

James Connolly

**Our "American
Mission"**

(August 1902)

The Workers' Republic, August 1902.

We are pleased to be in a position to state that arrangements have been made between the Socialist Labour Party of America and the Socialist Republican Party of Ireland for Mr James Connolly, the editor of this paper, to proceed to the States on a lecturing tour on behalf of both organisations. Our comrade leaves Liverpool on the fourth of September, and will probably remain in America until the first week of December. Meetings are being organised already in many of the great industrial centres where Irishmen have made their home; the Cooper Union, the largest hall in New York, has been secured for his first meeting on the 15th September, and every effort will be made to enable our representative to place his message before the largest number possible of Irish-American workers.

The fact that our comrade has spent so much of his own life (20 years) amongst the Irish exiles of Great Britain fits him in a peculiar manner for the task of understanding and speaking to those other exiles in America, while the thorough knowledge of Irish history and politics he has so well demonstrated in all his speeches and writings qualifies him for the position he now occupies as an exponent of that phenomenon in Irish politics – the revolt of the working class –

seeking its independent political expression through the Socialist Republican Party.

We would direct our reader's attention to the great underlying significance of this visit to the States. All other Irish agitators have gone to America to beg funds for the support of agitations at home on the express or implied understanding that the desire of the agitation in Ireland was to erect in this country the political and economic institutions which prevail in America. Therefore every such agitator had praise of all things American on his tongue as part of his poor stock in trade. But this agitator knows that the misery of Ireland springs from an economic cause operating equally malignantly [in America] as it does in Ireland to the majority of the population; he knows that the comparative comfort of the more fortunate of the American workers is due primarily to the state of the economic development of their country relatively to Ireland, and he knows also that the very nature of that economic development, its very power and insatiableness, will prevent all possibility of creating in Ireland industrial conditions at all similar to those in America. In other words, he knows well that to-day the very success of American enterprise in agriculture and industry strikes a death blow to the hopes of industry and agriculture on a grand scale *under capitalism* in Ireland, as the Americans are now our greatest competitors. He also knows and it will be his duty to preach that the terms "American Success", "American Domination", "American Control" mean Success, Domination and Control by the American Capitalist Class, and that exercised not only against producers on this side of the Atlantic, but quite as relentlessly against the working class on the American side.

And whilst telling the workers of America of the new hope which has arisen in the breasts of the more intelligent of the working class of Ireland – the hope of a Socialist Republic in which our land will be purged of the contaminating presence of the foreign and native tyrants alike, a freedom for which the workers are learning to rely on themselves and on themselves alone – he will not fail to remind them that the progress of capitalism brings for the American worker a slavery as grinding and merciless as that we groan under to-day, even if many of the slaves be better fed and housed than are ours.

This campaign which our comrade Connolly is undertaking in America is, then, for the miscreants at home and abroad who have so long traded on our kindly sentiment to the undoing of the Irish workers, an ominous portent indeed. But to those who value truth, the facts which our comrade will lay before his audience upon the condition of that long neglected portion of the Irish nation, the working class, and the truths he will tell of the inwardness of the political position in Ireland, will make this visit a welcome relief from those of the attitudinising politicians who in the past have sold themselves to every American grinder-of-the-faces-of-the-poor who desired to parade an Irish leader on his platform as a catch for Irish votes.

A few words apropos of the party under whose auspices our representative will travel to the States will not be amiss. Shortly after the establishment of the Irish Socialist Republican Party in 1896 we opened up communications with the Socialist Labour Party of America. An interchange of views took place between the two bodies, and we then discovered that our ideas upon policy and tactics generally were practically identical, a discovery that immediately led to a friendship lasting to the present time. Since then both parties have gone through severe struggles, the SLP have been subjected to a revolt within and to a malevolent misrepresentation from without unequalled in the socialist movement for bitterness, and the ISRP has undergone a period of financial strain which has left its mark deep on the character and spirits of many of its members [\[1\]](#), but neither party has faltered, and both are as a result stronger than ever before. Our confidence in our SLP friends is still unabated, and we can challenge the world to investigate our conduct, our policy, or our history. The SLP has the only Socialist daily newspaper in the English language, and we intend on the return of our editor from America to permanently re-establish the **Workers' Republic** on a weekly basis.

Verily, Labour Conquers All.

