

James Connolly

# Industrial Unionism and Constructive Socialism

(1908)

From **Socialism Made Easy**, 1908.

There is not a Socialist in the world today who can indicate with any degree of clearness how we can bring about the co-operative commonwealth except along the lines suggested by industrial organization of the workers.

Political institutions are not adapted to the administration of industry. Only industrial organizations are adapted to the administration of a co-operative commonwealth that we are working for. Only the industrial form of organization offers us even a theoretical constructive Socialist programme. There is no constructive Socialism except in the industrial field.

The above extracts from the speech of Delegate Stirton, editor of the **Wage Slave**, of Hancock, Michigan, so well embody my ideas upon this matter that I have thought well to take them as a text for an article in explanation of the structural form of Socialist society. In a previous chapter I have analysed the weakness of the craft or trade union form of organization alike as a weapon of

defence against the capitalist class in everyday conflict on the economic field, and as a generator of class consciousness on the political field, and pointed out the greater effectiveness for both purposes of an industrial form of organization.

## **Organizing Constructively**

In the present article I desire to show how they who are engaged in building up industrial organizations for the practical purpose of today are at the same time preparing the framework of the society of the future. It is the realization of that feat that indeed marks the emergence of Socialism as a revolutionary force from the critical to the positive stage. Time was when Socialists, if asked how society would be organized under Socialism, replied invariably, and airily, that such things would be left to the future to decide. The fact was that they had not considered the matter, but the development of the Trust and Organized Capital in general, making imperative the Industrial Organizations of Labour on similar lines, has provided us with an answer at once more complete to ourselves and more satisfying to our questioners.

Now to analyse briefly the logical consequences of the position embodied in the above quotation.

“Political institutions are not adapted to the administration of industry.”

Here is a statement that no Socialist with a clear knowledge of the essentials of his doctrine can dispute. The political institutions of today are simply the coercive forces of capitalist society they have grown up out of, and are based upon, territorial divisions of power in the hands of the ruling class in past ages, and were carried over into capitalist society to suit the needs of the capitalist class when that class overthrew the dominion of its predecessors.

## **The Old Order and the New**

The delegation of the function of government into the hands of representatives elected from certain districts, States or territories, represents no real natural

division suited to the requirements of modern society, but is a survival from a time when territorial influences were more potent in the world than industrial influences, and for that reason is totally unsuited to the needs of the new social order, which must be based upon industry.

The Socialist thinker, when he paints the structural form of the new social order, does not imagine an industrial system directed or ruled by a body of men or women elected from an indiscriminate mass of residents within given districts, said residents working at a heterogeneous collection of trades and industries. To give the ruling, controlling, and directing of industry into the hands of such a body would be too utterly foolish.

What the Socialist does realize is that under a social democratic form of society the administration of affairs will be in the hands of representatives of the various industries of the nation; that the workers in the shops and factories will organize themselves into unions, each union comprising all the workers at a given industry; that said union will democratically control the workshop life of its own industry, electing all foremen etc., and regulating the routine of labour in that industry in subordination to the needs of society in general, to the needs of its allied trades, and to the departments of industry to which it belongs; that representatives elected from these various departments of industry will meet and form the industrial administration or national government of the country.

### **Begin in the Workshop**

In short, social democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of democracy. Such application will necessarily have to begin in the workshop, and proceed logically and consecutively upward through all the grades of industrial organization until it reaches the culminating point of national executive power and direction. In other words, social democracy must proceed from the bottom upward, whereas capitalist political society is organized from above downward.

Social democracy will be administered by a committee of experts elected from the industries and professions of the land; capitalist society is governed by representatives elected from districts, and is based upon territorial division.

The local and national governing, or rather administrative, bodies of Socialists will approach every question with impartial minds, armed with the fullest expert knowledge born of experience; the governing bodies of capitalist society have to call in an expensive professional expert to instruct them on every technical question, and know that the impartiality of said expert varies with, and depends upon, the size of his fee.

### **No 'Servile State'**

It will be seen that this conception of Socialism destroys at one blow all the fears of a bureaucratic State, ruling and ordering the lives of every individual from above, and thus gives assurance that the social order of the future will be an extension of the freedom of the individual, and not the suppression of it. In short, it blends the fullest democratic control with the most absolute expert supervision, something unthinkable of any society built upon the political State.

To focus the idea properly in your mind you have but to realize how industry today transcends all limitations of territory and leaps across rivers, mountains and continents; then you can understand how impossible it would be to apply to such far-reaching intricate enterprises the principle of democratic control by the workers through the medium of political territorial divisions.

Under Socialism, States, territories, or provinces will exist only as geographical expressions, and have no existence as sources of governmental power, though they may be seats of administrative bodies.

Now, having grasped the idea that the administrative force of the Socialist republic of the future will function through unions industrially organized, that the principle of democratic control will operate through the workers correctly organized in such industrial unions, and that the political territorial State of

capitalist society will have no place or function under Socialism, you will at once grasp the full truth embodied in the words of this member of the Socialist Party whom I have just quoted, that “only the industrial form of organization offers us even a theoretical constructive Socialist programme.”

## **The Political State and its Uses**

To some minds constructive Socialism is embodied in the work of our representatives on the various public bodies to which they have been elected. The various measures against the evils of capitalist property brought forward by, or as a result of, the agitation of Socialist representatives on legislative bodies are figured as being of the nature of constructive Socialism.

As we have shown, the political State of capitalism has no place under Socialism; therefore, measures which aim to place industries in the hands of, or under the control of, such a political State are in no sense steps towards that ideal; they are but useful measures to restrict the greed of capitalism and to familiarize the workers with the conception of common ownership. This latter is, indeed, their chief function.

But the enrolment of the workers in unions patterned closely after the structure of modern industries, and following the organic lines of industrial development, is par excellence the swiftest, safest, and most peaceful form of constructive work the Socialist can engage in. It prepares within the framework of capitalist society the working forms of the Socialist republic, and thus, while increasing the resisting power of the worker against present encroachments of the capitalist class, it familiarizes him with the idea that the union he is helping to build up is destined to supplant that class in the control of the industry in which he is employed.

## **The Union Can Build Freedom**

The power of this idea to transform the dry detail work of trade union organization into the constructive work of revolutionary Socialism, and thus

make of the unimaginative trade unionist a potent factor in the launching of a new system of society, cannot be over-estimated. It invests the sordid details of the daily incidents of the class struggle with a new and beautiful meaning, and presents them in their true light as skirmishes between the two opposing armies of light and darkness.

