

**James Connolly**

# **Workshop Talks**

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**Foreword**  
to  
*Workshop Talks*

In this work the author presents his own views in his own manner. Hence he employs the first-person singular in preference to the impersonal 'we' of journalism or of official production. The articles have been written at various times in Ireland and America and have already attained a wide circulation through being reprinted in various Socialist journals in both countries. Constant requests to the author to have them collected and published in a more permanent and accessible form have induced him to make this selection in the hope that they may be thought not unworthy of a place in at least the fugitive literature of the Socialist movement.

A word as to the plan of the work may not be amiss here. It is light, satirical, jesting and serious by turns, and follows the usual course of attack and defence, argument and rebuttal, experienced by a Socialist workman in factory, workshop

or mine before he has destroyed the prejudices and won the serious consideration of his fellow workers.

## ***Workshop Talks*** **by James Connolly**

### **Socialism is a foreign importation!**

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I know it because I read it in the papers. I also know it to be the case because in every country I have graced with my presence up to the present time, or have heard from, the possessing classes through their organs in the press, and their spokesmen upon the platform have been vociferous and insistent in declaring the foreign origin of Socialism.

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In Ireland Socialism is an English importation, in England they are convinced it was made in Germany, in Germany it is a scheme of traitors in alliance with the French to disrupt the Empire, in France it is an accursed conspiracy to discredit the army which is destined to reconquer Alsace and Lorraine, in Russia it is an English plot to prevent Russian extension towards Asia, in Asia it is known to have been set on foot by American enemies of Chinese and Japanese industrial progress, and in America it is one of the baneful fruits of unrestricted pauper and criminal immigration.

\* \* \*

All nations today repudiate Socialism, yet Socialist ideas are conquering all nations. When anything has to be done in a practical direction toward ameliorating the lot of the helpless ones, or towards using the collective force of society in strengthening the hands of the individual it is sure to be in the intellectual armory of Socialists the right weapon is found for the work.

## A CASE IN POINT

There are tens of thousands of hungry children in New York today as in every other large American city, and many well-meant efforts have been made to succour them. Free lunches have been opened in the poorest districts, bread lines have been established and charitable organisations are busy visiting homes and schools to find out the worst cases. But all this has only touched the fringe of the destitution, with the additional aggravation that anything passing through the hands of these charitable committees usually cost ten times as much for administration as it bestows on the object of its charity.

\* \* \*

Also that the investigation is usually more effectual in destroying the last vestiges of self-respect in its victims than in succouring their needs.

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In the midst of this difficulty Superintendent Maxwell of the New York Schools sends a letter to a committee of thirteen charitable organizations which had met together to consider the problem, and in this letter he advocates the method of relieving distress long since initiated by the Socialist representatives in the Municipality of Paris. I quote from the New York World:

A committee of seven was appointed to inquire more fully into the question of feeding school children and to report at a subsequent meeting. School Superintendent Maxwell sent a letter advocating the establishment in New York schools with city money of lunch kitchens, these to sell food at actual cost and to give to needy children tickets just like those paid for, to the end that no child might know that his fellow was eating at the expense of the city by the color of his ticket. This is done in Paris.

Contrast this solicitude for the self-respect of the poor children, recognized by Superintendent Maxwell in the plan of these 'foreign Socialists' with the insulting methods of the capitalist 'bread lines' and charitable organizations in general.

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But all the same it is too horrible to take practical examples in relieving the distress caused by capitalist society from pestilent agitators who wish to destroy the society whose victims they are succouring, and mere foreigners, too. The capitalist method of parading mothers and children for an hour in the street before feeding them is more calculated to build up the proper degree of pride in the embryo American citizens; and make them appreciate the benefits their fathers and brothers are asked to vote for.

\* \* \*

Read this telling how hungry children and mothers stood patiently waiting for a meal on the sidewalk, and whoop it up for pure ecstasy of joy that you are permitted to live in a system of society wherein a great metropolitan daily thought that the fact of five hundred children getting a 'hearty luncheon' was remarkable enough to deserve a paragraph:

Five hundred ill-fed children who attend the schools on the lower east side got a hearty luncheon yesterday when the first of the children's lunchrooms was opened at Canal and Forsyth streets. Long before noon there was a large gathering of children, some of them accompanied by their mothers, awaiting the opening of the doors.