Footnote

1. A group had just left the SLP and joined with the party's competitor the Social Democratic Party to form the Socialist Party of America. The ISRSP had gone through serious financial troubles, leading to a degree of internal tension

James Connolly

The Irish Socialist Republican Party and the Dewsbury Election

(29 March 1902)

*The Irish Socialist Republican Party and the Dewsbury Election, **Justice**, 29 March 1902, p.6.*

DEAR COMRADE.

I have so often received commendatory notices from **Justice** that I can scarcely complain if now I receive a stricture, even although that stricture may be, in my opinion, as wide of the truth as was the commendation perhaps in the minds of other people. But whilst not resenting I may yet point out the errors of your note in **Justice** of the 15th inst.

After quoting the **Workers' Republic** in its notice of the treacherous action of the United Irish League at Dewsbury – a notice in which we say that, “If it were not for the fact that Quelch's defeat meant a distinct loss to the Socialist cause, I would have rejoiced over this action of the U.I.L.,” you say that “to rejoice over

the defeat of our candidate would be rather petty," and go on to labour that point. But, comrade, the words you have quoted do not justify the interpretation that we would have rejoiced at your defeat *under any circumstances*. You are somewhat hasty; the rejoicing was to be over the action of the U.I.L., not over the defeat of Quelch, and unless you are prepared to take up the ridiculous position that success or defeat at Dewsbury lay with the Irish Home Rulers to decide, your complaint is utterly beside the mark. The words in our paper were written under circumstances of great excitement and confusion, but now, considering them more calmly, it may interest you to know that I withdraw that reservation entirely. I am heartily and unfeignedly glad of the action of the Home Rulers at Dewsbury as I would be at any action of theirs which would tend to convince my English comrades that the Home Rule gang is a capitalist concern, mouthing revolutionary phraseology in order to cloak utterly reactionary practices and designs. The splendid vote polled by Quelch at Dewsbury against such splenetic and treacherous opposition may be taken now as registering the high-water mark of Socialist feeling in the district; as such it gives heart to the comrades, but if we had to allow for a large percentage of Home Rule votes the poll at Dewsbury would have been utterly valueless to our cause. Therefore, I rejoice.

Now, *in re*, the manifesto. I, of course, accept your statement that you never saw it. But, seeing that a marked copy of it was posted to you in a regularly sealed and addressed envelope, you will admit that our assumption that you had received it was by no means a rash one. Of course, strange things do happen in the post. The issue of **Justice** for January 11 only reached this office on March 4, but then the wrapper bore the strange and wonderful address, "*Irish Republic, 138, Upper Abbey Street, Durban,*" so no wonder that went astray. Our manifesto was noticed favourably in the Socialist press of Germany, France, and America; that it should be ignored by the English Socialists to whom it was addressed was not calculated to the promotion of fraternal feelings between us.

On your attitude to the Irish Parliamentary Party and my election address: The reference to being "anxious to shield" was, of course, inspired by the manifesto business noted above, the manifesto being an attack upon Home Rulers. The statement that you attempted to rebut our assertion that the action of

the U.I.L. was inconsistent and treacherous does seem to me at least to be borne out by the passages in **Justice** in which you first noticed the address spoken of. I may have misunderstood you. My citation of Lanarkshire and Dewsbury was addressed to the electors of Dublin upon whose religious feelings our enemies were playing by declaring that no Catholic could vote for a Socialist – a cry afterwards endorsed by the priests. Obviously it was, therefore, good policy to point out that those same gentry had advised Irish Catholics in Lanarkshire to vote for a man who claimed to be a Socialist, and whom they had formerly denounced as a Socialist; and at the time the election address was published the **Dublin Evening Telegraph**, the evening edition of the **Freeman's Journal**, had recommended Quelch to the Irish electors at Dewsbury. This was at the time the only thing like an official pronouncement upon your election contest.

Thanking you in anticipation for the insertion of this somewhat lengthy epistle, and inclosing a copy of the manifesto all the bother is about,

I am, yours fraternally,
JAMES CONNOLY.
6, Lower Liffey Street, Dublin.

