir in terms of membership, with only 20,000 members between 1929 and 1931, and of branches, with a total of 52 surviving in that year. By now, the decline in the agricultural membership was probably complete. This meant that branches in smaller centres tended to close more easily than those in large centres where membership sometimes increased. Also, the lack of employment opportunities in small towns did not help, with small town businesses closing and the changeover from horse to motorised transport, which needed fewer workers, contributing to the decline (ITGWU, 1929, 7). The membership increases in larger centres were due to better organisation, especially among catering, flour mill and bacon factory workers (ITGWU, 1929, 7), and this improvement in organisation in larger centres probably reflected an acceptance that the union would have to rely on these for membership from now on. Hence, the 1929 report's statement that experience had shown that well organised closely-knit sections were more successful than large, but scattered, membership. As before, unemployment continued to be the main problem, with members being more concerned to hold onto their jobs than push for increased wages. This also forced the union to campaign against non-union and

child labour, both used by some employers to avoid paying full union rates.

MAP 6 shows a very constricted branch structure in 1931, with Leinster having 32 branches, almost half of which were in Dublin, Munster having 13 and Connacht and Ulster having 5 and 2 respectively. Apart from Wicklow, with 3, all Leinster counties outside Dublin had either 1 or 2 branches, with Laois and Offaly sharing the regional Laois/Offaly branch. Kilkenny had also witnessed an amalgamation, in the form of the Mid Kilkenny branch, and in other cases branches in the largest one or two towns in a county were now catering to the whole county. Of 17 branches with delegates, 9 were in Leinster and elected 15 of the total of 28 delegates. The strength of the Dublin branches is indicated by the fact that 6 of the city branches accounted for 12 of the delegates, with the Drogheda, Laois/Offaly and Mid Kilkenny branches being the only others sufficiently strong to elect a delegate.

In Munster, the situation was similar, with branches confined to the largest centres and only Cork, with 6 branches, breaking the mould of one or two branches per county. These also tended to be in larger towns. Connacht and Ulster also adhered to the same pattern and 3 counties in the former had lost their branch presences. The Northern branches were again located in the ports of Belfast and

1:2000000



- 1 Branch
- County/area branch

9 Branches

MAP 6. ITGWU BRANCHES 1931

Newry and the 3 counties in the Free State did not have any branches either, reflecting the relative shortage of industry in these areas.

Town size distribution of branches: By 1931, 36 branches (69%) were in towns of 1,500 people or more (v. Table 3.6). Ten of the 12 towns in the 10,000 people or more category (83.3% of all towns) had at least one branch. Six of the 14 towns in the 5-10,000 category (42.9% of all towns) had a branch, while 9 of the 22 towns in the 3-5,000 category (49.9% of all towns) had a branch. Finally, 6 of the 48 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category (12.5% of all towns) had a branch. Given the extent of the union's contraction, these were relatively high figures and do indicate the extent of its survival as an urban organisation. Thus, 1931 saw the union reach its lowest ebb since 1916, being content to hold on to what it had, rather than try to expand, realising that this was the most that could be hoped for in the context of increasing unemployment.

CONCLUSION.

This chapter has examined the development of the ITGWU during its first 22 years. The aims of the founders were ambitious, ie. to organise the general workers of Ireland in an Irish-based union, and a considerable degree of success was achieved in pursuit of this. Up until 1913, the bad conditions with which labourers in the major towns had to contend had led to a great growth in membership in these centres, based on the transport and docks sector. This growth, and the advances made on the wages front, had provoked a major reaction from employers during the 1913 Lock-out and General Strike and the relative defeat in that dispute left the union in a weak condition for most of the next 3 years. However, it was able to take advantage of the new spirit of radicalism unleashed after the 1916 Rising, and also of changes in economic conditions during the later war years, which improved the bargaining position of many labourers, especially those in the rural sector, and the combination of these factors encouraged it to launch a campaign of rural organisation from 1917 onwards. This extended the union's branch presence into areas and sectors hitherto untouched by trade unionism and led to an unprecedented growth in trade union membership, reaching

about 120,000 by the peak year of 1920.

However, the ending of the war led to a change in economic circumstances which became marked from that year onwards and the rising level of unemployment and falling price index for goods tended to undermine the position of the union and the willingness of employers, never very high, to pay relatively high wages. The decline in the union's fortunes occurred comparatively quickly with the 1920 branch total being halved by 1923. The union tried to consolidate its branch structure but, although many amalgamations took place until late 1923, outright closures were more common, especially after 1923. The decline of the union saw the branch structure contract in an upwardly hierarchical fashion, with branches tending to survive best in towns at the upper end of the urban scale. This saw the union retreat to sectors more traditionally organised, such as transport, dock and factory workers, while the structurally weak position of rural labourers and those in smaller centres meant that their positions were more easily undermined once recession hit. While the growth of the years 1917-1920 may appear as an aberration, stimulated by specific economic and political circumstances, it did represent a willingness on the part of Irish workers to accept trade unionism, given the right conditions. Despite the dramatic falling off of support from the mid 1920s, the

union was able, by 1931, to consolidate membership at around 20,000, with bases in many of the largest towns, and could claim that "nothing short of a revolution had taken place" in comparison to the situation 20 years before (ITGWU, 1930, 7). This meant that the original aim of organising general workers had been achieved in part and the union, now an accepted force on the industrial scene, had a base from which to grow if economic circumstances were to improve. This improvement was to happen from 1932 onwards, with the introduction of protectionism offering opportunities for growth. The effects of this economic expansion on union structure and membership are the focus of attention in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESURGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION 1932-1957.

PREAMBLE.

The ITGWU, in 1932, found itself in its weakest position since early 1917, in terms both of membership and of branch numbers. This was due to the loss of most of its members in the conditions of economic stagnation which prevailed throughout most of the 1920s. However, a resumption of economic growth, and in particular the beginning of a programme of relatively widespread industrialisation, at least in sectoral terms, from 1932, was to provide an environment within which the union was able to make very significant, and longer lasting, gains in membership. These gains were reflected in a tendency towards greater spatial expansion of the branch structure, although on a much smaller scale than in the peak years of 1917-1920 (v. chapter 3), reflecting a realisation by the leadership that it was better to rely on a smaller number of stronger, more centralised branches, offering a higher level

of services, than a large number of small branches with a relatively weak membership base.

This chapter focusses on the period 1932-1957, characterised by a substantial growth of industry behind protective tariffs. This chapter can also be divided into 3 separate phases to facilitate analysis:

1 1932-1938: The initial period of protectionism during which the ITGWU made substantial advances in terms of membership and branch numbers and eradicated the psychological legacy of the relative atrophy of the 1920s.

2 1939-1945: The years of the Second World War during which economic growth ceased as supply lines were disrupted and the raw materials for many industries became difficult to obtain. This was reflected in a fall in membership and the closure of some branches.

3 1946-1957: This period saw an initial spurt of growth as industry tried to meet the consumer demand which had built up during the war years. The increase in employment occasioned by this growth enabled the union re-commence its expansion and achieve a total of 100 branches for the first time since the mid 1920s. However,

by the early 1950s industry had reached its full capacity for expansion and in the years up to 1957 the limits to protectionist policy began to be seen, with relatively smaller increases in industrial production and employment being recorded. This stagnation, which led to 400,000 people leaving the country during the 1950s, was reflected in a relatively static branch distribution pattern between 1950 and 1955, the last year, before 1976, for which branch lists are available.

SECTION 1 - EARLY PROTECTIONISM 1932-1938.

Economic policy under the Cumann na nGaedheal government had tended to favour agriculture with relatively little being done to promote industry, which remained largely confined to the major towns and ports in the east and south of the country. Thus, by 1926, only 10% of the workforce was engaged in manufacturing industry (Gillmor, 1982, 9) and the depressed conditions of that period had contributed to a high level of emigration. However, the new Fianna Fail government, which came to power in 1932, was committed to providing employment for everyone at home, and to promoting economic self-sufficiency. As agriculture was

considered to be in a healthy state the key element in the new government's aims was to stimulate growth in manufacturing industry, which would have the dual function of curtailing dependence on imported manufactured goods and also of providing employment at home, thus obviating the need to emigrate. Accordingly, the government introduced a series of tariffs on a wide range of goods with the intention of allowing Irish industry develop without the rigours of competition from foreign products. This provided a major spur to industrial growth and by 1938 the numbers employed in industry had risen to 151,000 from a 1931 position of 101,000, according to the Census of Industrial Production. This provided major organisational scope for the ITGWU and other unions and the ITGWU's annual reports attribute most of the growth in membership experienced during this period to its success in organising among the industrial workforce.

Because of the union's success in organising industrial workers the reference frame used for analysing its regional growth will be the number of industrial employees by county. Trends in industrial employment can be traced using either the Census of Industrial Production (CIP), which was published periodically between 1931 and 1944 and annually from 1945 to 1973, or the Census of Population. However, the two do not contain comparable data as they have

different areas of coverage and classification. The CIP was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it has been taken much more frequently than the Census of Population, which has usually only been carried out every 10 years, and thus it allows changes in employment levels be observed on a much more continuous basis. Secondly, the CIP figures relate only to those concerns employing more than two people while the Census of Population includes establishments with only one or two workers. Union members are highly unlikely to be found in small scale employments such as these which are often family concerns. These usually only employ family members with the junior employee often aspiring to eventual ownership of the concern on the retirement of the senior employing relative. Union membership is normally only found in larger employments where the workers have no family relationship to their employer and the employment relationship is on a purely contractual basis, with a trade union mediating on behalf of the workers for improvements in wages and conditions. For both these reasons the CIP appears to be the more reliable indicator of changing trends in potential ITGWU membership.

Most of the ITGWU's growth during the 1930's can be ascribed to its organisation of workers in new industries but a substantial part is attributable to workers leaving British-based unions operating in Ireland to join the ITGWU.

This was probably encouraged by a combination of the successes achieved by the Irish union in winning improvements for its members, and also the heightened nationalist feeling prevalent in Ireland in the context of the Economic War with Britain over land annuity payments. The ITGWU itself, under the leadership of William O'Brien, campaigned against British unions in Ireland, partly motivated by the desire to be, if not the One Big Union, at least the pre-eminent Irish union, representing the majority of Irish workers. British-based unions were seen as a major obstacle to the achievement of this goal and the ITGWU received active support from the Fianna Fail government in its attempts to exclude them, with Fianna Fail seeing this as an important element in reducing British influence in the country.

There is no single source of information on membership levels (as discussed in chapter two) and it appears that the figures quoted in both the files of the Registry of Friendly Societies and the reports of the ITUC underestimate the actual membership totals for a number of years during the 1930s and 1940s, as, for example, the ITGWU's own reports refer to steadily increasing membership between 1932 and 1938 and a 1936 level up 100% on that of 1932, while no such increase is recorded in the other two sources. This means that considerable care must be taken in estimating the actual membership.

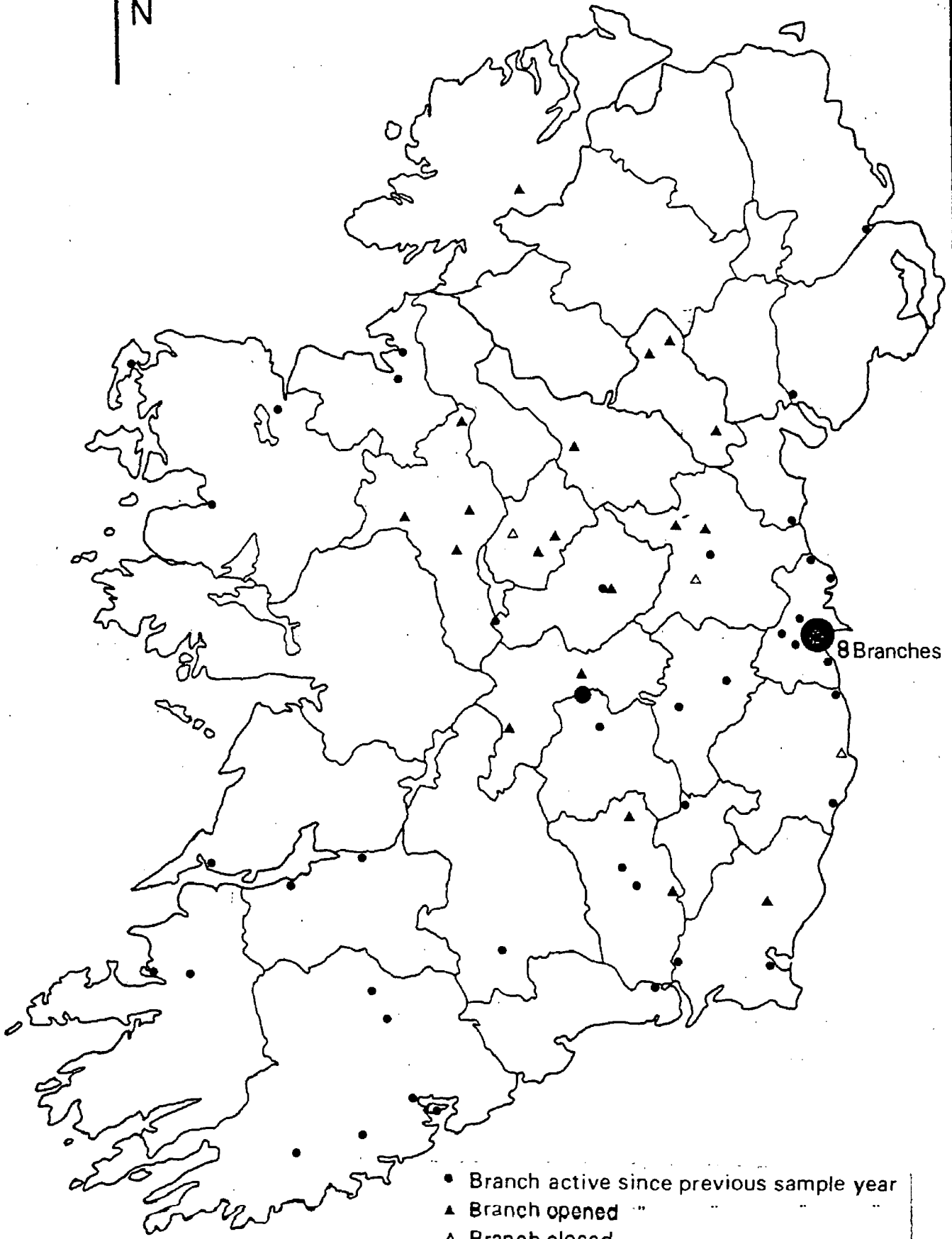
It is also not possible to estimate the precise number of branches in any one year. The files of the Registry of Friendly Societies record branch totals for most years but in nearly all cases these totals are larger than those indicated in the union's register. This could be due to the inclusion of branches which had closed during the year in the total submitted to the Registry of Friendly Societies. Fortunately, there is never a difference of more than 10% so that this does not unduly affect the overall picture. All branch totals given are thus compiled from the union register. For this period, three sample years have been chosen, namely 1932, 1935 and 1938. An examination of the branch structure in 1932 allows the extent to which the early growth in industrial activity was reflected in branch numbers to be observed, while 1935 gives a picture of branch growth when protectionism was well established. Finally, 1938 sees branch growth at its greatest before the advent of war and the consequent economic contraction.

1932

The annual report for 1932 refers to an increase in membership and this was reflected in an increase in the number of branches to 69, from 52 in 1931 (v.MAP 7). CIP figures for industrial employment are not available for the years between 1931 and 1936 but the annual report does refer to new industrial employment having been created, largely due to the newly inaugurated protectionist policy. However, although this increased employment seems to have benefitted the ITGWU, the tariff policy was by no means an unmixed blessing. Its initial impact was to create redundancies in many of the ports as less goods were being imported and exported. Also, many of the new jobs were filled by non-union labour eg. by children or women. Although the opposition of a very largely male-run trade union leadership to women taking the jobs of men may seem to represent an anti-women bias, such views were also held by prominent women trade unionists, as exemplified by Louie Bennett of the Irish Women Workers' Union, in her address to the 1932 ITUC conference:

"The modern tendency to draw women into industry in increasing numbers is of no real advantage to them. It has not raised their

1:2000000



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/ area branch

MAP 7. ITGWU BRANCHES 1932

status as workers, nor their wage standard. It is a menace to family life and, insofar as it has blocked the employment of men, it has intensified poverty among the working class." (Daly, 1981, 79)

Thus, although the ITGWU organised a substantial number of women, (14,000 by 1946)(ITGWU, 1946, 20), they were generally seen as an unwelcome addition to the labour force, especially when not unionised, and the union was to make constant calls for employers to take on union labour at union rates rather than avail of cheaper female and child labour. An associated problem was that of mechanisation which tended to drive people out of work. The union had been citing this as an obstacle to increased employment since the late 1920s but, with the increased level of industrialisation from 1932 onwards, the introduction of new plant with labour saving machinery seems to have increased.

Provincial Review:

Leinster now had 40 branches, an increase of 8 on 1931 and nearly 60% of the total. Munster remained static with 13 while Connacht's total had almost doubled from 5 to 9 and

Ulster's total had jumped from 2 to 7. The majority of new branches were located in smaller centres and most were re-openings of branches which had closed during the 1920s, with only 5 being first-time openings. Many of the new members won among new industrial workers were probably absorbed by branches in the larger centres due to the tendency for these industries to continue to locate in larger towns but this did not lead to any perceptible increase in membership in individual branches, as expressed in delegate representation. In fact, the same number of delegates was elected as in 1931, but by one less branch. Although part of the membership expansion may be accounted for by smaller groups of industrial workers in smaller centres, the greater part of such membership may have been employed in less secure areas such as road maintenance or construction projects. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that many of these branches closed within a few years and indicates that the membership base of many new branches was in vulnerable employment which offered little prospect of long term organisation. Another related reason for these early closures was probably that these branches were made up predominantly, if not exclusively, of workers in a small number of newly established concerns who only joined the union to win certain wages and conditions but left once their immediate aims were achieved. This problem was to resurface during the Second World War (ITGWU, 1947, 10).

The union appears to have been aware of the dangers of opening branches which might not last for very long as the annual reports refer to many requests being made for branches to be opened in most counties, with these being refused if the employment level in the area was not sufficient to maintain a branch (ITGWU, 1932, 6). However, its judgement of where branches should be opened was evidently not cautious enough, as some of these new branches did not last longer than two years.

Leinster: Leinster had slightly increased its share of larger branches as 10 now elected 17 delegates as opposed to 9 electing 15 delegates in 1931. The new branch which reached a membership of 500 was the one in Athlone while the impact of new industrial employment in larger centres was further demonstrated by the Dublin No. 4 branch which gained an extra delegate to give it 3. In Kilkenny, the city branch had lost its delegate-electing status but this was compensated for by the amalgamated Mid Kilkenny branch achieving a delegate. With 13 delegates, representing a minimum of 6,500 members, Dublin City branches organised by far the greatest proportion of the membership.

Munster: In Munster, the branches at Mallow (in Cork) and Waterford City had lost their delegates, while Cork City (4 delegates), Limerick City (2 delegates) and Tralee (1 delegate) had remained in the same position since 1931.

Connacht and Ulster: The delegate situation in both provinces had remained static since 1931 with Sligo (1 delegate), Belfast (2 delegates) and Newry (1 delegate) being the only branches represented.

Town size distribution of branches: Thirty seven out of 69 branches were located in centres of 1,500 people or more. This was 5 percentage points less than 1931, due to the tendency for many of the new branches to be in smaller centres. Eleven (84.6%) of the 13 towns in the 10,000 category and more had at least one branch (v. Table 4.1), with Galway and Dundalk again being the only towns without branches. Eight (50%) of the 16 towns in the 5-10,000 category had a branch, while 8 (38.1%) of the 21 towns in the 3-5,000 category and 10 (20.8%) of the 48 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category had a branch. Thus there had been a growth in the percentage of towns with branches in all except the 3-5,000 category since 1931, indicating that branches were opening or re-opening in large as well as small centres.

TABLE 4.1 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1932

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	% of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	13	11	84.6%	17	24.6%
5-10,000	16	8	50.0%	9	13.1%
3-5,000	21	8	38.1%	8	11.6%
1,500-3,000	48	10	20.8%	10	14.5%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	25	36.2%
Total	98	37	37.8%	69	100.0%

TABLE 4.2 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1935

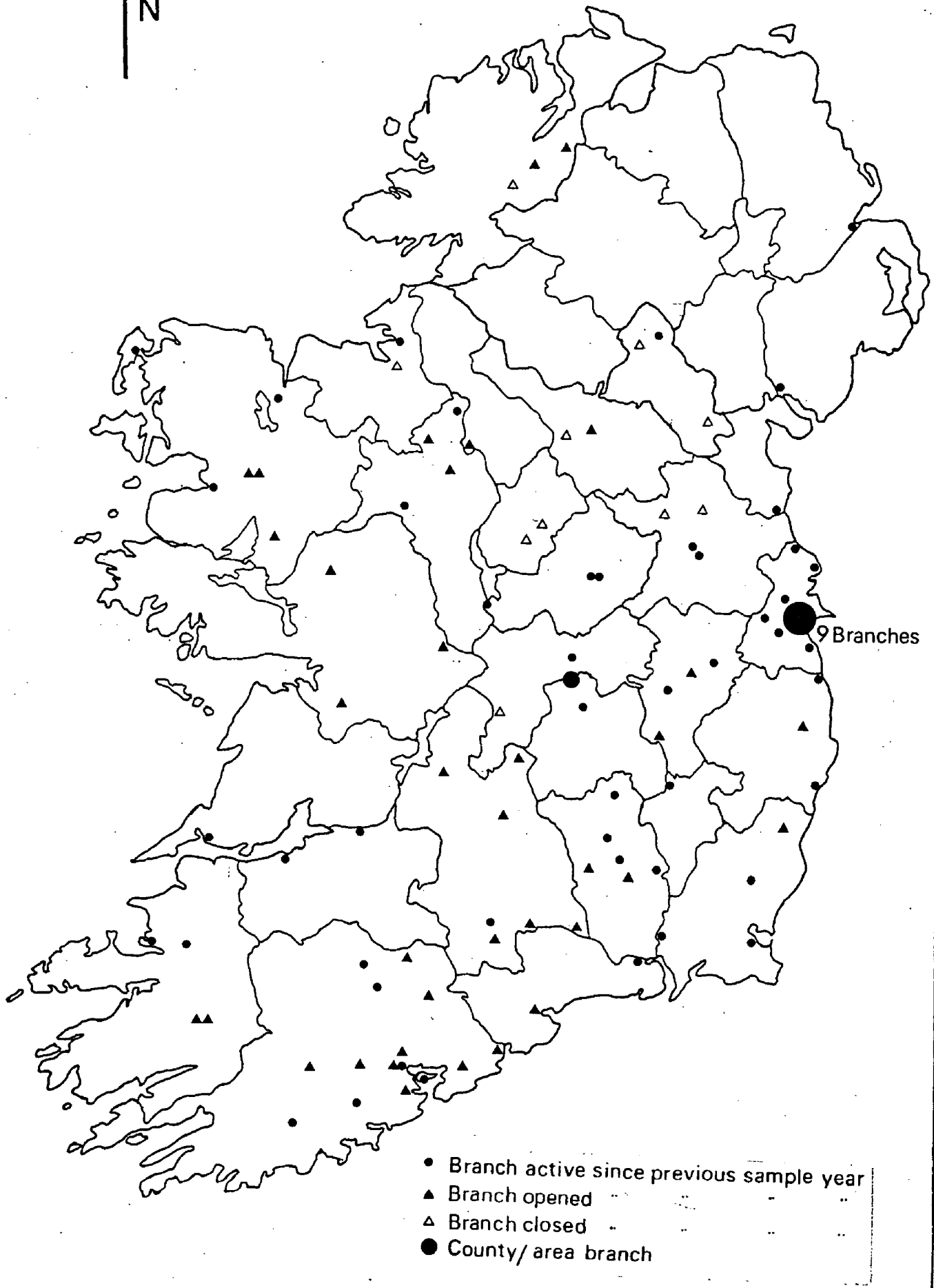
A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	% of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	13	11	84.6%	19	19.6%
5-10,000	16	14	87.5%	16	16.5%
3-5,000	21	15	71.4%	16	16.5%
1,500-3,000	48	14	29.2%	14	14.4%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	30	33.0%
Total	98	54	55.1%	95	100.0%

All population figures - 1936 Census.