*"Well, I am not interested in internationalism. This country is good enough for me."*

Is that so? Say: Are you taking a share in the Moscow Windau-Rydinsk Railway?

*"No, where is that?"*

My dear friend, where that railway runs has nothing to do with you. What you have to do is simply to take a share, and then go and have a good time whilst the Russian railway workers, whom you do not know, working in a country you never saw, speaking a language you don't understand, earn your dividend by the sweat of their brows.

\* \* \*

Curious, ain't it?

We Socialists are always talking about the international solidarity of labour, about the oneness of our interests all over the world, and ever and anon working off our heaving chests a peroration on the bonds of fraternal sympathy which should unite the wage slaves of the capitalist system.

But there is another kind of bond – Russian railway bonds – which join, not the workers, but the idlers of the world in fraternal sympathy, and which creates among the members of the capitalist class a feeling of identity of interest, of international solidarity, which they don't perorate about but which is most potent and effective notwithstanding.

\* \* \*

You do not fully recognise the fact that the internationality of Socialism is at most but a lame and halting attempt to create a counterpoise to the internationality of capitalism. Yet so it is.

Here is a case in point. The Moscow-Windau-Rydinsk railway is, as its name indicates, a railway running, or proposed to be run, from one part of Russia to another. You would think that that concerned the Russian people only, and that our patriotic capitalist class, always so ready to declare against working class Socialists with international sympathies, would never look at it or touch it.

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You would not think that Ireland, for example – whose professional patriots are forever telling the gullible working men that Ireland will be ruined for the lack of capital and enterprise – would be a good country to find money in to finance a Russian railway.

\* \* \*

Yet, observe the fact. All the Dublin papers of Monday, June 12, 1899, contained the prospectus of this far away Russian railway, offered for the investment of Irish capitalists, and offered by a firm of London stockbrokers who are astute enough not to waste money in endeavouring to catch fish in waters where they were not in the habit of biting freely.

And in the midst of the Russian revolution (of 1905) the agents of the Czar succeeded in obtaining almost unlimited treasures in the United States to pay the expenses of throttling the infant Liberty.

As the shares in Russian railways were sold in Ireland, as Russian bonds were sold in America, so the shares in American mines, railroads and factories are bought and sold on all the stock exchanges in Europe and Asia by men who never saw America in their lifetime.

Now, let us examine the situation, keeping in mind the fact that this is but a type of what prevails all round; you can satisfy yourself on that head by a daily glance at our capitalist papers.

## **CAPITAL IS INTERNATIONAL**

The shares of Russian railways, African mines, Nicaraguan canals, Chilian gas works, Norwegian timber, Mexican water works, Canadian fur trappings, Australian kanaka slave trade, Indian tea plantations, Japanese linen factories, Chinese cotton mills, European national and municipal debts, United States bonanza farms are bought and sold every day by investors, many of whom never saw any one of the countries in which their money is invested, but who have, by virtue of so investing, a legal right to a share of the plunder extracted under the capitalist system from the wage workers whose bone and sinew earn the dividends upon the bonds they have purchased.

When our investing classes purchase a share in any capitalist concern, in any country whatsoever, they do so, not in order to build up a useful industry, but

because the act of purchase endows them with a prospective share of the spoils it is proposed to wring from labour.

Therefore, every member of the investing classes is interested to the extent of his investments, present or prospective, in the subjection of Labour all over the world.

That is the internationality of Capital and Capitalism.

The wage worker is oppressed under this system in the interest of a class of capitalist investors who may be living thousands of miles away and whose very names are unknown to him.

He is, therefore, interested in every revolt of Labour all over the world, for the very individuals against whom that revolt may be directed may – by the wondrous mechanism of the capitalist system – through shares, bonds, national and municipal debts – be the parasites who are sucking his blood also.

