

James Connolly

A Political Party of the Workers

(1908)

The Harp, January 1908.

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With the advent of an Irish Socialist paper in the labor movement of America will come of necessity a host of questions and questioners upon the attitude of the proprietors of that paper toward the political parties at present in the field for Socialism. Such questions are unavoidable, and it is therefore best that they be faced at once at the outset without delay or equivocation.

Let it be noted therefore that the **Harp** is the official organ of the Irish Socialist Federation in America, and that that body was founded with the intention, expressed and desired, of spreading the light of Socialism amongst the working class Irish in this country, and that, recognizing that the existence of two political parties of Socialism has had in the past and has now a confusing effect upon the minds of the American working class, the founders of the Federation recognized that it would be worse than folly to make allegiance to one or the other of these political divisions a test of membership in the newly founded camp

of Irish Socialists in America. The Federation is not founded for political action, it is founded for propaganda; it is not in existence to fashion a political machine, it is in existence to present Socialism as a historical development from capitalism and as the only remedy for the wage slavery of the workers. The task of presenting the Socialist side as against the side of the capitalists, with all their powerful allies and weapons, is a big enough job for us without also taking part in the campaigns of slander which form the stock in trade of the American Socialists when they condescend to refer to each other. In their mutual recriminations many wrong things have been said, many right things have been wrongly said, and we are convinced that if American Socialists in general had been more solicitous in finding and emphasizing the points they had in common, and less eager to stretch the importance of the points on which they differed, a great party – great in unity in essentials, great in numbers – might long ere this have been built up in America. And until that party does appear the ISF will confine its work to the making of Socialists; let its recruits when made choose their own political affiliations.

But, it may be said, since the Irish comrades deplore the existing division, have they no suggestion to offer whereby it may be ended? Is it not certain that as you make recruits to Socialism, and those recruits choose their own political affiliations, that in course of time their differing choices will result in bringing into the Federation the disputes which divide Socialists outside? That is true, and therefore it is to our interest as well as in conformity with our desires to find some common ground upon which in our opinion earnest revolutionary Socialists could meet to combine their forces in battle with the common enemy.

The common ground of action we favor is one for which a strong sentiment already exists in the rank and file of both existing parties. It has been adopted and endorsed by practically all the non-English using federations of Socialists in America, and has therefore strong organized forces already behind it, and it would, as a magnet, draw unto itself all the true proletarian Socialists and weld them into an irresistible force. A common ground of action to be effectual for its purpose cannot emanate from either SP or SLP; it cannot be furnished by unity conferences, no matter how earnest the conferees are; the ghost of all the hatreds

and jealousies aroused by the past years of strife will perpetually rise between the most united unity conference and the realization of its hopes, and, finally, it cannot be realized by an amalgamation of the existing parties. There are too many leaders, save the mark! Too many 'saviors of the working class' whose reputations have been built upon disunion; too many petty personal ambitions which might be endangered did the rank and file have an opportunity to know and understand one another; and too much fear that a general reunion might mean a general housecleaning, and the consequent dumping upon the garbage heap of many great lights whose personal predominance is dearer to them than the power of the movement. Some men in the Socialist movement on both sides would rather have a party of ten men who unquestioningly accepted their dictum and called their blind faith 'democracy' than a party of half a million whose component elements dared to think and act for themselves. Unquestionably the realization of unity must have as its necessary concomitant the acceptance of the fact that the interests of the movement are greater than and superior to the prejudices or rivalries of its leaders.