In the light of this principle of industrial unionism every fresh shop or factory organized under its banner is a fort wrenched from the control of the capitalist class and manned with the soldiers of the revolution to be held by them for the workers.

On the day that the political and economic forces of Labour finally break with capitalist society and proclaim the Workers' Republic, these shops and factories so manned by industrial unionists will be taken charge of by the workers there employed, and force and effectiveness be thus given to that proclamation. Then and thus the new society will spring into existence, ready equipped to perform all the useful functions of its predecessor.

**James Connolly**

# **The Future of Labour**

**(1908)**

From

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In choosing for the subject of this chapter such a title as *The Future of Labour* I am aware that I run the risk of arousing expectations that I shall not be able to satisfy. The future of Labour is a subject with which is bound up the future of civilization and therefore a comprehensive treatment of the subject might be interpreted as demanding an analysis of all the forces and factors which will influence humanity in the future, and also their resultant effect.

Needless to say, my theme is a less ambitious one. I propose simply to deal with the problem of Labour in the immediate future, with the marshalling of Labour for the great conflict that confronts us, and with a consideration of the steps to be taken in order that the work of aiding the transition from Industrial Slavery to Industrial Freedom might be, as far as possible, freed from all encumbering and needless obstacles and expense of time, energy and money.

But first, and as an aid to a proper understanding of my position, let me place briefly before you my reading of the history of the past struggles against social subjugation, my reading of the mental development undergone by each revolting class in the different stages of their struggle, from the first period of their bondage to the first dawn of their freedom. As I view it, such struggles had three well-marked mental stages, corresponding to inception, development, and decay of the oppressing powers, and as I intend to attempt to apply this theory to the position of Labour as a subject class today, I hope you will honour me by at least giving me your earnest attention to this conception and aid by your discussions in determining at which period or stages the working class, the subject class of today, has arrived. My reading, then, briefly is this: that in the first period of bondage the eyes of the subject class are always turned towards the past, and all efforts in revolt are directed to the end of destroying the social system in order that it might march backwards and re-establish the social order of ancient times – ‘the good old days’. That the goodness of those days was largely hypothetical seldom enters the imagination of men on whose limbs the fetters of oppression still sit awkwardly.

In the second period the subject class tends more and more to lose sight and recollection of any pre-existent state of society, to believe that the social order in which it finds itself always did exist, and to bend all its energies to obtaining such

amelioration of its lot within existent society as will make that lot more bearable. At this stage of society the subject class, as far as its own aspirations are concerned, may be reckoned as a conservative force.

In the third period the subject class becomes revolutionary, reckons little of the past for inspiration, but, building itself upon the achievements of the present, confidently addresses itself to the conquest of the future. It does so because the development of the framework of society has revealed to it its relative importance, revealed to it the fact that within its grasp has grown, unconsciously to itself, a power which, if intelligently applied, is sufficient to overcome and master society at large.

As a classic illustration of this conception of the history of the mental development of the revolt against social oppression, we might glance at the many peasant revolts recorded in European history. As we are now aware, common ownership of land was at one time the basis of society all over the world. Our fathers not only owned their land in common, but in many ways practised a common ownership of the things produced. In short, tribal communism was at one time the universally existent order. In such a state there existed a degree of freedom that no succeeding order has been able to parallel, and that none will be able to until the individualistic order of today gives way to the Industrial Commonwealth, the Workers' Republic of the future. How that ancient order broke up it is no part of my task to tell. What I do wish to draw your attention to is that for hundreds, for a thousand years after the break up of that tribal communism, and the reduction to serfdom of the descendants of the formerly free tribesmen, all the efforts of the revolting serfs were directed to a destruction of the new order of things and to a rehabilitation of the old. Take, as an example, the various peasant wars of Germany, the Jacquerie of France, or the revolt of Wat Tyler and John Ball in England as being the best known; examine their rude literature in such fragments as have been preserved, study their speeches, as they have been recorded even by their enemies, read the translations of their songs, and in all of them you will find a passionate harking back to the past, a morbid idealizing of the status of their fathers, and a continual exhortation to the

suffering people to destroy the present in order that, in some vague and undefined manner, they may reconstruct the old.

The defeat of the peasantry left the stage clear for the emergence of the bourgeoisie as the most important subject class and for the development of that second period of which I have spoken. Did it develop? Well, in every account we read of the conflict between the nobility and the burghers in their guilds and cities we find that the aggressive part was always taken by the former and that wherever a revolt took place the revolting guild merchants and artisans justified their act by an appeal to past privileges which had been abrogated and the restoration of which formed the basis of their claims, and their only desire if successful in revolt. One of the most curious illustrations of this mental condition is to be found in the History of the Rise of the Dutch Republic by Motley, in which that painstaking historian tells how the Netherlands in their revolt against the Spanish Emperor continued for a generation to base their claims upon the political status of the provinces under a former emperor, made war upon the Empire with troops levied in the name of the Emperor, and led by officers whose commissions were made out by the rebel provinces in the name of the sovereign they were fighting against. This mental condition lasted in England until the great Civil War, which ended by leaving Charles I without a head, and the bourgeoisie, incarnated in Cromwell, firmly fixed in the saddle; in France it lasted until the Revolution. In both countries it was abandoned not because of any *a priori* reasoning upon its absurdity nor because some great thinker had evolved a better scheme - but because the growth of the industrial system had made the capitalist class realize that they could at any moment stop the flow of its life blood, so to speak, and from so rearming it was but a short mental evolution to frame a theory of political action which proclaimed that the capitalist class was the nation, and all its enemies the enemies of the nation at large. The last period of that social evolution had been reached from feudal ownership to capitalist property.

Now, let me apply this reading of history to the development of the working class under capitalism and find out what lessons it teaches us, of value in our present struggle. Passing by the growth of the working class under nascent

capitalism, as it belongs more to the period I have just dealt with than to the present subject, and taking up working-class history from the point marked by the introduction of machinery to supplant hand labour – a perfectly correct standpoint for all practical purposes – we find in the then attitude of the workers an exemplification of the historical fidelity of our conception. Suffering from the miseries attendant on machine labour, the displacement of those supplanted and the scandalous overworking of those retained, the workers rioted and rebelled in a mad effort to abolish machinery and restore the a of hand labour. In a word, they strove to revert to past conditions, and their most popular orators and leaders were they who pictured in most glowing terms the conditions prevalent in the days of their fathers.