That is one of the underlying facts inspiring the internationalism of Labour and Socialism.

But the Socialist proposals, they say, would destroy the individual character of the worker. He would lean on the community, instead of upon his own efforts.

Yes: Giving evidence before the Old Age Pensions' Committee in England, Sir John Dorrington, M.P., expressed the belief that the "provision of Old Age Pensions by the State, for instance, would do more harm than good. It was an objectionable principle, and would lead to improvidence."

There now! You will always observe that it is some member of what an Irish revolutionist called "the canting, fed classes," who is anxious that nothing should be done by the State to give the working class habits of "improvidence," or to do us any "harm." Dear, kind souls!

To do them justice they are most consistent. For both in public and private their efforts are most whole-heartedly bent in the same direction, viz., to prevent improvidence – ON OUR PART.

They lower our wages – to prevent improvidence; they increase our rent – to prevent improvidence, they periodically suspend us from our employment – to prevent improvidence, and as soon as we are worn out in their service they send us to a semi-convict establishment, known as the Workhouse, where we are scientifically starved to death – to prevent improvidence.

Old Age Pensions might do us harm. Ah, yes! And yet, come to think of it, I know quite a number of people who draw Old Age Pensions and it doesn't do them a bit of harm. Strange, isn't it?

Then all the Royal Families have pensions, and they don't seem to do them any harm; royal babies, in fact, begin to draw pensions and milk from a bottle at the same time.

Afterwards they drop the milk, but they never drop the pension – nor the bottle.

Then all our judges get pensions, and are not corrupted thereby – at least not more than usual. In fact, all well-paid officials in governmental or municipal service get pensions, and there are no fears expressed that the receipt of the same may do them harm.

But the underpaid, overworked wage-slave. To give him a pension would ruin his moral fibre, weaken his stamina, debase his manhood, sap his integrity, corrupt his morals, check his prudence, emasculate his character, lower his aspirations, vitiate his resolves, destroy his self-reliance, annihilate his rectitude, corrode his virility – and – and – other things.

\* \* \*

*Let us be practical. We want something pr-r-ractical.*

Always the cry of hum-drum mediocrity, afraid to face the stern necessity for uncompromising action. That saying has done more yeoman service in the cause of oppression than all its avowed supporters.

The average man dislikes to be thought unpractical, and so, while frequently loathing the principles or distrusting the leaders of the particular political party he is associated with, declines to leave them, in the hope that their very lack of earnestness may be more fruitful of practical results than the honest outspokenness of the party in whose principles he does believe.

In the phraseology of politics, a party too indifferent to the sorrow and sufferings of humanity to raise its voice in protest, is a moderate, practical party; whilst a party totally indifferent to the personality of leaders, or questions of leadership, but hot to enthusiasm on every question affecting the well-being of the toiling masses, is an extreme, a dangerous party.

Yet, although it may seem a paradox to say so, there is no party so incapable of achieving practical results as an orthodox political party; and there is no party so certain of placing moderate reforms to its credit as an extreme – a revolutionary party.

The possessing classes will and do laugh to scorn every scheme for the amelioration of the workers so long as those responsible for the initiation of the scheme admit as justifiable the 'rights of property'; but when the public attention is directed towards questioning the justifiable nature of those 'rights' in themselves, then the master class, alarmed for the safety of their booty, yield reform after reform – in order to prevent revolution.

Moral – Don't be 'practical' in politics. To be practical in that sense means that you have schooled yourself to think along the lines, and in the grooves those who rob you would desire you to think.

In any case it is time we got rid of all the cant about 'politics' and 'constitutional agitation' in general. For there is really no meaning whatever in those phrases.

Every public question is a political question. The men who tell us that Labour questions, for instance, have nothing to do with politics, understand neither the one nor the other. The Labour Question cannot be settled except by measures which necessitate a revision of the whole system of society, which, of course, implies political warfare to secure the power to effect such revision:

If by politics we understand the fight between the outs and ins, or the contest for party leadership, then Labour is rightly supremely indifferent to such politics, but to the politics which centre round the question of property and the administration thereof Labour is not, cannot be, indifferent.

