

# James Connolly

## Let Us Free Ireland!

(1899)

From Workers' Republic, 1899.

Let us free Ireland! Never mind such base, carnal thoughts as concern work and wages, healthy homes, or lives unclouded by poverty.

Let us free Ireland! The rackrenting landlord; is he not also an Irishman, and wherefore should we hate him? Nay, let us not speak harshly of our brother – yea, even when he raises our rent.

Let us free Ireland! The profit-grinding capitalist, who robs us of three-fourths of the fruits of our labour, who sucks the very marrow of our bones when we are young, and then throws us out in the street, like a worn-out tool when we are grown prematurely old in his service, is he not an Irishman, and mayhap a patriot, and wherefore should we think harshly of him?

Let us free Ireland! “The land that bred and bore us.” And the landlord who makes us pay for permission to live upon it. Whoop it up for liberty!

“Let us free Ireland,” says the patriot who won’t touch Socialism. Let us all join together and cr-r-rush the br-r-rutal Saxon. Let us all join together, says he, all classes and creeds. And, says the town worker, after we have crushed the

Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do? Oh, then you can go back to your slums, same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

And, says the agricultural workers, after we have freed Ireland, what then? Oh, then you can go scraping around for the landlord's rent or the money-lenders' interest same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic. Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the poorhouse door to the tune of *St. Patrick's Day*. Oh! It will be nice to live in those days!

"With the Green Flag floating o'er us" and an ever-increasing army of unemployed workers walking about under the Green Flag, wishing they had something to eat. Same as now! Whoop it up for liberty!

Now, my friend, I also am Irish, but I'm a bit more logical. The capitalist, I say, is a parasite on industry; as useless in the present stage of our industrial development as any other parasite in the animal or vegetable world is to the life of the animal or vegetable upon which it feeds.

The working class is the victim of this parasite – this human leech, and it is the duty and interest of the working class to use every means in its power to oust this parasite class from the position which enables it to thus prey upon the vitals of labour.

Therefore, I say, let us organise as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organise to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organise to wrench from their robber clutch the land and

workshops on and in which they enslave us; organise to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man.

Organise for a full, free and happy life **FOR ALL OR FOR NONE.**

**James Connolly**

# **Our Mad Rulers**

**(30 December 1899)**

From **The Workers' Republic,** 30 December 1899.

It is said that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad. To judge by the events accompanying the visit of the Colonial Secretary to Dublin [\[1\]](#) we might conclude that the governing classes of these countries have indeed come under this sentence of the gods. For, except as the acts of madmen, the conduct of the authorities of the city of Dublin during that visit is entirely inexplicable to the ordinary mind. The visit of Mr Chamberlain was, of course, primarily intended as a political demonstration having for its purpose to annul the effect which the anti-war demonstrations in Ireland might have had upon the mind of the world. To the Irish people, certainly, the idea of regarding Trinity as a focus of national thought would seem in the last degree preposterous, but the information on Irish affairs possessed by other nations is not so precise as to preclude the possibility of an honour conferred by a university in our capital city being confounded with a welcome by the city itself.

That there was such a danger, we believe; that the holding of two large, but possibly unreported, meetings of protest would not completely obviate the danger we also believe; that such a danger was averted, and due emphasis given to the fact that the people of Dublin are not willing slaves to the British governing class, or pliant accomplices in the infamies of the pirate Empire, we owe to the madness which seized upon our rulers and led them to suppress the right of public meeting in Dublin, and let loose their uniformed bullies upon a defenceless people.

At a time when the British flag has been stricken down in Africa, when its drilled and disciplined soldiery are flying before the conquering hosts of a nation of farmers, when its ablest generals are foiled in strategy by men they had affected to despise, when all over the world the enemies of the British Empire are speculating as to the weakest point at which it may be attacked, then, in her hour of greatest danger, the powers that be in Ireland hasten to show to the world that here, within a few hours sail of the shores of England, is a nation bitterly hostile to her rule, and only kept down by superior force.

This, we repeat, was the act of madmen. It accentuated the weakness of England and the hypocrisy of her rulers. When the same men who go to war on the pretext of securing political freedom for the populations of other states ruthlessly suppress the most elementary rights of citizenship in a country under their own rule, the last shred of justification for their war policy is torn to atoms, and the war itself stands revealed in its proper colours as a criminal aggression upon a free people. So much has the government performed, so much let the people note. All the elaborate machinery of the British Constitution, all its pretended political freedom and rights of citizenship, are ever at the mercy of the governing class of England, who, with the force of the military and the police at their backs, respect nothing – except force. It is an awkward lesson to teach the Irish working class today. The Irish working class, we say, because in every popular tumult of late years the propertied class have, by their silence, acquiesced beforehand in the actions of the government.

When the government proceeds to stifle political freedom let it consider well its action and what may result therefrom. There are at present but few soldiers in Ireland; the militia and the last of the reserves are about to be called out and sent

to the front. Now, if those Irish working men were of a reflective turn of mind, and were to consider that the British soldiers are not nearly such good shots as the Boers, that therefore there is not nearly so much danger of death in fighting the British Army as in fighting the Boer Army and finally were they to come to the conclusion that it would be a safer, more judicious, and altogether more honourable course to stay in Ireland and fight their tyrants at home instead of risking life and losing honour by fighting for their tyrants abroad, and were they to be encouraged in their resolve by observing from the proceedings which accompanied Mr Chamberlain's visit that peaceful means of agitation have no effect; if, we repeat, those Irish working men were to follow that chain of reasoning then that force which tyrants do heed – the last resort of people as well as kings – might suddenly appear in Ireland.

And who knows?

## Note

1. Joseph Chamberlain visited the city on 17-18 December to accept an honorary degree from Trinity College. Police baton-charged protestors against the Boer war, arrested Connolly, and smashed **The Workers' Republic's** printing press, forcing the paper to miss an issue.

## James Connolly

# Dublin and the War

Diary of the "Troubles"

(1899)

**Workers' Republic,** 30 December 1899.  
Republished in **James Connolly: Lost Writings**, (ed. Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh), [Pluto Press](#) 1997.