Summary: The biggest branches continued to be very largely concentrated in the largest centres. Overall, these branches had 28 delegates between them, representing at least 14,000 members, and probably 2 to 3 thousand more, at a time when total membership was somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000. This meant that at least half the membership was concentrated in about 25% of the branches.

1935

By 1935, the ITGWU had experienced a relatively large growth in branch terms, now having 95 branches, an increase of 26 on 1932 (v. MAP 8). Six of the new branches catered exclusively to members in mental hospitals, but the union had had great success in organising other workers and especially those in new protected industries. The new branches were not evenly distributed throughout the country. Leinster had made a net gain of only 2 since 1932, giving it 42, while Munster's total had more than doubled from 13 to 31. Connacht now had 15 branches, 6 more than in 1932 and equal to its 1923 total, while Ulster, with 7, had the same number as in 1932. Again, quite a few of the new branches were in small centres, indicating that the union may still have been willing to risk setting up branches in areas where



MAP 8. ITGWU BRANCHES 1935

the employment prospects may not have been very secure.

Provincial Review:

Leinster: Dublin City and County, with a total of 15 branches, led the field in Leinster. There were now 9 branches in the city, each one catering to different sections of workers and representing a tendency to concentrate membership in city branches rather than in branches dispersed around the suburbs. There were now 8 Dublin branches (6 in 1932) entitled to elect delegates to conference and between them they elected 25 (13 in 1932). This represented at least 12,500 members, again demonstrating the large proportion of the membership located in, or near to, the capital. Kilkenny, with 6, had the next highest county branch total. However, these all had less than 500 members and although they were probably all based on industrial workers these would not have been employed in very large concerns.

Kildare and Wexford each had 4 branches, all located in the largest towns in each county. Despite this, none of these was large enough to elect a delegate. In fact, the only other Leinster branches to have 500 members were in Athlone (as in 1932), Carlow, Bray and Laois/Offaly, all of

which had reached this size since 1932. The Drogheda branch had fallen below a membership of 500 but 1935 was the only year during the 1930s in which this happened. Generally, although the increasing number of branches (with most Leinster counties now having 2 or 3) reflects the increasing level of industrialisation, it also indicates that most of this growth was in the form of relatively small concerns which could not develop to a large size because of the limited market they were serving. Because of this, branches tended to remain small but they did provide a substantial basis for growth which would come in later years and the majority of branches lasted well.

Munster: The substantial increase in branch numbers in Munster was accounted for by Cork, with 15 branches (6 in 1932), Tipperary, with 7 branches (1 in 1932), Kerry, with 4 branches (2 in 1932), and Waterford, with 2 branches (1 in 1932), while Limerick, with 2 branches, and Clare, with 1 branch, had not gained any since 1932. Most new branches in the first 4 counties mentioned were in the relatively larger towns and, as with Leinster, represent the union concentrating membership into more centralised branches. The relative absence of large towns in Limerick, Waterford and Clare accounts for the mere 5 branches they shared, with industry and port employment being concentrated in a small

number of centres.

As in Leinster, most Munster branches had less than 500 members. Only Cork City, with 5 delegates (4 in 1932), Limerick City, with 3 (2 in 1932), and Blarney, Mallow, Thurles, Tralee and Kilrush, with one each, had yet achieved delegate status, reflecting the tendency for larger branches to locate in the larger towns in each county. Of the 5 with a single delegate each, all except Tralee had reached that size since 1932. As in Leinster, due to the small size of most manufacturing concerns, branches could rarely organise among large groups of workers, thus tending to remain small.

Connacht: The increase in employment had also allowed the ITGWU open more branches in Connacht. There were now 3 branches in Galway (none in 1932), 6 in Mayo (3 in 1932), 4 in Roscommon (as in 1932) and one in Leitrim (none in 1932). Only Sligo had shown a decrease, from 2 branches in 1932 to one in 1935. Although most of these branches were again located in the largest towns in each county, their membership base does not appear to have been as secure as the majority of those in Leinster and Munster, because 5 of the 15 had closed by 1938, a relatively high proportion. The Sligo and Arigna branches (the latter based on a local coal mine) were the only two branches with 500 members.

Ulster: Ulster had only a small number of branches, 7 in all, with Monaghan having lost two branches, to leave it with one, and Donegal and Cavan having gained one each, to give them 2 each. Both the Donegal and one of the Cavan branches were in smaller centres and, as such, were probably based on workers in one establishment. The Monaghan branch was based in the local mental hospital so it appears that the union had failed to gain a significant foothold among the workers of the 3 Ulster counties in the Irish Free State. The largest Ulster branches were still those in Belfast and Newry, each of which had at least 500 members.

Town size distribution of branches: The trend had reverted to branches increasingly locating in the larger centres, after the slight fall in the numbers in these in 1932 (v. Table 4.2). By 1935, 67% of branches were in centres of more than 1,500 people, 3 percentage points up on 1932. Eleven (84.6%) of the 13 towns in the 10,000 people and more category had at least one branch. Fourteen (87.5%) of the 16 towns in the 5-10,000 category and 15 (71.4%) of those in the 3-5,000 category had branches. Finally, 14 (29.2%) of the 48 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category had branches. Most growth had taken place in the 3-5,000 category (33.3%) and the 5-10,000 category (37.5%), while even the 1,500-3,000 category had seen a rise of 8.4

percentage points in the number of towns with branches. This indicates that branches in larger centres were replacing those in smaller centres which were unable to survive for extended periods. Of 23 branches that first opened between 1932 and the end of 1934, 18 had closed before the end of 1935, virtually all of these being in centres of less than 1,500 people. The more secure branches re-opened were in larger centres where there had been a branch presence in the 1920s and the membership base was stronger. It appears that in the 1930s the ITGWU was willing to open branches almost anywhere, probably influenced by the experience of the lean years of the 1920s, and took a few years to predict accurately where branches stood the best chance of survival because, although each annual report refers to refusals of requests to start branches where they were thought to be unviable, permission was granted to the aforementioned 18 which proved to be short-lived. This meant a drain on union resources catering to usually small groups of workers whose long term commitment to the union was less than wholehearted. Only 4 towns of 5,000 people or more were without a branch, namely Dundalk, in Leinster, Galway, in Connacht, and Tipperary and Ennis, in Munster. Thus, large towns without branches tended to be fairly evenly distributed throughout the country.

1938

Census of Industrial Production figures for 1938 have been published so from this year onwards it is possible to relate branch structure to industrial employment levels (v. Table 4.3). By 1938 the increase of 50,000 in the industrial workforce, bringing it up to 151,000, had had a marked impact on the ITGWU's branch numbers, although the total of 89 was 6 less than in 1935 (v. MAP 9). This was largely accounted for by the closure of a number of smaller branches, with the union rationalising its operations by dismantling some of the weaker branches. Each year since 1932 had seen the annual report refer to increasing membership, and by 1938 it may have been as high as 50,000, judging by a claim in the 1948 report that the membership of 120,000 in that year was 70,000 above the 1938 figure. This would represent at least a doubling of the 1931 membership and would mean that the ITGWU had organised the equivalent of half the 50,000 new industrial workers, a considerable achievement, given that many of these would be craft workers who would probably have joined craft unions anyway. Members were now engaged in a wide range of occupations, with most being in the manufacturing sector eg. flour milling, sugar manufacturing, bacon curing, cement manufacturing, hosiery manufacturing, paint and brick making, oil refining, carpet

TABLE 4.3 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, ITGWU DELEGATE REPRESENTATION AND BRANCHES 1931 AND 1938

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1 (Branches) 2		Branch Total 3	
	1931	1938	% +/-	1931	1938	1931	1938
Leinster	60,619	91,037	+ 50.2%	15(9)	35(16)	32	47
Carlow	996	1,541	+ 54.7%	- -	1 (1)	1	1
Dlin Cit	42,507	64,952	+ 52.8%	12(6)	26 (7)	7	10
Dlin Co	2,158	3,888	+ 80.2%	- -	2 (2)	7	5
Kildare	934	2,016	+115.8%	- -	- -	2	5
Kilkenny	2,218	2,483	+ 11.9%	1(1)	1 (1)	2	5
Ls/Offly	2,235	3,657	+ 63.6%	1(1)	2 (2)	2	6
Longford	630	506	- 19.7%	- -	- -	1	-
Louth	3,438	6,135	+ 78.4%	1(1)	1 (1)	1	1
Meath	1,427	2,205	+ 54.5%	- -	- -	2	2
Westmth	1,293	1,685	+ 30.3%	- -	1 (1)	2	3
Wexford	1,997	3,076	+ 54.0%	- -	- -	2	4
Wicklow	786	2,259	+187.4%	- -	1 (1)	3	5
Munster	28,962	38,216	+ 32.0%	9(5)	20 (9)	14	26
Clare	995	1,619	+ 62.7%	- -	1 (1)	1	1
Cork Cit	7,259	11,329	+ 56.1%	4(1)	10 (2)	1	3
Cork Co	6,604	7,355	+ 11.4%	1(1)	2 (2)	5	10
Kerry	2,097	2,766	+ 31.9%	1(1)	1 (1)	2	4
Limk Cit	3,164	4,269	+ 34.9%	2(1)	4 (1)	1	1
Limk Co	2,209	1,803	- 18.4%	- -	- -	1	1
Tipprary	3,420	4,721	+ 38	- -	1 (1)	1	5
Watfd Cit	2,187	2,903	+ 32.7%	1(1)	1 (1)	1	1
Watfd Co	1,027	1,451	+ 41.3%	- -	- -	-	-
Connacht	6,875	11,728	+ 70.6%	1(1)	3 (2)	5	10
Galway	2,587	5,495	+112.4%	- -	2 (1)	-	3
Leitrim	792	1,137	+ 43.6%	- -	- -	-	1
Mayo	1,627	3,020	+ 85.6%	- -	- -	3	3
Rcommon	772	663	- 14.1%	- -	- -	-	1
Sligo	1,097	1,413	+ 28.8%	1(1)	1 (1)	2	2
Ulster	5,081	7,336	+ 44.4%	3(2)	3 (2)	2	6
Cavan	977	1,330	+ 36.1%	- -	- -	-	1
Donegal	3,312	4,665	+ 40.9%	- -	- -	-	1
Monaghan	792	1,341	+ 69.3%	- -	- -	-	1
Antrim				2(1)	2 (1)	1	1
Down				1(1)	1 (1)	1	1

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

3 Total number of branches in area.

1:2000000



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/ area branch

MAP 9. ITGWU BRANCHES 1938

planning, tanning and coal mining (ITGWU, 1938, 9).

Provincial Review:

Leinster: MAP 9 shows that, despite the overall decline in branch numbers, Leinster's total had risen to 47 with Kildare, Wicklow, Laois and Offaly gaining extra branches. Dublin still accounted for nearly one third of all branches, with 15, and 9 of its branches now elected 28 delegates, 3 more than in 1935. This represents at least 14,000 members and, when the extra membership in each of these above the minimum 500 members/delegate requirement, added to the membership in the other 6 branches, is considered, there may have been a total Dublin membership of nearly 20,000. This represents an increase of about 10,000 on the 1932 total. The level of industrial employment in the city and county had risen by just over 22,000 to 69,000 in the same period so the ITGWU had probably organised the equivalent of almost half of these new workers. Considering that this organisational effort had to contend with opposition from two other general workers' unions with branches in the city ie. the Workers' Union of Ireland and the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union, the ITGWU had reason to be satisfied with its level of success.

In the rest of Leinster, the largest percentage increases in industrial employment had taken place in counties Kildare, Laois, Wexford and Louth and although the latter had the largest industrial workforce outside of Dublin, it still had only one branch, at Drogheda, possibly due to the presence of another union, or unions, in the area. However, the other three counties had all seen a substantial increase in their branch numbers since 1931, having 14 branches between them. As yet none of these had reached a membership of 500 apart from the amalgamated Laois/Offaly branch. Kilkenny had 5 branches, an increase of three on 1931, in spite of a rise of only 265 in its industrial workforce so this level of success was probably due to organisation among previously non-unionised workers as well as those in new establishments. In Wexford, the doubling of the branch total to 4 had been helped by an increase of almost 1,100 in the industrial workforce, although none of these had yet reached a membership of 500. Offaly had 2 more branches than in 1931, also helped by an increase of nearly 700 in the industrial workforce, and the Tullamore branch had reached a membership of 500. In counties Carlow and Meath, despite substantial increases in industrial employment, there had been no increase in branch or delegate numbers since 1931, indicating a relative failure to benefit from substantially improved conditions. Westmeath's industrial workforce had only increased by 400,

probably accounting for the fact that only one branch had been added to the two in existence in 1931. Longford had lost its one branch extant in 1931, reflecting its position as the only Leinster county where industrial employment had actually fallen since 1931. Thus, apart from a few exceptions, the ITGWU had been able to increase its branch presence in most Leinster counties, taking advantage of increases in industrial employment, and, although the number of branches in Dublin rose by only one, membership in many branches registered impressive increases, reflecting a decision to concentrate membership in existing branches, rather than open a large number of new ones.

Munster: The number of branches in Munster had dropped from 31 in 1935 to 26 in 1938, exactly twice the 1931 figure, and this growth derived much of its impetus from the increase of over 9,000 in the industrial workforce, bringing it up to over 38,000 by 1938. Cork still had the greatest number of branches, with 13, twice its 1931 figure, reflecting a rise of nearly 5,000 in its industrial workforce. The bulk of the employment increase took place in Cork City where the 2 branches had about 5,000 members between them, up from about 2,000 in 1931 and indicating a large measure of success on the ITGWU's part in organising new workers there. This repeats the pattern of Dublin and

suggests that organisation in branches in the largest centres was very effective, with every effort being made to gain members wherever and whenever possible. The same appears to be true of Limerick City where the branch had increased its membership from at least 1,000 in 1931 to over 2,000. Industrial employment had only grown by 1,105 during the 1930s so this indicates a spectacular organisational success on the part of the union, although some of the new members were probably in non-industrial employment, as the ITGWU would not have organised many craft workers in new industry.

Although industrial employment in Cork county had only grown by 750, there were 5 branches more than in 1931, indicating that much of the new industry must have been dispersed among quite a few towns and that the ITGWU did well in organising new workers. In Tipperary, a total of 1,300 new workers helped the union add 4 branches to the solitary one it had (at Cahir) in 1931. None of these had more than 500 members so again the establishments concerned must have been quite dispersed with no major concentrations in any one town. In Waterford, the only branch in 1938 was in Waterford City which had not substantially increased its membership, despite an increase of over 700 in the industrial workforce. In the county, industrial employment had risen by only about 400 and the union had only

temporarily re-opened its branch in Dungarvan in the mid 1930s. Kerry, where industrial employment had risen by about 750, had doubled its branch total from 2 in 1931 to 4 in 1938, although the Fenit branch would have been a predominantly dock worker branch. Tralee's branch had not yet got 1,000 members, but it was still the county's only branch with 500 or more members. Clare, despite an increase of over 600 in the industrial workforce, had still only one branch, at Kilrush, but this had a membership of over 500 since 1935 and may have continued to grow until 1938. In Limerick County, the industrial workforce had shrunk by about 400 since 1931 and this was reflected in the union's failure to open any other branch outside the port of Foynes, where dock workers would have provided most of the membership. In general, Cork, Tipperary, Kerry and Limerick City had seen an increase in branches and membership in line with the increase in industrial employment, while in Clare, Waterford and Limerick County the relatively smaller industrial growth had meant that branch totals remained low.

Connacht: In Connacht, the branch total had risen by only one, to 10, between 1931 and 1938, although there had been 15 branches in 1935. This was in spite of an overall increase in industrial employment of nearly 5,000 to give a total of almost 12,000. By far the greatest part of the

increase was accounted for by Galway and Mayo and it may have been that the tendency for new industry to concentrate spatially may have meant that fewer towns in each county had manufacturing, even of a small scale, than was the case in Leinster and Munster. However, this would imply that branch sizes should have increased, with more delegates being elected, but this only happened in Galway City. This suggests that the ITGWU did not have any significant success in organising new workers in Connacht and this may be because many of these workers may have been part-time small farmers who may not have seen themselves fully as wage labourers (v. chapter 3) and thus not been overly keen to join a trade union. An associated factor may have been that more industry might have been smaller in scale than elsewhere and the employer could maintain a paternalistic relationship with his/her employees, thus discouraging them from unionisation.

Galway City and County had seen their industrial workforce more than double to 5,495 by 1938 and this is largely reflected in the re-opening of 3 branches by that year, there having been none in 1931. Galway City now had 2 branches, of which one had over 1,000 members, and the combined membership of both may have been as high as 1,500. Considering that there was also a branch in Tuam, the union had probably done quite well in taking advantage of the

growth in industrial employment, in Galway at any rate.

In Mayo, however, where industrial employment had almost doubled to 3,000 since 1931, progress had not been as impressive, with only 3 branches in 1938, as in 1931, although there had been 6 during the mid 1930s. Also, none of these 3 branches had, as yet, reached a membership of 500. This tends to support the hypothesis that Connacht workers were reluctant, or were not actively pursued, to join the union. In Sligo, the industrial workforce grew by only 316 and there were no additions to the 2 branches extant in 1931, of which the Sligo Town branch still had at least 500 members. In Leitrim, industrial employment grew by only 345 but this did assist the union in opening a branch in Carrick on Shannon, the county's largest town, which branch was the only one in the county. In Roscommon, industrial employment actually fell, and although there were 4 branches between 1932 and 1935 these must have been very small, as Arigna's was the only branch left open in 1938, having a coal mine as a relatively solid membership base.

Thus, the employment benefits of protected industry largely bypassed Connacht, apart from Galway and Mayo. It was only in the former that the ITGWU was able to make significant gains in terms of branches and membership and this was largely confined to Galway City, with Sligo Town and Arigna having the only other major branches.

Ulster: There were now 6 ITGWU branches as opposed to the 2 branches based in the ports of Belfast and Down in 1931. Industrial employment had only increased by 2,255 in the 3 Ulster counties in the Irish Free State, so the union had probably done quite well in gaining an extra 4 branches in these counties. However, one of these branches was based in a mental hospital (at Monaghan) and the branch at Lisnaboe, in Cavan, was to be short-lived, finally closing in 1942, having already done so in 1939 and re-opened in 1940. Thus, only the branches at Cavan and Convoy were relatively secure, indicating that workers in Ulster, as in Connacht, were relatively slow to join the union.

Town size distribution of branches: The trend towards concentration in larger centres had increased since 1935, with 70% of branches now located in centres of 1,500 people and more, an increase of 3 percentage points on 1935 and one percentage point higher than the previous peak figure, recorded in 1931 (v. Table 4.4). Twelve (92.3%) of the 13 branches in the 10,000 people and more category had at least one branch, with Dundalk being the only exception. Ten (62.5%) of the 16 towns in the 5-10,000 category had branches, with 5 of the towns without branches being in Munster and one in Connacht. Sixteen (76.2%) of the 21 towns in the 3-5,000 category and 11 (22.9%) of the 48 towns

TABLE 4.4 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1938

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	% of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	13	12	92.3%	23	25.8%
5-10,000	16	10	62.5%	12	13.5%
3-5,000	21	16	76.2%	16	18.0%
1,500-3,000	48	11	22.9%	11	12.4%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	27	30.3%
Total	98	49	50.0%	89	100.0%

All population figures - 1936 Census.

in the 1,500-3,000 category had a branch. Thus, there had been an increase in towns with branches in the 10,000 and more and the 3-5,000 categories while the number in the other 2 categories had fallen since 1935.

Summary:

Overall, then, the the first years of the protectionist era had seen the ITGWU carry out a substantial organisation campaign, largely among workers in new tariff-protected industries. Growth in membership and branch numbers had begun in 1932, for the first time since 1920, although the leadership may have been slightly over-anxious to recruit new members, thus not taking sufficient care in deciding where to open new branches, with 18 out of 23 first opened between 1932 and 1934 closing before the end of 1935. By the later 1930s this problem appears to have been approaching solution, with a tendency for less branches to close and for those that did eventually close to survive for longer. This reflects the tendency for more of the new branches to be re-openings of branches, in larger centres, closed during the 1920s. The concentration of much of the new industry in Leinster and Munster, and especially in the largest towns there, is reflected in the great growth of branches in both provinces in comparison to Connacht and

Ulster, where the lower level of industrialisation meant that branch growth was weaker and concentrated in fewer areas. In both Leinster and Munster, growth in most counties tended to reflect the growth of industrial employment, although Louth was a notable exception where a doubling of an already large industrial workforce did not result in any increase in branches. Some counties seemed to gain more branches than the increase in employment would have suggested, but this was probably due to the nature of much of the new industry ie. small concerns dispersed in a number of the larger towns with few large scale establishments. This is supported by the fact that, even by 1938, only 30 branches out of 89 had over 500 members. In general, the branches in large centres such as Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway experienced most growth, with membership doubling in all these to provide the backbone of the union's 50,000 members in 1938. However, growth in other centres, although not as substantial, was of almost equal importance in that it brought the union back into areas where it had not functioned since the 1920s, a factor constantly alluded to in the annual reports, and as such it established an organisational network which would be ready to take advantage of the even greater advances in industrial employment in the post-war years.

SECTION 2 - THE WAR YEARS 1939-1945.

The coming of war in late 1939 highlighted a major weakness in the state's industrial policy, namely that, rather than using indigenous raw materials, many industries were based on imported materials and in the disrupted war-time conditions it was difficult to get supplies from abroad. In these conditions protectionism was an irrelevance and most tariffs were suspended for the duration of the war as the state tried to get supplies from whatever sources were available. Needless to say, this had a marked impact on industrial production, and consequently on employment, the fall in which was reflected in a decline in ITGWU branch numbers across the country. No CIP figures are available for the years between 1939 and 1943, which appear to have been the worst years for unemployment, but it may be assumed that the fall in employment was relatively evenly distributed throughout the country, judging by the decline in branches. However, the harsh conditions did not lead to a continued decline and from 1942 onwards the union appears to have begun to extend its organisational scope to compensate for losses in its original sectors of membership, with branch numbers rising from that year onwards. The sample years selected are 1940 and 1945, the former because

it appears to represent the greatest contraction of branch numbers, while by 1945 CIP figures are available and the union had also begun to extend its organisational structure again, in spite of the constraints imposed by the war.

1940

By 1940 the effects of the war had already had a marked impact, with a total of 77 branches remaining, a drop of 12 since 1938 (v. MAP 10). The annual report claimed that the fall in membership was less than had been expected and that some gains had been made in larger centres, and, indeed, many of the closures did affect smaller branches in smaller centres. The provincial balance had been roughly maintained with Leinster having 43 branches, Munster 22, Connacht 7 and Ulster 6.

