

Scotland and the First World War: A Revision Guide

Domestic Impact of War: Politics

Describe the key events of Red Clydeside and reasons for the protests taking place

- Unrest seen in Glasgow firstly through the **Rent Strikes**.
- **Feb 1915: 'Tuppence an Hour' Engineers' strike**. Strike caused by rise in cost of living and arrival of more skilled workers from America who were paid more than Scottish workers. Dispute centred on Weir's of Cathcart, who brought over American workers.
- Engineers also felt employers were taking advantage of the war, making inflated profits.
- Three-week long strike by 10,000 workers/members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in the Clydeside area.
- Eventual compromise was found. However, the strike did lead to the setting up of the Labour Withholding Committee: made up of the more radical trade union members who were prepared to ignore official trade unions if they thought workers' interests were not being properly represented
- Impact of The Munitions of War Act, which gave employers much power to ensure that weapons and munitions made it to the army uninterrupted.
- Led to the reduction in the power of unions and led to limitation of rights of skilled workers. Workers could not leave their job without a leaving certificate from the employer to move to another job. Also made it compulsory for a worker to accept a job, whatever it paid, and to work overtime, paid or unpaid.
- Munitions tribunals (made up of officials) set up to deal with workers who did not comply with the Munitions Act. **Led to the Fairfields dispute, August 1915**.
- Three shipwrights from the Fairfields shipyard in Glasgow were given a prison sentence by a tribunal for the non-payment of a fine. Fairfields workers went out on strike, which led to further escalation. The Labour Withholding Committee called for strike action if the men were not released within three days. This was only avoided when someone paid the fine anonymously.
- Dilution of labour - Reaction of skilled labour to the introduction of unskilled workers to do their job largely negative. In December, 1915 leading government member David Lloyd George visited Glasgow to speak to a meeting of workers and shop stewards. He was heckled and could hardly be heard above the jeers.
- The Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) was determined to oppose the introduction of unskilled labour. **Disputes broke out in Beardmore's in Parkhead** when the management refused to allow the CWC representative, David Kirkwood, to speak to new female workers. Kirkwood was arrested and with three other shop stewards was deported to Edinburgh until the end of the war.
- Industrial unrest in Glasgow continued after the war with the **40 hours strike and 'bloody Friday' George Square in 1919**.
- Continued industrial unrest in Glasgow partly caused by the split between the CWC and the official trade unions. CWC refused to accept a 47-hour week negotiated by the official trade unions. They demanded a 40-hour week instead.
- Friday 31 January: 'Bloody Friday' saw 100,000 demonstrate in George Square in Glasgow in support of a 40-hour working week and at the end of rent restrictions.
- Fighting between police and demonstrators led to massive overreaction by authorities, who moved 12,000 English soldiers to the city, supported by six tanks.
- Strike ended swiftly as strike leaders were shocked at the violence. Trade unions were the losers as they distanced themselves from strike action.

Explain the impact of the war on the growth of the ILP

- Glasgow area saw growth of socialist- and labour-based organisations, such as the ILP and the Glasgow Central Labour Party.
- The ILP was committed to achieving equality in society by the application of socialist principles
- At its peak in the mid-1920s, ILP membership in Scotland accounted for a third of all membership of the party in Britain, and out of a total of just over 1000 branches throughout Britain, over 300 were in Scotland.
- John Wheatley of the ILP helped organised the rent strikes of 1915–16 and fought for improved housing conditions for Clydeside's urban working classes.
- The ILP was active in the anti-conscription movement, and its leadership in Scotland opposed Britain's involvement in the First World War.
- ILP members were actively involved in resisting the Munitions Act of 1915 and in opposing the introduction of dilution. Indeed two future ILP MPs, Davie Kirkwood and Emanuel Shinwell, were leaders of the CWC during the 40-hours strike of 1919.
- Another notable feature of the ILP in Scotland was the prominence of many women within the party. Female involvement in political agitations and campaigns was a characteristic of ILP front-line politics in Glasgow, doubly significant in an era when women did not feature so prominently in public and political life. Women like Mary Barbour, Agnes Dollan and Helen Crawford proved themselves more than capable of operating in the male-dominated and hostile arena of municipal politics.
- Up until the late 1920s in Scotland, and particularly on Clydeside, the ILP was seen by its supporters as the Labour Party. It was the electoral advances of the ILP in Scotland which helped to break the Liberal dominance of British politics and which contributed to the growth of the Labour Party as the second party in British politics.
- A graphic illustration of the ILP's influence in Labour's electoral rise can be highlighted by the fact that in the 1922 general election in Scotland, 40 out of the total of 43 prospective Labour candidates were members of the ILP. It was in the general election of 1922 that the ILP was to record perhaps its most famous electoral victory, when the party won 10 out of the 15 parliamentary constituency seats in Glasgow.
- ILP criticism of the Labour leadership for deviating from its socialist principles led to the party splitting from the mainstream Labour Party in 1932.

Explain the reasons for continuing support for political unionism during and after the war

- Conservatives attracted those middle classes who did well after the war with their message of patriotism, steadfastness and appeal to traditional family values.
- The Conservative Party won 30% of the vote in Scotland in the 1918 election. Conservatives also benefited from being seen as the party of law and order, especially in the aftermath of the George Square riots. In the second election of 1924 they won 38 seats in Scotland compared to Labour's 26.
- Conservative Party won support for their backing of the political Union between Scotland and England and for their support of Unionist-Nationalism – the idea that Scottish interests were best served by staying a part of Britain.
- Labour had briefly supported Home Rule for Scotland in 1918 – the creation of a Scottish Parliament; however, by the 1920s all three major parties were supporters of Unionist-Nationalism.
- There was very little support in Scotland for independence, despite the formation of the National Party of Scotland in 1928 (which later became the SNP).
- The war had played an important role in promoting a sense of pride in Britain and the British Empire in Scotland. This also helped to promote support for the political Union with England.

Evaluate the significance of the Great War in the development of Scottish identity

- There was very little support even for Scottish Home Rule in 1914, let alone independence.
- There was great pride, not just in the union with England but in the British Empire.
- These feelings were undoubtedly strengthened by WWI. However, the aftermath left things a little more confused.
- By the late 1920s, many considered Scottish identity to be in crisis.
- The Empire & industry had brought great success to Scotland before WWI.
- Scotland's industries were failing badly and no longer could Scotland be considered 'the workshop of the world'.
- Nationalism was not considered a serious alternative. Scots were unsure of what separated Scots from the rest of Britain, of what Scottish identity now was.
- War changed some, a minority, into fervent nationalists, eg men like the poet Hugh MacDarmid. In 1928 he joined the National Party of Scotland, which campaigned for Scottish Independence.
- The distinctively Scottish way in which the First World War was remembered did not translate to a growing sense of Scottish nationalism in the short term, apart from in a few individuals. Most Scots fought for king, country and the United Kingdom.
- However, the First World War did change the way Scots viewed themselves: the impact of the war on industry and the impact of military losses on society had a huge impact in the long term.