

The Irish Postal Strike 1979

Aim

This exhibit displays the foreign mail cachets, labels and back-cancelled post during and immediately after the eighteen-week Irish Post Office strike in 1979.

The Strike

On 18 February 1979 members of the Post Office Works Union (P.O.W.) went on strike and stopped sorting and delivering mail. The industrial action ceased on 25 June 1979 following a 15% pay increase, below the 37% sought, agreed with the Department of Posts and Telegraphs (P&T).

This labour dispute was the biggest and costliest strike in the history of the Irish State, prolonged by the fears of the Government that an increase for Post Office Clerks would ripple through the public service, which eventually it did. The stoppage resulted huge quantities of post for sorting afterwards.

Display Scope & Importance

Many foreign postal administrations treated mail to Ireland during the strike as "Undeliverable" and returned it to the sender. Others simply stored it for reposting. This display focuses on the North American and European countries that used instructions affixed or stamped onto the mail. Most commercial correspondence has been destroyed. Mail bearing such instructions is most uncommon.

This display is a graphical result of the political and social change taking place in Ireland at the end of a dramatic decade, fifty years after Irish Independence. A decade in which Ireland joined the European Economic Community, a time when the Irish workers demanded more in their wages.



Stored mail forwarded on.

16 MAY 1979 NORTH SUBURBAN IL. cancel on airmail envelope to Newmarket-On-Fergus.

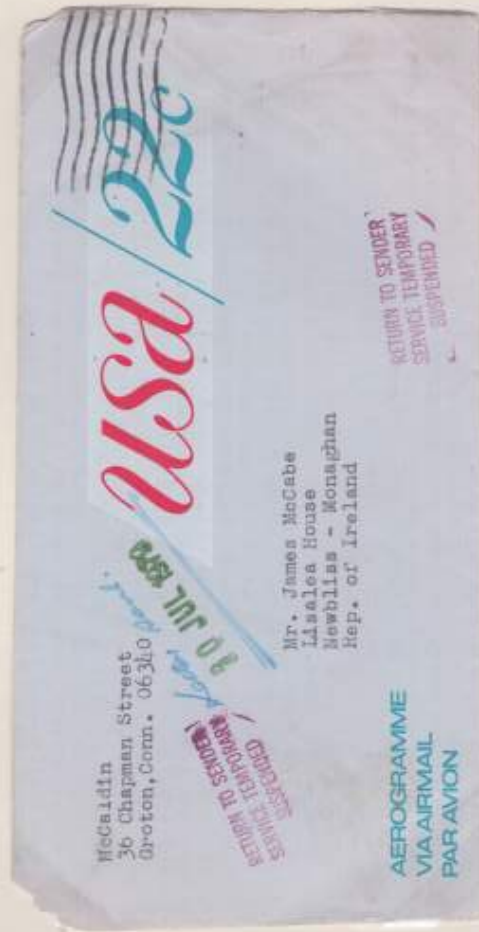
Triple line black RETURN TO SENDER SERVICE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED hand applied cachet. Stored in the mail centre, then forwarded to Ireland. Three line strike-through marked on the cachet prior to reposting, with a further 13 JUL 1979 NORTH SUBURBAN IL. machine cancel.

North America - USA



26 FEB 1979 OAKLAND CA. machine cancel, with FEB 26 1979 VALLEJO CA circular date stamp (c.d.s) on envelope from USA to Ireland.

Triple line black RETURN TO SENDER SERVICE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED hand applied cachet (size 40 x 12 mm).



Aerogramme from USA to Ireland written on 19 Feb 1979 machine cancelled with twice applied triple line maroon RETURN TO SENDER SERVICE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED hand applied cachet (size 31 x 13 mm) with a hand written note 'Letter sent' over 30 JUL 1979 strike.