What and where, then, is this common ground we have spoken of? As we have already stated, the ISF is pledged to no political party, but this neutrality on the political field is not extended to the economic. There, we believe, an assumption of neutrality would be a crime on our part. Between, on the one hand, the new economic organization, the Industrial Workers of the World, which prepares and organizes the administrative framework of society in the future, and at the same time furnishes the only effective method of resistance against present-day encroachments of the master class, and on the other hand the old-style pure and simple trade unionism of the AF of L with its system of dividing the working class and its professed belief in the identity of interests between Capital and Labor, between these two economic organizations our choice is as plain and unmistakable as between Socialism and Capitalism; indeed, it is the same proposition presented in different terms. And as we believe that all working class Socialists must realize that their place is in the only real economic organization truly worthy of the name of union, the IWW, so we believe that the same body has it in its power to solve the problem of Socialist unity. On the day that the IWW launches its own political party it will put an end to all excuse for

two Socialist parties and open the way for a real and effective unification of the revolutionary forces. To it will flock all the real proletarians, all the loyal-hearted working class whom distrust and suspicion have so long kept divided: it will be the real Political Party of the Workers – the weapon by which the working class will register the decrees which its economic army must and shall enforce.

We do not say this will end forever all fear of the existence of two parties calling themselves Socialists, but it will end all possibility of two revolutionary Socialist parties claiming the allegiance of the working class at the same moment. Compromisers and schemers will still erect parties to serve their personal ends and satiate their lust for being worshipped; intellectual mannikins will still perch themselves upon the shoulders of the workers and imagining their high altitude is the result of transcendent ability on their part will call the world to witness how great they are; but they will be deprived of their power to delude the real revolutionist by the simple fact of the existence of a political party of Socialists dominated by and resting upon the economic movement of the working class.

This is our hope, our proposed solution of the problem of divided forces, and on the day that that hope is consummated if anyone looks around for the class-conscious Irish workers he will, we believe, find them alert and determined at the head of the fighters.

Ollamh Fódhla.

PS – We invite correspondence on this point. All letters must be limited to one column. – Editor.

James Connolly

Our Purpose and Function

(1908)

The Harp, January 1908.

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When the Irish Socialist Federation was first founded the action of its originators evoked a great deal of adverse criticism. We believe the launching of our journal will evoke still more. It is fitting, therefore, that we should devote some little space to explaining the central idea of this new venture in the fields of Socialist activity. We do so in no apologetic mood (our course is marked and mapped, and we shall resolutely pursue it), but in the belief that the more our purpose is understood the more will our methods be appreciated and endorsed.

The editor of this paper, the present writer, has been in the Socialist movement more years than he cares to enumerate, and in several countries as well as his own, and in each of the former he has noted with regret the adoption by Irishmen as soon as they became Socialists of a line of conduct fatal to the best interests of the Socialist cause amongst our people. To illustrate this, let us ask the reader to conjecture what should be the first result of the winning to Socialism of a worker of the Irish race. Obviously the first result should be that he should become a medium for, so to speak, translating Socialist ideas into terms of Irish thought, and a channel for conveying the Socialist message to others of his race.

But this he could only do as long as his Socialism did not cause him to raise barriers betwixt him and his fellow countrymen and women, to renounce his connection with, or to abjure all the ties of kinship and tradition that throughout the world make the heart of one Celt go out to another, no matter how unknown. Yet this is precisely what their adoption of Socialism has caused in the great majority of cases amongst Irishmen. Led away by a foolishly sentimental misinterpretation of the Socialist doctrine of Universal Brotherhood, or Internationalism, they generally began by dropping out of all Irish societies they were affiliated with, no matter how righteous their objects were, and ended by ceasing to mix in Irish gatherings or to maintain Irish connections. The result upon the minds of their fellow countrymen and women was as might be expected. At home and abroad the Irish Celt has had to keep up a perpetual watch and ward against insidious and relentless foes; for hundreds of years England has had the ear of the world, pouring into it calumnies and hatred of the Irish until the latter had become an Ishmael among the nations, and nowhere more so than in America. The bitter words of our poet –

Aye, bitter hate and cold neglect,
Or lukewarm love at best,
Is all we've had or can expect,
We aliens of the West.

simply chronicled truthfully the international status of our race.