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December 8. – Announced in London and Dublin newspapers that the Right Hon Joseph Chamberlain, MP, Colonial Secretary, would visit Dublin on the 17th and 18th December to receive a degree from Trinity College.

English newspapers eulogise Chamberlain's "courage".

December 11. – Special meeting of Dublin Corporation to consider a vote of sympathy with the Boers is rendered abortive by the Home Rule members treacherously absenting themselves.

December 12. – Public meeting called by the Irish Socialist Republican Party "to celebrate the British defeat at Stormberg."

Date of meeting 19th December, same date as Chamberlain's triumphal entry; place of meeting, College Green, beside Trinity.

December 13. – Reliable natives report the jingo enemy to be very wrathful at Socialist audacity.

December 14. – Irish Transvaal Committee summon public meeting to be held in Beresford Place on Sunday 17th, to denounce the action of the Dublin Corporation – and salute Chamberlain.

British garrison go into laager.

December 15. – London **Pall Mall Gazette** declares that there is trouble brewing in Dublin in connection with Mr Chamberlain's visit and expresses the belief that the parties responsible for all the trouble are "the Irish Socialist Republican Party which is composed of a number of the most extreme and least reputable representatives of the nationalists of Dublin".

London **St James' Gazette** hopes "that the police will see to it".

**Irish Daily Independent** reminds us of the "rights of hospitality".

December 16. – Reported at British Headquarters that both wings of the Irish Revolutionary forces were gathering behind the kopjes.

British draw in all their outposts, from Kingstown and all outlying camps.

One hundred rounds of ammunition per man served out to the military.

Proportionate quantity of porter served out to the police.

Some swearing done before Mr Wall, Police Magistrate.

Government Proclamation issued forbidding the meeting on Sunday. Copies served on the Transvaal Committee: John O'Leary, Michael Davitt, Pat O'Brien, MP, Willie Redmond, MP and James Connolly.

Meeting of Transvaal Committee. Willie Redmond, as chairman, advises the people to defy the police, and hold the meeting in Beresford Place.

Native runners out all night summoning the bludgeonmen of the Government.

December 17. – All the tactical positions in and about and streets debouching on Beresford Place occupied by masses of police. Military confined to barracks and in readiness to turn out. Thousands of people thronging to the place of meeting. Dublin wild with excitement.

Home Rulers Funk. Leave the people to face the police as they had advised them to, but take their own miserable carcasses to the seclusion of a back room.

Miss Maud Gonne, Mr Griffith of the **United Irishman**, Mr Lyons of the Oliver Bond '98 Club, comrades Stewart and Connolly of the Irish Socialist Republican Party step into the breach and drive down to Beresford Place to hold the meeting.

Baton charges by police. Hired driver of brake seized by police, reins assumed by Connolly who had been moved to the chair by Griffith, procession organised through the principal streets, two meetings held, charges by mounted police, unsuccessful, but desperate, efforts of the mounted police – to keep their seats, triumphal conclusion of the procession, arrest of Connolly.

Fake meeting held by Home Rulers. Audience composed of five reporters and two ladies.

At the close of the meeting W. Redmond MP gets himself interviewed (?) and declares:

I have never seen anything like the enthusiasm manifested when I (I, I, Willie Redmond, to wit) stepped out of the rooms of the Celtic Literary Society.

Saith Pat O'Brien: "*We have demonstrated to England that she cannot go to war unless she has first conciliated Ireland.*"

Quoth the man in the street: "Rats."

December 18. – Connolly fined £2, or one month imprisonment, and to find bail in the sum of £10 or go to prison for another month.

Fine paid, and security for bail found.

Socialist Republican meeting prohibited, the attempt at holding meeting frustrated by hundreds of policemen, vicious police charges upon the people.

Police raid on Socialist premises. One Red Flag, one Green Flag, two Boer Flags, and the Historic Black Flag which led the anti-Jubilee procession of 1897 captured by the police.

Several members maltreated. After a gallant struggle six stalwart policemen succeed in throwing one small boy, brother of one of the members, downstairs. Said policemen to be mentioned in despatches for “distinguished conduct”.

After the retirement of the police meeting held in Socialist club-room, comrade Stewart in the chair. A resolution denouncing the Dublin Corporation, and protesting against the ruffianly conduct of the police, was put to the meeting, spoken to by Messrs Griffith and Quinn of the Transvaal Committee, and carried.

Chamberlain in his speech at Trinity apparently loses heart, for, instead of the expected war-whoop, he winds up by asking those present to believe “he was not so black as he was painted”.

A “Reconnaissance in force” of the Trinity College loyalists checked by an old woman in Dawson Street, and finally repulsed by a flying column of Catholic University boys. Loyalists retreat in two divisions, one towards Trinity, the other towards Mercer’s Hospital – for surgical treatment.

**Workers’ Republic** suspended for one week owing to disorganisation caused by above events.

December 19. – All quiet on the Potomac.

### **Moral**

Although a body aiming primarily at economic change, at Social Revolution, yet wherever a blow is to be struck for freedom – national or social, political or economic – there you will find the Socialist Republicans, ready and willing to fight.

Our warfare against the domestic exploiter does not diminish our hatred of the foreign tyrant.

# James Connolly

## Home Thrusts

(16 December 1899)

From **The Workers' Republic**, 16 December 1899.

The Dublin Corporation.

A great body of patriots.

How their hearts do bleed for suffering humanity – at so much per bleed.

How they do hate England, and love all her enemies – at election time.

This great body of patriots, who have the honour of Ireland's capital in their keeping, were summoned together on Monday to a special meeting of the Corporation to consider a resolution of sympathy with the Boers [\[1\]](#), and took the opportunity to show what mettle they are made of.

Splendid mettle. Fit for anything. Fit for road metal, in fact.

There are 60 members of the Corporation, the majority of whom are gr-r-eat Nationalists, ever thirsting for the gore of the brutal Saxon.