Provincial Review:

Leinster: The fall in branches in Leinster was accounted for by the loss of one each in Dublin, Wicklow, Westmeath and Offaly. The closures in Dublin involved the Clondalkin and one city branch, but the latter loss was

1:2000000



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/ area branch

MAP 10. ITGWU BRANCHES 1940

compensated for by the opening of another branch catering to hosiery workers in the city. The closure of the Clondalkin branch represents a further step towards centralising membership in the environs of the city into branches in the city itself. Although 10 branches now had at least 500 members these could only elect 26 delegates to conference between them, as opposed to 28 in 1938. This indicates a drop of at least 1,000 in membership and, spread over all Dublin branches, it may well have been higher. The closure in Westmeath was of the Mullingar branch, a loss in a large town, while the membership of the Athlone branch had fallen below 500 members, a position it had maintained for most of the 1930s. The closure of the Birr branch in Offaly was again probably a substantial loss but the membership may simply have been transferred to the Laois/Offaly branch which now had over 1,000 members, having only had over 500 in 1938. The closure in Wicklow was of the Valleymount branch which had probably been a small one, based on a single establishment, judging by the fact that Valleymount had less than 1,500 people. Also in Wicklow, membership of the Bray Branch had fallen below 500 but this was compensated for by the Arklow branch achieving this position. Throughout the rest of Leinster, the branch totals had not fallen since 1938, and, although one branch less elected delegates than in 1938, the total number of delegates remained the same at 35. This tends to support

the claim in the annual report that larger branches held up quite well in difficult circumstances but, unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the level of decline in smaller branches which managed to stay open.

Munster: There were 22 branches left in Munster, 4 less than in 1938. The decline was accounted for by 2 closures each in Tipperary and Cork, of which one in Cork was the city mental hospital branch whose closure would not have been affected by the war situation. Despite the loss of these branches, delegate numbers actually increased from 20 in 1938 to 23 in 1940, although one branch less had the 500 members necessary to elect a delegate. This growth was accounted for by an increase of about 1,500 in the membership spread between the 2 Cork City branches and again reflects the strength of the union in the country's second largest city, even at a time when membership should have been in decline. This pattern of growth in larger cities was repeated in Limerick, where there were now 2,500 members, as opposed to 2,000 in 1938. The effects of the war on port employment were reflected in the drop in membership below 500 in the predominantly dock worker branches at Kilrush and Cobh, the former for the first time since 1934. Elsewhere in Munster, most branches appeared to be holding their own, helped by being located in relatively

large towns, but, as in Leinster, it is not possible to tell to what extent membership was affected by the fall in industrial employment.

Connacht: The decline in Connacht's branch total to 7, from 10 in 1938, was caused by the closure of branches in Sligo, Roscommon and Leitrim, with the latter 2 counties being left without any ITGWU presence. In Galway and Mayo, the branches were able to remain open, probably due to their larger industrial workforces. However, Galway now had only one delegate to conference, as against 2 in 1938, probably reflecting the impact of the war on both port and industrial employment. In Sligo, the town's Number 2 branch had folded, probably for the same reason as the membership decline in Galway. The closure of the Arigna branch in Roscommon may have been due to a decline in the demand for coal for industrial uses, but it re-opened the following year as production no doubt increased to help fill the gap caused by the shortage of industrial petroleum. The closure of the Carrick on Shannon branch probably reflects the weak position of the small industrial workforce in Leitrim, with the branch being unable to survive once economic conditions deteriorated.

Ulster: In Ulster, the only branch to have closed was that at Monaghan Mental Hospital. Of the 5 remaining, the Belfast and Newry branches were helped by the war legislation banning strikes which encouraged employers to concede workers' demands before a dispute went to the Arbitration Tribunal (ITGWU, 1941, 10). The Convoy, Cavan Town and Lisnaboe branches had also survived but the latter was to close the following year.

Town size distribution of branches: The closure of branches had had a marked impact on the number in smaller centres, with a total of 74% of branches now being in centres of 1,500 people or more, 4 percentage points up on 1938 (v. Table 4.5). Twelve (92.3%) of the 13 branches in the 10,000 people and more category still had branches, with Dundalk remaining the exception. The same 10 (62.5%) of the 16 towns in the 5-10,000 category had branches as in 1938. In the 3-5,000 category 12 (57.1%) of the 21 towns had branches, as against 16 towns in 1938. Eleven (22.9%) of the 48 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category again had branches. Thus, closures had been largely restricted to towns in the smaller centres with only those in the 3-5,000 category being affected while branches in larger centres appear to have been strong enough to withstand losses of membership.

TABLE 4.5 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1940

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/ Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	No. of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	13	12	92.3%	22	28.9%
5-10,000	16	10	62.5%	11	14.5%
3-5,000	21	12	57.1%	12	15.8%
1,500-3,000	48	11	22.9%	11	14.5%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	21	26.3%
Total	98	45	45.9%	77	100.0%

Population figures - 1936 Census.

TABLE 4.7 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1945

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/ Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	% of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	12	11	91.7%	21	22.1%
5-10,000	16	15	93.8%	20	21.1%
3-5,000	23	15	65.2%	16	16.8%
1,500-3,000	49	10	20.4%	10	10.5%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	28	29.5%
Total	100	51	51.0%	95	100.0%

Population figures - 1946 Census.

The membership decline continued until 1942, by which time the ITGWU appears to have begun to re-extend its organisation. This was helped by the re-opening and enlarging of coal mines and the development of turf cutting to augment fuel supplies (ITGWU, 1941, 6). However, the problem of non-union labour had to be contended with. In the conditions of unemployment, short-time and the reduction of earnings, some members fell behind in their subscription fees and this presented officials with the problem of not alone having to defend their members' positions, but also making sure all members still in employment remained in the union. Almost paradoxically, perhaps, the difficult conditions probably encouraged others to rejoin, recognising the need to defend their wage levels and improve them, if possible, and to this end the union achieved most success in areas not under direct state control where wages were regulated by successive government orders. The increasing unemployment and resultant emigration had forced the ITGWU to begin an organisational campaign in 1940 to compensate for losses in membership and it reflects favourably on the success of this campaign that by 1942 there were 3 extra branches, rising steadily to 95 by 1945 (6 more than in 1938). The difficult conditions probably contributed to the increased tensions between the ITGWU and British-based unions, most notably the ATGWU, which competed for general worker members. In 1941, this led to a strike in the Dublin

United Tramway Company over a dispute between the 2 unions. Matters came to a head in 1944 when the ITUC split as the ITGWU and a number of smaller Irish unions broke away to form the rival Congress of Irish Unions (CIU), leaving the British-based unions, and some other Irish unions, in the ITUC.

1945

Provincial Review:

Of the 95 branches open in 1945, Leinster had 41 (2 less than in 1940), Munster had 35 (13 more than in 1940), Connacht had 12 (5 more than in 1940) and Ulster had 7 (2 more than in 1940)(v. MAP 11). Thus, there were 18 branches more than in 1940 and 6 more than in 1938, despite the fact that industrial employment had fallen by nearly 14,000 between 1938 and 1945 (v. Table 4.6).

Leinster: Despite the fact that industrial employment increased between 1944 and 1945, the ITGWU's branch organisation had actually contracted since 1940. Four branches had closed; those at Portlaoise Mental Hospital



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/area branch

MAP 11. ITGWU BRANCHES 1945

TABLE 4.6 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, ITGWU DELEGATE REPRESENTATION AND BRANCHES 1938 AND 1945

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1 (Branches) 2		Branch Total 3	
	1938	1945	% +/-	1938	1945	1938	1945
Leinster	91,037	85,959	- 5.6%	35(16)	36 17)	47	41
Carlow	1,541	1,449	- 6.0%	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1
Dlin Cit	64,952	58,302	-10.2%	26 (7)	27 (8)	10	10
Dlin Co	3,888	3,664	- 5.8%	2 (2)	2 (2)	5	4
Kildare	2,016	2,283	+13.2%	- -	1 (1)	5	4
Kilkenny	2,483	2,283	- 8.1%	1 (1)	2 (2)	5	5
Ls/Offly	3,657	3,633	- 0.7%	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	3
Longford	506	396	-21.7%	- -	- -	-	-
Louth	6,135	6,082	- 0.9%	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1
Meath	2,205	1,795	-18.6%	- -	- -	2	1
Westmth	1,685	1,076	-36.1%	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	3
Wexford	3,076	2,864	- 6.9%	- -	- -	4	4
Wicklow	2,259	2,132	- 5.2%	1 (1)	- -	5	5
Munster	38,216	36,497	- 4.5%	20 (9)	22 (9)	14	35
Clare	1,619	2,015	+24.5%	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	4
Cork Cit	11,329	9,860	-13.0%	10 (2)	12 (2)	1	2
Cork Co	7,355	7,827	+ 6.4%	2 (2)	2 (2)	5	12
Kerry	2,766	2,671	- 3.4%	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	6
Limk Cit	4,269	3,618	-15.2%	4 (1)	4 (1)	1	1
Limk Co	1,803	2,077	+15.2%	- -	- -	1	1
Tipprary	4,721	4,439	- 6.0%	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	8
Watfd Cit	2,903	2,197	-24.3%	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1
Watfd Co	1,451	1,793	+23.6%	- -	- -	-	-
Connacht	11,728	9,249	-21.1%	3 (2)	2 (2)	5	12
Galway	5,495	3,662	-33.4%	2 (1)	1 (1)	3	4
Leitrim	1,137	698	-38.6%	- -	- -	-	-
Mayo	3,020	2,613	-13.5%	- -	- -	3	5
Rcommon	663	888	+33.9%	- -	1 (1)	-	1
Sligo	1,413	1,388	- 1.8%	1 (1)	- -	2	2
Ulster	7,366	6,197	-15.5%	3 (2)	4 (3)	2	7
Cavan	1,330	1,363	+ 2.5%	- -	- -	-	3
Donegal	4,665	3,576	-23.3%	- -	1 (1)	-	1
Monaghan	1,341	1,258	- 6.2%	- -	- -	-	1
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)	1	1
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

3 Total number of branches in area.

and Mountmellick (County Laois), Trim (County Meath) and Ballymore Eustace (County Kildare), while those opened were at Avoca (County Wicklow) and Mullingar (County Westmeath). Thus, the closures were mainly of smaller branches and reflect the continuing trend to concentration of membership in larger branches in Leinster. The total number of industrial employees had declined by just over 5,000 since 1938 so this inevitably provoked a decline in branch totals of 6 since 1938. However, it appears that while there were fewer branches, those remaining were more tightly organised as the same number of branches as in 1938 (17) elected one delegate more than in that year, sending a total of 36 to conference. The extra delegate was provided by Dublin (which accounted for 29), demonstrating that the city branches had maintained a remarkably good level of organisation, despite a decline of nearly 7,000 in industrial employment between the city and county, with industry there being more likely to be based on imported raw materials due to the proximity of port facilities.

Outside Dublin, Newbridge, in Kildare, now had 500 members and this expansion was probably helped by the rise of 267 in industrial employment between 1938 and 1945. Kilkenny also had an extra branch with 500 members, showing that a well run organisation campaign could win extra members, even in the face of declining industrial

employment. Of course, the presence of a relatively large branch at Moneenroe, based on the Castlecomer coalfield, was an important factor, with the increased demand for coal helping it to maintain a membership of at least 500 throughout the war years. Carlow Town's branch had a membership of 500 since 1938, reflecting the fact that industrial employment in the county had remained almost static. The re-opened Mullingar branch had reached a membership of 500 but with industrial employment in Westmeath falling by 609 this happened at the expense of Athlone's branch whose membership had fallen below 500. A decline of 410 in Meath's industrial workforce was responsible for the closure of the Trim branch. In Wicklow, the branch at Arklow had fallen below a membership of 500, although the industrial workforce had only fallen by 127, but the opening of a branch at Avoca, possibly based on mining, had provided some compensation for this and exemplifies the union's drive to organise in new sectors to compensate for losses in old ones.

The general pattern in Leinster was one of branch contraction throughout the war years but this probably masks a restructuring of membership with more being concentrated in fewer branches and losses in some branches being made good by gains in others. A decline in industrial employment

did not necessarily lead to a reduction in membership (although in some cases it did) as the union's organisation campaigns appear to have made considerable progress in sectors in which it may not have had much success before.

Munster: In Munster, there had been a marked expansion in branch activity with an increase of 13 branches over 1938 and of 9 over 1938. This compensated for the slight decrease in concentration of membership in larger branches, as the 9 branches which had elected 22 delegates in 1938 now elected only 20. Cork had 14 branches (13 in 1938, 10 in 1940), Tipperary had 8 (5 in 1938, 3 in 1940), Kerry had 6 (4 in 1938 and 1940) while Clare had 4 branches (one in 1938 and 1940). Waterford and Limerick had remained static since 1938 with one and two branches respectively. This was a dramatic and widespread growth, outstripping even pre-war totals, and, while much of it can be accounted for by the fact that industrial employment in the province had risen to within less than 2,000 of the 1938 figure of over 38,000, an important factor was the war time organisational campaign which had been directed towards small centres to compensate for losses in larger centres (ITGWU, 1945, 6). Thus, there were now branches at Killorglin, Castleisland and Dingle in Kerry, at Slieve Ardagh in Tipperary and at Kilfenora in Clare. These 5 accounted for over half the increase since

1938, with the others being branches re-established in some of the larger towns in Cork and Tipperary, where there had been branches earlier in the 1930s, along with both a general and a mental hospital-based branch at Ennis in Clare. The increase in Clare was stimulated by a rise of nearly 400 in the number of industrial employees between 1938 and 1945, but in every other county the industrial workforce had declined, thus making this expansion all the more remarkable. Nearly every major town in the province now had a branch, although most of these had less than 500 members and the new-found need to open branches in small centres may have meant that some branches had only a relatively small number of members.

Connacht: Although industrial employment in Connacht was 21% lower in 1945 than in 1938, the ITGWU had still managed to gain an extra 2 branches there, bringing the total to 12, and marking a good recovery of fortunes since 1940, when there had been only 7 branches. In Galway, the Tuam branch had been re-opened, and one opened for the first time at Ballinasloe Mental Hospital. In Mayo, a branch had been opened at Castlebar Mental Hospital, and there was now a second branch in Ballina. In Roscommon, the Arigna branch had remained open for most of the war as coal production was increased to supplement fuel supplies and it was one of only

2 in Connacht to have 500 members, with the Ballinaloe branch being the only other to have achieved this. Thus, neither the 2 Galway branches nor the Sligo branch had a membership of 500. The fall in membership in both Galway and Mayo reflects the fall in industrial employment in both and the effort to compensate for this, as in Munster, had forced the union to organise smaller groups of workers in more centres. The fall of 40% in industrial employment in Leitrim, leaving it with only 69 such workers in 1945, meant that organising a branch there was impractical.

Ulster: The total of 7 branches in Ulster was still very low, although Cavan now had 3 branches, all in relatively large towns and helped by the fact that industrial employment in 1945 was very slightly up on that for 1938. A decline of about 20% in Donegal's industrial workforce meant that the Convoy branch was still the only one in that county, while similar conditions in Monaghan meant that the mental hospital based-branch in Monaghan Town was again the only one open.

Town size distribution of branches: The trend towards branches locating in larger centres had been slightly reversed, with 71% of branches now in centres of 1,500 people or more, 3 percentage points less than in 1940 (v.

Table 4.7). Eleven (91.7%) of the 12 towns in the 10,000 people and more category had a branch, Dundalk again being the only exception. In the 5-10,000 category, 15 (93.8%) of the 16 towns had a branch, a big improvement on 1940 when 6 towns were without branches, and now the only exception was Dungarvan, in Waterford, which may, at this stage, have been organised by the rival ATGWU. In the 3-5,000 category, 15 (65.2%) of the 23 towns had a branch while 10 (20.4%) of the 49 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category had a branch. Thus most categories had remained almost static since 1940 apart from the 5-10,000 category which now had an extra 5 towns with branches. The other area of change, as mentioned above, was that more branches opened in towns of less than 1,500 people as the ITGWU was forced to cast its organisational net beyond its usual constituency of larger towns.

Summary:

Generally, the ITGWU had shown its resourcefulness in dealing with the war-time situation. Initially, it had lost membership and branches but, as early as 1940, it had begun a fresh organisational campaign to win new members, some in new areas and sectors, to compensate for that lost due to rising unemployment. It was also helped somewhat by the

fact that it was now more difficult to win improvements in wages and conditions from employers and that many workers saw the best way of achieving this as being through joining a union, with the ITGWU's position as the country's largest, and therefore perhaps the strongest, union making it an obvious choice for many. The need to get members wherever possible forced the union to move into some smaller centres which it had largely begun to ignore by the late 1930s. In the context of overall union membership, figures published for 1945 indicate that, with about 51,600 of the 80,300 members of general workers' unions in the Irish Free State, it occupied a commanding position in the movement. This strength was to be maintained as the union reaped the benefits of a dramatic post-war expansion in industrial employment.

SECTION 3 - POST-WAR GROWTH 1946-1957.

The constraints imposed by the war situation had meant, not only that less goods were produced, but also that, with government imposed wage restraint, purchasing power fell throughout the war years. By the end of the war, a considerable level of consumer demand had built up and the

efforts to satisfy this in the immediate post-war period led to a large increase in industrial production and hence in the level of industrial employment. Thus, although industrial employment had been increasing in the later war years, the rate of growth accelerated significantly after 1945, and in 1946 the workforce had grown by 17,000 over the previous year. This expansion continued steadily until 1950, from which point the rate tapered off. The ITGWU was able to carry out a very successful campaign of organisation among new industrial workers; this was reflected in a growing number of branches and also of delegates and branches electing delegates. The sample years selected are 1950 and 1955, the former because it was the peak year of employment in the post-war boom period, and the latter because it allows the level of change in branch structure during the relatively stagnant 1950s be gauged. It is also the last year in which the union's register records openings and closures of branches.

By 1950, membership estimates varied between 116,000 and 130,000. The higher figure may include members who had not paid their membership contributions and, thus, were technically not members and, as the higher estimate was submitted to the CIU, the ITGWU may have used it as a means of winning extra delegates to the Congress Annual Conference, with delegate positions being awarded in

proportion to the membership. Whichever figure is accepted, membership had at least doubled since 1945, which indicates that the union organised a major proportion of the 65,000 workers who had joined the industrial workforce since that year. The annual report for 1948 claimed a membership of hundreds of clerical workers, located mainly where manual workers had already been organised. In this way, the organisation of workers in relatively prosperous conditions could be an almost self-perpetuating phenomenon, as the organisation of one group could encourage others to join also.

Although branch numbers had also risen, the increase had not been anything as dramatic as that in membership. There were now 122 branches countrywide listed in the union's register (although the file in the Registry of Friendly Societies gives a total of 134). While the figure of 122 was 27 higher than in 1945 it was less than a 30 percentage point rise, as compared with a 100 percentage point or more rise in membership (v. MAP 12). This was mainly due to the locational policy of most new industry where many membership gains were secured. Industry still depended largely on imported goods for raw materials, and for this reason still tended to locate in larger towns, predominantly in the east and south of the country where transport costs from the coast would not be too high. A

further factor was the union's fear of starting small, short-lived branches in smaller centres. During the war a number of branches, opened in small centres, had seen the members leave once the immediate problem was sorted out, probably a recurrence of the pattern in the early 1930s. Before allowing a branch to open the union now asked for an assurance from those requesting it that all would be done to keep it open (ITGWU, 1947, 11). Similar reasoning probably lay behind the refusal to grant membership to substantial numbers of agricultural workers who, it was feared, would not be overly conscientious about maintaining membership for very long. Of course, the leadership would have recalled the experience of the 1920s when the bulk of the rural membership fell away in the space of a few years (v. chapter 3) and this probably provided a very strong disincentive to expend resources on potentially unreliable members.

All this suggests a union which was becoming increasingly professional in its approach to organisation and activities and this was repeated throughout the trade union movement in general. Unions were by now an accepted element in national life, having very largely discarded the image of anti-social and generally suspect organisations which many people had held of them earlier in the century. This was accompanied, and encouraged, by the continuing

change in attitude to economic life in general, whereby the government was getting more actively involved in sponsoring growth and in creating a more favourable climate for it to take place in. Thus, the late 1940s and early 1950s saw successive governments moving to establish semi-state bodies whose role was to facilitate industrial growth, as well as try to influence its location, among them being the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and Coras Trachtala (v. chapter 2). An important element in these developments was to win the support and co-operation of the trade union movement (McCarthy, 1977, 529) and to provide a means of bringing relative order to the industrial relations scene. The two prongs of this strategy were the setting up of an independent Labour Court in 1947, under government aegis, to which trade unions of workers or employers could refer a dispute, and also the negotiation of annual national wage agreements, starting from 1948, by representatives of both sides, with government appointees as mediators. These national-scale developments demanded of the trade union movement in general that it continue the trend to greater organisation and centralisation and this is mirrored in the ITGWU's organisation, whereby a rapidly expanding membership was concentrated in relatively fewer, but larger, branches. Thus, the emphasis since 1946 was to organise on an industrial, rather than a regional, basis, with the aim being to organise as many workers as possible in sectors

which the union considered to be its own constituency, rather than try to win small numbers of members in other sectors.

1950

Provincial Review:

The 122 branches in existence in 1950 were still very largely concentrated in the east and south of the country. Leinster had 51 branches, Munster 38, Connacht 20 and Ulster 13 (v. MAP 12).