Under such circumstances, and we repeat those were and are the normal conditions of our existence as Irish – under such circumstances the man or woman who broke away from and kept aloof from contact with things Irish and with an Irish environment became, in the eyes of their fellow countrymen and women, deserters from the weaker side in a fight, and therefore objects of opprobrium and of hatred. In the case of those who became Socialists this was invariably the course of events; the dislike and hatred did not precede, but followed the breaking away from Irish associations. Had the convert to Socialism showed that his conversion did not operate to make him hold aloof from his fellow countrymen, or to decry their cause, he would have become a medium for

attracting the Irish, instead of repelling them, and each fresh Irish recruit to our cause would have meant an added power of convincing the Irish worker that Socialism made its devotees better equipped mentally and morally to combat oppression than any scheme evolved by the invertebrate Irish middle class politicians; but this is just what the Federation and its organ proposes to do. We propose to show all the workers of our fighting race that Socialism will make them better fighters for freedom without being less Irish; we propose to advise the Irish who are Socialists now to organize their forces as Irish and get again in touch with the organized bodies of literary, educational and revolutionary Irish; we propose to make a campaign amongst our countrymen, and to rely for our method mainly upon imparting to them a correct interpretation of the facts of Irish history, past and present; we propose to take the control of the Irish vote out of the hands of the slimy seoiníní who use it to boost their political and business interests to the undoing of the Irish as well as the American toiler; we propose to challenge all the other federations and nationalities in this country to a generous rivalry in the work of our common emancipation; and we propose, finally, to show the world that after seven hundred years battling against a mighty oppressor we are still, as a race, lusty and vigorous for the fight, and that abreast with the march of the intellect of the world we raise the ideal of the legions of our unforgotten dead, "Ireland for the Irish", on to the plane of the higher, nobler and all comprehending "World for the workers".

Thus all may see and learn that

Ireland has no leper sores
Her eye is clear, her stature strong,
Still thro' her veins the life blood pours

In mighty tides of speech and song.
She watches by eternal shores
The birth of Right, the death of Wrong.

James Connolly

Harp Strings

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This is the **Harp**.

I am one of the favored few privileged to play upon the strings of the **Harp**.

Sometimes my notes will be gay, sometimes they will be sad; sometimes they will be lively, sometimes severe. As in Ireland the sun shines through the heaviest rainstorms, and the Irishman in the midst of his deepest woe will broaden out in a smile at a good joke, so the writer of these first columns of our paper will ever attune the strings of his harp to the music of the worldwide struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed.

And that struggle has its humorous aspects as well as its tragic. A grave demeanor does not always betoken a serious purpose, and a man offering up his life in martyrdom for a principle may yet march to the scaffold with a joke upon his lips.

Sir Thomas More, scholar and philosopher, executed by Henry VIII of England for refusing to admit the supremacy of that libertine king in religious matters, as he laid his head upon the headsman's block asked leave to brush his

long-flowing beard out of the way of the executioner's axe. "For," he said, "my beard at least has committed no treason."

Yes, we are indeed fearfully and wonderfully constructed, as the near-sighted old gentleman said when he gazed at the skeleton of a donkey in the anatomical museum. Therefore let us laugh while we may, though there be bitterness in our laughter; let us laugh while we may, for capitalism has tears enough in store for all of us.

Fearfully constructed, indeed, and perhaps no race on earth more so, or has absorbed more heterogeneous elements into itself and at the same time given out more of the best of its blood to the upbuilding of foreign and alien races than the Irish.

All races are mixed more or less; a pure race does not exist. In all the world there cannot be found a territory of any size still inhabited exclusively by the autochthonous or original inhabitants, a territory whose records do not tell of a conquest and a settlement by alien invading hosts.

In Europe it is generally accepted that the Basques and the Finns are the only people of whose advent into their present location neither history nor tradition has aught to record, who are therefore possibly an autochthonous people.

But the Irish, to whom our capitalist politicians are forever preaching an aggressive insularity (as if a man could not love his own without hating his neighbor), can count as cousins and blood brothers practically all the nations of Europe. We have received and we have given the best and the worst.

The modern Irish race is a composite blending – on the original Celtic stock have been grafted shoots from all the adventurous races of the continent.

Let us glance for a moment at the tally of the races that have mingled and merged upon our island.

