

### **Provide an evaluation of source material.**

At the end of the nineteenth century Glasgow had built a successful ship building reputation, and it led the field in technological developments. During the twentieth century changes meant that it has lagged behind the rest of the UK in many areas which are illustrated in the source material.

#### **Ships launched on the River Clyde (Source B)**

The graph, showing factual information, portrays a wildly fluctuating picture of tonnage launched. The tonnage launched peaks in 1920 at 680,466 tons, and again in 1928. However the troughs in 1925 and 1933 (48,770 tons) emphasize the situation, and show one of the underlying roots of social problems in the city. From 1933 onwards the graph shows a gentle upturn in tonnage.

The increase from 1919 is due to the Royal Navy's need to replace vessels lost in the First World War. During the Battle of Jutland (1916) "the Germans [...] lost only 2,115 men to the British toll of 5,672. In German terms Jutland was a victory" (MOD, 2002). Losses such as this created much work for the shipyards and supported the economy in Glasgow. The first trough embodies the "failure of international trade to recover to pre-war levels" (Mitchison, 1979, p408) which also suggests that the 1920 peak is a localised exception to the economic situation. The general strike of 1926 may go some way to explaining the 1928 peak as backlogged work in replacing dated ships continued.

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the subsequent depression are shown in the rapid falling of output. Mitchison describes Scotland's position within the global economy: "Scotland went into depression as fast and as far as the rest of Britain; but she stayed in much longer than did England" (p408) not benefiting from the "housing and consumer goods boom occurring in England" (Iowa, 2002). The upturn from 1936 is only due to the Government's demands for rearmament, and it led to a "renewed emphasis on heavy industry" (Mitchison, p409); while this and the Second World War did lead to an economic boost it was not to last for long.

***No Mean City* – A McArthur & HK Long (Sources D and E)**

This book was both set and published in 1935<sup>1</sup>, and it gives a personal, Scottish perspective on life in the city at the time. The extracts describe the overcrowded conditions in which people lived, the payments made towards child support, and look at the social situation found in the city's slums.

Despite being a novel, and therefore not necessarily based in fact, the descriptions do flesh out the raw statistics about employment (considering factors such as the low output of ships) and infant mortality at the time, which exceeded Chicago's by 180%, Oslo's by 280%, and Stockholm by 290%. (Mitchison, p400). The issue of overcrowding was also a real problem, the Rent Act of 1915 and the Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restriction) Act in 1921 (McLean, 1983, p166) had tried to help resolve the problem but there were still many people living in single rooms, and the tenement blocks were "invariably crowded and epidemic diseases were frequent" (Robbins, 1983, p58).

While the social side of the extracts appears accurate, the move of the vote from Liberal to Labour appears very cynical. McLean (p154ff) examines the cause of the political shift and defines it more specifically to be concerned with the two greatest social problems, unemployment and housing. In the extract the writers seem to be personally disillusioned with the entire concept of government and state control and let their personality interfere with the facts.

**Contemporary Newspapers (Source F)**

These extracts again illustrate the poor social conditions of the city, but their viewpoint is from the outside. The London newspapers portray the 'inner Britain' views of Scotland, the stereotypes are rife, with barbaric "gangster" and "hooligan" references and the comparison of the infant mortality rates to 'civilised' London. As has been seen the conditions in the city were not good, and "armoured cars [were] assisting the preservation of law and order" (Robbins, p130). While painting a generalised pictures of the

problems in the city, these extracts do not offer the clear insight into the situation that raw data can, and neither are they written by or for people in the city. They ignore the Cunard ship building going on at that time (the Queen Mary was launched in 1935), and that University students raise money annually during the 1930s for charity (Pathé).

As with all of the large industry based cities, Glasgow has not had a smooth path through the twentieth century and for various reasons it has fared worse than most. The poor living conditions continued for several years and employment was slow to pick up. The images created by the newspaper clips have stuck with people and it has only been within that last decade that with the considerable help of regeneration programmes, people have been forced to challenge and to dismiss their misconceptions.

(803 words)

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst the source suggests 1954 as the publication date, all on line bookstores indicate this book was first published in 1935, as does the Oxford *Dictionary of Quotations* which includes a quotation taken from Chapter 4.

## **Bibliography and References**

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Robbins, K (1983) *The Eclipse of Great Power – Modern Britain 1870 – 1975* London: Longman

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