Leinster: The Leinster total had risen by 10 since the end of the war with the increase being accounted for by Wicklow (3), Louth and Offaly (2 each) and Carlow, Longford and Laois (one each) and largely made possible by the increase of nearly 43,000 (almost 50%) in the provincial industrial workforce in that period (v. Table 4.8). Although the increase in branch numbers was almost 25%, this does not adequately reflect the union's expansion and for a truer representation, the delegate lists are more useful. These show that, while 17 branches elected 36 delegates

1:2000000



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened
- △ Branch closed
- County/ area branch

MAP 12. ITGWU BRANCHES 1950

TABLE 4.8 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, ITGWU DELEGATE REPRESENTATION AND BRANCHES 1945 AND 1950

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1 (Branches) 2		Branch Total 3	
	1945	1950	% +/-	1945	1950	1945	1950
Leinster	85,959	128,619	+ 49.6%	36 (17)	82 (27)	41	51
Carlow	1,449	1,997	+ 37.8%	1 (1)	2 (1)	1	2
Dlin Cit	58,302	86,698	+ 48.7%	27 (8)	54 (8)	10	10
Dlin Co	3,664	6,868	+ 87.4%	2 (2)	3 (2)	4	4
Kildare	2,283	4,388	+ 92.2%	1 (1)	2 (2)	4	4
Kilkenny	2,283	2,593	+ 13.6%	2 (2)	4 (2)	5	5
Ls/Offly	3,633	5,676	+ 56.2%	1 (1)	5 (3)	3	6
Longford	396	833	+110.4%	-	-	-	1
Louth	6,082	8,104	+ 33.2%	1 (1)	4 (2)	1	3
Meath	1,795	3,229	+ 79.9%	-	1 (1)	1	1
Westmth	1,076	1,986	+ 84.6%	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	3
Wexford	2,864	3,482	+ 21.6%	-	4 (3)	4	4
Wicklow	2,132	2,765	+ 29.7%	-	3 (2)	5	8
Munster	36,497	51,426	+ 40.9%	22 (9)	48 (17)	35	38
Clare	2,015	2,645	+ 31.3%	1 (1)	2 (2)	4	3
Cork Cit	9,860	15,358	+ 55.8%	12 (2)	23 (2)	2	2
Cork Co	7,827	10,905	+ 39.3%	2 (2)	7 (6)	12	14
Kerry	2,671	4,031	+ 50.9%	1 (1)	1 (1)	6	7
Limk Cit	3,618	4,387	+ 21.3%	4 (1)	8 (1)	1	1
Limk Co	2,077	2,208	+ 6.3%	-	-	1	1
Tipprary	4,439	6,763	+ 52.4%	1 (1)	4 (4)	8	9
Watfd Cit	2,197	3,380	+ 53.8%	1 (1)	3 (1)	1	1
Watfd Co	1,793	1,749	- 2.5%	-	-	-	-
Connacht	9,249	12,680	+ 37.1%	2 (2)	9 (8)	12	20
Galway	3,662	5,019	+ 37.1%	1 (1)	5 (4)	4	7
Leitrim	698	1,002	+ 43.6%	-	-	-	1
Mayo	2,613	3,570	+ 36.6%	-	2 (2)	5	8
Rcommon	888	1,069	+ 20.4%	1 (1)	-	1	1
Sligo	1,388	2,020	+ 45.5%	-	2 (2)	2	2
Ulster	6,197	9,962	+ 60.8%	4 (3)	8 (7)	7	13
Cavan	1,363	2,338	+ 71.5%	-	1 (1)	7	13
Donegal	3,576	5,625	+ 57.3%	1 (1)	4 (4)	1	5
Monaghan	1,258	1,999	+ 58.9%	-	-	1	1
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)	1	1
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

3 Total number of branches in area

between them in 1945, by 1950, 27 branches elected a total of 87. Although the number of delegates elected rose by 59 percentage points, the number of branches electing them rose by almost twice that figure, at 114 percentage points. This shows that the larger branches were organising the lion's share of new membership. Again, Dublin led the way, and although it still had only 14 branches, 10 of these accounted for 57 delegates, representing a minimum of 28,500 members, and with extra members who did not make up a voting unit of 500, the figure was probably close to 35,000 in Dublin City and County. This expansion was stimulated by the fact that 30,600 of Leinster's 43,000 new industrial workers were located in Dublin, highlighting the continued domination of the country's industrial life by the capital. Some branches were now very large, with the Dublin No. 1 branch having about 10,000 members and No. 4 having about 3,000. The expansion was not confined to the city, with the Balbriggan and Lucan branches having over 500 and over 1,000 members respectively.

Outside Dublin, the trend towards concentration of membership into larger branches had also continued. In Louth, where the industrial workforce had grown by just over 2,000, there was a new branch, with 500 members, at Dundalk, and the Drogheda branch, with 3 delegates, had 1,000 members more than in 1945. In Longford, where the industrial

workforce had grown by 437, the union had opened a branch for the first time since the 1930s. Kildare, with the province's third largest industrial workforce, still had 4 branches and only one of these (at Newbridge) had reached a membership of 500 since 1945, in which year the Naas branch had been the only one of this size. In Wexford, although, industrial employment had only grown by 618, the branches at Wexford Town (2), and Enniscorthy and New Ross (1 each) now had delegates, representing at least 2,000 members in a county with less than 3,500 industrial workers, although dock workers at Wexford and New Ross would also have provided a large proportion of the membership. In Carlow, there was now a branch at Tullow and the Carlow Town branch had gotten over 1,000 members for the first time, helped by an increase of 548 in the industrial workforce. In Kilkenny, the growth in union membership had been quite marked, despite an increase of only 310 in the industrial workforce. Of the 5 branches, 2 now had over 1,000 members each and one had over 500. This was 1,500 members up on 1945 and the union must have organised a considerable number of non-industrial workers, possibly along with hitherto non-unionised industrial workers, to achieve it. In Wicklow, there were 633 new industrial employees, and this had helped the union open 3 new branches. These were all in small centres and were in the west of the county so the membership could not easily be served by the large,

established branches along the coast on the eastern side of the Wicklow Mountains. Of these latter branches, Arklow's now had over 1,000 members while Bray's had over 500, both having had less than 500 in 1945. In Offaly, with 1,620 new industrial workers, a new branch had been opened at Clara and a second one at Tullamore, with 1,500 members between them, a substantial increase. In Laois, no branch apart from the Laois/Offaly branch had over 500 members, although there was a new branch at Abbeyleix. Westmeath was the only Leinster county where growth was not apparent. Although it had 910 new industrial workers, there were still only 3 branches and only one with 500 members.

With the exception of Westmeath, the pattern in Leinster was of a very substantial increase in membership, overwhelmingly centred on Dublin due to its preponderance of industrial workers. Most growth occurred in the larger branches, with few new branches being established. The major exceptions to this were Louth, where more branches could have been expected before 1950, Offaly and Wicklow, whose 3 new small branches proved to be relatively short-lived.

Munster: The branch pattern in Munster had changed little with only 3 more branches than in 1945 (when there were 38), accounted for by 2 extra in Cork, one extra in both Tipperary and Kerry and one less in Clare. As in Leinster, however, this relatively small rise in the branch total was due to a concentration of membership in existing branches, of which 17 had 500 members or more, as opposed to 9 in 1945. Thus, nearly half of all Munster's branches had 500 or more members, between them electing 48 delegates. The largest proportion of the new membership was in Cork City, where the 2 branches now had 23 delegates (11,500 members) between them, Cork County, where 6 branches now elected 7 delegates between them, and Limerick City, where the branch elected 8 delegates, twice as many as in 1945. Elsewhere, of Tipperary's 9 branches 4 now had 500 members each, while of Kerry's 7 branches, only the one at Tralee had more than 500 members. This expansion in Munster was spurred by a rise of nearly 15,000 in the province's industrial workforce, with all areas except Waterford County contributing to this increase. In Cork, Tipperary and Waterford City, much of the increase was accounted for by larger branches while in Kerry and Clare it appears to have been more evenly spread across the branches, with few having more than one delegate, and not even that in 6 of Kerry's 7 branches. In Clare, the Kilrush branch had reached a membership of 500 or more since 1945, compensating for the

closure of the Kilfenora branch.

Thus, the picture in Munster was very similar to that in Leinster. There had been a perceptible tightening up of the ITGWU's branch structure and, although a substantial proportion of the 15,000 new industrial workers had been organised, this did not necessitate the establishment of many new branches; instead, new members were incorporated in existing branches, about half of which now had at least 500 members and were thus less vulnerable to closure if one group of workers should be forced to leave through loss of employment.

Connacht: There were now 20 branches in Connacht, as opposed to 12 in 1945. This was a large proportional rise but the province had started from a low base and in that sense the expansion is not so surprising. The number of delegates also increased, with 9 being elected by 8 branches as against 2 being elected by 2 branches in 1945, so the increase in the number of branches was also accompanied by an increase in the size of branches. The provincial increase in industrial employment was 3,341 which suggests that the ITGWU did very well in organising new workers in Connacht, although it may well have been that there were still quite a few non-unionised workers in established concerns, for the reasons discussed above, and the union may

also have made belated gains among these.

In Galway, the workforce had risen by 1,357 and there were 3 new branches. Four branches now elected 5 delegates, as opposed to the mere one elected in 1945, so Galway obviously accounted for a major proportion of the membership increase. In Mayo, where there were 957 new workers, there were also 3 new branches, bringing the total to 8. There were now 2 branches each in Ballina and Castlebar, although this splitting of the branch load was hardly necessitated by their size as none of them had a delegate. Only the Foxford and Castlebar Mental Hospital branches had 500 members, so most of the Mayo branches remained relatively small, with the organisation of new workers being shared out comparatively evenly among them. In Sligo, the increase of 632 in industrial employment allowed the Ballisodare branch achieve a membership of 500. In Roscommon, where industrial employment only rose by 181, a branch had still been opened in Castlerea, in addition to the strong branch in Arigna. In Leitrim, with 304 new industrial workers, a branch had been opened in Manorhamilton, although it had less than 500 members.

Ulster: As before, there were many similarities between Ulster and Connacht. The industrial workforce, despite having grown by 3,765 to nearly 10,000, was still quite small in absolute terms, and this meant that the union could not hope for a very substantial membership there, at least outside of Donegal. Nonetheless, there were 6 new branches, giving a total of 13. Four of these were in Donegal and 2 in Cavan. Donegal, with 2,049 new industrial workers, giving a total of over 5,600, had at last got a substantial level of organisation, and with 3 branches having 500 members the union was now in quite a strong position. In Cavan, the 2 new branches reflected the increase of almost 1,000 in industrial employees, but only the Cavan Town branch had a delegate, mainly due to the low overall total of workers. Monaghan, with 741 extra workers, had not added to its branch at Monaghan Mental Hospital, leaving it the only county in the Republic without a general workers' branch.

Thus, Ulster and Connacht were similar in many respects. Branch numbers in both grew relatively more than in either Leinster or Munster, but outside of Galway and Donegal, most remained relatively small. This contrast with the general trend in the east and south of the country probably owed a lot to the large size of counties such as

Donegal, Mayo and Galway where the union did not want to have its officials catering to geographically dispersed groups of workers from central locations and thus established relatively more small branches.

Town size distribution of branches: There had been a slight trend away from concentration of branches in larger centres, with a fall of 4 percentage points since 1945 leaving, 67% of branches in towns of 1,500 people or more (v. Table 4.9). Part of this is due to the increase in membership, bringing the union into small centres where it was difficult to organise workers in existing branches. However, another important factor was a fall of 5% in the number of towns in the 1,500 or more category between the 1946 and 1951 Censuses. This meant that there were fewer large centres for the union to organise in. All 14 of the towns in the 10,000 or more category had at least one branch, Dundalk having at last gained a branch in 1949. Fifteen (93.8%) of the 16 towns in the 5-10,000 category also had branches, with Dungarvan again being the only exception. Sixteen (76.2%) of the 21 towns in the 3-5,000 category now had branches, an increase of 11% since 1945, due to there being one extra town with a branch and two less towns in the category. Finally, 17 (38.6%) of the 44 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category had branches. This was nearly

TABLE 4.9 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1950

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	No. of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	14	14	100.0%	25	20.7%
5-10,000	16	15	93.8%	23	19.0%
3-5,000	21	16	76.2%	16	13.2%
1,500-3,000	44	17	38.6%	17	14.0%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	51	33.1%
Total	95	62	65.3%	122	100.0%

TABLE 4.11 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1955

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	% of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	14	14	100.0%	28	22.0%
5-10,000	16	15	93.8%	24	18.9%
3-5,000	21	16	76.2%	16	12.6%
1,500-3,000	44	17	38.6%	18	14.2%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	41	22.3%
Total	95	62	65.3%	127	100.0%

All population figures - 1951 Census.

twice the percentage of 1945 as there were 5 less towns in the category and 7 extra towns had branches. Thus, the union was now represented in a large proportion of the country's largest towns.

Summary: By 1950 the ITGWU had achieved a membership comparable to that of 1920, and had representation in a large number of towns. There had been a tendency for more branches to be located in large centres in Leinster and Munster with some smaller branches opened during the war years closing and membership probably being transferred to adjacent larger branches. In Connacht and Ulster a number of small branches had been opened in smaller centres with the union not being able to concentrate membership to the same extent as in the former 2 provinces. The union had also improved its position in the general workers' trade union movement, now representing about 128,500 (79%) of the 163,000 members in general unions in the Republic of Ireland, 14 percentage points more than in 1945. This was a very impressive proportion and suggests that the ITGWU was by far the most successful union in organising new industrial workers in the post-war period.

The pattern established by 1950 was to be maintained throughout the next 7 years. Industrial employment levelled off from that year onwards, rising by only about 7,000 by 1955 (v. Table 4.10). This relative stagnation was caused by the satisfaction of the post-war consumer demand which had built up during the war years. Once this was satisfied, and demand returned to more normal levels, the limitations of protectionist policy became increasingly obvious. Due to the small size of the domestic market and the absence of competition from foreign sources, Irish industry tended to remain small in scale, inefficient and unenterprising. The Control of Manufacturers Acts tended to discourage foreign companies from investing in Ireland (v. chapter 2) so this avenue for expansion was also closed off. The failure of the Irish economy to expand during the rest of the 1950s placed constraints on trade union organisation and, although the ITGWU achieved a membership of 150,000 by 1954, it remained at about this level for the rest of the decade. Few developments in branch structure took place, with only 5 extra branches being opened between 1950 and 1955 and most of the approximately 20,000 extra members being incorporated into existing branches.

TABLE 4.10 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, ITGWU DELEGATE
REPRESENTATION AND BRANCHES 1950 AND 1955

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1 (Branches) 2		Branch Total 3	
	1950	1955	% +/-	1950	1955	1950	1955
Leinster	128,619	134,335	+ 4.4%	83(27)	87(29)	51	52
Carlow	1,997	2,139	+ 7.1%	2 (1)	2 (1)	2	1
Dlin Ci	86,698	89,051	+ 2.7%	54 (8)	56 (9)	10	12
Dlin Co	6,868	7,856	+14.4%	3 (2)	3 (2)	4	5
Kildare	4,388	3,840	-12.5%	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	3
Kilkenny	2,593	4,119	+58.9%	4 (2)	5 (3)	5	6
Ls/Offly	5,676	5,252	- 8.7%	5 (3)	5 (3)	6	6
Longford	833	791	- 5.0%	-	-	1	1
Louth	8,104	8,740	+ 7.8%	4 (2)	5 (2)	3	4
Meath	3,229	3,046	- 5.7%	1 (1)	-	1	1
Westmth	1,986	2,224	+12.0%	1 (1)	3 (3)	3	3
Wexford	3,482	3,967	+13.9%	3 (2)	3 (2)	4	4
Wicklow	2,765	3,346	+21.0%	3 (2)	3 (2)	8	6
Munster	51,426	52,112	+ 1.3%	48(17)	45(17)	38	39
Clare	2,645	2,349	-11.2%	2 (2)	1 (1)	3	3
Cork Cit	15,358	13,956	- 9.1%	23 (2)	24 (2)	2	2
Cork Co	10,905	13,304	+22.0%	7 (6)	7 (6)	14	13
Kerry	4,031	3,211	-20.3%	1 (1)	3 (2)	7	8
Limk Cit	4,387	4,513	+ 2.9%	8 (1)	10 (1)	1	1
Limk Co	2,208	2,413	+ 9.3%	-	-	1	1
Tipprary	6,763	6,942	+ 2.6%	4 (4)	4 (4)	9	10
Watfd Cit	3,380	3,536	+ 4.6%	3 (1)	6 (1)	1	1
Watfd Co	1,749	1,888	+ 7.9%	-	-	-	-
Connacht	12,680	13,520	+ 6.6%	9 (8)	7 (6)	20	21
Galway	5,019	5,083	+ 1.3%	5 (4)	4 (3)	7	7
Leitrim	1,002	1,045	+ 4.3%	-	-	1	1
Mayo	3,570	4,342	+21.6%	2 (2)	1 (1)	8	9
Rcommon	1,069	1,061	- 0.7%	-	-	2	1
Sligo	2,020	1,989	- 1.5%	2 (2)	2 (2)	2	3
Ulster	9,962	9,461	- 5.0%	8 (7)	14 (8)	13	15
Cavan	2,338	2,451	+ 4.8%	1 (1)	1 (1)	5	5
Donegal	5,625	4,969	-11.7%	4 (4)	3 (3)	5	5
Monaghan	1,999	2,041	+ 2.1%	-	1 (1)	1	2
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)	1	1
Derry				-	6 (1)	-	1
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

3 Total number of branches in area.

1955

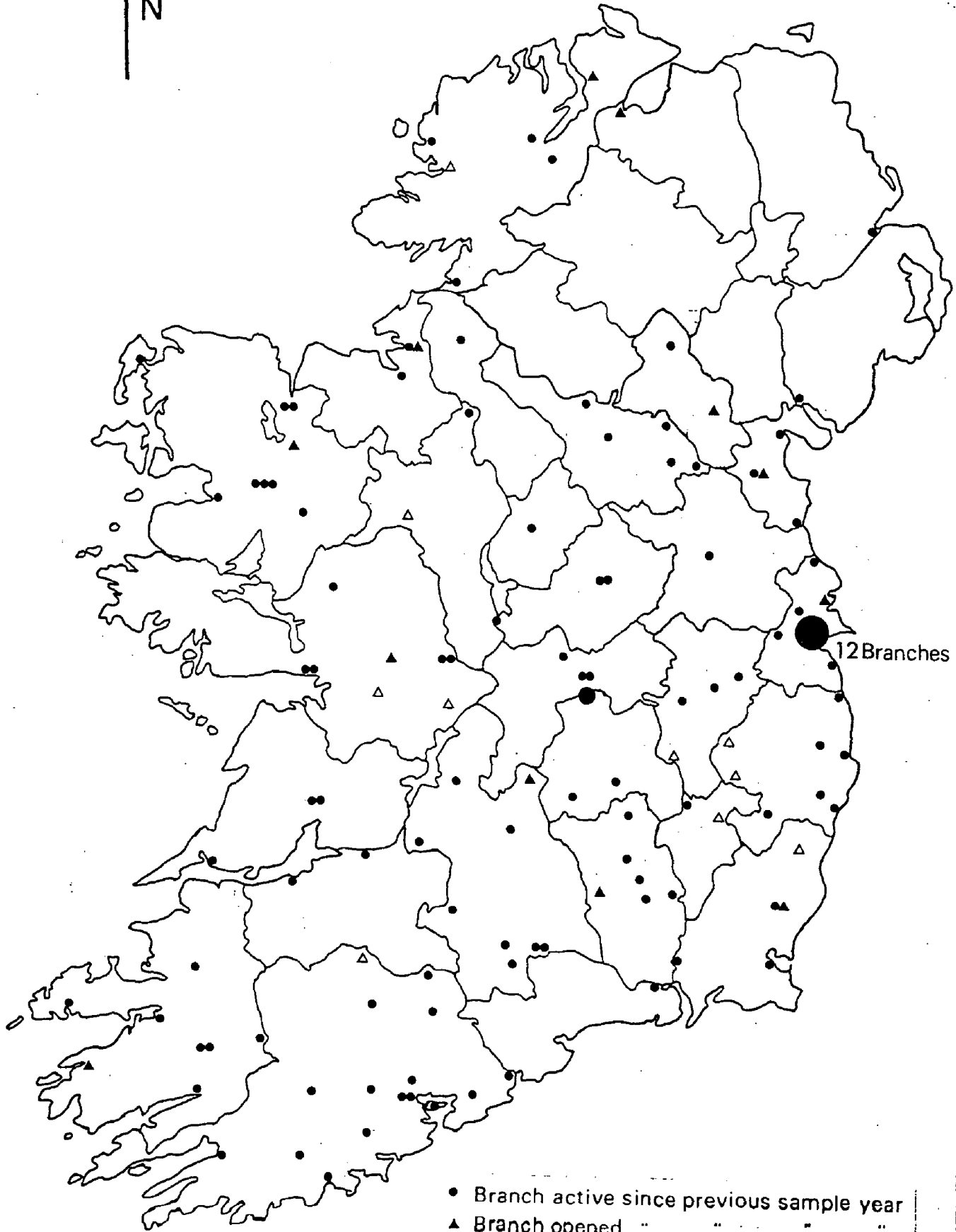
Provincial Review:

Thus, by 1955, the picture was very largely one of stagnation in comparison to the expansion of the late 1940s, with a few isolated exceptions. Leinster had 52 branches, Munster 39, Connacht 21 (each up by one) and Ulster 15 (up by 2) (v. Map 13).

Leinster: Four Leinster branches had closed and 5 had opened, with 3 of the openings being in Dublin, one in Louth and one in Kilkenny. The closures were all of relatively small branches, with 2 of the Wicklow branches opened since the war being among them. There had not been any dramatic increase in branch sizes since 1950, with just 2 more branches electing 2 more delegates, so the membership increase in Leinster had probably been quite dispersed among the branches.

Munster: Again, there was little change here. Cork had lost one branch while Kerry and Tipperary had gained one each. Although the number of branches electing delegates was static, at 17, they now elected 7 extra delegates, with

1:2000000



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/area branch

MAP 13. ITGWU BRANCHES 1955

55 between them. However, this growth was accounted for by the 4 largest centres, ie. Waterford, Limerick, Cork and Tralee, in that order. Industrial employment had only risen by 686 since 1950 so this increase in membership is probably accounted for by increased recruitment efforts by the relatively larger staffs of the larger branches in these centres.

Connacht: Although there was one extra branch in Connacht there was a decline of 2 in the number electing delegates and in the number of delegates elected. Industrial employment was stagnant in all counties except Mayo where the rise of 772 probably helped towards the establishment of the one new branch.

Ulster: In Ulster, there were 2 extra branches; Monaghan at last had a second branch with one being opened at Castleblayney, and one had also been opened in Derry City. Although there were 6 more delegates than in 1950, this had been caused by a huge expansion in the Derry branch since its foundation in 1953. This was due to the recruitment of large numbers of clothing workers in this predominantly Catholic City who may have been attracted, partly by the ITGWU's organisational strength and the organisational efforts of its officials (whose praises were

constantly sung in the annual reports), but also by its prominent stance on the question of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland, which the annual reports were wont to refer to as the "Occupied Area" (ITGWU, 1951, 24). Whatever the reason, the achievement of a membership of 3,000 in one branch in so short a time reflected great credit on the officials of that branch. Elsewhere, everything was as in 1950, apart from the fact that the Ballyshannon branch had fallen below 500 members, while the Castleblayney branch had risen above this size, probably because it was the only general branch in Monaghan catering to a large potential membership among over 2,000 industrial workers.

Town size distribution of branches: The town size distribution of branches was almost identical to that of 1950 (v. table 4.11), further underlining the stagnant condition the ITGWU now found itself in.

Summary:

Membership of general unions in the Republic had risen by 16,000 to 179,000 while the ITGWU's membership stood at around 145,000. Thus the union continued to be far and away

the largest general workers' union in the Republic, having increased its share of the membership by 2 percentage points since 1950. Nonetheless, the prospects were not promising. The membership growth rate had slowed down due to the atrophy of the Irish economy and, while the union itself was maintaining its position, it could not ignore the fact of rising unemployment and emigration which stood as telling indictments of the economic policy of successive Irish governments.

CONCLUSION.

Despite the virtual cessation of growth during the 1950s, the ITGWU had good reason to be satisfied with its achievements since 1932. It had stood at its lowest ebb for a long period at the start of that year, the victim of a stagnant economy during the 1920s, but the increase in employment in protected industries had provided just the boost it needed. It had been able to take advantage of this and double its membership by 1938 with a widespread extension of branch activity bringing the union back into both large and small centres in areas where it had not operated since the early 1920s. Although the war brought a

temporary halt to growth, the strength of the union's membership base was reflected in its ability to carry out an organisational campaign during a period of high unemployment and it actually had more members at the end than at the beginning of the war. It also learned valuable lessons about smaller branches during the war and from about 1945 onwards its increasingly professional approach enabled it to double its membership in 5 years without a correspondingly large increase in branch numbers. The increasing emphasis on concentrating membership in larger branches led to greater efficiency and was helped especially by the concentration on organising on an industrial rather than a regional basis. Even when the post-war boom period did come to an end in the early 1950s, the union's base was solid enough for it to maintain, and even increase, its membership in the face of high unemployment. This was, perhaps, the surest sign of its post-war strength and provided a healthy contrast with the dark years of the 1920s when the membership fell from 120,000 to 20,000 in the space of about 8 years. Nonetheless, the ITGWU claimed to represent the unemployed as well as the employed worker and by adding its voice to the growing demands for a change in economic direction, it helped to influence the decision to reverse the protectionist policy in 1958. In turn, the new open-door policy pursued from 1958 onwards was to allow a major upswing in the country's economic fortunes which

allowed the ITGWU recommence its expansion, with significant implications for the geography of the union's branch and membership structure. These implications will be examined in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

EXPANSION IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

PREAMBLE.