First in order we have the Celts, or Scots, or Milesians. Coming as invaders, they found a people of whose coming or origin no record exists. Settling in

Ireland, the Celts colonized Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man. Between those places and Ireland for hundreds of years there continued the closest friendly intercourse, commercial and social, marriage and intermarriage. And down to our day the migration of the inhabitants of these places continues almost uninterruptedly, the sole distinction being that now it is the migrations of individuals as such and not of clans or communities.

Next we had the Danish, or, more properly speaking, the Scandinavian, invasion. For hundreds of years Norway, Sweden and Denmark poured their best fighting men into Ireland, established cities and towns all around our coast – Dublin being their chief settlement – took our women and gave their own in marriage.

All around Dublin and the eastern coast the fair-haired Irish you meet are lineal descendants of the Vikings of the north who settled and married in Ireland, just as the dark-haired Scandinavians we often see in America are without a doubt the sons or daughters of the Irish maidens whom the northern pirates brought home from Ireland as the prizes of war to their homes in Scandinavia.

Then we had the Norman invasion – the fruitful source of all our evils to the present day. It also brought its mixture of foreign elements. Half Norsemen, half French, each in a generation or two becoming imbued with the spirit of the island.

All during the centuries of struggle against England there have been continual eruptions into Ireland on one side or the other in the conflict of foreign soldiery, some of whom found their graves, some of whom found wives, most of whom settled in one way or another.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France, Ireland was the refuge ground of thousands of French Protestant families, who established trades, founded new quarters of the cities and in a generation or two supplied the most determined recruits to the Irish struggle for liberty against the oppression of England.

In the Williamite war after the deposition of King James in England, King William invaded Ireland at the head of an army composed of the adventurers of Europe, most of whom settled in the country when the war was over. Some became proprietors of the lands they had stolen from the Irish; most became tenants on the lands their swords had won for their leaders.

The common soldiers had helped to make serfs of the Irish, and in the course of only one generation their own descendants found the yoke of social and political serfdom upon their necks also.

Add to this record of the immigrations into Ireland, the fact that for hundreds of years the genial English Saxon had turned an honest penny by selling his womankind into slavery in Ireland – an old Gaelic writer calls them “tall, fair-haired Saxon slaves, fit to weave wool in the mansions of a king” – and the further fact that hundreds of English Quakers at a more recent date fled from persecution in England to take refuge in Ireland, where their descendants multiplied exceedingly and waxed fat and prosperous, and you have a picture of a race dominated indeed by the Celtic, but as composite and varied in its make-up as any nation upon earth.

That is one side of the picture – the inflow upon our Irish shore, the record of the successive hosts of foreigners who came amongst us and, finding Ireland a green and pleasant land, chose to abide there and become bone of our bone and blood of our blood.

But there is another side, viz, the going forth of the Irish. Study the history of Ireland and you will find that, whether the compelling cause was love of adventure or stern necessity, this going forth of the Gael has been ever an abiding characteristic of the race.

“The chiefs of the Gael,” wails an old Gaelic poet, “always went forth, but they never returned.”

Examine our earliest chronicles and you read of Irish settlements in Scotland, Man and Mona, and all the British Isles. When Scandinavian hosts first

conquered Iceland they found Irish books and evidence of Irish learning and Irish settlement; as the power of Rome declined Irish fleets and armies harried her legions retreating from the western seaboard, and an Irish king led a marauding army through France and Switzerland (Gaul and Helvetia) until at the head of his forces he was killed by an avalanche in the passes of the Alps.

When on the field of Bannockburn Robert the Bruce of Scotland overthrew the power of England, one of his chief supports was an Irish auxiliary legion of the O'Neills. The district of Kincardine O'Neill, in Aberdeenshire, granted as a reward for their services, still perpetuates in its name the memory of the exploit.

Irish exiles served as soldiers in the armies of every sovereign in Europe for hundreds of years, lived and loved and married and left children speaking all the tongues of Europe. These soldiers, generally the best and bravest of their generation, left to Ireland nothing but their memory; to other countries they left the fruit of their loins and the heirs of their spirit and manhood.