They were thus on the same mental plane as those medieval peasants who, in their revolt, were fired by the hope of restoring the primitive commune. And just as in the previously cited case, the inevitable failure of the attempt to reconstruct the past was followed in another generation by movements which accepted the social order of their day as permanent, and looked upon their social status as wage slaves as fixed and immutable in the eternal order of things. To this category belongs the trade union movement in all its history. As the struggles of the serfs and burghers in the middle ages were directed to no high aim than the establishment of better relations between these struggling classes and their feudal overlords, as during those ages the division of society into ruling classes of king, lord and church resting upon a basis of the serfdom of the producers was accepted by all in spite of the perpetual recurrences of civil wars between the various classes, so, in capitalist society, the trade unionist, despite strikes, lock-outs, and black lists, accepted the employing class as part and parcel of a system which was to last through all eternity.

The rise of Industrial Unionism is the first sign that the second stage of the mental evolution of our class is rapidly passing away. And the fact that it had its inception amongst men actually engaged in the work of trade union organization, and found its inspiration in a recognition of the necessities born of the struggles of the workers, and not in the theories of any political party – this fact is the most cheering sign of the legitimacy of its birth and the most hopeful augury of its

future. For we must not forget that it is not the theorist who makes history; it is history in its evolution that makes the theorists. And the roots of history are to be found in the workshops, fields and factories. It has been remarked that Belgium was the cockpit of Europe because within its boundaries have been fought out many of the battles between old dynasties; in like manner we can say that the workshop is the cockpit of civilization because in the workshops has been and will be fought out those battles between the new and the old methods of production, the issues of which change the face and the history of the world.

I have said that the capitalist class became a revolutionary class when it realized that it held control of the economic heart of the nation. I may add when the working class is in the same position it will also as a class become revolutionary, it will also give effective political expression to its economic strength. The capitalist class grew into a political party when it looked around and found itself in control of the things needed for the life of the individual and the State, when it saw that the ships carrying the commerce of the nation were its own, when it saw that the internal traffic of the nation was in the hands of its agents, when it saw that the feeding, clothing, and sheltering of the ruling class depended on the activities of the subject class, when it saw itself applied to furnish finance to equip the armies and fleets of the king and nobles; in short, when the capitalist class found that all the arteries of commerce, all the agencies of production, all the mainsprings of life in fact, passed through their hands as blood flows through the human heart – then and only then did capital raise the banner of political revolt and from a class battling for concession become a class leading its forces to the mastery of society at large.

This leads me to the last axiom of which I wish you to grasp the significance. It is this, that the fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real battle is the battle being fought out every day for the power to control industry, and the gauge of the progress of that battle is not to be found in the number of votes making a cross beneath the symbol of a political party, but in the number of these workers who enrol themselves in an industrial organization with the definite purpose of making themselves masters of the industrial equipment of society in general.

That battle will have its political echo, that industrial organization will have its political expression. If we accept the definition of working-class political action as that which brings the workers as a class into direct conflict with the possessing class AS A CLASS, and keeps them there, then we must realize that NOTHING CAN DO THAT SO READILY AS ACTION AT THE BALLOT-BOX. Such action strips the working-class movement of all traces of such sectionalism as may, and indeed must, cling to strikes and lock-outs, and emphasizes the class character« of the Labour Movement. IT IS THEREFORE ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE FOR THE EFFICIENT TRAINING OF THE WORKING CLASS ALONG CORRECT LINES THAT ACTION AT THE BALLOT-BOX SHOULD ACCOMPANY ACTION IN THE WORKSHOP.

I am convinced that this will be the ultimate formation of the fighting hosts of Labour. The workers will be industrially organized on the economic field, and until that organization is perfected, whilst the resultant feeling of class consciousness is permeating the minds of the workers, the Socialist Labour Party will carry on an independent campaign of education and attack upon the political field, and as a consequence will remain the sole representative of the Socialist idea in politics. But as industrial organization grows, feels its strength, and develops the revolutionary instincts of its members, there will grow also the desire for a closer union and identification of the two wings of the army of Labour. Any attempt prematurely to force this identification would only defeat its own purpose, and be fraught with danger alike to the economic and the political wing. Yet it is certain that such attempts will be of continual recurrence and multiply in proportion to the dissatisfaction felt at the waste of energy involved in the division of forces. Statesmanship of the highest kind will be required to see that this union shall take place only under the proper conditions and that at the moment for effective action. Two things must be kept in mind – viz., that a Socialist Political Party not emanating from the ranks of Labour is, as Karl Marx phrased it, simply a Socialist sect, ineffective for the final revolutionary act, but that also the attempt of craft organized unions to create political unity before they have laid the foundation of industrial unity in their own, the economic field, would be an instance of putting the cart before the horse. But when the foundation of the industrial union is finally secured then nothing can prevent the

union of the economic and political forces of Labour. I look forward to the time when every economic organization will have its Political Committee, just as it has its Organizational Committee or its Strike Committee, and when it is counted to be as great a crime, as much an act of scabbery, to be against the former as against any of the latter. When that time comes we will be able to count our effective vote before troubling the official ballot-box, simply by counting our membership in the allied organizations; we will be able to estimate our capacity for the revolutionary act of Social Transformation simply by taking stock of the number of industries we control and their importance relative to the whole system, and when we find that we control the strategic industries in society, then society must bend to our will – or break. In our organization we will have Woman Suffrage, whether governments like it or not, we will also have in our organizations a pure and uncorrupted ballot, and if the official ballot of capitalist society does not purify itself of its own accord, its corruption can only serve to blind the eyes of our enemies and not hide our strength from ourselves.

Compare the political action of such a body with that of any party we know. Political parties are composed of men and women who meet together to formulate a policy and programme to vote upon. They set up a political ticket in the hope of getting people, most of whom they do not know, to vote for them, and when the vote is at last cast, it is cast by men whom they have not organized, do not know, and cannot rely on to use in their own defence. We have proven that such a body can make propaganda, for Socialist principles, but it can never function as the weapon of an industrially organized working class. To it such a party will always be an outside body, a body not under its direct control, but the political weapon of the Industrial Organized Working Class will be a weapon of its own forging and wielded by its own hand. I believe it to be incumbent upon organized Labour to meet the capitalist class upon every field where it can operate to our disadvantage. Therefore I favour direct attacks upon the control of governmental powers through the ballot-box, but I wish to see these attacks supported by economic organization. In short, I believe that there is no function performed by a separate political party that the economic organization cannot help it perform much better and with greater safety to working-class interests. Let us be clear as to the function of Industrial Unionism. That function is to build

up an industrial republic inside the shell of the political State, in order that when the industrial republic is fully organized it may crack the shell of the political State and step into its place in the scheme of the universe. But in the process of upbuilding, during the period of maturing, the mechanism of the political State can be utilized to assist in the formation of the embryo Industrial Republic. Or, to change the analogy, we might liken the position of the Industrial Republic in its formative period towards political Society to the position of the younger generation towards the generations passing away. The younger accepts the achievements of the old, but gradually acquires strength to usurp its functions until the new generation is able to abandon the paternal household and erect its own. While doing so it utilizes to the fullest all the principles of its position. So the Industrial Unionist will function in a double capacity in a capitalist society. In his position as a citizen in a given geographical area he will use his political voting power in attacks upon the political system of capitalism, and in his position as a member of the Industrial Union he will help in creating the economic power which in the fullness of time will overthrow that political system and replace it by the Industrial Republic.