But out of the 60 members only 14 attended, and of the 14 a large proportion were Conservatives who came with the intention of opposing the motion.

14 members do not constitute a quorum, so that by staying away the absentees succeeded in defeating the motion.

It would have been a more manly course of action to have opposed the motion and defeated it, but then you do not surely expect manly action on the part of middle class tricksters – or Labour men engaged in selling the cause of Labour.

14 members out of 60 and 5 of them Conservatives. Nearly all the Labour members absent, including the Alderman, Fleming, his friend, Councillor Bergin, and all the other members for the North Dock Ward.

A fine object lesson for the electors. [\[2\]](#)

Lord Mayor Tallon was hooted and groaned, cheers were raised in the Council-room for an Irish Republic, and groans given for the Pirate Empire. The Lord Mayor read a speech he had got somebody to prepare for him, asserting his sympathy with the Boers –

But never mentioning the fact that on the voyage home he had presided at a meeting on board ship the purpose of which was to raise funds for the relief of the destitute relatives of the soldiers engaged in slaughtering the Boers.

The whole spectacle – the cowardly action of the absentees, the hypocritical clowning to the gallery by the person in charge of the motion, and the dishonest attitude by the Home Rule press – all ought to drive home the conclusion that the middle class must be driven from public life if the manhood of Ireland would rescue their country from universal contempt.

Perhaps our Republican friends who have, or profess, such a dread of political action will now see the value of it, see how much stronger and aggressive they could be if they had taken our advice and captured representative positions in the revolutionary interest.

Now they have to beg for a hearing in the corporation, where, with a representation of their own there, they could enforce it.

But of course, such a representation could only be secured by linking the political revolutionary cause to the cause of social emancipation of the workers, and perhaps that is why our friends are so much afraid of it.

The **Daily Nation** denounced the proposal to pass a motion of sympathy with the Boers on the ground that it might endanger the Boundaries Bill which it said was more important than the freedom of a people thousands of miles away.

This has nothing to do with the rumour that Tim Healy MP is about to be appointed to a Judgeship. [\[3\]](#)

The poor **Evening Herald** almost wept over the news of the defeat of the British at Stormberg.

In agonising sentences it pictured the sorrows of those Irish mothers whose sons had fallen in Africa, in the course of their glorious trade of hired assassins.

This game of the **Herald** is worth noting, as a clever and insidious method of working up sympathy for the British army.

It is on a par with the action of the same journal in continually issuing placards announcing, in its largest type, defeats of the Boers, and great victories for the British, in the most approved style of sensational jingo journalism.

All those little dodges of the Home Rule press are interesting, as exhibiting the innate characteristics of the capitalist class – a class incapable of straightforward action when money may be made by treachery.

In our day and generation there is only one class which can be depended upon for consistent revolutionary action. That class is the working class.

Not because the working class is in its individual members better than other classes, but because it is the only class in the community which has nothing to hope for from the maintenance of present conditions.

The onward march of capitalist society crushes the workers lower and lower in the mire, makes life more and more precarious for the toilers, and as a consequence confronts the manhood of Labour with the grim alternative:–

Either revolution to enable the workers to grasp the power of the State and so render possible the restoration to the labourer of the control of the means of existence, and thus of a healthy, happy, human life, or else a lifetime of degrading toil with the workhouse as a final reward.

The worker who realises his class position is consistent throughout, and his consistency carries with it the destruction of modern capitalism and all the governments and institutions which maintain its rule.

*Spailpín*

## Notes

1. The war between the British empire and the Boer republics of South Africa had just begun.

2. The Irish Socialist Republican Party was standing a candidate for the North Dock Ward, E.W. Stewart. The Labour Electoral Association had just refused to endorse Stewart, backing Councillor Bergin instead.

3. Timothy Healy led the faction of the Home Rule party which the **Daily Nation** supported.

# James Connolly

# Home Thrusts

(9 December 1899)

From **The Workers' Republic,** 9 December 1899.  
Reprinted in **Red Banner,** No.18.

## A Close Season

During the Boer war the English Jingo press will observe a close season for the sport of making game of the German Emperor.

He is a great man, is the Kaiser. When Dr Jameson raided the Transvaal, and Kruger defeated his little game, the Kaiser sent a telegram of congratulation to Paul. [\[1\]](#) Then all the Jingo press of England went for the “mad Emperor,” and called him all the pet (?) names they could think of.

There was peace at that time. But now there is war, and as the mad Emperor, if he chose to take a hand in the game, could successfully humiliate the British Lion, that animal is now down kissing the ground at his feet, and all the Jingo crowd who a few months ago were howling for his blood are now prowling around on the hunt for his photograph.

His photograph. Yes, for he wouldn't condescend to gratify them with a look at his imperial person.

Now observe, ye workers, that this crowd of swashbucklers are our masters. And if you have any contempt for the crowd who spit upon a man one day, and crawl for a smile from him the next, what sort of feeling must you have for yourselves, who are lorded over by such a pitiful crew?

And don't make the mistake of lauding the Kaiser, either, as our so-called nationalist journals do.

He has always proven himself to be a most determined enemy of the working class, and longs for the day when he may drown in blood their hopes for freedom.

He, only the other day, introduced to his Parliament a bill which would have made it a penal offence to ask a workman to go on strike, had it not been defeated by the determined opposition of the Social Democrats.

He is continually rallying all the conservative classes in Germany against the demands of the workers, and striving by his speeches to his soldiery to familiarise them with the idea of firing upon their own countrymen.

He is your enemy, as the English governing class is your enemy, as the Irish propertied class is your enemy, as all the classes who live upon your labour in all the nations of the world are your enemy.

And the same law of self-preservation which makes the propertied classes stand together throughout the world, ought also to make you realise the necessity of studying the position and prospects of the revolutionary working class opposed to those classes.

That is part of the aim and purpose of this paper. To present to our readers a brief resume of the important advances made by the Socialist forces along the lines of the Class War.