In another column you will find some authentic figures of one Irish dispersion – the Cromwellian. Here you find that in one generation alone no less than 34,000 soldiers in the prime of life went from Ireland to foreign countries. Irish soldiers, or Irishmen as a whole, have never been famous as celibates or as averse to the joys of matrimony, and there is no reason to believe that those in question were any exception to the rule. In all probability the greater number married in the countries to which they went, as the leisurely wars of the period gave them plenty of time to do, and left a numerous progeny behind them.

Consider, oh, my compatriots, what this implies! That Polack, whose advent into the workshop you are taught to view with such disfavor, if you could trace his ancestry back a few hundreds of years perhaps you would find for him an Irish ancestor who charged by the side of Hugh O'Neill on that fateful day when the English flag went down in disaster at the Yellow Ford. That Dago, whose excited gestures win your disapproval so much; perhaps he has an Irish ancestor whose arms defended the colors of Queen Gráinne O'Malley when her ships swept the English pirates from our western coasts. And those Frenchmen – heavens, how

many scores of thousands of the best of our race have gone to build up and recruit the armies and population of France!

But, you ask me, why this thusness? What has all this to do with Socialism? My dear friend, this is a lecture on Internationalism. Didn't you notice it before? It is a lecture written in characters of blood and fire in Irish history; a lecture on the mingling and merging and therefore on the oneness and unity of all the races of mankind.

Let no Irishman throw a stone at the foreigner; he may hit his own clansman. Let no foreigner revile the Irish; he may be vilifying his own stock.

Talking of France. What do you think of the comments upon the recent proceedings of the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, especially upon the militarist resolution? I mean the resolution of the French delegate, Hervé, calling upon the soldiers to mutiny or desert in case of war in order to prevent the capitalist class from again uselessly shedding the blood of the workers in murderous wars.

The comments of some American Socialists upon it have been, to say the least, more interesting than instructive. I read the other day where one leading American Socialist said that the militarist question was one of those which we considered settled in America, and could not come up for discussion in our locals though it was a live question still in Europe, the inference being that we were so much ahead of Europe on that question. But are we?

Almost all the speakers and writers of the same party as he whom I have quoted agree with the Hervé resolution, or think they do. I think they only think they do. For I do not recall that when the United States and Spain went to war that any organized body of Socialists in America called upon the United States soldiers to mutiny or desert. The most they did was to pass academic resolutions on the causes of the war; resolutions such as the most reformist body of Socialists in Europe would have passed without a dissenting voice.

And I am quite sure that if the United States and Japan were to go to war next year there would not be the smallest possibility of getting the National Conventions of either the SP or SLP to pass a resolution in favor of an active campaign to induce the United States soldiers to mutiny or desert.

Why, then, talk of this as a settled question in America, and inferentially condemn those who objected to the wording of the Hervé resolution? If that resolution was put not as a general proposition, but as a concrete one in the sense I have just spoken of (a war between the United States and Japan), we would soon find out whether it was or not a settled question.

The conflict between the French delegate and the Germans was not a conflict between revolution and reaction. The Germans, all criticisms to the contrary notwithstanding, are not reactionary. It was a conflict between the French method of doing things and the German method.

The German is cool, cautious, patient, given to analyze all the results of his words before uttering them, is determined and never recedes from a vantage ground once gained. And the German Socialist is the incarnation of the German spirit. He does not shrink from the idea of a fight, but he is resolved to fight in his own manner and, above all, in his own time. Hence he will adopt no resolution that might allow his enemies to fix the time and condition of the final struggle.

The French, on the other hand, are ardent, enthusiastic, optimistic, ready to sacrifice their all for a principle, recking little of consequences when a truth is at stake, and willing at all times to face a world in arms for a righteous cause.

As the Irish poet finely says:

Like the tigress of the Deluge as she heard the waters seethe,
And sprang onto the topmost peak, her cubs between her teeth;
So stood Red France, so stands Red France, her head bared to the sleet,
With Paris girdled to her heart and Freedom at her feet.