The ITGWU, in 1958, appeared to have reached the limits of its organisational capacity, as membership and branch numbers had increased relatively little since 1950. This was a result of the stagnation which had beset the economy during the 1950s, with few increases in industrial employment, the union's major source of membership. However, a renewal of economic growth from the late 1950s was to enable the union to recommence its growth in membership, again mainly based on industrial employees, but with substantial gains being made in other sectors as well. This new growth in membership did not result in any substantial increase in branch numbers, largely because, by the mid 1950s, the branch structure had been extended to most of the larger centres, in or close to which most industry was likely to be located, and branches in these centres were able to cater to the majority of the new

members. This reflects the ITGWU's increasingly professional attitude to its affairs, manifested since the late 1940s, which led to greater rationalisation of the branch structure, involving a concentration of membership in larger branches in large centres.

This chapter will focus on the period 1958-1979, characterised by a renewed growth in industry, much of it foreign-owned and export-oriented. 1979 has been chosen as the final year of study because it allows the impact on the ITGWU's branch structure of the large increase in the number of foreign firms operating in Ireland following EEC entry be observed. Also it is the last year for which the employment figures of the Census of Industrial Production are available. Unlike chapters 3 and 4, this chapter will not be divided into sub-sections as there have been no major turning points comparable to those in the earlier two periods, and although some may see the country's accession to the EEC in 1973 as such a landmark, it has tended to strengthen pre-existing trends rather than lead to any major changes in direction in the economy or in the union's organisational policy (v. fig. 1.1). As there has been comparatively little change in branch numbers the level of growth within branches provides a better indication of the development of the union since 1958. Accordingly this will receive greater attention in this chapter.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

The stagnation of the 1950s had been caused by the limitations of protectionist policy. This insulated Irish industry from the rigours of international competition and the small size of the Irish economy meant that firms, unable and often unwilling to develop beyond a certain point, remained small in scale and inefficient. Thus, once the Irish market had been satisfied, firms were unable to continue to grow by expanding into foreign markets. By the late 1950s, it had become increasingly obvious that the only avenue for increased industrial employment lay in an export-oriented policy, and that, given the low level of development of most Irish industry, foreign-owned industry provided the best means of achieving this. Accordingly, from 1958 onwards, a number of measures were introduced to facilitate and encourage foreign investment in Ireland and the export of industrial goods from the country (v. chapter 2). This involved the gradual extension of free trade and the opening up of Ireland to imports of goods from abroad which had the anticipated side-effect of closures and redundancies in some traditional industries which could not withstand the rigours of competition from more highly organised foreign producers. However, these losses were more than compensated for by the influx of foreign-owned

firms and CIP figures indicate that, by 1979, the industrial workforce had grown by 24% since 1958. These firms tended to be more productive and export-oriented than traditional Irish-owned firms and by 1976 new firms accounted for 42% of total manufacturing employment, 52% of output and 76% of exports (Gillmor, 1982, 18). However, the increase of new industrial employment was not shared equally by all parts of the country. Between 1973 and 1981, manufacturing employment in the Eastern planning region (based on Dublin) actually declined by 15% while it increased by 80% in the Western region, by 57% in the Midlands region, by 49% in the Northwest region, by 24% in Donegal, by 22% in the Southeast region, by 9% in the Midwest region and by 5% in the Southwest region. The Northeast was the only other region to experience a decline in manufacturing employment, albeit of only 1% (Gillmor, 1982, 41), so the increase in new industrial employment tended to benefit hitherto relatively un-industrialised regions, mainly in Connacht and Ulster, and to bypass the traditionally industrialised centres of Dublin and Cork, in the East and Southwest respectively. Thus the level of new industry locating in much of the East, and especially Dublin City, has not been sufficient to compensate for job losses in the traditional sector and the numbers employed in industry have tended to decline. Thus, according to CIP figures, industrial employment fell by over 14% in Dublin City and County between 1973 and 1979.

Growth of the services sector: This contraction of industrial employment has not led to any decline in the Dublin membership of the ITGWU. This is largely because of the union's success in organising workers outside of manufacturing industry during the 1960s and 1970s. Much of this recruitment has been carried out among service sector workers, sometimes in concerns where the union had already organised manual workers, but often in establishments where the union had no previous membership. This has been facilitated by the changing structure of employment in the post-war period, and especially since about 1960, with employment in both industry and the service sector expanding at the expense of agriculture. In 1961 60.7% of all employed workers were engaged in productive industry with 39.3% engaged in the service sector (NESC, 1977,30). However, by 1981 this situation had been largely reversed: only 48.1% of workers were engaged in productive industry while the service sector workforce had grown to 51.9% of the Republic's total workforce (Census, 1981). Thus, the service sector increased its share of the workforce by nearly 13 percentage points, much of this accounted for by the increases in office and other white-collar workers. Before the 1960s their relative scarcity had given these workers a certain status and guaranteed relatively good conditions of employment. They had, therefore, tended not to join trade unions, with many identifying more closely

with their employer than with what many may have seen as rather "disreputable" organisations. However, the post-war expansion of the white-collar sector tended to undermine the position of prestige which these workers used to enjoy so that the wages of many were surpassed by those of substantial numbers of manual workers. This relative failure to keep pace with improvements won by those in other sectors of employment tended to force a re-evaluation of their position on many white-collar workers, while the growth in their numbers also allowed a more collective consciousness to emerge (Kelly, 1980, 73). Consequently they have increasingly found in trade union membership a means of defending and bettering their positions, and, while many of them have joined specifically white-collar unions, substantial numbers have also joined general unions such as the ITGWU.

The greatest number of service sector workers is to be found in the Eastern planning region, comprising counties Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, with the vast majority of these located in Dublin City. In 1981 Dublin accounted for 48.1% of all service sector workers in the Republic of Ireland (Census, 1981), due to the concentration of management, banking, insurance and general decision-making functions in the capital. Thus, it is in Dublin that the ITGWU has been able to organise most strongly among service

sector workers and while branches in some provincial centres will have some such membership, due to their relatively small numbers located in these, they will not be as important a proportion of membership as in Dublin. A further factor militating against a high service sector membership in provincial branches is that many of these workers are employed in relatively small establishments where some of the traditional anti-union prejudice may linger on or there may be a tendency for a more paternalistic relationship between employer and employee to exist. Accordingly, the reference frame used for analysing the union's regional growth will continue to be the number of industrial workers by county with allowances being made for the large proportion of service sector workers in Dublin.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ITGWU 1958-1979.

There are no branch lists available for the years between 1955 and 1976. However, there were only minor changes in branch structure in these years, judging by the branch totals returned annually to the Registry of Friendly Societies, and it appears that the branch distribution

pattern achieved by 1955 altered little between then and 1976 with the most notable changes being the splitting of some branches in the largest centres of Dublin, Cork and Limerick into smaller, more manageable units. This means that the most useful measure of growth in the union is the expansion of individual branches, as observed through delegate numbers. To retain some idea of the development of the union on a regional basis it has been decided to map those branches which elected delegates for selected years between 1955 and 1976. This demonstrates the regional growth of branches as the number of delegates elected and the number of branches electing them has increased over time. The years selected for analysis are 1963, 1972, 1976 and 1979, all of which represent key years in Ireland's economic development over the last 25 years. 1963 was the first year in which industrial employment surpassed the 1958 total, while 1972 represents the employment situation immediately before EEC entry, 1976 illustrates the effects of EEC entry and the simultaneous international recession on traditional industry and its repercussions on the ITGWU's branch structure, and, finally, 1979 shows the effects of the substantial investment in the country in the late 1970s by multinational corporations, taking advantage of access to EEC markets.

1963

The numbers employed in industry had fallen from nearly 210,000 in 1955 to just over 187,000 in 1958, a drop of over 22,000 which graphically illustrates the severity of the problem which called for such a radical re-orientation, in Irish terms, of economic policy. The effects of the new open-door policy were immediately felt, with industrial employment rising by 11,000 by 1960 and reaching 220,650 by 1963. This was an increase of 33,000 on the 1958 figure and of 11,000 on the 1955 figure and partly accounted for the union's success in raising its membership between these years. Unfortunately, as before, the extent of the membership expansion cannot be reliably gauged as the union consistently claimed lower levels of membership in its returns to the Registry of Friendly Societies than in those submitted to the various Congresses to which it has been affiliated. Union officials now refer to its membership as having been more than 150,000 since the mid 1950s while this figure was not claimed in the Registry files until the mid 1960s, since which time there has been an almost continuously upward trend in membership recorded. Thus, it may be assumed that the Registry figures up until the mid 1960s underestimate the membership levels but since then the figures have been fairly accurate. For the period to the

mid 1960s, it can be assumed that the Registry figures do reflect the extent of fluctuations in membership and this is supported by the annual reports which, for 1960 and 1961, claim membership increases equivalent to those recorded in the Registry files.

If the Registry figures do give an accurate representation of change, then the membership may have increased by 17,000 between 1955 and 1963, while industrial employment grew by only 11,000. This disparity can only be accounted for by the intensification of an organisational campaign during these years, designed to make up for membership losses up to 1958. This probably took place among workers in new industry, previously non-unionised industrial workers and service sector workers and was facilitated by the number and increasing professionalism of the staff employed by the ITGWU by 1958. There were now 121 full-time officials, 98 part-time officials and about 2,550 collectors (ITGWU, 1958, 13) and the size of its organisational staff was doubtless a crucial factor in allowing the union to organise workers in a wide variety of establishments throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Provincial Review:

Despite the large increase in membership the total of 135 branches listed in the files of the Registry of Friendly Societies is the same as that for 1955, so the increased membership was absorbed by existing branches. However, it did not lead to a dramatic increase in the number of branches with 500 members, as there were only 65 in 1963, 5 more than in 1955 (v. Table 5.1, MAP 14). Thus the increase in membership continued to be absorbed mainly by the larger branches and these now elected 193 delegates, 31 more than in 1955 and representing an increase of 15,500 in the membership of larger branches. On a provincial level, Leinster had 30 branches with 500 or more members, Munster had 20, Connacht 8 and Ulster 7.

Leinster: The 30 branches in Leinster elected 103 delegates between them, an increase since 1955 when one less branch elected 16 delegates less. The bulk of this increase in delegates was accounted for by Dublin where the number rose by 15 to 74, all in branches which already had 500 or more members, with the Lucan branch being the only one outside the city to have reached this size. The membership rise of at least 7,500 had outstripped the rise of about 5,300 in industrial employment, and although the union may

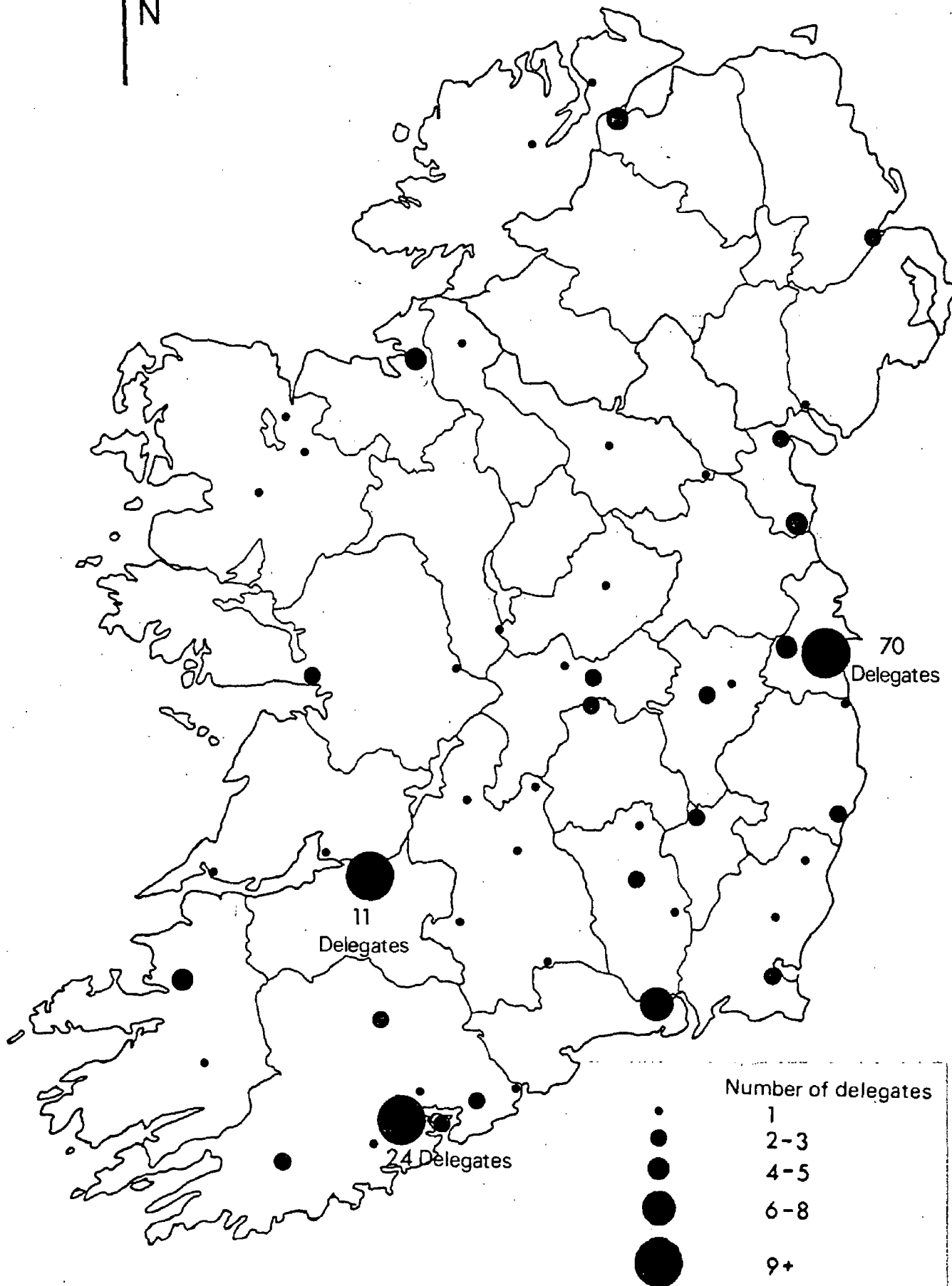
TABLE 5.1 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, ITGWU DELEGATE REPRESENTATION 1955 AND 1963 AND BRANCHES 1955

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1		Branch	
	1955	1963	% +/-	(Branches) 2	1963	1955	Total 3
Leinster	134,335	141,155	+ 5.1%	87 (29)	103 (30)	52	
Carlow	2,139	2,953	+38.1%	2 (1)	2 (1)	1	
Dlin Cit	89,051	89,857	+ 0.9%	59 (9)	70 (9)	12	
Dlin Co	7,856	12,352	+57.2%	3 (2)	4 (1)	5	
Kildare	3,840	4,601	+19.8%	1 (1)	3 (3)	3	
Kilkenny	4,119	3,936	- 4.4%	5 (3)	4 (3)	6	
Ls/Offly	5,252	4,707	-11.6%	5 (3)	5 (3)	6	
Longford	791	894	+13 %	-	-	1	
Louth	8,740	10,055	+15.0%	5 (2)	6 (2)	4	
Meath	3,046	3,014	- 1.1%	-	-	1	
Westmth	2,224	2,105	- 5.4%	3 (3)	2 (2)	3	
Wexford	3,967	3,418	-13.8%	4 (3)	4 (3)	4	
Wicklow	3,346	3,263	- 2.5%	3 (2)	3 (2)	6	
Munster	52,112	57,357	+10.1%	45 (17)	66 (20)	39	
Clare	2,349	3,923	+67.0%	1 (1)	2 (2)	3	
Cork Cit	13,956	14,653	+ 5.0%	24 (2)	24 (2)	2	
Cork Co	13,304	15,152	+13.9%	7 (6)	12 (7)	13	
Kerry	3,211	3,427	+ 6.7%	3 (2)	5 (2)	8	
Limk Cit	4,513	4,870	+ 7.9%	10 (1)	11 (1)	1	
Limk Co	2,413	2,223	- 7.5%	-	-	1	
Tipprary	6,942	7,267	+ 4.7%	4 (4)	5 (5)	10	
Watfd Cit	3,536	4,004	+13.2%	6 (1)	7 (1)	1	
Watfd Co	1,888	1,828	- 3.2%	-	-	-	
Connacht	13,520	12,939	- 4.3%	7 (6)	13 (8)	21	
Galway	5,083	5,397	+ 6.2%	4 (3)	3 (2)	7	
Leitrim	1,045	804	-23.1%	-	1 (1)	1	
Mayo	4,342	3,616	-16.7%	1 (1)	3 (3)	9	
Rcommon	1,061	896	-15.6%	-	-	1	
Sligo	1,989	2,226	+11.9%	2 (2)	6 (2)	3	
Ulster	9,461	9,199	- 2.8%	14 (8)	11 (7)	15	
Cavan	2,451	2,392	- 2.4%	1 (1)	2 (2)	5	
Donegal	4,969	4,805	- 3.3%	3 (3)	2 (2)	5	
Monaghan	2,041	2,002	- 1.9%	1 (1)	-	2	
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)	1	
Derry				6 (1)	4 (1)	1	
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)	1	

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

3 Total number of branches in area.



MAP 14. DELEGATE REPRESENTATION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1963

have won some new members among previously non-unionised industrial workers it is hardly likely that these provided a substantial proportion of the membership in a city where the trade union tradition could trace its origins back hundreds of years. Thus, many new members must have been won among service sector workers. By the late 1950s many white-collar workers were becoming unionised for the first time and in 1961 61% of all office workers in the Republic were located in the Eastern planning region, with the vast majority of these being in Dublin City. These probably accounted for a large proportion of the new members won among service sector workers, with the ITGWU being quick to realise the organisational potential offered by these workers, and also sufficiently flexible in structure to cater to them.

Outside of Dublin membership had risen in only 3 counties, namely Kildare, Louth and Offaly, although industrial employment had risen only in the two former counties. In Kildare, there were now 3 branches with 500 or more members, as against one in 1955, and this largely reflected the rise of 761 in the industrial workforce. Louth had an extra 1,315 workers, an increase second only to that in Dublin, yet it had only gained one more delegate, possibly due to competition from other unions in the area. In Offaly, the joint Laois/Offaly branch had lost a delegate, probably due to members being lost in smaller

concerns, while the Tullamore branch had gained one delegate, probably reflecting membership gains in larger concerns in the county's biggest town. Elsewhere, Carlow was the only county to have a substantial increase in industrial employment (814) but it had not made any obvious gains in membership. In every other county, industrial employment had fallen by relatively small amounts and in all except Kilkenny and Westmeath the delegate totals indicate that branch sizes had changed relatively little since 1955. Although industrial employment in Wexford fell by 549, the branches in New Ross and Wexford Town were probably bolstered by the number of dock workers in both port towns.

Generally, then, ITGWU membership appears to have held up well in most of Leinster, only increasing substantially in Dublin City. Much of this is due to the relatively static industrial employment situation, with most counties experiencing comparatively small declines. This contraction was probably due to the effects of free trade which opened up Ireland to competition from, often more efficiently organised, foreign producers. The companies least able to deal with this competition would most likely have been small concerns based in provincial towns, catering to local markets, and this probably explains the decline in employment in 8 of the 12 Leinster counties. The only counties experiencing substantial increases in employment

were Dublin and Louth, which indicates that much new industry was continuing to locate in traditional industrial areas. However, in Dublin itself, most of the increase was accounted for by Dublin County, demonstrating that the city was becoming a less favoured location. Of course, the majority of these workers who joined the ITGWU would have been organised by branches located in the city, as there were only 3 general branches located in the county, and the policy appears to have been to concentrate membership into city-based branches as far as possible. However, this did not account for all the increase in Dublin membership, as the first substantial organisation of white-collar workers seems to have taken place in the Dublin area and, in future years, this was to compensate for declining industrial employment.

Munster: 20 branches in Munster elected 66 delegates in 1963, as opposed to 17 electing 55 in 1955. This increase was facilitated by a rise of nearly 5,250 in the number in industrial employment. Unlike Leinster, this increase was shared by every county, although only Cork and Clare registered substantial increases. In fact, Cork accounted for nearly half the overall increase and this enabled the 9 branches to elect 36 delegates, 5 more than were elected by one less branch in 1955. The relative

dispersal of industry, whereby the county won about 3 times as many new jobs as the city, is mirrored by the fact that 4 of the 5 new delegates were from branches in centres outside of Cork City.

Elsewhere, Clare had almost 1,600 new industrial workers, giving it nearly 4,000. Much of this was due to the opening of the pioneering free trade zone at Shannon, specifically designed to entice foreign investment into the area. The union had opened a new branch here and by 1963 it had over 500 members, growing to 1,000 or more by 1965. This supplemented the branch with 500 or more members at Kilrush which had achieved that size as far back as 1949. The Shannon branch was to develop considerably over the next decade as industrial employment grew remarkably. In Waterford, the industrial workforce had grown by 468 since 1955 and this had enabled the city branch to increase its membership from over 3,000 to over 3,500. Unlike Cork and Dublin, the growth in employment was greater in the city than in the county, where it actually declined. Tipperary had only 325 extra industrial workers, yet 5 branches now had one delegate each, one more than in 1955. Limerick's industrial workforce only grew by 177 between the city and county yet the branch had added an eleventh delegate to its total. The union probably had to organise among other sectors of the workforce, perhaps among dock workers with

the increase in foreign trade, but also probably among service sector workers, of whom there was probably quite a substantial number in this large town. The most dramatic increase in membership had taken place in Kerry, where the Tralee branch had doubled its membership from 1,000 or more to 2,000 or more, while the branch at Rathmore had also grown to a membership of over 500. This took place despite an increase of only 216 in the industrial workforce and indicates that the union made considerable progress among previously unorganised workers and those in other sectors.

Thus, the overall picture for the ITGWU in Munster was uniformly bright. Increased industrial employment in every county, representing a tendency for new industry to locate away from the east, had enabled the union to make substantial membership gains in many branches. The tendency to dispersal of new industry within the province itself was demonstrated in that Cork City got only one third as many new jobs as did the county and this is reflected in the growth of many branches in relatively smaller centres.

Connacht: There had been a substantial increase in delegates in Connacht with 8 branches there electing 13, 6 more than in 1955 and elected by one more branch. However, this growth was very unevenly spread throughout the branches and the Sligo branch accounted for 4 of the extra delegates.

Only Sligo and Galway had experienced increases in industrial employment, and the overall level had fallen by 560 since 1955. It is most likely that the increase was due to a continuing campaign to organise workers in Connacht where unionisation had been low, relative to the numbers in industrial employment. Some of it may also have been due to an increase in the numbers working in new foreign industries, where the ITGWU may have had less difficulty in effecting organisation in larger concerns where a paternalistic employment relationship could not be maintained (v. chapter 2).