You meet this Class War everywhere, but do not always recognise it. It is our duty to label its every manifestation, in order that you may recognise it.

This you have been told by most of your public speakers on the Transvaal War, that it is a capitalist's war. So it is. It is one manifestation of the Class War.

So is the war in the Philippines. [2] So are all modern wars; all manifestations of the struggle of Capital to enlarge its domain of exploitation.

And in like manner all efforts to beat back those forces of capitalism are of a kin to the efforts of the working class to rid themselves of the burden of capitalism.

In fact the capitalist has so far extended his powers that every political movement of the present bears a direct relation to the class war, and desires to be keenly watched for that very reason.

The effort of the British Governing Class to impose its rule upon the Transvaal is simply an exemplification of capitalism fully grown and developed; the efforts of the Irish master class to retain its hold upon public power in our corporations and other boards is an exemplification of the same unclean animal's attitude when too weak to dare show all its teeth.

As soon as the Irish master class attains the strength of its British brother it will develop all his brutal traits; at present it can only exercise his sneaking proclivities.

The English master class bullied the Boer, and grovelled before the Emperor; the Irish master class in Ireland denounces the Englishman, and in England grovels before every English politician who winks his eye in the direction of Home Rule.

**Brothers both**

***Spailpín***

## Notes

1. At the end of 1895 L. Storr Jameson, an official of the British South Africa Company, led an unsuccessful armed assault against the Boer government of the Transvaal, led by Paulus Kruger. Kruger also led the Boers in the war with Britain that had broken out in October 1899.

2. Having taken the Philippines from Spain in the war of 1898, the United States were now attempting to suppress a guerrilla movement for independence.

## James Connolly

# Dogma and Food

(December 1899)

From **The Workers' Republic**, 9 December 1899.

At a meeting of the Sacred Heart Home in Dublin the other day a most powerful and impassioned appeal was made by the Archbishop of Dublin for funds to provide proper care and training for the Catholic children who, from the poverty and carelessness of their parents, frequently fall into the clutches of "proselytisers" who make their misery a weapon of warfare against their religion. We do not propose now, nor at any other time, to enter into the disputes of rival religions, but we do think that the occasion merits at least a passing notice on our part, helping as it does to illustrate the truth of our contention that the social question, or the bread and butter question, is the root question of all, and until it is settled no other question of fundamental importance can be grappled with in any but an incomplete and unsatisfactory manner.

For what is the position upon which the appeal for funds to carry on the charitable work of the Sacred Heart Home was based? That owing to the poverty-

stricken condition of large masses of the people the Catholic faith of the children was at the mercy of those missionaries and other Protestant agencies who come with charitable contributions to the parents and make of their charity a means for obtaining control of the education and bodily person of the child. Here then we have the statement clearly made that the manifold dangers against which we are so solemnly warned spring from POVERTY. Reasoning on this matter from the standpoint of a mere layman we would be inclined to say that the first line of attack along which the Archbishop should direct the forces of his eloquence, and the attention of the world in general, is that of poverty and the institutions which create it. If you destroy the social institutions which create poverty, if you lift the working class from their present position of economic dependence, and in so doing assure to all men and women a sufficiency of the good things in life in return for a moderate amount of labour, then the insidious work of the “souper” is ended and all religious denominations will require to stand or progress by their inherent truths alone.

But nowhere in all the passionate exhortations of our clerical leaders do we find this point ever noted; instead we are to have appeals for funds to be applied for the purpose of saving Catholic children from the temptations of “proselytisers;” and as said temptations usually take the form of food and raiment, to supply food, raiment, and if necessary, shelter through Catholic sources. In all this there is no question of whether it would be a subject worthy of consideration to consider what means should be taken to abolish the poverty which degrades the workers so much that they are ready to traffic in their children in such a manner.

Yet until this question is dealt with all the efforts of the Sacred Heart Home, and such-like institutions, will be of practically no avail in combatting such degradation. The place of the children rescued today will be filled tomorrow by the children of other parents hurled into the abyss of slum life and misery by the ceaseless working of our unjust social system. We on this journal, or in this party, are not allied, nor opposed to, any particular creed or Church – seeking the emancipation of the working class from the unholy trinity of Rent, Interest and Profit we require the aid of men of all religions and of none – but we consider it

our duty to point out that if the speakers at the Sacred Heart Home at Drumcondra were really in earnest in their desire to save the children, they would find in the Municipal Programme of the Socialist Republican Party a plank, that of the Free Maintenance of Children, which, if applied in practice, would prevent effectually all that hopeless misery out of which such degrading incidents as those complained of spring.

But it is at all times more congenial to a certain class of minds to nibble at consequences rather than to strike boldly at the root of the evil; that, and the unpopularity sure to be the reward of the political party which, despising cheap methods of gaining sympathy, instead of whining over the sufferings of the poor, calls upon them to rebel against the oppressive institutions which cause it, explains why our public men in general are chary about touching a reform, be it ever so practical, which appeals to manhood rather than to wealth.

But all such admissions of timidity coupled with an admission of the degrading nature of capitalist society, such as that the assembled clerics treated us to on Monday last, only tend to confirm the faith of the Socialist Republican in that uncompromising course of action which rests all its hopes in the right arms and clear brains of the disinherited – the working class.

**James Connolly**

# **A Plea for the Children**

**(1899)**

We wonder how many of our readers fully appreciated the significance of that plank in our municipal programme [\[1\]](#) which demands the free maintenance of children at School. In no item of the Socialist programme are the economic and humanitarian aspects of the movement so closely blended, and none are so much required in the interest of future generations. For the misery and oppression under which the adults of this generation suffer, they have themselves largely to blame as much of it is immediately removable, and all of it could be abolished by a concerted effort on the part of its victims. But the children who suffer most from this inhuman social system; who are stunted in growth, physically and intellectually; who are dragged up, for the most part, in tenement houses which ever tend to become veritable cesspools of crime and degradation; who are shut out by the poverty of their parents from every avenue of enlightenment, and who find their whole lives warped and distorted by the evil conditions surrounding their infancy; their claim for consideration is superior to all political exigencies, and ought to be pressed forward with all the energy we possess.