I consider that both French and German are earnestly and determinedly revolutionary. But they do things different ways. And one is needed as a check upon the other.

And American Socialists do not help the matter by adopting the Pharasaical attitude of thanking God we are not as these people.

Spailpín.

James Connolly

The Coming Revolt in India

Its Political and Social Causes

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“The educated classes of India may find fault with their exclusion from full political rights ... But it was by force that India was won, and it is for force India must be governed.” – London **Times**, Feb. 1, 1886.

The appearance at the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart of an Indian delegate, voicing the aspirations of the people of India for freedom, and the news items continually appearing in the capitalist press of sporadic acts of revolt in that country – harbingers of the greater revolt now fermenting throughout that vast empire – justify us in placing before our readers the following brief résumé of conditions in that country in order that it might be more possible for them to intelligently follow events as they develop.

British rule in India, like British rule in Ireland, is a political and social system established and maintained by the conquerors in the interest of the conquered. So runs the legend. But there are not wanting men and women who, strangely enough, maintain that British rule, whether in India or Ireland, is one of the heaviest curses ever inflicted upon an unfortunate people; that its fruits are famine, oppression and pestilence, and that it has but one animating principle wherever found, viz., to extract the utmost possible tribute from the labor of its unfortunate subjects. With that aspect of British rule peculiar to Ireland we are all in a position to be thoroughly acquainted, but there are, unfortunately, many reasons why a like acquaintance with the history and facts of British rule in India is impossible of attainment to the vast majority of our fellow countrymen. Therefore the writer, having had for some time exceptional opportunities of learning the real position of affairs in that country, feels he is doing a service to the cause of freedom and humanity in laying before the readers of the **Harp** a short sketch of the predisposing causes which had led up to the devastating famine which at present holds and the incipient rebellion which threatens the Indian Peninsula. The first point to note is that the reader must in discussing Indian affairs at once rid himself of all the extravagant ideas about the ‘wealth of India’ with which the reading public have been familiarized through the writings of ignorant English romancers, avaricious English adventurers or unscrupulous English statesmen. India is, in reality, one of the poorest, if not the poorest, of all the countries in the world. Her immense population live from generation to

generation in a state of such chronic misery that death from actual hunger excites no comment whatever except when, as in the present famine, their numbers swell so that it is feared even the patient Hindoo may refuse to bear it longer. Thus when we read that the tribute extracted from India by the imperial government in payment of home charges, pensions to retired officials, remittances, contributions to imperial expenditure, etc., reaches an annual total of from 20 to 27 million pounds sterling, the sum, though large in itself, does not at first appear so exorbitant when levied on a population of two hundred million people. It is only when we are aware of the average daily income of the people upon whose labor this tax is levied that we begin to understand how it is that the 'inestimable benefits of British rule' (?) have been so potent a factor in working out the destruction of this people that the failure of a single harvest is enough to bring upon them all the horrors of famine.

The wages of the agricultural laborers of India – where 70 per cent of the population derive their sole subsistence directly from the cultivation of the soil – are not such as to induce any very extravagant mode of living or to fire the imagination of a glutton. In Bihar, the northwest provinces, the greater portion of the Deccan and Oudh, the average remuneration of the laborer is certainly not more than one anna, six pie, or one and one-half pence (three cents) per day. In some portions of East Bengal the wage sometimes rises to three pence (six cents), or four pence (eight cents) per day – an almost princely remuneration. It should also be remembered that the entire native population is excluded from all share in the government of their country, except in the most menial positions, and that on the other hand the Indian Civil Service is entirely manned by Englishmen, whose salaries are the highest in the world for such services. Thus the poorest people under the sun are taxed to support the wealthiest (and most insolent) official class. It might be interesting, in order to bring the matter more vividly before the reader, to give a few instances of the disparity of means between official England in India and the unfortunate people upon whom it is quartered. The late Professor Fawcett, in an article upon a proposed loan to India, called attention to a few items illustrating the extravagant expenditure of Anglo-Indians when the cost of such extravagance can be saddled upon the Indian people. Two of these items, viz., £1,200 for outfit and passage of a member of the Governor-