My contentions along these lines do not imply by any means that I regard immediate action at the ballot-box by the economic organization as essential, although I may regard it as advisable. As I have already indicated, the proletarian revolution will in that respect most likely follow the lines of the capitalist revolution in the past.

In Cromwellian England, in Colonial America, in Revolutionary France, the real political battle did not begin until after the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class, had become the dominant class in the nation. Then they sought to conquer political power in order to allow their economic power to function freely. It was no mere coincidence, but a circumstance born of the very nature of things, woven so to speak in the warp and woof of fate, that in the three countries the signal for the revolution was given by the ruling class touching the bourgeoisie in the one part that was calculated to arouse them as a class, and at the same time demonstrate their strength. That one sensitive part was their finance, their ownership of the sinews of war. In England it was over the question of taxes, of

ship money, that Hampden raised the standard of revolt, whose last blow was struck at Whitehall when the king's head rolled in the gutter. In America it was over the question of taxes, and again the capitalist class were united, until a new nation was born to give them power. In France it was the failure of the king to raise taxes that led to the convocation of the States General, which assembly first revealed to the French capitalists their power as a class and set their feet on the revolutionary path. In all three countries the political rebellion was but the expression of the will of a class already in possession of economic power. This is in conformity with the law of human evolution, that the new system can never overthrow the old until it itself is fully matured and able to assume all the useful functions of the one they seek to dethrone.

In the light of such facts, and judging by such reasoning, we need not exercise our souls over the question of the date of the appearance of the Industrial Organization of Labour upon the electoral field. Whether we believe, as I believe, that the electoral field offers its opportunities it would be criminal to ignore, or believe, as some do, that electoral action on the part of the economic organization is at present premature, one thing we can be agreed upon, if we accept the outline of history I have just sketched – viz. that it is necessary to remember that at the present stage of development all actions of our class at the ballot-box are in the nature of preliminary skirmishes, or educational campaigns, and that the conquest of political power by the working class waits upon the conquest of economic power and must function through the economic organization.

Hence, reader, if you belong to the working class your duty is clear. Your union must be perfected until it embraces everyone who toils in the service of your employer or as a unit in your industry. The fact that your employers find it necessary to secure the services of any individual or worker is or ought to be that individual's highest and best title to be a member of your union. If the boss needs him you need him more. You need open union and the closed shop if you ever intend to control the means and conditions of life. And, as the champion of your class upon the political field, as the ever active propagandist of the idea of the working class, as the representative and embodiment of the social principle of the

future, you need the Socialist Labour Party. The future of Labour is bound up with the harmonious development of those twin expressions of the forces of progress; the freedom of Labour will be born of their happily consummated nation.

**James Connolly**

# **Facets of American Liberty**

**(1908)**

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“Where Liberty is, there is my country.”

So said the enthusiastic 18th century revolutionist. But if he lived nowadays he would have a long search for his country – where Liberty is. The only liberty we know of now, outside the liberty to go hungry, stands in New York Bay, where it has been placed, I am told, in order that immigrants from Europe may get their first and last look at it before setting foot on American soil.

You see, it would be decidedly awkward for our Fourth of July orators to be orating to the newcomers about the blessings of American liberty and then to be asked by some ignorant European to tell where that liberty is to be found.

Some ignorant, discontented unit of the hordes of Europe, for instance, might feel tempted to go nosing around in this great country in search of liberty, and his search might take him into the most awkward places.

He might go down South and see little white American children of seven, eight and nine years of age working in our cotton mills enjoying their liberty to work for a boss at an age when other children are still compelled by tyrannical laws to stay on wrestling with the dreadful problems of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic.

He might have visited Alabama and seen American citizens out on strike, driven out of their homes by the power of the capitalist mine-owner, and when they erected tents upon private land granted by a charitable farmer for that purpose, he might have seen a Democratic governor order in the state militia to cut down the tents and drive the American workers back to the mine at the point of the bayonet.

He might, being an ignorant European, visit Florida and see men lured from the big cities to the railroad construction camps and kept there on a hunger diet, compelled to endure blows and foulest insults, and when they attempted to escape he might see the power of the state detective force employed to arrest them as if they were criminals and take them back handcuffed to their slavery.

This ignorant representative of the scum of Europe might have visited Colorado in 1904 and seen armed militia invade newspaper offices and imprison printers and journalists alike without legal warrant or pretense at trial, trade union meetings suppressed, duly elected public officials compelled to resign under threat of lynching, respectable men taken out of their beds in the middle of the night and without [being] given a chance to even put their shoes on marched under armed guards across the state lines, hundreds of men thrown into cattle

enclosures and kept there for months without trial, and Pinkerton detectives employed to manufacture outrages in order to hang innocent men.

This pilgrim in search of liberty might have learned from the coal miners of Pennsylvania that their state is dotted over east and west with localities where union miners were shot down like dogs whilst peacefully parading the streets or roads in time of strikes, he might have learned that practically every industrial center in the country from Albany, N.Y., to San Francisco, Calif., from New Orleans to Minnesota, has the same tale to tell of the spilling of workmen's blood by the hirelings of the master class, and he might have attended the unemployed demonstration in Union Square, New York, and have seen the free American citizens rapped on the head for daring to ask a job collectively, instead of begging for it individually.

Or this greenhorn might have strolled along West Street, New York, and interviewed some Irish longshoremen, who could tell him that when in Ireland they stayed at home and played cards and bothered the women of the house every time it rained (and in Ireland it rains oftener than it is fair), that they stopped work every time there was a fair day, or a Saint's Day, or a Feast Day, or a Home Rule, Nationalist, Gaelic League or Orange Demonstration, when they stayed up too long at a wake, or wished to go a few miles to attend a wedding.

But that since he became a participant in the freedom of America he has to turn out to his work rain or shine, winter and summer, and be ready to stand in line to be picked out of a gang as he used to pick out pigs at a fair at home, only that the pigs got fed, if they were or were not picked, whereas he and his family are likely to go hungry if he does not keep on the soft side of the boss and get picked. And if he does get picked for a job, he has to stand worse driving and foul abuse than an Irish ass ever received from its driver.