It may be urged against such a demand that it introduces the public power of the community into a sphere from which it ought to be excluded – the home. But this is an argument which cannot be seriously entertained when we consider the many and varied inroads upon private life which the power of the State has already made, and in which such public intervention has proven to be in the highest degree beneficent. The individual can no longer use his property as he pleases, even when that property is in inanimate things, but when property takes the form of human beings, as children, the 'rights' of the individual are circumscribed and limited in the most thorough manner. And what sane man to-day would venture to assert that the right of parents to do as they like with their children – a right which all too often took the form of brutal maltreatment and systematic starvation – was more compatible with public welfare, or private morality, than the supervision enforced by the State at present. And as the right of the individual to maltreat his children has been suppressed in the interest of

the children, should not the social maltreatment of the children which follows as a result of the enforced poverty of the parents also be suppressed? If it is right that parents should not be allowed to sentence their children to corporal punishment of a severe character, or to curtail their supply of food below what is necessary for their subsistence, is it not also right that Society which, through its faulty economic organisation, sentences the parents themselves to a lifetime of drudgery and ill-requited toil, should use its power to provide the children of the poor it has created with sufficient of the necessaries of life to allow of their proper development into capable, self-respecting men and women? It is said this would encourage drunkards and loafers to neglect their children. But the children of such people are neglected now, and the maintenance of their children out of public funds could not increase such neglect, but would only save the helpless little ones from its consequences. Why should children suffer, even if the parents are criminal and indolent?

Society owes a duty to these children – they are the citizens of the future; as their childhood is made happy and healthful, and therefore truly susceptible of receiving education, so will their manhood and womanhood tend to become; so will the civilization they mould be worthy of an enlightened people. Therefore, we repeat, the Free Maintenance of the Children is a most important item to be fought for, and we look to see the revolutionary working class making this demand a prominent feature in its future agitation – resolved that capitalist society, which starved and stunted our childhood, and debases and exploits our manhood, shall, at least, be compelled to take its clutches off the lives of our children and leave the rising generation physically and mentally capable of accomplishing the glorious task of social reconstruction now awaiting it.

## **Note**

1. The programme put forward by the ISRP in local elections.

# **James Connolly**

# The South African War II (1899)

**Workers'**

**Republic,**

18

November,

1899.

... And what about the war? Well, I think it is the beginning of the end. This great, blustering British Empire; this Empire of truculent bullies, is rushing headlong to its doom. Whether they ultimately win or lose, the Boers have pricked the bubble of England's fighting reputation. The world knows her weakness now. Have at her, then everywhere and always and in every manner. And before the first decade of the coming century will close, you and I, if we survive, will be able to repeat to our children the tale of how this monstrous tyranny sank in dishonour and disaster.

**James Connolly**

# Landlordism in Towns

(November 1899)

From **The Workers' Republic**, 18 November 1899.

In an early issue of the **Workers' Republic** we pointed out that the Corporation of Dublin had it in its power to sensibly mitigate the sufferings of the industrial population in the City by a wise and intelligent application of its many powers as a public board. Among the various directions we enumerated as immediately practical outlets for corporate enterprise, there were two allied measures which, were they applied, might do much to at once relieve the most odious and directly pressing evils arising from the congested state of our cities. Those two measures were:—

- Taxation of unlet houses,

and

- Erection at public expense of Artisans' Dwellings, to be let at a rent covering cost of construction and maintenance alone. [\[1\]](#)

The wisdom of the proposal to increase the funds and utilise the borrowing powers of the Corporation in this manner cannot be questioned. The housing accommodation of the Dublin workers is a disgrace to the City; high rents and vile sanitary arrangements are the rule, and no one in the Corporation seems to possess courage enough to avow the truth, or to face the storm of obloquy which

would be directed upon the head of the councillor who would take the opportunity to expose on the floor of the City Hall the manner in which the interests of house landlords are protected, and the spirit of sanitative legislation set at naught.

The so-called philanthropic companies which profess to cater to the needs of the workers by providing cottages, etc., in reality charge higher rents than do most individual house owners elsewhere. We all remember how the owners of the Coombe area property attempted to raise the rents on their cottages, because they were compelled to undertake the construction of some necessary drainage, which they culpably neglected to supply when their property was being built. Now the Dublin and Suburban Artisans' Dwellings Company have in like manner initiated an attempt to raise the rents on their Cork Street buildings by another sixpence a week, in spite of the fact that the property has lately been allowed to get into a most dilapidated condition – roofs leaking, footpaths all broken up, roadways full of holes and pitfalls, and lamps never lit in the darkest nights of the year.

We are glad to record that this attempt at extortion is being met by the tenants in a most spirited fashion, and that it is likely to prove successful. Councillor Cox has also stood by the tenants in this matter, and has used his position on the Corporation to stop the rebate of taxes which this company usually obtains on the score of its philanthropic character.

This action of our friend, Councillor Cox, shows how much influence for good can be exerted by our representatives when imbued with the proper spirit. What a Socialist Republican could do in the way of remedying grievances, and pushing forward measures for the benefit of the workers, can be easily surmised by those who have observed the keen grasp of public questions which at all times distinguishes the Socialist above his fellows.

But, lacking the measures spoken of at the beginning of this article, all other measures must be only of a partially remedial character. Each proposal bears the stamp of a truly practical measure; each can stand the test of rigid economic analysis, and may be put into operation whenever the working class democracy are enlightened enough to demand it.

The taxation of unlet houses would compel the owners of property to accept rents much lower than they now demand, in order to avoid the disagreeable necessity of paying taxes upon unremunerative property. But the erection of houses to be let at cost of construction and maintenance would place in competition with the speculative house landlord, dwellings which, not needing to yield a dividend, could easily beat down his rents to a point more within the compass of the working man's purse. One point more needs to be noted. It is that a large proportion of the houses in Dublin are owned by persons too poor to keep them in a habitable state. When this is the case such houses should be taken over by the Corporation and made habitable at public expense, or where this would be too costly, razed to the ground. The owners could be compensated according to the condition of their property when taken out of their hands.