General's Council, and £2,450 for outfit and passage of the Bishops of Calcutta and Bombay, convey their own lesson so well that no words of mine could possibly add point to their eloquence. Ten million pounds have been spent by the imperial government in erecting for their military garrisons regimental quarters so luxuriously equipped that one Anglo-Indian writer, General Strachey, enthusiastically declared "our soldiers' barracks are now beyond comparison the finest in the world," whilst Florence Nightingale, a thoroughly impartial witness, wrote: "We do not care for the people of India; the saddest sight in the East, nay, probably in the world, is the peasant of our Indian empire." "We suppose," says a young Indian writer, "it is inseparable from an alien rule that the living of an English soldier should be of primary importance." And again, "ten million pounds wrung from the hard earnings of semi-starved dwellers in mud hovels for the rearing of 'palatial' barracks. Surely we should pause before we congratulate ourselves on this." We are constantly informed by all Anglo-Indian writers that the English in India have been mighty instruments of Divine Providence for winning the land from anarchy and oppression, bringing it within the area of civilization and order; and, finally, of introducing its people to all the inestimable benefits of modern civilization.

We Irish are, of course, well enough acquainted with the ways of English officialdom to be able to discount to a certain extent the brightly colored reports of progress emanating from such sources, and they constitute the sole medium by which Indian news is allowed to filter through to the reading public. But it would, nevertheless, be a mistake to suppose that the present writer denies that progress has been made in India under British rule. The only question is, in what degree is that progress due to British rule, and in what degree is it that progress which, under any circumstances, would have been made by an intellectual people with a continuity of literary and philosophic activity stretching back for two thousand years and more? We are told that the English rulers of India were the first to abolish the hideous custom of suttee, by which the Hindoo widow was forced to sacrifice herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband.

But an educated Hindoo, Ram Mohun Roy, greatly venerated by his countrymen, had begun a crusade against the custom ten years before the edict

was first formulated in 1829. It is more than probable that the exertions of this Indian patriot would eventually have been successful even without English intervention, which at the most perhaps, hastened the desired consummation.

The vast irrigation works established throughout India are also often alluded to as specimens of the advance of civilization in the East, largely resultant from the paternal efforts of the English government on behalf of its Indian subjects.

Here again the reader is apt to draw erroneous conclusions and picture to himself the government of England laboriously instructing the ignorant Indian natives in the functions and uses, theory and practice of irrigation works. But the remorseless hand of history rudely shatters all belief in the fidelity to truth of any such picture. So far from such irrigation works being the product of English enterprise or genius they are, as a matter of fact, only feeble and halting imitations of the magnificent works and public enterprise of the former Mohammedan rulers whom the English have supplanted. Dr. Spry, writing in 1837, on **Modern India**, declared:

It is in the territory of the independent native chiefs and princes that great and useful works are found and maintained.

In our territories the canals, bridges and reservoirs, wells, groves, etc., the works of our predecessors from revenues expressly appropriated to such undertakings, are going fast to decay.

It is noteworthy also that while the former rulers of India neither expected nor accepted any return for the money they voluntarily expended in their irrigation and other public works, the English government could only be induced to embark on such enterprises by the hopes of reaping enormous profits therefrom- hopes which have never been realized. Lord Lawrence in a letter to Lord Cranborne stated that the general opinion held that these works would yield an average profit of 25, 50 or even 100 per cent. To the no small chagrin of the ruling classes of India these high expectations were doomed to disappointment, the full measure of which is revealed in the words of Lord Salisbury, valuable as a no

doubt unwilling tribute to British official incompetence and to the superior engineering genius of their predecessors.

“The irrigation works that have been carried out,” he said, “if they had for their basis the former works of native rulers, have in many instances been a financial success. But ... when we have begun the projects of irrigation for ourselves we have not, I believe, in any instance the desired result of a clean balance sheet.”