As for holidays – tell it not in Gath. A holiday in Ireland meant rest and recreation for his body and mind; in America a holiday means a rest for his stomach and anxiety for his mind.

I think I can work in a joke here. There was once a hardworking Irish girl who married an enterprising Irish-American. On the day after the wedding she remarked, "Well, thank God, now I can get a rest for my bones."

"Deed, if you do, Mary," responded her loving spouse, "it will be a rest for your jaw-bones."

(This joke is going to be copyrighted).

After making this pilgrimage through the state possibly our representative of the destitute alien might be impertinent enough to interrupt the Fourth of July orator with the demand to be shown where this American Liberty is.

Then the orator, thanks to Bartholdi, could arise in his dignity and crush the interrupter with the statement that Liberty is to be found outside in the Bay of New York.

It is a waste of time to look inside for what is standing outside. Verb sap, or as we say in the Gaelic, "An tuigeann tú?" In the classic language of the Bowery, "Are you next?"

The Liberty we have in Bartholdi's statue is truly typical of liberty in this age and country.

It is placed upon a pedestal out of the reach of the multitudes; it can only be approached by those who have money enough to pay the expense; it has a lamp to enlighten the world, but the lamp is never lit, and it smiles upon us as we approach America, but when we are once in the country we never see anything but its back.

'Tis a great world we live in.

P.H.B., of Shaft, Pa., wrote to the **Harp** in September asking for enlightenment on several points connected with the practical workings of Socialism in the mining industry. The chief points he dealt with were the difficulty of having a system that would insure absolute justice to every

individual, and who would do the dirty work, and who would be induced to waste his time in qualifying for a mining engineer when the ordinary miner would be as highly remunerated.

Our friend should remember that Socialists do not suppose that the substitution of common ownership for private ownership will of itself abolish all difficulties or solve all questions of administration. It will not. But it will make the solution of those questions on a just basis easier than it is to-day. In fact, to-day justice is simply not taken into account in such matters. Expediency and profit-making are all that are sought. Yet our friend, like many others, demands of Socialism perfect, absolute, flawless justice down to the minutest detail, and if he cannot be assured of it he will continue to support the capitalist system, although he knows it to be saturated with injustices of the most horrible description.

I presume that he would not ride on a railroad train until he had fully understood all the mechanism of a steam engine, all the principles and practice of steam propulsion, all the complicated appliances of signaling, points, switching and railroad telegraphing.

But that would not be his attitude in reality. No, he would say that he had no doubt there were difficulties in the way of railroading, but that the central principle being right he could trust the associated intelligence of those engaged in the industry to master those difficulties in line with the general principle. That, in fact, has been the general practical attitude of the human race toward all innovations, once the general principle of the new departure was accepted.

Under Socialism, mining, like every other industry, will be democratically administered by the workers in that occupation; foremen, managers, superintendents, etc., will all be elected from and by the rank and file of the workers, and those same workers will also elect the delegates who will represent them on the local and governing bodies of the land. All matters pertaining to the technical efficiency of the mines, and of labor, will be settled either by those experts whom the workers have elected as administrators, by discussion and vote

of the men in the union of their industry, or by whatever method their common interest and sense of fairness can devise.

Such positions as mining engineers, or other professions, etc., can be filled by pupils chosen in a competitive examination. There will always be a sufficiency of candidates for any such post of honor, and as the cost of the education for such posts will be borne by the community, and not by the individual aspirant, they need not necessarily entail any disparity of salary.

As for the varying needs of individuals, each individual will require to “cut his coat according to his cloth,” to use a homely old saying. He whose tastes run to automobiles cannot expect to be strong on books, and he who desires the luxury of travel will have to forego the pleasures of a private garden and a secluded mansion. And so on *ad infinitum*.

Socialism will solve the problem of poverty by abolishing it, but it will not solve all problems, smooth all rough places, nor prevent all mistakes.

Under Socialism men will possibly often mistake their avocations in life, women will marry the wrong men, and men will marry the wrong women.

I know some Socialists say that there will be no marriage question under Socialism, but I do not see that that will necessarily be the case, and I am only concerned with what Socialism will necessarily do. I hold that under Socialism no woman will be compelled to marry a man for a livelihood or for riches, but I hold that it is quite possible that under Socialism a man and woman may imagine that they were destined for each other, love and marry, and after the lapse of years and closer intimacy find they had made a mistake and one came to hate the other.

And when that happens we will have a marriage and divorce question, or a sex question, if you will, and I do not see that the fact that each is economically independent of the other will alter that fact. If the woman desires to be rid of the man whilst the man still loves the woman, or vice versa, we will still have passion, and jealousy, and love, and hatred.

In fact, Socialism will not make us angels upon earth; it will only put a premium upon our better qualities instead of upon our baser, as is done by capitalism today. And that itself would be worth a revolution to realize, or a thousand revolutions.

Under any system of society there will be differences of opinion amongst men and women, and with some natures such differences will be intense and lead to much swinging of literary and verbal cudgels, and metaphorical belaboring with black thorns.

Talking of blackthorns reminds me of some fine verses I lately came across upon that inspiring subject. Here they are; you can read them while I mop my fevered brow:

### **LINES TO A BLACKTHORN**

You're welcome to my hand, my fine blackthorn,  
That grew in beauty under Erin's skies;  
Your blossom sweet, on many a bright May morn,  
Gave added fragrance to the summer's sighs.  
Upon your branch the brown-robed linnet sang,  
The goldfinch chattered merrily his lay,  
And at your feet the primrose joyous spring  
To welcome your sweet blossoms falling spray.

It moves the fount of memory to tears  
To think this fine "Kippeen" had root upon  
That Irish hillside, where my boyhood years  
In careless glee and innocence sped on,  
I hear the lark with pulsing waves of song –  
Sweet herald of the dawn that knew no care –  
Across the gulf of Time, again I long  
To feel the rapture of that matin prayer.

And when they cut you down, my fine blackthorn,

They “saysoned” you, like bacon in the smoke  
Above the ample “hob”, where night and morn  
The turf fire gave you heart and strength of oak.  
And round the fire I hear the welcome cheer  
That burst in limpid music from the heart.  
As neighbor entered with “God save all here,”  
And “banact lat,” as he would slow depart.

You are welcome to my hand, for like the rod  
At Moses’ touch bloomed in the desert wild,  
I see again dear Erin’s verdant sod,  
And every flower that on her bosom smiled.  
Sure you are nurtured by the same soft rain,  
Your veins were warmed by the same bright sun.  
And so at your kind touch I live again  
The joyous hours with which life’s morn begun.