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Editorial Note

We readily give space to this letter, and are pleased to have to acknowledge that we misunderstood the reference to the Dewsbury result. It was a mistake for which we apologise. We note now that it was at the action of the U.I.L. and not at the defeat of our candidate, that our Irish comrades would have rejoiced. For ourselves we never attached so much importance to the action of the U.I.L. in that connection as did some of our friends; the chief point was that in the peculiar circumstances of the case, in which it was stated that our candidate had

been “foisted on the constituency,” great capital was made by our enemies out of any pronouncement made against us by any representative body. We are under no delusion as to the composition of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and if the Liberal candidate had been an honest Home Ruler it would have been quite consistent for them to have supported him rather than a Socialist; seeing, however, that he was an Imperialist, their action was somewhat inconsistent. In another part of this paper we publish the manifesto referred to above. In the main we are in entire agreement with it. We have said practically the same thing ourselves about the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the manifesto leaves our withers unwrung. At the same time, because we do hold these opinions about the I.P.P. we can scarcely regard their hostility to Socialists, except under very exceptional circumstances – as “inconsistent.” We do not regard Liberal opposition to us as inconsistent, except when their only choice is between a Socialist and a reactionary Tory, or when, while professing to be anti-jingoes, they vote for an Imperialist in preference to a Socialist. Otherwise their opposition is quite logical and consistent. For the rest, we can only say that we never had any reason – as Connolly seems to have supposed – for not giving publicity to the manifesto but, whatever the cause may have been, it never came into our hands until we received it with the above letter.

James Connolly

Taken Root!

(1902)

Workers’ Republic, March 1902.
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The Irish Socialist Republican Party was founded in Dublin in May, 1896. Six working men assisted at its birth. The founders were poor, like the remainder of their class, and had arrayed against them all those things that are supposed to be essential to success. They were without a press of any kind, their propaganda was generally supposed to be hostile to the religious views of the majority of the people, no great or well-known name allied itself to them, they had to count on the bitter opposition of all the organised parties which defend the interests of the propertied class, their opponents had more sovereigns to spare for political work than they had coppers, they were in a country undeveloped industrially, and a country in which political freedom was not fully realised, and where, therefore, the political mission of Liberalism or middle-class reformers was not yet exhausted – in short they were handicapped as no other party in this country ever yet were handicapped; hated by the government, held in distrust by the people, and in short generally regarded as Ishmaels in the political life of Ireland.

But that little band of pioneers stuck to their work manfully, and despite all discouragements and rebuffs continued sowing the seeds of Socialist working-class revolt in the furrows of discontent ploughed by the capitalist system of society. To-day they can look back on their work with pride. Nowhere, it is true, have they yet succeeded in getting on their side that majority necessary to place the nominee of their party, the SRP, on the seats of the elected ones – that triumph is indeed not yet vouchsafed to them – but he would indeed be a very ignorant or a very presumptuous person who would essay to review the possibilities of the political situation in Dublin, and would leave this little fighting party out of his calculations. In the elections just ended *eight hundred votes were cast for Socialism* in the only two wards of this city our finances allowed us to contest. These votes were cast for no milk-and-water, ratepaying, ambiguous 'Labour' candidates, but for the candidates of a party which in the very stress and storm of the fight instructed its standard bearers to refuse to sign the pledge of

the compromising Labour Electoral body, and to stand or fall by the full spirit and meaning of its revolutionary policy.

These 800 votes were cast for Socialism in spite of a campaign of calumny unequalled in its infamy, in spite of the fact that the solemn terrors of religion were invoked on behalf of the capitalist candidates, in spite of the most shameless violation by our opponents of the spirit of the Corrupt Practices' Act, and despite the boycott of the press. No other party ever had such a dead weight to lift ere they could appear as a recognised force in political life; no other party could have lifted such a weight so gallantly and so well. What is the secret of the wonderful progress of this party? The secret lies not in the personality of leaders, nor in the ability of propagandists; it lies in the fact that all the propaganda and teaching of this party was, from the outset, based upon the Class Struggle – upon a recognition of the fact that the struggle between the Haves and the Have Nots was the controlling factor in politics, and that this fight could only be ended by the working class seizing hold of political power and using this power to transfer the ownership of the means of life, viz, land and machinery of production, from the hands of private individuals to the community, from individual to social or public ownership.

This party had against it all the organised forces of society – of a society founded upon robbery, but it had on its side a latent force stronger than them all, the material interests of the Working Class. The awakened recognition of that material interest has carried us far; it will carry us in triumph to the end.