Despite an increase in industrial employment of over 300 in Galway the branch at Tuam had lost its delegate status, although the Galway City and Ballinasloe branches still had over 1,500 members between them. Sligo, with only 2,226 industrial workers, now had over 2,500 members, 2,000 more than in 1955, indicating that the union was able to organise substantial numbers of workers in other sectors. Some of these may have been dock workers, again helped by the increase in dock employment in the context of increasing international trade. This was one of the more startling membership rises in any area, and reflects the possibility of what could be achieved with a forceful and comprehensive organisational campaign. Mayo represented similar success in that, despite a fall of 726 in the total industrial

workforce, 3 branches now had 500 or more members each, while only one had reached this size by 1955. In Leitrim, in spite of a fall of 241 in the industrial workforce, a branch had been opened in Manorhamilton and by 1963 it also had over 500 members. Roscommon was still the only county without a 500-member branch.

In general, the ITGWU had reason to be satisfied with the performance of its branches in Connacht since 1955 in that, despite an overall decline in industrial employment, there had been a substantial level of expansion. Much of this was probably due to the relatively low degree of unionisation in the province throughout the 1950s which meant that there was plenty of scope for organisation, even in the face of falling employment. Nonetheless this does reflect creditably on the success of officials who persuaded many, hitherto reluctant, workers to join the ITGWU. The growth of a small number of relatively large branches also continued the trend within the union's structure towards concentration of membership in fewer but larger branches.

Ulster: As in Connacht, the industrial workforce in the 3 Ulster counties in the Republic of Ireland had also fallen, albeit by only 262. This was largely responsible for the fall in the number of branches with 500 or more members from 5 in 1955 to 4 in 1963. Cavan was the only

county where membership growth had taken place, now having two branches with 500 or more members (one in 1955). In Donegal and Monaghan, one branch in each had fallen below a membership of 500, despite comparatively small declines in industrial employment. In the six Northern counties, Belfast and Newry still had over 1,000 and over 500 members respectively, reflecting a relatively secure membership in secure employments. Derry, however, had not fared as well. In 1955 it had 3,000 or more members but by 1963 it had fallen to only 2,000 or more. This was largely due to a contraction in the shirtmaking industry, in which most members were engaged, in the face of competition in its markets from lower-cost products from Hong Kong (ITGWU, 1963, 53). This illustrates the difficulty which traditional industries were facing in the context of free trade and similar conditions in the Republic in the later 1960s and 1970s were to mean that many gains made in the organisation of workers in new industry were largely compensating for losses in the traditional sectors. This competition was to ensure that the ITGWU did not regain the position achieved in Derry in the 1950s.

Summary: The trend towards increased growth in a number of the ITGWU's larger branches had continued since 1955, with many new members being organised in these, while

relatively few other branches had reached a membership of 500 since then. This concentration of growth, union policy apart, was mainly because much of the new industry tended to be located in, or close to, traditional centres and the move away from larger centres, although beginning, had not yet become marked. This meant that new members could mainly be organised by already large branches. A new feature appears to have been the beginnings of relatively large scale organisation of service sector workers by Dublin branches, whose growth outstripped the rise in industrial employment. Apart from this, however, the union's branch structure appears to have been altered little, as yet, by the opening up of Ireland to foreign investment and to foreign competition.

1972

Industrial employment rose again in 1964 but fell dramatically in the following year, after which it continued to increase, surpassing the 1964 level by 1969 but falling again by 1972, the year before Ireland entered the EEC. In terms of membership the ITGWU's returns to the ITUC continued to claim an annual figure of 150,000 but the Registry of Friendly Societies files refer to an increase of

13,000 over these years so the membership was probably somewhere between 160,000 and 180,000. This rise of 13,000 was almost the same as the increase in industrial employment since 1963. Some of the membership expansion was probably due to the increasing proportion of the workforce engaged in new industry, where the ITGWU may have found it easier to organise workers in firms which were probably less hostile to trade unionism than some of the traditional, family-run Irish concerns. Much was also probably due to an increase in service sector membership, although this would have been very largely restricted to branches in the largest cities.

Provincial Review:

There were 5 branches more than in 1963, with a total of 140. This was also 5 less than in 1969 when a high point in branch numbers had been reached, and although it is not possible to say which branches had closed, it is likely that they were in smaller centres. This is supported by delegate figures which show an increase in the number of delegates elected and also the number of branches electing them since both 1963 and 1969. In 1963, 65 branches had elected 185 delegates, in 1969, 88 elected 218 and in 1972, 91 branches elected 233 delegates. Thus, it appears that large branches continued their expansionary pattern, in spite of a fall in

branch numbers since 1969. This is further supported by the 1971 annual report's reference to 85 branches experiencing a fall in membership, while 50 registered an increase (ITGWU, 1971, 9).

Leinster now had 40 branches with 500 or more members (29 in 1963), Munster had 33 (20 in 1963), Connacht had 9 (8 in 1963) while Ulster also had 9 (7 in 1963). Thus, Munster had the biggest proportional increase in larger branches, demonstrating the changing balance of industrial employment. Since 1963, Leinster's workforce, although still the largest in absolute terms, had fallen by 2.4 percentage points, while Munster's had risen by 19.7 percentage points, Connacht's by 18.8 percentage points and Ulster's by 27 percentage points.

Leinster: The decline in traditional industries was reflected in Leinster's fall of 3,333 in its industrial workforce since 1963, leaving it with just under 138,000 (v. Table 5.2). The 40 branches of 500 or more members now elected 116 delegates (v. MAP 15), as opposed to 103 elected by 29 in 1963, nearly 3 percentage points down on its share of the delegates in 1963. This indicates that the location pattern of industry was changing perceptibly, and it was having an impact on the ITGWU's membership distribution, with expanding membership in other sectors

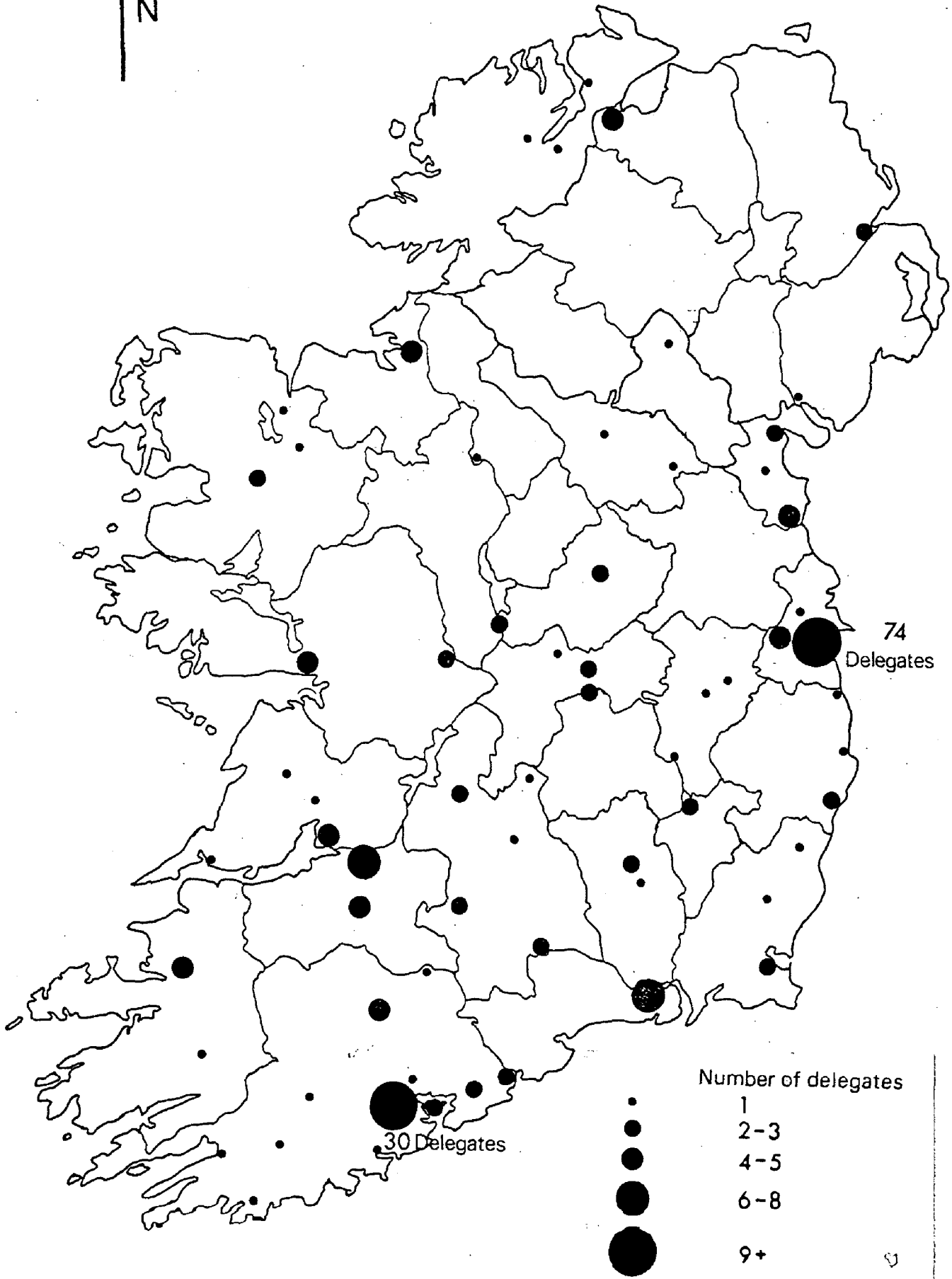
TABLE 5.2 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT AND ITGWU
DELEGATE REPRESENTATION 1963 AND 1972

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1 (Branches) 2	
	1963	1972	% +/-	1963	1972
Leinster	141,155	137,822	- 2.4%	103 (29)	116 (40)
Carlow	2,953	2,522	-14.6%	2 (1)	2 (1)
Dlin Cit	89,857	69,632	-22.5%	70 (9)	74 (16)
Dlin Co	12,352	22,146	+79.3%	4 (1)	5 (2)
Kildare	4,601	6,026	+31.0%	3 (3)	3 (3)
Kilkenny	3,936	4,169	+ 5.9%	4 (3)	3 (2)
Ls/Offly	4,707	5,048	+ 7.3%	5 (3)	5 (3)
Longford	894	1,270	+42.1%	-	-
Louth	10,055	12,743	+26.7%	6 (2)	9 (3)
Meath	3,014	4,088	+35.6%	-	-
Westmth	2,105	1,952	- 7.3%	2 (2)	5 (4)
Wexford	3,418	4,010	+17.3%	4 (3)	5 (3)
Wicklow	3,263	4,762	+45.9%	3 (2)	5 (3)
Munster	57,357	68,660	+19.7%	66 (20)	88 (33)
Clare	3,923	7,078	+80.4%	2 (2)	8 (4)
Cork Cit	14,653	13,090	-10.7%	24 (2)	30 (6)
Cork Co	15,152	18,368	+21.2%	12 (7)	17 (11)
Kerry	3,427	5,223	+52.4%	5 (2)	6 (2)
Limk Cit	4,870	4,672	- 4.1%	11 (1)	7 (2)
Limk Co	2,233	4,156	+86.1%	-	5 (1)
Tipprary	7,267	8,058	+10.9%	5 (5)	8 (5)
Watfd Cit	4,004	5,529	+38.1%	7 (1)	7 (2)
Watfd Co	1,828	2,486	+36.0%	-	-
Connacht	12,939	15,368	+18.8%	13 (8)	16 (9)
Galway	5,397	6,264	+16.1%	3 (2)	7 (3)
Leitrim	804	859	+ 6.8%	1 (1)	1 (1)
Mayo	3,616	3,850	+ 6.5%	3 (3)	4 (4)
Rcommon	896	1,225	+36.7%	-	-
Sligo	2,226	3,170	+42.4%	6 (2)	4 (1)
Ulster	9,199	11,687	+27.0%	11 (7)	13 (9)
Cavan	2,392	2,740	+14.5%	2 (2)	2 (2)
Donegal	4,805	5,662	+17.8%	2 (2)	2 (3)
Monaghan	2,002	3,285	+64.1%	-	1 (1)
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)
Derry				4 (1)	4 (1)
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

1:2000000



MAP 15. DELEGATE REPRESENTATION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1972

failing to allow the Leinster branches keep in line with developments elsewhere.

In Dublin only 4 extra delegates (74) were elected, but by 7 more branches (16) than in 1963. This was because some of the larger branches had been split into smaller, more flexible, units to allow for greater ease of administration. This relative stagnation was largely due to a fall of over 20,000 in the city's industrial workforce, which meant that gains in other sectors very largely had to compensate for losses among industrial workers. It also indicates that the union was having organisational successes in other sectors, probably mainly in the service sector, to avert an actual decline in membership. The county, on the other hand, had seen its industrial workforce grow by nearly 10,000 (79%) since 1963 and these probably also provided much organisational scope for city branches. Because city branches organised county workers, the extent of the shift in membership location cannot be gauged, although the Blanchardstown branch, on the edge of the city, had now reached a membership of 500 or more.

Elsewhere in Leinster only 4 counties had registered an increase in delegates. Louth now had 9 delegates elected by 3 branches as against 6 elected by 2 in 1963. This growth had taken place in the Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee branches, and had been helped by an increase of 2,688 in the

industrial workforce. Wexford's 3 branches now had 5 delegates between them, one more than in 1963, and this was facilitated by a rise of nearly 600 in the industrial workforce. Wicklow also had 5 delegates from 3 branches, as against 3 from 2 branches in 1963, and this obviously owed a great deal to an increase of almost 1,500 (nearly 50%) in its industrial workforce since 1963. The most notable increase had taken place in Westmeath, where 4 branches elected 5 delegates, while only 2 branches had elected one delegate each in 1963. This increase took place in the face of a decline of 150 in the industrial workforce and, notwithstanding the fact that 2 of these branches were composed of non-industrial workers ie. Mullingar Rail and Mental Hospital branches, this was quite an achievement. Kilkenny was the only county where delegate numbers actually fell, albeit only by one, to 3, but this was due to the closure of the coal mine at Moneenroe which reduced membership in that branch by half. In the other 6 Leinster counties branch sizes remained the same as in 1963, with Meath and Longford still having no branch with 500 members.

Thus, the pattern in Leinster was one of relatively little change, reflecting the generally small increases in industrial employment in most counties as the benefits of new industry were countered by closures and redundancies in traditional industries. Nonetheless, the ITGWU could take

solace from 2 things: firstly, membership continued to grow in Louth, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow (in 3 of which industrial employment grew substantially); and, secondly, the decline in industrial employment in Dublin City had not led to a fall in membership there, largely because of the union's success in organising in other sectors.

Munster: Industrial employment in Munster had grown by over 11,000 since 1963 and this had enabled branches in all counties except Waterford to increase the number of delegates elected. Thirty three branches now elected 88 delegates, as against 20 branches electing 66 in 1963, which gave Munster 38% of all delegates, 4 percentage points more than in 1963. As in Leinster, much of the increase in branches with 500 members was due to the splitting of large branches into smaller units, but the increase in membership was spread much more evenly throughout the branches than in Leinster.

Cork and Limerick cities had both lost industrial workers since 1963, largely in the traditional sector, but Cork had gained 6 delegates, giving it 30. Since 1963, the 2 Cork City branches and the one Limerick branch had been split, the former into 6 branches and the latter into 2 city and one county branches. Most of the new members in Cork were probably service sector workers, with this big city

having a large concentration of such workers, among whom the union was able to organise to compensate for losses in the traditional industrial sector. The 3 Limerick branches elected one extra delegate (12) but it is impossible to determine whether the extra membership was gained in the city or county.

Industrial employment had increased in all other areas. In Cork County, there were over 3,000 new workers and 11 branches now elected 17 delegates, as against 7 electing 12 in 1963. In Clare, industrial employment had risen by 80 percentage points and delegates had also increased notably in number, with 8 elected by 4 branches, as opposed to 2 elected by 2 branches in 1963. The Shannon branch accounted for 5 of these, showing the union's success in organising workers in new industry located on the industrial estate. In Kerry, industrial employment was over 50 percentage points up on the 1963 level, and there was an extra delegate (6) elected by the same 2 branches as in 1963. In Tipperary, although there were only about 800 new workers, 5 branches now elected 8 delegates, 3 more than in 1963. Waterford City, where the branch had been split in 2, still had the same number of delegates as in 1963.

Thus, Munster had experienced a very substantial increase in ITGWU representation since 1963, largely reflecting the increase in industrial employment. Many more branches outside of the largest centres had gained delegates, helped by the increasing tendency for new industry to locate away from traditional industrial areas. In these traditional centres, the union was at least holding its own or, as in Cork, expanding, thanks mainly to the higher concentrations of service sector workers in these centres who compensated for the declining numbers of industrial workers. Thus, the changing employment pattern in Munster had a marked impact on the ITGWU's branch membership structure.

Connacht: Industrial employment in Connacht had risen by over 2,400 (nearly 19 percentage points) since 1963, with all counties sharing in this increase. Only Galway and Mayo had seen their delegate totals increase, mainly because they had the largest industrial workforces. It appears that branch officials had increased their organisational efforts in Galway as there were now 7 delegates elected by 3 branches, as opposed to 3 elected by 2 in 1963, despite an increase of only about 900 in the industrial workforce. In Mayo, an extra branch with a delegate had been gained at Castlebar Mental Hospital, with the small rise of 234

industrial workers rendering it difficult for general branches to expand. Leitrim and Roscommon still had only one branch with a delegate between them, also having few new industrial workers in absolute terms. Paradoxically Sligo, where there were nearly 1,000 new industrial workers, had lost 2 delegates since 1963, although one of these was in the town mental hospital branch. Outside of Galway, then, it appears that the ITGWU in Connacht was still suffering from the effects of the recession of the mid to late 1960s which had led to a contraction of traditional industry, with expansion in new industry being insufficient to give absolutely large increases in employment outside of Galway and Sligo.

Ulster: There had been a 27 percentage point increase in industrial employment in the 3 Ulster counties in the Republic of Ireland, but this only added about 2,500 workers to the 1963 total, giving almost 11,700. This meant that only one extra general branch in Donegal (with 3) now elected a delegate (one each) while the Monaghan Mental Hospital branch also elected one for the first time, although this organised no industrial workers. In Cavan, Belfast, Newry and Derry the delegate totals remained the same as in 1963. Thus, as in Connacht, ITGWU branches were unable to take advantage of a slight increase in industrial

employment, having probably lost members in traditional concerns.

Summary: Generally the ITGWU branch pattern had changed little since 1963 as most existing branches were able to absorb new members. However, the membership pattern itself was far from stagnant. The union appeared to be losing industrial members in a number of areas, and especially in the largest cities, but this did not lead to any decline in membership as branches in these were able to compensate by extending their recruitment drives among service sector workers. In many counties, especially in Munster and parts of Leinster, the union was able to take advantage of the tendency for foreign-owned industry to locate in smaller centres and registered substantial increases in membership. In most of Connacht and Ulster, the union's position, although stable, showed little sign of improving greatly as industrial employment was not sufficient to allow any major increases in membership. Overall, large branches appeared to be doing very well, judging by the increase in the number of delegates and the number of branches electing them, but in the absence of complete branch lists it is impossible to determine the fortunes of branches with less than 500 members.

1976

The accession of Ireland to EEC membership in 1973 represented the greatest development yet of the country's free trading position. It had been anticipated that this would produce great benefits for manufacturing employment, as foreign investment would increase as companies from non-EEC countries came to take advantage of a relatively low-cost manufacturing base with access to the large EEC market. However, it was also anticipated that many industries in the traditional sector would be forced to contract due to the increased competition from more efficient foreign producers. In the event, the initial jobs bonanza did not materialise as Ireland, along with the rest of Europe, was plunged into recession between 1973 and 1975. This had the immediate effect of destroying many of the weaker traditional industries, and, although there was an increase in foreign investment, it was not sufficient to compensate for losses in traditional industries. The result was that, by 1975, manufacturing employment was down to 203,500, or 30,000 less than in 1972. This inevitably had an effect on ITGWU membership, but in fact this was not as bad as might have been expected. This was probably because the union was already organising to counter the effects of the membership losses prior to 1972, and was moving into new

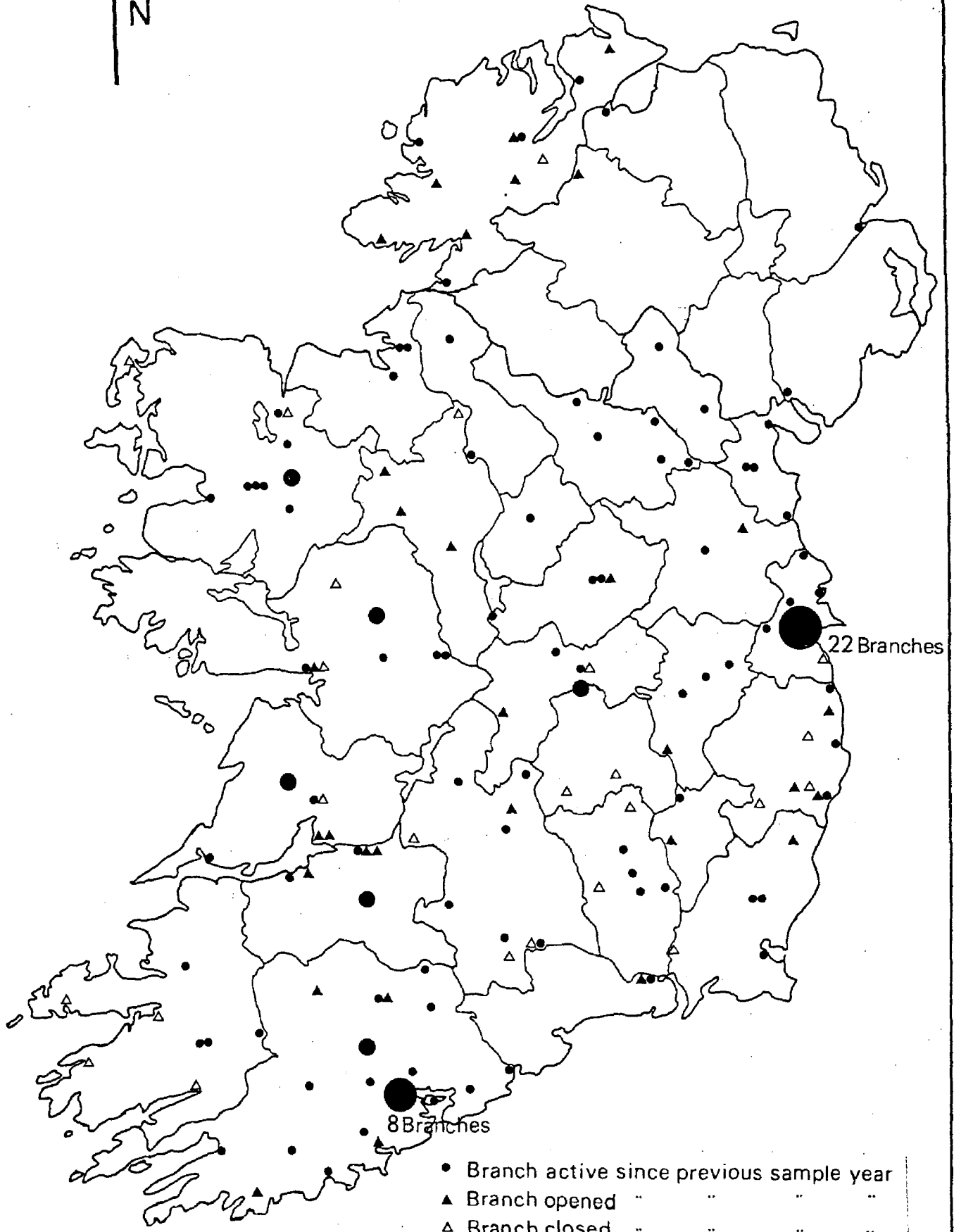
areas and sectors of activity. A further factor cited by the union was that the difficulties in the economy helped show unorganised workers that they needed union membership as protection (ITGWU, 1974, 11). This meant that membership actually rose in 1973 and 1975, although by 1976 it was down by about 1,400 on the 1972 figure.