– *William J. Dawson.*

Another correspondent writes to ask me “as a practical man” to tell what measures the Socialists would pass and what they would repeal in the city of St. Louis, in the state of Missouri, in the Senate or Congress if they got the victory. ’Tis a tall order.

In the first place I am not a practical man. To be practical under capitalism means that your ideas are consonant with the existence of capitalism. Mine, I trust, are not. My correspondent has not grasped that fact yet; when he does he will realize that to be “practical” is the last thing I aim at.

I would remind him that the Socialist Party of St. Louis, the Socialist Party of Missouri, and the National organization have each issued platforms which answer his questions, and recommend him to secure copies for his enlightenment. He tells me he wants it answered in the **Harp**, but I desire him to understand that the **Harp** desires only to treat of the general principles of

Socialism as a revolutionary movement, and not with any patching up of the old social order.

Personally, I believe that the fact that we still have long platforms and programs is one of the signs of the comparatively backward state of the Socialist movement, of our unripeness for Social Revolution. On the day that we have so far conquered the mind of the workers that we can safely abolish our platforms and concentrate and express our whole fighting principle in one simple phrase capable of being remembered by the average school boy, we will then, and then only, cease to be a propagandist association and become a revolutionary army.

At least so thinks

*SPAILPÍN*

**James Connolly**

# **Roman Catholicism and Socialism**

**(1908)**

From

**The**

**Harp,**

September,

1908.

This is the title of a pamphlet by Patrick J. Cooney of Bridgeport, Conn., which we would like to see in the hands of all our readers, and especially those who are struggling towards the light out of the economic darkness of today. To Catholics who have been repelled from socialism by the blatant and rude atheism of some of its irresponsible advocates – and unfortunately the number of such Catholics is legion – this book will be as refreshing as an oasis in the desert to the tired and thirsty traveller.

The author is an active Catholic and at the same time a militant socialist, and in his presentation of our socialist doctrines he never wavers in his allegiance to either. Here and there indeed his loyalty to the Church seems to betray him into statements regarding her position which to our mind would hardly stand the test of modern criticism and historical research. But we confess that in that respect his attitude is a refreshing change from that of the crudely superficial thinkers (?) and scribblers who so commonly discredit the socialist ranks by their dogmatisms on that subject. If we had to choose between the perfervid Catholicity of our author and the blatant anti-Catholicism of the men who are so fond of repelling earnest Catholics by their assertion that the great conflict of the social revolution will be between the forces of the Catholic Church and those of socialism, then we should prefer the position of Comrade Cooney as containing the highest propagandist value, as well as being, if historical precedents count for anything, the most probable to last and stand the test of time. As a matter of fact the Catholic Church always accepts the established order, even if it has warred upon those who had striven to establish such order.

To use a homely adage the Church “does not put all her eggs in one basket,” and the man who imagines that in the supreme hour of the proletarian struggle for victory the Church will definitely line up with the forces of capitalism, and pledge her very existence as a Church upon the hazardous chance of the capitalists winning, simply does not understand the first thing about the policy of the Church in the social or political revolutions of the past. Just as in Ireland the Church denounced every Irish revolutionary movement in its day of activity, as in 1798, 1848 and 1867, and yet allowed its priests to deliver speeches in eulogy of the active spirits of those movements a generation afterwards, so in the future the

Church, which has its hand close upon the pulse of human society, when it realises that the cause of capitalism is a lost cause it will find excuse enough to allow freedom of speech and expression to those lowly priests whose socialist declarations it will then use to cover and hide the absolute anti-socialism of the Roman Propaganda. When that day comes the Papal Encyclical against socialism will be conveniently forgotten by the Papal historians, and the socialist utterances, of the von Kettelers, the McGlynns, and McGradys will be heralded forth and the communistic utterances of the early fathers as proofs of Catholic sympathy with progressive ideas. Thus it has been in the past. Thus it will be, at least attempted, in the future. We are not concerned to champion or to deny the morality of such a cause in anticipation, we are simply attempting to read the lessons of the past into the future. And, we modestly submit, this forecast has infinitely more of probability in it than the dreams of those who tell us so glibly of a coming Armageddon between the forces of socialism and Catholicism. Such dreams are not the product of modern socialist philosophy, they are a survival from the obsolete philosophy of the days preceding the first French Revolution.

To the free-thinkers and rebels of those days – and the professional free-thinkers of today have not advanced much beyond that mental stage – God and the Church were nothing more than the schemes of a designing priesthood intent on enslaving and robbing the credulous masses. Religion was a systematised business of deception and trickery invented and perpetuated by men thoroughly aware of its falsehood and baseness, and consciously laying plans to maintain and spread it for their own selfish ends. Kings and rulers of all kinds were the creation of this crafty priesthood which used them to its own purposes. That we are not in the slightest degree mistating the ideas of the times we are criticising any student of the early freethought literature will readily concede. That many otherwise excellent comrades have brought such ideas over into the camp of socialism is also undeniable. But that they are also held by an even greater number of enemies of socialism is truer still. And it is in truth in the camp of the enemy such ideas belong, such doctrines are the legitimate children of the teachings of individualism, and their first progenitors both in England and France were also the first great exponents of the capitalist doctrines of free trade and free competition, free contract and free labour. Such conceptions of religion are

entirely opposed to the modern doctrine that the intellectual conceptions of men are the product of their material conditions, and flow in the grooves channelled out by the economic environment.

In the light of this modern conception of the conditions of historical progress religion appears as the outcome of the efforts of mankind to interpret the workings of the forces of nature, and to translate its phenomena into the terms of a language which could be understood. The undeveloped mind cannot grasp an abstract proposition. Therefore that which the cultured man of the twentieth century would explain and understand as 'a natural process,' the mental vision of our forefathers could only see as the result of the good or ill will of some beneficent or evil spirit – some God or Devil.

Hence we had in Ireland in our Celtic legends a plentiful store of fairies, leprechauns and good and evil spirits, and every thing on land or sea, on wind or water that our fathers did not understand was readily attributed to the good or perverse genius of some member or members of this fairy host. In their turn the fairies were the descendants of the servants of the 'Unknown God' whom the Celt of old worshipped in his Druidic Groves. Anyone at all acquainted with the beliefs of the Irish peasant before the advent of the National School to 'spoil' him of his innocence is well aware that his Catholicity was almost inextricably mingled with a belief in fairy lore and legend that testified that he was still in a transition state of mentality between belief in the spirits of Druidism and the angels of Catholicity.