James Connolly

**Coronation of King
Edward VII**

(1902)

Fellow-Workers,

Unless unforeseen accidents intervene to prevent this consummation, His Majesty, Edward VII, King and Emperor, will be crowned on June 26th. Were we able to follow our own inclinations in the matter we would be inclined to treat it with contempt as being of but little importance to the cause for which we stand, or to the workers with whose interests we are concerned. To us, as Socialists, it is but of little moment who may for the time being wear the trappings of royalty; that we are compelled to acquiesce in his rule by the bayonets of his hireling soldiery and police is for us sufficient; and to us, as workers, the personality of the head of the Capitalist system in these islands is of small concern when we realise that our exploitation by the master class would proceed apace even if King Edward VII were a Christian gentleman instead of a –

But although we would rather treat the matter thus philosophically, we find that the machinations of those in power do not leave us that possibility; with them, and because of them, the festivities attending the Coronation have taken on the aspect not merely of a huge parade of pomp and magnificence – cloaking the festering sores of that slave society on which it is built – but have also become an elaborately contrived and astutely worked piece of Royalist and Capitalist propaganda, designed to captivate the imagination of the unthinking multitude, and thus lead them to look askance upon every movement which would set up as an ideal to work for something less gorgeously spectacular, even if more solidly real. The evil effects of private ownership of industries is thus illustrated once more in a manner that ought to appeal to those patriots in our midst who still dread the innovating effects of Socialism on the National spirit of the Irish people.

Because of this private ownership and control of our newspapers, of our shops, of our manufactures, we find our Home Rule press devoting columns to descriptions of all the preparations for the Coronation, nauseating the thinking portion of its readers, but insidiously sapping the manhood of the weak and vulgar, and preparing their minds for the worship of the foul gods of Imperialism. We find our shops stocked with every kind of article, from the toy of the babe in arms to the dress patterns of our womankind dedicated by name to the Coronation; and we find our manufacturers able by their economic power over the bread and butter of their employees, to enforce observance of this saturnalia of tyranny, even upon those workers whose whole beings are hot with revolt against it. Hence we are compelled to speak, lest by those who have trusted us by their adherence, or by those who have honoured us by their hatred for our unflinching championship of the workers' cause, our silence should be construed either into an approval or even into weakness in front of this demonstration of the power of the enemy, or the imbecility of its slaves.

We are Socialist Republicans; we work for the realisation of that time when kings and emperors will be no more, when they will be remembered by mankind as the strong man awakened remembers the hideous nightmare which oppressed him as he slept. As Socialist Republicans we desire the application to society in all its relations, industrial and political, of the freest republican principles. We unceasingly devote our energies to awakening in the minds of the workers consciousness of the sufficiency of their own manhood and of the dignity of their class; and we hope and believe in the rapid approach of that time when those ideas and that consciousness will have so far leavened the minds of the workers as to justify us in calling upon them to rally up for that final struggle, the issue of which will assuredly usher in the era of free and enfranchised labour, instead of the barbaric splendour of military and financial castes. Meanwhile, animated by such hopes, inspired by such principles, looking forward impatiently to that time of glorious struggle, when the eyes of the world are turned upon that City of London, when Capital and its cringing slaves are united in adoration of the monarch who has been successful in uniting in his person, all the baser attributes of the mediaeval monarch and the modern stockjobbing capitalist; we also in

imagination hasten thither in order to offer to King Edward, in the name of ourselves and our class, the only homage we owe him – OUR HATRED.

We are neither awed by the magnificence of the robbers, daunted by the bayonets of their hired assassins, nor dismayed by the plaudits of the multitude. The magnificence of the robbers but serves to fire our hearts with a greater hatred when we think of the squalid surroundings and miserable homes of our class. The glitter of the sunlight on the bayonets of its hired assassins reveals to the vision of the humanist the moral hideousness of a society propped by such means, and the plaudits of the multitude are but useful to him who desires to sound the depths to which such a system can degrade a people.

Let those who are pleased, and those who are dismayed, by the pressure of gaping, cheering crowds of witless ones, remember the pregnant words of Cromwell in the same city on a similar occasion, “My Lord Protector,” said one of his attendants, as Cromwell rode through London, “how the people crowd to see you.” “Yes,” replied Cromwell, “but how many thousands more would crowd to see me hanged!”