Although there are no CIP figures available for 1976, that year has been chosen for analysis to examine the effects of the recession and extended free trade on ITGWU branch and membership patterns. Also, it is the first year since 1955 for which a branch list is available so it is useful to examine the degree of change in union organisation since then. CIP figures are available for 1975 so these will be used as the reference frame for growth in 1976.

Provincial Review:

There were now 156 branches, 30 more than in 1955 (v. MAP 16). Leinster, with 58, still led the field, but this was only 6 more than in 1955. Munster was close behind with 50 branches, 11 more than in 1955, while Connacht, with 23, had only 2 more than in 1955. Ulster had 22 branches, 7 more than in 1955. The remaining 3 branches, although based in Dublin, served members on a nationwide basis. The growth

1:2000000



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/area branch

MAP 16. ITGWU BRANCHES 1976

of almost 20% in branch numbers since 1955 tends to mask the continuity in the pattern, in that nearly half of the new branches had been formed from the subdivision of existing large branches in the major centres of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford. Thus, with a few exceptions, the branch structure was largely similar to that of 1955. With regard to membership structure the number of branches with 500 or more members, at 104, was nearly 20% up on the 1955 figure, representing two thirds of the total, and it is in this area that most evidence of new developments can be observed.

Leinster: Forty five of Leinster's 58 branches now elected delegates but their share of the total elected had fallen a further percentage point, to 49%, since 1972. Dublin still had by far the largest number of branches, with 23, but, as outlined above, 5 of these were only offshoots of existing branches which had become too large. Industrial employment had fallen by over 10,400 (v. Table 5.3) since 1972, yet the number of delegates elected had risen, by 14, from 79 to 93, again demonstrating the union's continuing adaptability in moving into new sectors of employment to organise new members. A decline of almost 2,600 in Louth's industrial workforce since 1972 had led to the loss of 2 delegates, with this county not having a large amount of

TABLE 5.3 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT 1972 AND 1975, ITGWU
DELEGATE REPRESENTATION AND BRANCHES 1972 AND 1976

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1		Branch	
	1972	1975	% +/-	1972	1976	1955	1976
Leinster	137,822	122,133	-11.4%	116(40)	140(45)	52	50
Carlow	2,522	2,550	+ 1.1%	2 (1)	4 (2)	1	2
Dlin Cit	69,632	61,813	-11.2%	74(16)	89(16)	12	21
Dlin Co	22,146	19,545	-11.7%	5 (2)	4 (1)	5	4
Kildare	6,026	5,426	-10.0%	3 (3)	3 (3)	3	4
Kilkenny	4,169	3,779	- 9.4%	3 (2)	4 (2)	6	4
Ls/Offly	5,048	4,196	-20.3%	5 (3)	6 (3)	6	4
Longford	1,270	1,28	+ 1.5%	- -	- -	1	1
Louth	12,743	10,174	-20.2%	9 (3)	7 (2)	4	4
Meath	4,088	3,696	- 9.6%	- -	2 (2)	1	2
Westmth	1,952	1,818	- 6.9%	5 (4)	7 (4)	3	4
Wexford	4,010	3,592	-10.4%	5 (3)	7 (4)	6	6
Wicklow	4,762	4,255	-10.6%	5 (3)	7 (4)	6	6
Munster	68,660	58,314	-15.1%	88(33)	106(36)	39	50
Clare	7,078	5,600	-20.9%	8 (4)	9 (4)	3	5
Cork Cit	13,090	10,226	-21.9%	30 (6)	34 (7)	2	8
Cork Co	18,368	16,398	-10.7%	17(11)	21(12)	13	8
Kerry	5,223	4,882	- 6.5%	6 (2)	10 (3)	8	4
Limk Cit	4,672	3,731	-20.1%	7 (2)	10 (2)	1	3
Limk Co	4,156	3,346	-19.5%	5 (1)	4 (1)	1	3
Tipprary	8,058	6,949	-13.8%	8 (5)	11 (5)	10	7
Watfd Ci	5,529	4,763	-13.9%	7 (2)	7 (2)	1	2
Watfd Co	2,486	2,419	- 2.7%	- -	- -	-	-
Connacht	15,368	13,549	-11.8%	16 (9)	20(11)	21	23
Galway	6,264	5,497	-12.2%	7 (3)	8 (4)	7	7
Leitrim	859	548	-36.2%	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	2
Mayo	3,850	3,583	- 6.9%	4 (4)	4 (4)	9	8
Rcommon	1,225	1,438	+17.4%	- -	- -	1	3
Sligo	3,170	2,481	-21.7%	4 (1)	7 (2)	3	3
Ulster	11,687	9,468	-19.0%	13 (9)	17(12)	21	22
Cavan	2,740	2,361	-13.8%	2 (2)	4 (3)	5	5
Donegal	5,662	4,473	-21.0%	3 (3)	5 (4)	5	11
Monaghan	3,285	2,634	-19.8%	1 (1)	2 (2)	2	2
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)	1	1
Derry				4 (1)	3 (1)	1	1
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1
Tyrone				- -	- -	-	-

1 Number of delegates from area.

2 Number of branches electing delegates.

3 Total number of branches in area.

industrial workers for the union to organise among to compensate for these losses. Kildare, with 4 branches, had gained one extra since 1955, and had managed to maintain its membership since 1972, in the face of a decline of 600 in the industrial workforce. The concentration of membership in larger branches was demonstrated in Wicklow by the closure of the 3 small branches open in 1955, although the county still had 6 branches, thanks to the opening of new branches in larger centres, as well as at Newcastle Mental Hospital. there were now 7 delegates from 4 branches, as against 5 from 3 in 1972, in spite of a fall of 500 in the industrial workforce. In Counties Wexford, Laois and Offaly, Meath, Kilkenny, Westmeath and Carlow there had been increases in delegates, nearly all taking place in spite of substantial falls in industrial employment. Since 1955, Laois had lost 2 small branches (at Abbeylaxey and Rathdowney) and Kilkenny had lost 2 of its original 6 branches, while Meath, Carlow and Westmeath had gained one branch each.

Thus, there had been no dramatic changes in branch numbers in Leinster since 1955. This demonstrates the level of professionalism the union had achieved by the early 1950s in that it had been able to rationalise its branch structure very successfully to cope with organisational demands made on it in subsequent years. Obviously, there had also been a

large growth in membership in many of these branches, with nearly 36% more than in 1955 having 500 or more members. There had also been an impressive level of growth since 1972, in the face of a deep recession. The union had been forced to begin an organisational campaign in many new sectors of activity to counter losses among members employed in traditional industries. Much of the expansion took place in new industry and also in the service sector, although the latter would only have been a significant element in membership in Dublin. It appears that membership was increasing in a number of larger branches but, as overall membership was declining slightly, a lot of smaller branches may have been contracting. This hypothesis would fit in very well with the existing tendency, evident since the late 1940s, to concentrate membership as much as possible into larger branches.

Munster: Thirty six of the 50 Munster branches had 500 or more members, and between them they accounted for 38% of all delegates elected, an increase of one percentage point since 1972, with the provincial total having risen, by 18, to 106. Every county had registered an increase, with the exception of Waterford, and in some the growth was quite notable, given that industrial employment in the province had fallen by over 10,300, a decline shared in by every

county.

Cork, with 26, had 11 more branches than in 1955, only 4 of which were subdivisions of the 2 original Cork City branches. Cork also accounted for half of the extra 16 delegates elected by Munster branches since 1972, although only 2 more branches had reached a membership of 500 or more, demonstrating again that growth was being concentrated in a small number of branches. However, 19 of the 26 branches now had over 500 members, and the growth that had occurred since 1972 was especially impressive, given that the industrial workforce had fallen by nearly 5,000. The greater employment decline in the city was reflected in the fact that only 2 extra delegates were gained there, while the county branches had added another 6. This, again, represents the impact of recession which most hit traditional industries, predominantly located in the city.

Branch numbers had increased in Clare, Limerick and Waterford since 1955, although in the latter 2 this was due to the splitting of larger branches. In Clare, the County and Shannon branches had been set up to organise workers mainly in new industry, while a branch had been established among workers in the Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation (SFADCo.) probably organising white collar workers. This had been partly offset by the closure of the Ennis general branch. Branch numbers had fallen in Kerry

(by 4, to 8) and Tipperary (by 3, to 7) but these closures were among smaller branches, again reflecting the tendency to rely less on small branches.

Delegate numbers had increased since 1972 in Clare (by one, to 9), Limerick City (by 3, to 10), Kerry (by 4, to 10) and Tipperary (by 3, to 11). In Kerry, industrial employment had only fallen by 341 and it may be that there was a greater proportion of new industry here than in other counties. This was probably the reason for growth in Clare also as the county branch was the only one to expand, gaining membership in new industry locating away from the major centres. Nonetheless, any expansion in Clare, Tipperary and Limerick was quite notable, given that industrial employment had fallen dramatically in each.

Thus the general pattern in Munster was one of a very impressive growth in membership in a number of branches. As most expansion occurred in rural town branches such as those of Kerry, Cork and Tipperary it appears that, as well as organising among previously non-unionised workers, the union was making gains in new industry which was increasingly locating in these areas, and that gains in this sector often more than compensated for losses in traditional industry. The increasing importance of new industry and its tendency to locate away from larger centres is reflected in the opening of County branches in Cork, Clare and Limerick which

would allow the union take advantage of the increasing number of workers in dispersed locations. Some of the increase in the largest centres may have been due to increasing organisation of workers in service employments. As in Leinster, gains were probably largely due to the efforts of the organisational campaign which had begun after the losses of the early 1970s, and it further demonstrates the ITGWU's ability to survive and prosper, even in the least favourable of conditions.

Connacht: The total number of delegates elected by Connacht branches in 1976 had grown by 4, to 20, since 1972. In contrast to Leinster and Munster, less than half the 23 branches (11) had delegates, while in the former 2 provinces the proportion was over 70%. Thus, Connacht's branches still tended to be smaller than those in the east and south of the country. Nonetheless, the increase in delegates had been achieved against a backdrop of falling industrial employment.

Only Leitrim and Roscommon had increased their branch numbers since 1955, to 2 and 3 respectively, each having had one in 1955. Galway and Sligo, with 7 and 3, had the same number as in 1955, although in Galway the Tuam and Galway Number 2 branches had closed, to be replaced by the UCG and Galway County branches, with the former being composed of

white-collar workers and the latter established to organise workers in new dispersed industry. Only in Mayo, had branch numbers fallen since 1955, albeit only by one, to 8, although a county branch had been opened, compensating for one of the 2 branches which closed.

The 4 extra delegates were accounted for by Galway (1) and Sligo (3), although both had lost roughly 700 industrial workers each. Galway had 4,000 members or more in the 4 branches with delegates and, given that the county only had about 5,500 industrial workers, they must have organised a substantial number in other sectors. Sligo's town branch must also have been organising outside of the industrial sector as it now had over 3,000 members, 500 more than the industrial workforce. In the other 3 counties, the branch sizes had remained largely static since 1972, due to the stagnant economic situation.

Thus, Connacht's ITGWU branch structure showed a high degree of continuity with that of 1955 and only Roscommon demonstrated major differences. The effects of the recession had militated against any major expansion in membership since 1972, although Sligo proved to be an exception in this case. However, the province had managed to retain its overall share of delegate representation and, considering the lack of alternative membership sources in many counties, this in itself was an achievement.

Ulster: As in Connacht, Ulster's proportion of 12 out of 22 branches having 500 or more members in 1976 was relatively low. The total number of delegates had grown from 13 in 1972 to 17 in 1976, an increase of 30 percentage points. Again, this took place against a backdrop of a decline of 2,219 in the industrial workforce in the 3 Counties in the Republic of Ireland.

Cavan (with 5) and Monaghan (with 2) had the same number of branches as in 1955, leaving Donegal as the only county where branch numbers had grown. The county now had 11 branches, 6 more than in 1955. This was the largest growth in the country and may have owed a lot to the size of the county which meant that industrial workers tended to be relatively dispersed, a conclusion supported by the fact that 7 of these branches still had less than 500 members. The 4 branches of this size now elected 5 delegates, as against 3 branches electing one each in 1972, in spite of a large fall of nearly 1,200 in the industrial workforce. Cavan also had 2 extra delegates (4) while Monaghan had one extra (2), although employment had fallen by smaller amounts in each.

In the 6 Counties of Northern Ireland the Belfast and Newry branches had maintained themselves at the 1972 level while the Derry branch had lost about 500 members, probably due to further contraction in the shirt-making industry in

the wake of EEC entry and increased competition through the Multi-Fibre Agreements which allowed access to European markets of imports of cheaper Third World goods, often produced by multinational companies. A branch had also been opened in Strabane in County Tyrone, a mainly Catholic area where the union could expect support from this quarter. Its membership was less than 500.

Thus, Donegal and Tyrone were the only 2 counties where branches had increased since 1955, with Donegal being the most striking example of change in the 32 Counties. However, branch sizes had increased in all 3 Southern counties, most notably so in Cavan.

Town size distribution of branches: There had been an increase in the number of towns in the 3 largest categories, while the 1,500-3,000 category had less towns than in 1955. A number of towns in each category have been excluded because they are really only suburban towns for neighbouring larger centres such as Dublin, with no economic base of their own, and could not be expected to have trade union branches (v. Table 5.4). In the 3-5,000 and 5-10,000 categories there has been a fall in the percentage of towns with branches since 1955. However, this is very largely due to the growth in the number of towns in these categories, in which relatively few new branches have been opened. In

TABLE 5.4 SUBURBAN TOWNS FROM 1981 CENSUS

A	B	C
Town Size Categories	Town	County
Over 10,000	Swords	Dublin
5-10,000	Ballinacollig Greystones-Delgany Leixlip Malahide Portmarnock Skerries	Cork Wicklow Kildare Dublin Dublin Dublin
3-5,000	Celbridge Maynooth Rush	Kildare Kildare Dublin
1,500-3,000	Ashbourne Clane Glanmire-Riverstown Laytown-Bettystown-Morningtown Newtownmountkennedy	Meath Kildare Cork Meath Wicklow

toto, 123 of the 156 were located in centres of 1,500 or more people (v. Table 5.5). This represents 79% of all branches, the highest ever figure for branch concentration in larger centres, and caused mainly by the subdivision of branches in cities such as Dublin and Cork.

In the individual town-size categories, all 16 of the non-suburban towns in the 10,000 or more population category, 23 (79%) of the 29 non-suburban towns in the 5-10,000 category, 13 (54%) of the 24 non-suburban towns in the 3-5,000 category and 21 (62%) of the 34 towns in the 1,500-3,000 category had branches. Overall, 71% of the non-suburban towns had branches, an increase of 6 percentage points since 1955. Thus, despite a fall in the percentage of towns with branches in the 3-5,000 and 5-10,000 categories, the general trend was towards expansion in the number of larger towns with branches. The most notable feature of the 1976 situation was that 62% of towns in the 1,500-3,000 category had now got branches. This was 23 percentage points up on 1955 and, although much of this was due to the decline in the number of towns in this category, it indicates a tendency towards filling up of the lower categories. On a provincial level, Leinster had 12 towns without branches, Munster had 11, Connacht had 3 while Ulster had 4.

TABLE 5.5 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1976

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	No. of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	16	16	100.0%	56	36.4%
5-10,000	29	23	79.3%	32	20.8%
3-5,000	24	13	54.2%	14	9.1%
1,500-3,000	34	21	61.8%	21	13.7%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	32	21.1%
Total	103	73	70.9%	155	100.0%

TABLE 5.7 TOWN SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF ITGWU BRANCHES 1979

A	B	C	D	E	F
Town Size Categories	Towns/Category	Towns with Branches	C as % of B	No. of Branches in each Size Category	No. of Branches in each Size Category
Over 10,000	16	16	100.0%	61	39.4%
5-10,000	29	23	79.3%	32	20.6%
3-5,000	24	13	54.2%	13	8.4%
1,500-3,000	34	18	52.9%	18	11.6%
Under 1,500	-	-	-	33	20.0%
Total	103	70	68.0%	157	100.0%

All population figures - 1981 Census.

Summary: Generally, then, the overall branch and membership pattern for 1976 was one of a comprehensive coverage of the country, with the ITGWU maintaining itself very well in the face of recession. Despite losing members in many traditional industries, the union had managed to prevent its membership from falling by more than 1,500. This was mainly due to the organisational campaign it had begun in the early 1970s, when losses in the traditional sector had not been countered quickly enough by organisation of workers in other sectors, at a time when industrial employment was growing. By the mid 1970s the ITGWU had come to terms with the new conditions and was probably helped by an increased rate of job creation by foreign firms, in the wake of EEC membership and the easing of the international recession. There was a definite continuation of the tendency towards growth in a number of the branches in larger centres, although this did not happen to the same extent in Cork as in Dublin and Limerick. This expansion was probably due to the wide variety of alternative sources of membership in these centres, among which the union was able to organise to compensate for losses in traditional industrial sectors. However, there was also an increasing tendency for expansion to occur in towns in rural areas, particularly Cork, Tipperary, Kerry, Meath, Westmeath, Wicklow and Carlow, and a number of county branches had also been opened. This reflected the increasing tendency for

industry to locate in towns away from the traditional industrial centres and the ITGWU was making many gains in these areas. These tendencies had been developing since the 1960s, but they now appeared to be really becoming marked, as the impact of recession and EEC membership began to be felt in the main urban centres.

1979

From 1976 the economy began to move out of recession. Although some firms in the traditional sectors still experienced difficulties, the number of closures was not as great as in the first years of the country's EEC membership. While declining employment in traditional industry had a deleterious effect on ITGWU membership, its impact on smaller craft unions could be quite disastrous. A case in point is the Irish Shoe and Leather Workers' Union (ISLWU), which lost over 2,000 of its approximately 5,500 members in the early 1970s, as competition from cheap, mass-produced footwear imports from low-cost countries undercut jobs in Irish footwear manufacturing. This decline led the ISLWU to seek amalgamation with the ITGWU and in 1977 the merger took place. Thus, the decline in traditional industrial employment did not have an unremittingly bad impact on the

ITGWU and this amalgamation was to bolster membership in a number of branches in traditional industrial centres, Drogheda and Dundalk being important examples. This was to be the first, and the most significant, of a number of amalgamations which took place during the next few years.

Also, there was a large increase in the number of foreign firms investing in the country, taking advantage of the favourable conditions offered by Ireland (v. chapter 2). The net result of these factors was that, by 1979, industrial employment had risen to 232,500, just 1,000 short of the 1972 figure. However, this rise in employment was not distributed evenly throughout the country. While Leinster's total number of jobs was still 8,000 below that of 1972, and Munster's total was about equal to that for 1972, Connacht's total had risen by about 5,500 and Ulster's had risen by about 1,700 (v. Table 5.6). Thus, there had been a significant shift away from the traditionally industrialised provinces, in favour of the traditionally less industrialised provinces. Within Leinster and Munster, the largest centres had also lost out heavily in employment, with Dublin, Cork and Limerick failing to regain their 1972 industrial employment levels. Unfortunately, the CIP figures for 1979 do not distinguish between employment in the city and county in these cases, as had been the practise previously, so it is not possible to determine whether

TABLE 5.6 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT 1975 AND 1979, ITGWU
DELEGATE REPRESENTATION AND BRANCHES 1976 AND 1979

	Industrial Employment			Delegates 1 (Branches) 2		Branch Total 3	
	1975	1979	% +/-	1976	1979	1976	1979
Leinster	122,133	129,688	+ 6.2%	140(45)	157(48)	60	59
Carlow	2,550	3,753	+ 47.2%	4 (2)	5 (2)	2	2
Dublin				89(16)	95(16)	21	22
Cit + Co	81,358	78,708	- 3.3%	4 (1)	7 (4)	4	4
Kildare	5,426	6,743	+ 24.3%	3 (3)	4 (3)	4	3
Kilkenny	3,779	3,444	- 8.9%	4 (2)	4 (1)	4	4
Ls/Offly	4,196	5,873	+ 40.0%	6 (3)	9 (4)	4	4
Longford	1,289	1,779	+ 38.2%	- -	1 (1)	1	1
Louth	10,174	10,078	- 0.9%	7 (2)	10 (5)	4	4
Meath	3,696	5,568	+ 50.6%	2 (2)	3 (2)	2	2
Westmth	1,818	3,091	+ 70.0%	7 (4)	6 (3)	4	4
Wexford	3,592	4,548	+ 20.6%	7 (4)	6 (3)	4	4
Wicklow	4,255	6,103	+ 43.4%	7 (4)	7 (4)	6	5
Munster	58,314	68,523	+ 17.5%	106(36)	113(38)	50	50
Clare	5,600	7,036	+ 25.6%	9 (4)	10 (3)	5	5
Cork				34 (7)	37 (7)	8	8
Cit + Co	26,624	29,076	+ 9.2%	21(12)	23(12)	18	18
Kerry	4,882	5,706	+ 16.9%	10 (3)	12 (4)	4	4
Limerick				10 (2)	8 (2)	3	3
Cit + Co	7,077	8,586	+ 21.3%	4 (1)	6 (2)	3	3
Tipprary	6,949	8,164	+ 17.5%	11 (5)	9 (6)	7	7
Waterfd				7 (2)	8 (2)	2	2
Cit + Co	7,182	9,955	+ 38.6%	- -	- -	-	-
Connacht	13,549	20,873	+ 35.9%	20(11)	24(11)	23	20
Galway	5,497	8,140	+ 48.1%	8 (4)	8 (3)	7	8
Leitrim	548	1,177	+114.8%	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	-
Mayo	3,583	6,299	+ 75.8%	4 (4)	7 (5)	8	7
Rcommon	1,438	1,966	+ 36.7%	- -	- -	3	2
Sligo	2,481	3,291	+ 32.6%	7 (2)	8 (2)	3	3
Ulster	9,468	13,361	+ 41.1%	17(12)	18(12)	22	27
Cavan	2,361	3,665	+ 55.2%	4 (3)	6 (4)	5	5
Donegal	4,473	6,277	+ 40.3%	5 (4)	5 (4)	11	11
Monaghan	2,634	3,419	+ 29.8%	2 (2)	1 (1)	2	4
Antrim				2 (1)	2 (1)	1	3
Derry				3 (1)	3 (1)	1	1
Down				1 (1)	1 (1)	1	2
Tyrone						1	1

1 Number of delegates from area.
2 Number of branches electing delegates
3 Total number of branches in area.

employment declined in the city alone, or in both city and county. However, as employment had increased in nearly every other county in both provinces, it is likely that the decline was limited to the cities. This expansion in employment provided rich potential for the ITGWU which was well placed to organise new workers due to the strong network of branches it had established in all counties. Between 1976 and 1979, the membership grew by about 10,000, according to the Registry of Friendly Societies figures, which meant that it was now between 170,000 and 190,000, its highest ever level.