He would have hotly repudiated such an insinuation. But to the seeing eye the proofs were palpable and undeniable, and this mental development of the Irish Celt towards a clearer conception of the universe, this progress, for it was a progress, from the conception of a world helplessly torn by the warring of spirits to the conception of a world ruled by a Creator holding a spirit world in subjection for a beneficent purpose, this development was paralleled throughout the earth by all the advanced races in their upward march to the conquest of truth. The point to be noted is this:

The different stages of development of the human mind in its attitude towards the forces of Nature created different priesthoods to interpret them, and the mental conceptions of mankind as interpreted by those priesthoods became, when systematised, Religion. Religions are simply expressions of the human conceptions of the natural world; these religions have created the priesthoods. Only he who stands upon the individualist conceptions of history can logically claim that priesthoods created religion. Modern historical science utterly rejects the idea as absurd.

Yet it is this utterly unhistorical idea, rejected by historical science as it is also rejected by the record of the countless thousands of priests of all religions who have cheerfully gone to martyrdom for their beliefs and martyrdom is incredible in a conscious imposter – it – it is this belief that is often brought in and made to do duty as a result of socialist thought by those who ought to know better. It is a matter for congratulation that Irish socialists are free of such excrescences on socialist belief.

**James Connolly**

# **The Irish Masses in History**

**(1908)**

From

**The**

**Harp,**

September,

1908.

In its issue of August 8, the Boston **Pilot** had a very interesting article upon the life of a typical Irish girl of ancient Ireland. The article dealt with the life of the ancient Irish as it has been reconstructed by antiquarians from a study of the gold and silver ornaments found in various bogs in Ireland, and from the allusions to the use of those ornaments made in old Irish manuscripts

All this is interesting, especially to those who desire to have their Irish patriotism or pride of race buttressed up by historical data. And, of course, there are many such.

I, also, was much interested in the article, but for another reason. To me it was especially interesting as illustrative of the curious effect modern property relations have upon the mind of even the most gifted amongst us. The gifted authoress of the article in question took as the imaginary subject of her sketch an ancient Irish princess and reconstructed her life in the most ingenious manner, describing her lying down and uprising, her hunting and riding and chess-playing and sweet-hearting and, in fact, all the incidents in which an Irish princess is revealed or touched upon by the old Irish manuscripts in song or story.

In all of those pursuits she was waited upon by a slave woman, a different slave woman for each separate amusement; in all, there must have been at least a dozen different slave women waiting upon the one princess, and what appeared to my cold Socialistic mind as curious was that the writer wrote and treated of the princess as a typical 'colleen' of ancient Ireland, and utterly neglected to recognise in the slave women any right to be regarded as Irish types at all.

Yet when we remember that for every princess living the life of luxury and ease sketched by the Pilot writer there must have been at least a dozen other women attending her and a hundred other Irish women working in the fields attending cattle and weaving and spinning to feed and clothe and house and ornament her, it must be conceded that any one of these hundred useful Irish women had more right to be considered 'typical Irish colleens' than the useless drone whose life our authoress has reconstructed with such loving fidelity and care.

By all means tell us about the typical colleens of ancient Erin, shake up for us the dry bones of history and tell us about the wives and mothers and daughters of the producing classes of our native country, but do not ask us to believe that a princess was anything more than a type of the class to which she belonged – a predatory useless class – a class whose predatory proclivities hindered the free development of the nation and prepared the way for its subjection.

What a history that would be which would tell us the history of the real women of Ireland – the women of the people ! What a record of ceaseless suffering, of heroism, of martyrdom! What a recital of patient toil, of uncomplaining self-sacrifice, of unending abnegation! Aye, and what a brilliant tale of things accomplished, of deeds done, of miracles achieved!

Think of all the insurrections against British tyranny in Ireland, and as you honour the men who went out to front the armed force of the oppressors think also of the brave women who kissed them and cried over them ere they went, but bade them go for freedom's sake.

Think of all the slimy roll of informers in Erin, and wonder when you remember how seldom even tradition places a woman's name upon the list.

Think of the long and bloody history of the fight against private property in Irish land – against Irish landlordism, and when you remember how the Irish mother, the woman of the house, consented to suffer eviction and ruin rather than let her husband betray the cause of his friends and neighbours, then if you believe in a God thank Him for the spirit and courage and honour of our Irish womanhood.

But then you will not be accepting princesses as the types of Irish life, you will be looking for types of the real womanhood of Ireland where only they can be found, among the producing classes.

Those Irish girls who in the recent dock strike in Belfast joined their fathers and brothers and sweethearts in the streets to battle against the English troops imported in the interests of Irish capitalism are to my mind a thousand times

more admirable 'types of Irish colleens' than the noblest bean uasal of Gaelic Erin much as I admire the latter.

What would we think of the historian who would picture the life of the daughter of an Irish aristocrat of today, and then tell us that this was a picture of the life of a typical Irish girl of the twentieth century? We would laugh him to scorn. Yet that is the manner in which history is written.

**James Connolly**

**Michael Davitt**

**A Text for a Revolutionary Lecture**

**(1908)**

**The Harp,** August 1908.  
Republished in **James Connolly: Selected Political Writings**, (ed. Owen Dudley Edwards & Bernard Ransom), New York 1974.

We have received at this office a copy of a book entitled the life of **Michael Davitt, Revolutionary, Agitator, and Labor Leader**, by F. Sheehy Skeffington. The book is published in London by Fisher Unwin, and has already evoked a storm of criticism and protests from the various reviewers of Ireland and England, a fact that will not seem in the least extraordinary to those of our readers who will take the trouble to dip into the book itself, as we would strongly

advise them to do. For our part we do not intend to place before our readers any mere formal review of the production of Mr. Sheehy Skeffington, but rather to utilise the incident to point the moral which may rightly be drawn from the facts of that stormy period of Irish history during which Michael Davitt was a central public figure. On one point of dissent from the author's appreciation of his hero's qualities will be found centered all the criticism which we would offer were we to devote space to a more extended review. The point is this:

In dealing with the incident of the Parnell Commission Mr. Skeffington says Davitt's conduct "revealed his possession in the highest degree of great intellectual acuteness, resourcefulness, and knowledge of men." Our own opinion of Davitt's character as revealed in his whole history is far other. We conceive of him as an unselfish idealist, who in his enthusiasm for a cause gave his name and his services freely at the beck and call of men who despised his ideals and would willingly, but for their need of him, have hung himself as high as Haman. He abhorred clerical dictation in politics, yet when the psychological moment arrived to give it a death blow, when it was grappling to destroy the one leader who with himself could rally all the democracy of Ireland – Parnell, Davitt, instead of taking full advantage of the event which threw Parnell into the democratic ranks and uniting with him against clerical interference in politics, foolishly threw away his opportunity, misjudged the whole situation, and fought with all his force and aggressiveness to establish the priesthood in full control of secular affairs in Ireland.