It must be remembered, however, that all those measures are merely tentative. Our cities can never be made really habitable or worthy of an enlightened people while the habitations of its citizens remain the property of private individuals. To permanently remedy the evils of city life the citizens must own their city.

## Note

1. In *Home Thrusts* in the October 8 1898 **Workers' Republic** Connolly wrote: "The Corporation can provide dwellings for the working people at a rent to cover the cost of construction and maintenance alone, and can procure money for the purpose by a stiff tax on unoccupied houses."

# James Connolly

# Socialism and Imperialism

(1899)

From Workers' Republic, 4 November 1899.

As Socialists – and therefore anxious at all times to throw the full weight of whatever influence we possess upon the side of the forces making most directly for Socialism – we have often been somewhat disturbed in our mind by observing in the writings and speeches of some of our foreign comrades a tendency to discriminate in favour of Great Britain in all the international complications in which that country may be involved over questions of territorial annexations, spheres of influence, etc., in barbarous or semi-civilized portions of the globe. We are, we repeat, disturbed in our mind because we ourselves do not at all sympathize with this pro-British policy, but, on the contrary, would welcome the humiliation of the British arms in any one of the conflicts in which it is at present engaged, or with which it has been lately menaced. This we freely avow. But the question then arises: is this hostility to the British Empire due to the fact of our national and racial subjection by that Power, or is it consistent with the doctrine we hold as adherents of the Marxist propaganda, and believers in the Marxist economics?

The English Socialists are apparently divided over the question of the war on the Transvaal; one section of the Social Democratic Federation going strongly for the Boers and against the war; another also declaring against the war, but equally denouncing the Boers; and finally, one English Socialist leader, Mr Robert Blatchford, editor of **The Clarion** and author of **Merrie England**, coming out

bluntly for the war and toasting the health of the Queen, and the success of the British arms. On the other hand, all the journals of the party on the continent of Europe and in America, as far as we are aware, come out in this instance wholeheartedly on the side of the Transvaal and against what the organ of our Austrian comrades fittingly terms England's act of 'blood-thirsty piracy'. Our esteemed comrade, H.M. Hyndman, took the position that England ought not to have given way to Russia at Port Arthur, but ought to have fought her and asserted British supremacy in the Far East. His reason for so contending being the greater freedom enjoyed under British than under Russian rule.

That we may not be accused of criticizing the attitude of others without stating our own, we hereby place on record our position on all questions of international policy.

Scientific revolutionary Socialism teaches us that Socialism can only be realized when capitalism has reached its zenith of development; that consequently the advance of nations industrially undeveloped into the capitalistic stage of industry is a thing highly to be desired, since such an advance will breed a revolutionary proletariat in such countries and force forward there the political freedom necessary for the speedy success of the Socialist movement; and finally, that as colonial expansion and the conquest of new markets are necessary for the prolongation of the life of capitalism, the prevention of colonial expansion and the loss of markets to countries capitalistically developed, such as England, precipitates economic crises there, and so gives an impulse to revolutionary thought and helps to shorten the period required to develop backward countries and thus prepare the economic conditions needed for our triumph.

Comrade Hyndman claims that we should oppose Russia because her people are ruled despotically, and favour England because her people are politically free. But that is the reasoning of a political radical, not the dispassionate analysis of contemporary history we have a right to expect from an economist and a Socialist of Hyndman's reputation. Russia is not yet a capitalist country, therefore her people bow beneath the yoke of an autocrat. Drive the Russian out of Poland! By all means! Prevent his extension towards Europe! Certainly! But favour his

extension and acquisition of new markets in Asia (at the expense of England if need be) if you would see capitalism hurry forward to its death.

It may be argued that our Irish nationality plays a large part in forming this conception of international politics. We do not plead guilty, but even if it were so the objection would be puerile. As Socialists we base our political policy on the class struggle of the workers, because we know that the self-interest of the workers lies our way. That the self-interest may sometimes be base does not affect the correctness of our position. The mere fact that the inherited (and often unreasoning) anti-British sentiment of a chauvinist Irish patriot impels him to the same conclusion as we arrived at as the result of our economic studies does not cause us to shrink from proclaiming our position. It rather leads us to rejoice that our propaganda is thus made all the easier by this none too common identity of aim established as a consequence of what we esteem strong and irreconcilable hostility between English imperialism and Socialism.

**James Connolly**

# **Imperialism and Socialism**

(1899)

From **Workers' Republic**, 4 November 1899.

As Socialists – and therefore anxious to at all times throw the full weight of whatever influence we possess upon the side of the forces making most directly for Socialism – we have often been somewhat disturbed in our mind by observing in the writings and speeches of some of our foreign comrades a tendency to discriminate in favour of Great Britain in all the international complications in which that country may be involved over questions of territorial annexation, spheres of influence, etc., in barbarous or semi-civilised portions of the globe. We are, we repeat, disturbed in our mind upon the subject because we ourselves do not at all sympathise with this pro-British policy, but, on the contrary, would welcome the humiliation of the British arms in any one of the conflicts in which it is at present engaged, or with which it has been lately menaced. This we freely avow, but the question then arises: Is this hostility to the British Empire due to the fact of our national and racial subjection by that power, and does it exist in spite of our Socialism, or is it consistent with the doctrines we hold as adherents of the Marxist propaganda, and believers in the Marxist economics.

This is the question we propose briefly to discuss in our article this week. We are led to the discussion of this topic by observing that the English Socialists are apparently divided over the question of the war on the Transvaal; one section of the Social Democratic Federation going strongly for the Boers and against the war; another also declaring against the war, but equally denouncing the Boers; and, finally, one Socialist leader, Mr. Blatchford, editor of the **Clarion** and author of **Merrie England**, coming out bluntly for the war and toasting the health of the queen, and the “Success of the British arms”. On the other hand all the journals of the party on the continent of Europe and in America, as far as we are aware, come out in this instance whole-heartedly on the side of the Transvaal and against what the organ of our Austrian comrades fittingly terms England’s act of “blood-thirsty piracy”.