Provincial Review:

Leinster: The total number of industrial employees had risen by 7,555 since 1975, with this expansion shared by all counties except Dublin, Louth and Kilkenny. Thus, the 2 traditionally most heavily industrialised counties, Dublin and Louth, had lost out in employment as new industry failed to replace jobs lost in the traditional sectors. Dublin had gained one extra branch since 1976 in the form of the Number 18 branch, giving it a total of 24 (v. MAP 17). Although some branches contained members in both the productive and the services sector it is possible, using the delegate list, to obtain a rough idea of the proportion of the Dublin

- 228 -



- Branch active since previous sample year
- ▲ Branch opened " " " "
- △ Branch closed " " " "
- County/ area branch

MAP 17. ITGWU BRANCHES 1979

industry and transport, construction and the services sector. There were 59 delegates from branches representing industrial and transport workers (29,000 or more members), 8 from the construction workers branch (4,000 or more members) and 28 delegates from branches representing mainly service sector workers (14,000 or more members). Of these, the largest single group was made up of clerical, professional and supervisory workers (about 5,500), demonstrating the union's success in organising in the white-collar sector during the late 1960s (when there were only 2,500 such members) and the 1970s. The new Number 18 branch was also composed of white collar workers, representing corporation and local authority workers, and other successes in this area included the Local Government Inspectorate and the Professional/Managerial branches which, although based in Dublin, served members on a nationwide basis. Also, there were over 4,500 workers in the hotels and restaurants sector, over 2,000 in the cinemas and theatres sector and over 2,000 in the radio, television and musical sectors. Thus, the union had a considerable Dublin membership in the services sector, equivalent to almost half of the total membership in the capital, with this organisation having helped the union continue its expansion, despite falling industrial employment. The Local Government Inspectorate and the Professional/Managerial Unit both demonstrate a refinement of the methods used by a general workers' union

to cater to as many sectors as possible, in that each group of workers was seen as having separate needs and everything was done to ensure that these were catered for. Usually, this involved separate sections for different sectoral groups of workers, but in these cases the members separate status was given recognition through the establishment of a separate branch.

Delegate numbers in Dublin had increased by 9 to 102 since 1976, with 3 more branches having 500 or more members. This meant that Dublin membership may have been 55,000, or nearly one third of the overall membership, indicating the union's continuing strength in the traditionally most populous and economically active area in the Republic.

Outside Dublin the only alteration in branch numbers was that Kildare and Wicklow had each lost one, leaving them with 3 and 5 respectively. With regard to delegate totals, increases had been recorded in Carlow (up one, to 5), Kildare (up one, to 4), Louth (up 3, to 10, helped by the amalgamation with the ISLWU), Meath (up one, to 3) and Laois and Offaly (up 3, to 9 combined). Some of these counties, as well as others where delegate numbers were static, saw membership fluctuate, with some gaining and others losing delegates. This suggests that some older industry was still contracting and new industry opening in other areas. Closures in older industry must definitely have taken place

in Westmeath and Wicklow as they had each lost one of the 7 delegates they had had in 1976. Generally, it appears that membership growth between 1976 and 1979 must have been fairly evenly distributed throughout the branches as the increase in delegate totals did not always reflect the very substantial increases in industrial employment which took place in counties such as Meath, Westmeath and Wicklow. Dublin branches had continued to expand by organising more service sector workers, again showing its ability to appeal to a wide variety of workers.

Munster: There was an increase of 10,209 in the number of industrial employees in Munster, with all counties experiencing increases of between 800 and 2,700. However, as with Leinster there was no very substantial increase in delegate numbers, with only 8 more being added since 1976, and only 3 additional branches electing a delegate. Again, this implies that increases in membership, which must have occurred at a greater rate than the increase in delegates suggests, must have been spread over a large number of branches. As with Dublin, it is not possible to determine what proportion of the rise in employment was accounted for by the city and the county in the cases of Cork, Limerick and Waterford, but the examples of the other 3 Munster counties suggests that a majority of the new jobs were

accounted for by the county in all 3 cases.

There had been no changes in branch numbers since 1976, although, in Clare, the Kilrush branch had been closed, probably due to a decline in port employment caused by containerisation, while the Shannon branch had been split into separate Airport and Industrial Estate branches. On the other hand, the delegate list provides interesting evidence of the effects of location policies of new industry on the ITGWU's membership patterns. In Limerick, the 2 city branches had lost one delegate each while the county and Askeaton branches had gained one each, thus indicating that the employment increase of 1,509 masked a shift in employment from city to county. Kerry's branches also had 2 extra delegates, again showing the impact of increased industrial employment in a rural area. In Clare, despite an overall increase of only one delegate, to 10, there had also been a re-alignment of membership. The Ennis branch had lost one delegate and the Kilrush branch had closed, while the Clare County and Shannon branches had gained 2 and one delegates respectively, although the former was probably helped by the absorption of the membership of the Kilrush branch. This is a further example of the increase in membership in new dispersed industry. Waterford (with 8) also had one extra delegate, although this may have been won among city workers as the union had seen no need to open a

county branch. Cork had 5 extra delegates, 3 in the city and 2 in the county, the first year since the 1960s that the city gained more than the county and probably due to successes among service workers. Tipperary was the only county where delegate numbers fell (from 11 to 9) and it may be that there was a rise in membership spread across other branches which was too small to give extra delegates in any one of them to compensate for the losses in the larger branches.

Generally, then, there was evidence in Munster of the effects of new industry on the union's membership patterns, with a tendency for membership to increase most in branches organising predominantly among new industrial workers based in rural areas. The union appears to have been somewhat slow to organise new workers in Tipperary and Waterford to the extent that the employment increases would have suggested, although it was successful in Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare. It was now in a strong position in Munster, with a relatively large number of substantial branches, 14 of which, outside the 3 largest cities, had 2 or more delegates.

Connacht: There had been an increase of nearly 7,324 industrial jobs in Connacht since 1975, an expansion of nearly 74%. This had enabled the ITGWU have 4 more delegates (24) than in 1976. There were 3 less branches (20) than in 1976, showing a further movement towards rationalisation of operations in larger branches. Only Mayo and Sligo increased their delegate numbers. Mayo, with 2,716 new industrial workers, had 7 delegates from 5 branches, as against 4 from 4 branches in 1976, while Sligo's town branch had gained one extra delegate (7) since 1976, helped by an increase of 810 in the industrial workforce. Galway had not gotten any extra delegates, and only one new branch, despite an increase of 2,643 in the industrial workforce. However, new industry was probably quite dispersed and membership increases may have been spread throughout the branches. In Roscommon and Leitrim, the position had weakened with losses of one and 2 branches respectively. Both counties still had less than 2,000 industrial workers and in Roscommon, if membership increased, this increase was probably spread among the branches. Generally, the ITGWU had mixed fortunes in Connacht. Expansion had taken place in Mayo and Sligo but growth in Galway and Roscommon, although probably occurring, was not reflected in delegate totals, again, probably due to the dispersal of industry, which meant that more branches could organise workers, thus spreading growth more evenly

throughout the branch structure.

Ulster: There had been an increase of 3,893 in the industrial workforce in the 3 Ulster counties in the Republic of Ireland but the only increase in delegates had taken place in Cavan, where 4 branches now elected 6 delegates, as against 3 electing 4 in 1976, helped by the increase of 1,304 in the industrial workforce. Donegal had shown no obvious growth but expansion could have been spread relatively evenly throughout the 11 branches. Monaghan had lost one of its 2 delegates but had gained 2 extra branches so there may have been a net gain in membership.

In the 6 Northern Counties, there were also signs of expansion. There was now a second Belfast branch, and one catering to workers in North Antrim had also been opened in Belfast, indicating recruitment among workers in smaller centres in this area. This suggests that the ITGWU was adopting a more aggressive organisational policy in Northern Ireland, where heretofore it had been content to maintain its position. A separate branch had also been opened in Newry for Boiler Operators and Technicians. In the other 3 branches, membership remained at about the same level as in 1976.

Town-size distribution of branches: The stability among larger branches which had been developing over a number of years appeared to be quite established by 1979 (v. Table 5.7). Since 1976 the only change had been the closure of 4 branches in towns in the 1,500-3,000 category, leaving a total of 17 (50%) of the non-suburban towns in this category with one branch or more. Two of the closures had taken place in Connacht and one each in Munster and Ulster so there was a tendency to rationalise operations in the traditionally less industrialised provinces. This reflects well on the level of professional organisation that the ITGWU had achieved in that it had not had to make any major alterations to its branch structure and that, by and large, most branches were now sufficiently strong and broadly-based to withstand any fall or absorb any increase in membership that might have occurred. This provides a significant contrast with the situation, even in the 1950s, when many branches lasted only a few years, being more vulnerable to membership fluctuations.

Summary: By 1979, the ITGWU had achieved its highest ever membership, due substantially to the increase in new industrial employment made possible by EEC membership and the lifting of the international recession. However, in contrast with earlier years, this increase appears to have

been spread over a large number of branches, with relatively few showing any major increase in membership. Despite a falling share of industrial employment, Leinster had managed to maintain a large absolute share of membership, thanks to increases in some counties where employment rose, to the amalgamation with the ISLWU, and also to the increased membership in Dublin where the union was able to extend its organisational scope to other sectors of employment to make good losses among members in traditional industry. 1979 also saw the majority of branches enjoy a relatively vibrant condition, with 110 out of 157 having a membership of 500 or more. The union had maintained its position among general workers' unions with between 170,000 and 190,000 out of 246,000 general union members in the Republic in its ranks, demonstrating its continued ability to maintain its pre-eminent position in the general workers' union movement.

CONCLUSION.

The period since 1958 had seen membership grow by about 25% while branch numbers grew by about the same order of magnitude. Branch expansion did not often occur in new areas of activity for the union as many new openings

occurred in areas with a need for a second branch, or more. Donegal, with its doubling of branches between 1955 and 1976, and Kerry, with its halving of branches in the same period, provided the major instances of notable change. However, this apparently stable picture masked a great degree of development. In the late 1950s, most of the union's 150,000 members were employed in small scale, often inefficient industries, producing for the home market. However, the years of evolving free trade saw a gradual change in membership composition. Loss of membership in traditional industry had to be compensated for by gains in new industry and the services sector, especially white-collar workers. The tendency for new industry, often foreign-owned, to locate away from traditional industrial centres throughout the 1960s, and especially since Ireland's entry to the EEC in 1973, would probably have led to a relatively large increase in the proportion of membership in Branches in Connacht and Ulster, had it not been for the ITGWU's ability to recruit members outside of industry and, in particular, in the white-collar and other services sector in the traditional centres. This was most marked in Dublin, where the decline in the number of industrial employees was greatest. In spite of this, the union constantly increased its membership in the city, largely due to successes in the services sector, and also to its increased efforts among industrial workers. This meant that the provincial share of

membership changed very little between 1955 and 1979, with Leinster's share falling by 2 percentage points, Munster and Connacht's rising by 2 percentage points each and Ulster's falling by 2 percentage points, largely due to the decline in the Derry branch. By and large, the branch structure had settled into its final shape by 1955 and most new members were incorporated into existing branches, some of which had to be sub-divided if they became too large.

However, there appears to have been a change of emphasis during the 1970s when membership increases began to be distributed more evenly throughout the branches, rather than concentrated in a relatively small number, as heretofore. This was a further reflection of the changing locational trends of industry, with a greater tendency to dispersal, rather than clustering in a small number of centres. This meant that, by 1979, 70% of ITGWU branches had at least 500 members, giving them greater security against losses of membership. Finally, the branch structure had tended to increasingly be identified with the largest towns. Although the proportion of towns with branches in the 3-5,000 and 5-10,000 categories had fallen, this was only because of the increasing number of towns in both categories, while the proportion of towns with branches in the 1,500-3,000 category had risen. Thus, the ITGWU was increasing the validity of its claim to be a national union,

with 67% of Ireland's largest towns now having branches. Generally, then, the 1960s and 1970s saw consolidation within a pre-existing branch structure, with many more members being in structurally sounder employment than before, as well as a greater range of employment, which could cushion the union, to some extent, against recession in any one sector.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

GENERAL SUMMARY.

This thesis has outlined the spatial evolution of the branch structure of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union since its foundation, in 1909, up to 1979. This 70-year period has seen a number of changes in the ITGWU's organisational character, broadly determined by the different phases of economic development through which the country was passing at different points in time and also by the level of organisation achieved by the union.

Thus, between 1909 and 1931, when the country was largely dependent on agriculture, and industry was confined to the ports and other large towns, the ITGWU made its initial organisational gains in the latter centres, because these had the largest concentrations of potential members. The level of success achieved in the early years partly gave rise to the intensity of the counter-attack launched by the

employers of Dublin in the second half of 1913 and the relative defeat of the Great Strike and Lock-Out left the union in a temporarily weakened position. By late 1916, the union was ready to start a new organisational drive designed to win over all workers in the country, regardless of sector or location, in pursuit of the "One Big Union" ideal. This necessitated the organisation of hitherto non-unionised rural labourers and this was made possible by the demand for labour in the conditions of war-time labour shortage, the high prices which farmers were getting for produce needed to feed the British war-effort, and also by the mood of radicalism sweeping the country in the wake of the Easter Rising. The union made rapid progress, spreading initially in a hierarchical fashion but with contiguous diffusion becoming more important from 1919 onwards, as union organisation was extended into small agricultural villages. By 1920, the union had up to 120,000 members in about 535 branches around the country, with most branches being located in those counties where the tillage acreage was highest.

However, from 1920 onwards, conditions became unfavourable for the ITGWU as the war economy was wound down and demobilisation and falling demand for industrial and agricultural products led to large scale unemployment. Membership fell and branches began to close, with most

closures occurring initially in smaller centres. The paracastic process thus occurred in an upwardly hierarchical fashion, with branches tending to survive best in larger centres. This process was speeded up after 1923 and the union made few gains in the recessionary conditions which persisted throughout the 1920s. By 1931, there were only 52 branches left, with a membership of about 20,000, the union's weakest position since early 1917. However, it was now an accepted force in Irish life and it had managed to stabilise its position with a solid core of membership in many of the larger towns throughout the country.

The period 1932-1957 saw the union experience growth in numbers comparable to that in the immediate post-World War One years as it took advantage of a dramatic increase in industrial employment facilitated by the protectionist policies of the Fianna fail government. These gave rise to an immediate growth in employment, and consequently in membership, so that by 1938 the membership had doubled since 1931. This increasing membership gave rise to an extension of the branch structure but there was a much greater degree of centralisation than in the years up to 1920, with many members being concentrated in already existing branches.

Although this expansionary phase was halted during the early years of the Second World War, due to rising unemployment and emigration, the last years of the war saw a resumption of growth which accelerated from 1946 onwards as production increased to help satisfy the consumer demand which had developed during the war years. This continued until 1950, when the union had over 120 branches and up to 130,000 members. This indicated the degree of concentration of membership which the union had achieved: while membership was 6 times larger than in 1932, the number of branches was only two and a half times the 1932 figure. This was facilitated by an increasing level of professionalism within the union which enabled a greater degree of rationalisation of the branch structure to be achieved than heretofore. Membership growth tended to be greatest in the larger branches, with smaller branches remaining more or less stable. During the 1950s the union was hit by the stagnation which affected the economy in general as industry reached the limits of its growth potential within the confines of a small economy. This meant that membership grew by, at most, 20,000 during the years up to 1957, a relatively small figure by the standards of previous years.

The re-orientation of national economic policy introduced in 1958, which placed the emphasis on free trade to attract foreign investment, opened up new areas for expansion for the ITGWU. Ireland's evolving free trade position, culminating in EEC entry in 1973, made the country an attractive location for foreign companies, with the result that industrial employment in this sector expanded rapidly, with the union making many gains among new industrial workers. However, free trade also exposed many traditional industries to foreign competition which they were unable to withstand and the resultant job losses tended to hit union membership in traditional industrial areas, notably in Dublin. As new industry tended to locate away from Dublin, the union's membership there would probably have fallen considerably had the union not been able to organise large numbers of workers in the rapidly expanding services sector. This meant that, while membership in the provinces, and particularly in counties such as Mayo, Galway, Clare and Cork, grew considerably, the overall provincial share changed little. The net membership gain between 1958 and 1979 was probably about 40,000 but this masks the considerable shedding of membership in weaker traditional industries and its replacement by membership in export-oriented foreign-owned industry and in the services sector. Again, most of the new members were accommodated within the existing branch structure but some new branches

did have to be created by the subdivision of large branches in the largest centres, accounting for about half the 30 new branches established between 1955 and 1976. By 1979 the union was in a generally sound state with many members being in structurally sound employments and the majority of branches having at least 500 members.

The spatial diffusion of the ITGWU's organisational patterns over the 70 year period of study thus provides interesting insights into patterns of diffusion of societal innovations in Ireland. Definite patterns are discernible as to where the earliest adopters were, what the patterns of diffusion were and what the role of the urban hierarchy in this diffusion was. Two broad periods of diffusion can be identified, although in both stagnation and even retrenchment occurred. Firstly, the years 1909-1920 saw the union extend initially into the largest centres and then into very small centres followed by a period of severe contraction and secondly, the years from 1932 onwards saw it experience renewed growth, but this time very largely restricted to centres with more than 1,500 people.

In the early period the union had difficulty moving outside the largest towns before 1917, with the determining factor in adoption of union branches being the size of settlement and, therefore, the presence of large groups of workers, as well as a trade union tradition. From 1917 the

ITGWU was able to take advantage of a more receptive atmosphere for trade unionism and it began to spread into a large number of smaller centres, especially in areas where labourers enjoyed a relatively improved bargaining position. In this, the role of the urban hierarchy was important, with large towns generally tending to have branches before smaller centres. The contraction from 1920 onwards was also heavily influenced by the urban hierarchy, with relatively few branches surviving in small centres by 1931.

The second phase of expansion was also clearly influenced by the urban hierarchy. Despite a spate of openings in smaller centres in the early 1930s, by the end of that decade the union had been able to impose greater restraint on its organisational policy. Henceforth, openings were predominantly in larger towns and the succeeding decades witnessed a gradual extension of branch services to most towns with over 1,500 people, with virtually all those with 5,000 people or more having at least one branch.

The ITGWU has thus tended to be most successful in the largest centres where economic activity and, therefore, workers have predominantly been located. Not alone are there large concentrations of workers in these centres but, due to their proximity to each other, they also appear to have a more collective consciousness, thus being more

receptive to the idea of trade unionism than workers in smaller centres, and also better equipped to defend themselves in disputes with employers than workers in smaller centres. This point helps explain the survival of the union in so many of the largest towns, notably in Leinster, during the mid to late 1920s when membership fell dramatically in a short space of time. It is also of relevance with regard to the union's continued growth in Dublin and Cork since the 1960s, in the face of declining industrial employment, in that both tend to have more large employments in both the industrial and the services sector, workers in these being traditionally more likely to be unionised. Conversely, areas where the union has traditionally fared less well tended to have less large towns and less workers, with a greater tendency to dispersal of workers in smaller establishments. As indicated, the union's own organisational strategy has had an important modifying impact, especially since the 1940s when policy placed greater emphasis on concentrating membership in branches in large centres. However, it appears that the union is now close to a saturation stage, with the existing branch structure being capable of absorbing most gains in membership and the need for further spatial extension of branch services being minimal.

SOME CAVEATS CONCERNING INFORMATION SOURCES.

While it has been possible to identify and largely explain the evolution of the union's branch pattern, there are certain weaknesses in the coverage. These are largely due to the deficiencies in the sources used. For instance, it has not been possible to draw up totally accurate branch lists for any year before 1976 because the annual reports did not contain such lists between 1928 and 1976, and the lists prior to 1928 do not always tally with information contained in the union register. The register is also deficient in that it does not extend beyond 1955 and for some branches it appears not to give all dates of opening and closure so that totally accurate lists could not be constructed. However, it has enabled the general branch picture to be observed. A further weakness is that there are no figures on membership per branch which means that the precise pattern of regional development cannot be gauged for any one year. Again, the use of delegate lists has enabled the general patterns of expansion and contraction to be observed and this method is regularly used by union officials in estimating the relative size of branches at different points in time. An associated, and much more surprising, gap in the sources is the absence of any one

continuous and accurate record of overall membership. Figures submitted to the Registry of Friendly Societies and the various Congresses to which the ITGWU has been affiliated are sometimes contradictory and in some periods the same figure seems to have been submitted annually, despite references to changing membership in the annual reports. Furthermore, even when it is possible to determine the extent of net growth or contraction in membership, it is not possible to determine how many members left and how many joined in any one year. This information would be especially useful for the years 1958-1979, and particularly 1973-1979, when many members were being lost in traditional industry, to be replaced by members in new industry or the services sector. Finally, it would have been helpful to know where the other two large general workers' unions, the ATGWU and the FWUI, had branches during the last 60 years as their presence in certain areas may have inhibited the ITGWU's organisational efforts in these areas. Unfortunately, neither union has kept centralised records of where it has had branches outside of Dublin so this avenue was not amenable to exploration.

AREAS REQUIRING FURTHER RESEARCH.

Despite these deficiencies, it has been possible to construct an overall picture of the regional development of the ITGWU's branch structure over a 70 year period as a pioneering effort in the spatial analysis of trade union organisation. There is, however, much scope for further research on a more specialised level with regard either to specific areas or specific time periods or combinations of both. One potentially useful area of research concerns the degree of transfer of membership from British-based unions, particularly the ATGWU, to the ITGWU during the 1930s and 1940s if it was possible to gain access to files held in central repositories, and also, perhaps, at branch level, of both unions. Alternatively, the degree of change in the membership composition of Dublin branches during the 1960s and 1970s would prove interesting and should be quite feasible, as many records should be available in the union's headquarters where the secretaries of these branches have been located for a number of years. A further topical area of research would involve an analysis of the union's growth since the 1960's in any one of a number of counties, including Mayo, Clare, Cork and Donegal, where the union has experienced a considerable extension of its operations,

largely in foreign-owned companies. This could involve a comparative analysis of the problems facing a union trying to organise rural workers, as opposed to urban workers whose tradition of unionisation would be much greater, therefore presumably making them more receptive to union overtures. Recent industrialisation in the West of Ireland has seen an increase in the number of female industrial workers and this may also have implications for unionisation. An associated area of study could be the impact of the prior negotiation of organising rights with foreign-owned companies whereby workers have not had to fight to gain the right to unionisation. It has been suggested that this may cause some problems of identification with a union, especially among previously unorganised rural workers who may not appreciate the *raison d'etre* of trade unionism. Of course, the converse of this problem has recently been recognised by some with regard to the branch plants of some foreign-owned computer, and other electronic, firms, where the companies may do their best to discourage trade unions from organising their workforces. This may have implications for the spatial development of trade unionism, especially given that the IDA has staked much of the credibility of its programmes on its ability to attract to Ireland the decision-making and research, as well as the production, functions of such sophisticated enterprises. These, and other, areas should offer much scope for further research.

CONCLUSION.

This thesis has provided an overview of the spatial development of Ireland's foremost trade union, tracing its development from its early days as an organisation of dock and transport workers struggling for the chance to lead a decent life, free from the indignity of low wages and frequent unemployment, to its contemporary position as an important "social partner". The period of study has seen the union undergo a number of changes in form and organisational strategy, sometimes in response to outside pressures but as often as not due to a considered policy of the leadership. In its composition and structure it provides an excellent indicator of the socio-economic state of Ireland throughout much of this century with the union usually being quick to spot organisational openings offered by changing economic conditions. It is considered that this thesis will have provided an adequate example of the rich possibilities and potential for study offered to geographers by the spatial dimensions of trade union organisation.

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