He fought and campaigned for the Labor Cause in England, yet for the sake of harmony in the ranks he also supported and campaigned for a party – the Home Rule party – whose leaders were the bitterest enemies of the newly enfranchised workers of the Irish cities.

Again and again have the industrial proletariat of Ireland closed in grapples with the representatives of Irish capitalism, but never was the voice of Davitt raised in such a fight on behalf of labor. We are convinced that he was quite as sympathetic to the cause of Labor in Ireland as in England, but he had surrendered himself into the control of men who were quite willing to play upon Labor sentiments in England where such Sentiments might be made a menace to

British aristocracy, but were determined to scotch and oppose such sentiments in Ireland where they might become a menace to themselves. Thus in his later days Davitt became the idol of the revolutionary English democracy, and disliked and distrusted by the revolutionary working class democracy of Ireland. A poor ending for such a career, and solely due to the fact that he did not possess that knowledge of men of which his biographer gives him credit. Honest himself he believed implicitly in the honesty of others, and became the tool of political crooks and social reactionaries.

But it is as the Father of the Land League that Davitt will live in history, and not in the light of the failure of his later career; and it is with that phase of his activity we wish to deal today. We believe profoundly that a close study of the events of that time would immensely benefit the militant Socialists of all countries.

It would help to demonstrate how the union of the forces of social discontent with the forces of political agitation converted the latter from a mere sterile parliamentarianism, impotent for good, into a virile force transforming the whole social system, and bringing a political revolution within the grasp of the agitators. It would show how a political majority so strong that it left the socially privileged class absolutely without the political support of the socially subject class yet left untouched the real causes of the social misery of the latter. It would illustrate how a subject nation, kept by the bayonets of foreign army beneath the heel of native tyranny, by transferring the fight from the political battle ground of words to the social and economic battle ground of acts, succeeded in almost conquering its freedom, and in quite humbling the pride of a long dominant class, and by thus demonstrating what could be done and was done by a subject nation warring on the economic field against native and foreign tyrants combined, it would also demonstrate what could be done by the working class of any independent nation should it resolve to make its political activity one instrument and expression of its economic struggles, and its economic struggles in factory, workshop and mine the generating force of its political passions and programs.

As we have again and again pointed out the Irish question is a social question, the whole agelong fight of the Irish people against their oppressors

resolves itself in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production, in Ireland. Who would own and control the land? The people or the invaders; and if the invaders which set of them, the most recent swarm of land thieves, or the sons of the thieves of a former generation. These were the bottom questions of Irish politics, and all other questions were valued or deprecated in the proportion to which they contributed to serve the interests of some of the factions who had already taken their stand in this fight around property interests. Without this key to the meaning of events, this clue to unravel the actions of 'great men' Irish history is but a welter of unrelated facts, a hopeless chaos of sporadic outbreaks, treacheries, intrigues, massacres, murders and purposeless warfare. With this key all things become understandable and traceable to their primary origin; without this key the lost opportunities of Ireland seem such as to bring a blush to the cheek of the Irish Worker; with this key Irish history is as a lamp to his feet in the stormy paths of to-day.

Yet, plain as this is to the Irish Socialist, it is undeniable that for 100 years, or since the Act of Union of 1800, all Irish political movements ignored this fact, and were conducted by men who did not look below the political surface. These men to arouse the passions of the people invoked the memory of social wrongs such as evictions and famines, but for these wrongs proposed only political remedies such as changes in taxation and transference of the seat of government from one country to another. Hence they accomplished nothing, because the political method of fighting was unrelated to the social subjection at the root of the matter. Political agitators talked of sending men to Westminster to complain of English tyranny, but conducted no campaign against the rackrenting landlord on his estate, and as a result the adhesion of an overwhelming majority of the tenants to the political agitators lightened no economic burdens, stopped no evictions, and accomplished nothing. The Land League stepped in to alter all this, and transferred the real seat of war from the hustings to the estate, from the 'floor of the House of Commons' to the rent office of the landlord and the homestead of the tenant. It instructed the people to resist eviction, to refuse to pay rackrents, to terrorise landgrabbers – the scabs of the agrarian struggle – and to boycott and ostracise all offenders against the welfare of the tenant.

It made adhesion to the cause of the tenants synonymous with the call of Irish patriotism, and thus emphasised the point we have so often labored, viz. – that the Irish question is a social question. As a result of this change of base it revolutionized Irish politics. The men and women who had, with a grin on their faces, cheered the orators who talked of a “Parliament on College Green” and after cheering went home to scrape together the landlord's rent by denying themselves the comfort and even necessaries of life now listened to the practical talk of men who told them to resist their tyrants at once, and so listening they straightened up mentally and morally and kept their rents in their pockets, held their harvests, kept a grip on their homesteads, laughed in the face of the landlord whom they had hitherto feared, and so broke the back of Irish landlordism. And this great change was the result of bringing the Irish fight down from the cloud land of sentiment on to the hard basis of a fight, day by day, between the producers and the owners for the control of the means of livelihood – or to the basis of a class struggle. That the Land League did not entirely succeed in its mission was due chiefly to one flaw in the original theory of its campaign, viz. – that its promoters not being in agreement as to their ultimate ideal were unable to educate their followers against the fallacy of accepting concessions which divided and disorganised their forces when at the flood tide of success.

That lesson – the lesson of its failure, Socialists have already learned and know how to profit by; the other lesson – the lesson of its strength, is not so widely realised. It is this – the strength and power of the political agitation of the Land League lay in the fact that its representatives were the servants and mouthpieces of a class who were already organised and holding the means of production with a revolutionary intent. They were not asking government to give them possession, they were already in defiant possession and demanding that such possession be legalized. Their base of operation was secondarily at the election booth, primarily on the farm; they thought the organization of an estate against its landlord a thousand times more important than the capture of a parliamentary seat. Rather they knew that the seat would inevitably follow the fate of the estate.

In all this they showed their wisdom. And hence we claim that although the Socialist agitators of to-day in their political activity fulfil well the work of agitators as did the Irish agitators of the past, yet if they would find and utilise to the fullest all the latent revolutionary material and strength they require they must do as the Land League did – take hold of the daily fight in the workshop, and organise it in a revolutionary manner, with a revolutionary purpose and direction.