We ask then is there no common ground upon which Socialists can agree to treat all matters of international politics – a common standpoint from which all questions of race or nationality shall be carefully excluded, and every question dealt with from the position of its effect upon the industrial development required to bring the Socialist movement to a head? Nominally all Socialists hold

to the international solidarity of Labour, and the identity of the interests of the workers the world over, and during the Franco-German and Spanish-American wars the Socialists of those countries demonstrated that the belief was no mere abstract theory, but a living, concrete fact. But our English friend, Mr. Blatchford, deliberately throws the doctrine to the winds, and declares that “when England is at war he is English and regards all those who have taken up arms against England as enemies to be fought and beaten.” This is unqualifiedly chauvinist, and as a brutal endorsement of every act of brigandage and murder in which the capitalists of England may involve their country it throws a curious sidelight on the mental make-up of this man – who very nearly shed tears of pity over the wrongs and “Christ-like appearance” of the Anarchists expelled from the International Socialist Congress in London. Our esteemed comrade, H.M. Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation, also in an article contributed to the Berlin **Vorwaerts** and reprinted in **Justice** took the position that England ought not to have given way to Russia at Port Arthur, but ought to have fought her and asserted English supremacy in the far East. His reason for so contending being the greater freedom enjoyed under British than under Russian rule.

Mr. Blatchford’s chauvinist pronouncement can be ignored as simply a personal predilection, and therefore binding no one, but the opinions of our comrades in the Social Democratic Federation of England hardly stand upon the same footing, but require severer consideration.

That we may not be accused of criticising the attitude of others without stating our own, we hereby place on record our position on all questions of international policy.

Scientific revolutionary Socialism teaches us that Socialism can only be realised when Capitalism has reached its zenith of development; that consequently the advance of nations industrially undeveloped into the capitalistic stage of industry is a thing highly to be desired, since such advance will breed a revolutionary proletariat in such countries and force forward here the political freedom necessary for the speedy success of the Socialist movement; and finally, that as colonial expansion and the conquest of new markets are necessary for the prolongation of the life of capitalism, the prevention of colonial expansion and

the loss of markets to countries capitalistically developed, such as England, precipitates economic crises there, and so gives an impulse to revolutionary thought and helps to shorten the period required to develop backward countries and thus prepare the economic conditions needed for our triumph.

That is our position. Arguing from such premises we hold that as England is the most capitalistically developed country in Europe, every fresh conquest of territory by her armies, every sphere of influence acquired in the interests of her commercialists, is a span added to the life of capitalist society; and that every market lost, every sphere of influence captured by the non-capitalist enemies of England, shortens the life of Capitalism by aiding the development of reactionary countries, and hurling back upon itself the socially conservative industrial population of England.

Comrade Hyndman claims that we should oppose Russia because her people are ruled despotically, and favour England because her people are politically free. But that is the reasoning of a political Radical, not the dispassionate analysis of contemporary history we have a right to expect from an economist and a Socialist of Hyndman's reputation. Our comrade quite forgets to apply that materialist philosophy of history which he himself has done so much to popularise in its Marxian form, viz., that the economic system of any given society is the basis of all else in that society – its political superstructure included. If he did so apply it, he would realise that the political freedom of England is born of her capitalism. Her capitalist class required a wage slave class possessing such freedom or mobility of movement as would make them available at short notice wherever the exigencies of capitalism demanded. To gain such absolute freedom of migration a political movement had to be inaugurated placing the capitalist class in a position to break the bonds of serfdom for the labourer. This once achieved the capitalistic concentration of the workers in great centres of population gave to the proletariat the sense of numbers and opportunities of organisation required to complete the work of political enfranchisement. Thus the economic necessities of capitalism always and everywhere beget a measure of political freedom for its slaves.

Russia is not yet a capitalist country, therefore her people bow beneath the yoke of an autocrat. This is only saying that her capitalist class is not strong

enough yet to force upon the government laws establishing the conditions most helpful to capitalist development. But every forward move of Russia in the direction of colonial expansion strengthens that capitalist class in Russia and in so doing breeds there the revolutionary working class. On the other hand, if the wishes of comrade Hyndman were to be realised Russian capitalism would be checked in its growth, and the discontent in that country, lacking capitalistic conditions, would resolve itself into a purely agrarian movement. The revolutionary proletariat would remain unborn.

Drive the Russian out of Poland! By all means! Prevent his extension towards Europe! certainly; but favour his extension and his acquisition of new markets in Asia (at the expense of England if need be) if you would see Capitalism hurry onward to its death.

It may be urged that our Irish nationality plays a large part in forming this conception of international politics here set forth. We do not plead guilty, but even if it were so the objection would be puerile. As Socialists we base our political policy on the class struggle of the workers, because we know that the self-interest of the workers lies our way. That the self-interest may sometimes be base does not affect the correctness of our position. In like manner the mere fact that the inherited (and often unreasoning) anti-British sentiment of a chauvinist Irish patriot impels him to the same conclusion as we arrived at as the result of our economic studies does not cause us to shrink from proclaiming our position, but rather leads us to rejoice that our propaganda is thus made all the easier by this none too common identity of aim established as a consequence of what we esteem the strong and irreconcilable hostility between English Imperialism and Socialism.

## **James Connolly**

# America and Ireland

## Farmers' Demands

(1898)

**Workers' Republic,** 21 October 1899.  
Republished in **James Connolly: Lost Writings**, (ed. Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh), [Pluto Press](#) 1997.

