

Edward Phelan and the ILO



Edward Phelan and the ILO  
The life and views  
of an international social actor

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## Preface

Centred on Edward J. Phelan's unfinished memoirs, this book is part of the International Labour Organization's Century Project, devoted to exploring and documenting the ILO's history. Edward Phelan was a key member of the small group of people who mapped out the design of the Organization during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, a staff member of the ILO from 1919 to 1948, and its fourth Director (and first Director-General) from 1941 to 1948.

The first foreword, by former Irish Taoiseach Seán Lemass, and the introduction and postscript, by former ILO Director-General C. Wilfred Jenks, were written in the late 1960s. The second foreword was prepared especially for this volume by the present Taoiseach, Brian Cowen.

To set the scene for the memoirs of this unusual man, who played such an important role in the birth of the ILO, the well-known Irish labour historian Emmet O'Connor has contributed a biographical essay.

The volume continues with an extensive selection of passages from Phelan's memoirs. Explanatory editor's notes have been inserted in the text where necessary to maintain the thread of Phelan's story. Editorial footnotes, identified as such by the final element '(Ed.)', have also been added to explain historical events and names. Phelan's own notes are identified by the addition of his initials '(E.J.P.)'. The uncut and unedited memoirs can be found on the website of the ILO Century Project at: <http://www.ilocentury.org>

As the hitherto unpublished memoirs do not go beyond the early days of the ILO, the volume also includes three articles Phelan wrote for the Irish review *Studies* in the 1950s, providing his perspective on the Organization's later development.

## Edward Phelan and the ILO

The book concludes with a selected bibliography of Phelan's writings and a list of further reading on the history of the Organization.

Editorial work for this volume was undertaken by Julie Wolf. Project oversight was the responsibility of Jasmien Van Daele. A financial contribution from the Irish Government towards the cost of this publication is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are also due to Patricia O'Donovan, ILO Executive Director, for her interest in and support for this work, and to Remo Becci and Fiona Rolian and the staff of the ILO's Historical Archives for providing some of the basic materials used in this project, including the memoirs themselves, and assisting in the preparation of the footnotes.

GERRY RODGERS  
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