Will the reader please contrast this confession of bungling incompetence, allied to a greed to pay dividends, with the conduct of Runjeet Singh, the ‘Lion of the Punjab’, whom the English have always vilified as a barbarian and a tyrant, but of whom Marshman tells us that “he always advanced money free of interest to his peasantry for the purposes of irrigation.” That he was no exception to the rule is amply borne out by the following significant statement in Arnold’s **Dalhousie**: “The Musselman rulers were bold engineers in this respect; not only did they cover India with fine roads, shaded with trees in places which are now tiger walks, but they remembered the Arabic proverb that ‘water is the earth’s wealth.’ The irrigation works were so benevolently attended to that the fees for wells and artificial reservoirs were always deducted from the produce of every village before the government claim was paid.” [\[1\]](#) In almost every detail of Indian administration the same tale remains to be told.

Connolly’s Footnote

[1.](#) Sir Edwin Arnold, **The Marquis of Dalhousie’s Administration of British India** (Saunders, Otley & Co., London, 1862).

James Connolly

Declaration of Principles of the Irish Socialist Federation

(1908)

New York, January 1908

The Irish Socialist Federation is composed of members of the Irish race in America, and is organised to assist the revolutionary working-class movement in Ireland by a dissemination of its literature, to educate the working-class Irish of this country into a knowledge of Socialist principles and to prepare them to co-operate with the workers of all other races, colours and nationalities in the emancipation of labour.

It affirms its belief that political and social freedom are not two separate and unrelated ideas, but are two sides of the one great principle, each being incomplete without the other.

The course of society politically has been from warring but democratic tribes within each nation to a united government under an absolutely undemocratic monarchy. Within this monarchy again developed revolts against its power, revolts at first seeking to limit its prerogatives only, then demanding the inclusion of certain classes in the governing power, then demanding the right of the subject to criticise and control the power of the monarch, and finally, in the most advanced countries, this movement culminated in the total abolition of the monarchical institution and the transformation of the subject into the citizen.

In industry a corresponding development has taken place. The independent producer, owning his own tools and knowing no master, has given way before the more effective productive powers of huge capital, concentrated in the hands of the great capitalist. The latter, recognising no rights in his workers, ruled as an absolute monarch in his factory. But within the realm of capital developed a revolt against the power of the capitalist. This revolt, taking the form of trade unionism, has pursued in the industrial field the same line of development as the movement for political freedom has pursued in the sphere of national government. It first contented itself with protests against excessive exactions, against all undue stretchings of the power of the capitalist, then its efforts broadened out to demands for restrictions upon the absolute character of such power, i.e., by claiming for trade unions the right to make rules for the workers in the workshop; then it sought still further to curb the capitalist's power by shortening the working day and so limiting the period during which the toiler may be exploited. Finally, it seeks by Boards of Arbitration to establish an equivalent in the industrial world for that compromise in the political world by which, in constitutional countries, the monarch retains his position by granting a parliament to divide with him the duties of governing, and so hides while securing his power. And as in the political history of the race, the logical development of progress was found in the abolition of the institution of monarchy and not in its mere restriction, so in industrial history the culminating point to which all efforts must at last converge lies in the abolition of the capitalist class and not in the mere restriction of its power.

It recognises in all past history a preparation for this achievement, and in the industrial tendencies of today it hails the workings out of those laws of human progress which bring that object within our reach.

The concentration of capital in the form of trusts simplifies the task we propose that society shall undertake and the industrial organisation of labour resultant therefrom drills and prepares the force necessary to its accomplishment.

As today the organised power of the State theoretically guarantees to every individual his political rights, so in the Socialist Republic the power and

productive forces of organised society will stand between every individual and want, guaranteeing that right to life without which all other rights are but mockery.

The Irish Socialist Federation, recognising these two phases of human development, pledges its members to fealty to the principles resultant therefrom, politically rejecting the domination of nation over nation as of man over man; it on the field of Irish politics is organised against every party recognising British rule in Ireland in any form or manner, in all its moods and modifications; and as the final solution of the Irish, as of every other struggle for freedom, it seeks the Workers' Republic – the administration of all the land and instruments of labour, all social property in which all shall be co-heirs and owners.