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As a general rule we refrain from taking notice in our columns of the quarrels or discussions of the Socialist parties of the world. We regard ourselves as being, at present, primarily a missionary organ, founded for the purpose of presenting to the working class of Ireland a truer and more scientific understanding of the principles of Socialism than they could derive from a perusal of the scant and misleading references to that subject to be found in the ordinary capitalist press. This task also involves, as a matter of course, the criticism and exposure of all the quack remedies and political trickeries with which our masters, or their ignorant imitators in the ranks of the workers themselves, seek to impose upon the people as cure-alls for our social evils. We have all along acted upon the conviction that we must give the revolutionary principles of Socialism an Irish home and habitation before we venture to express our opinions on the minor matters dividing the party abroad. We can say now with some degree of confidence that we have succeeded in that task and that the Socialist Republican Party of Ireland is one of the factors which will play a big part in shaping the future history of this country, and being so confident we now propose to say a word upon a subject at

present under discussion in the United States of America; and in which the name of our Party has been cited as following a course of action similar to that adopted by one of the disputants.

The matter is as follows:– There are in the States just now two distinct Socialist parties – The Socialist Labor Party, and the Social Democratic Party. The first named is the longest established of the two and has repeatedly run candidates for the post of President of the United States, polling on the occasion of the last Presidential contest 36,664 votes. The last named has only come into existence since the last Presidential campaign, and is composed for the greater part of men and women who, while avowing themselves Socialists, disapproved of the policy and tactics pursued by the Socialist Labor Party. To the uninitiated in the economics and philosophy of Socialism it is hard to explain the exact point at issue, but it may be briefly summed up in the statement that the Socialist Labor Party adhere uncompromisingly to the policy of identifying themselves as a party with, and basing all their hopes upon, the struggle of the working class against every section of their exploiters, or employers. This involves opposition to every demand made in the interest of the master class, and an attitude of complacency, or even triumph, at the success of the great capitalist in crushing out his smaller competitor – this complacency arising from the, it seems to us, absolutely correct position that the crushing out of small capitalists by large ones will tend to increase the ranks of the working class, concentrate industry under centralised management, decrease the numbers of those interested in private property, and so make the ultimate attainment of Socialism easier.

In other words, theirs is the position known in Europe as the Marxist position, from its being first definitely formulated by the founder of Modern Socialism – Karl Marx.

The Social Democratic Party, on the other hand, look to the fact that the small middle class, and especially the farmers, still wield an enormous voting power, and, looking to the present rather than to the future, they have embodied in their programme certain ‘Farmers’ Demands’ – proposals for legislation to enable the petty farmers to bear up against the competition of those mammoth

farms for which the United States is so famous. The object being, of course, to win the votes of the farmers as a class.

Over those 'Farmers' Demands' a battle royal has been raging for some time between the two parties. The Socialist Labor Party denouncing them as reactionary and unscientific, the Social Democratic Party defending them as practical and useful. Lately some members of the latter party have themselves taken up the battle against those proposals being included in their programme, and demand their removal. In the course of this latter discussion in the columns of the **Social Democratic Herald** published at Chicago, Sept 25th, one writer, F.G.R. Gordon, in defending the proposals, cites our example as a party which, occupying an absolutely scientific position on Socialist doctrines, yet has its 'Farmers' Demands'. Here is the quotation:—

The Irish Socialist Republican Party have their Farmers' Demands; and their party has been endorsed as the par excellent Scientific Socialist Party.

No.3 of our programme is, we presume, the plank alluded to.

Now, we have no wish to be misunderstood by our comrades in America; we value our reputation as a straight Socialist Party too much to allow our name to be used as a cover for any kind of looseness in principles, tactics, or policy, even when it is used accompanied by flattery. Therefore, we would wish to point out to all whom it may concern that the cases of America and Ireland are not at all analogous. Agriculture in America has assumed already its company form, being in many cases administered purely on capitalist lines for the profit of non-resident owners; agriculture in Ireland is still in a semi-feudal form, the largest farm in Ireland would be classed as a petty farm in America, and the absorption of the working farmer by the capitalist managed estate of the non-resident farmer is practically unknown. Now observe this vital point of difference between the programme of the Socialist Republican Party of Ireland, and the programme of the Social Democratic Party of America. Both have demands for farmers, granted, but:—

1. The Farmers' Demands of the Social Democrats of America are demands which aim at the perpetuation of the system of petty farming by legislation to protect it from the effects of the competition of farms managed on those lines most nearly approximating to the Socialist form of industry, viz, the lines of centralised capital, and agricultural armies. American agriculture, *as such*, is not in any danger as a source of support for the agriculturist. His status may be endangered, not his existence.
2. The Farmers' Demands of the Socialist Republican Party of Ireland are demands which aim at preserving Agriculture in Ireland from being *annihilated as a native industry* by the competition of *foreign* agriculturists. Irish agriculturists are not threatened with absorption, but with extinction and enforced exile.

In other words the American Farmers' Demands are in the interest of one particular form of agricultural enterprise, as against another; the Irish Demands are directed towards rescuing agriculture itself, and teaching the agriculturist to look to national co-operation as the factor he should count upon for help in his struggle to remain in the country of his birth.

Things which look alike are not always alike. The apparent identity of the Irish and American proposals is seen to be non-existent when you take into account the different historical and industrial conditions of the two countries. Given American conditions in Ireland, the Irish Socialists would wipe their Farmers' Demands from off their programme, but in Ireland as it is with the rags of a medieval system of land tenure still choking our life and cramping our industry, with perennial famine destroying our people, with our population dwindling away by emigrations, we consider it right to point out, even if unheeded, that it is the duty of the State to undertake the functions of manufacture and custodian of all implements required for the one important industry of the country – agriculture. This is all we demand in that nature:–

Establishment at public expense of rural depots for the most improved agricultural machinery, to be lent out to the agricultural population at a rent covering cost and management alone.

It is not a sectional demand, but is the outcome of a national exigency.

“The practical application of the principles” (of Socialism), said Marx and Engels in their joint preface to the **Communist Manifesto**, “everywhere, and at all times will depend on the historical conditions for the time being existing.”

Let our critics please remember that fact, and the Socialist Republicans of Ireland can confidently abide by the result.