To effect its emancipation Labour must reorganise society on the basis of labour; this cannot be done while the forces of government are in the hands of the rich, therefore the governing power must be wrested from the hands of the rich peaceably if possible, forcibly if necessary.

In the phraseology of the master class and its pressmen the trade unionist who is not a Socialist is more practical than he who is, and the worker who is neither one nor the other but can resign himself to the state of slavery in which he was born, is the most practical of all men.

The heroes and martyrs who in the past gave up their lives for the liberty of the race were not practical, but they were heroes all the same.

The slavish multitude who refused to second their efforts from a craven fear lest their skins might suffer were practical, but they were soulless serfs, nevertheless.

Revolution is never practical – until the hour of the Revolution strikes. Then it alone is practical, and all the efforts of the conservatives and compromisers become the most futile and visionary of human imaginings.

For that hour, let us work, think and hope; for that hour let us pawn our present ease in hopes of a glorious redemption; for that hour let us prepare the hosts of Labour with intelligence sufficient to laugh at the nostrums dubbed practical by our slave-lords, practical for the perpetuation of our slavery; for that

supreme crisis of human history let us watch, like sentinels, with weapons ever ready, remembering always that there can be no dignity in Labour until Labour knows no master.

\* \* \*

*Would you confiscate the property of the capitalist class and rob men of that which they have, perhaps, worked a whole life time to accumulate?*

Yes sir, and certainly not.

We would certainly confiscate the property of the capitalist class, but we do not propose to rob anyone. On the contrary, we propose to establish honesty once and forever as the basis of our social relations. This Socialist movement is indeed worthy to be entitled The Great Anti-Theft Movement of the Twentieth Century.

You see, confiscation is one great certainty of the future for every businessman outside the trust. It lies with him to say if it will be confiscation by the Trust in the interest of the Trust, or confiscation by Socialism in the interest of All.

If he resolves to continue to support the capitalist order of society he will surely have his property confiscated. After having, as you say, “worked for a whole lifetime to accumulate” a fortune, to establish a business on what he imagined would be a sound foundation, on some fine day the Trust will enter into competition with him, will invade his market, use their enormous capital to undersell him at ruinous prices, take his customers from him, ruin his business, and finally drive him into bankruptcy, and perhaps to end his days as a pauper.

That is capitalist confiscation! It is going on all around us, and every time the business man who is not a Trust Magnate votes for capitalism, he is working to prepare that fate for himself.

On the other hand, if he works for Socialism it also will confiscate his property. But it will only do so in order to acquire the industrial equipment necessary to establish a system of society in which the whole human race will be

secured against the fear of want for all time, a system in which all men and women will be joint heirs and owners of all the intellectual and material conquests made possible by associated effort.

Socialism will confiscate the property of the capitalist and in return will secure the individual against poverty and oppression; it, in return for so confiscating, will assure to all men and women a free, happy and unanxious human life. And that is more than capitalism can assure anyone to-day.

So you see the average capitalist has to choose between two kinds of confiscation. One or the other he must certainly endure. Confiscation by the Trust and consequently bankruptcy, poverty and perhaps pauperism in his old age, or —

Confiscation by Socialism and consequently security, plenty and a Care-Free Life to him and his to the remotest generation.

Which will it be?

*But it is their property. Why should Socialists confiscate it?*

Their property, eh? Let us see: Here is a cutting from the **New York World** giving a synopsis of the Annual Report of the Coats Thread Company of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, for 1907. Now, let us examine it, and bear in mind that this company is the basis of the Thread Trust, with branches in Paisley, Scotland, and on the continent of Europe.

Also bear in mind that it is not a 'horrible example,' but simply a normal type of a normally conducted industry, and therefore what applies to it will apply in a greater or less degree to all others.

This report gives the dividend for the year at 20 per cent per annum. Twenty per cent dividend means 20 cents on the dollar profit. Now, what is a profit?

According to Socialists, profit only exists when all other items of production are paid for. The workers by their labour must create enough wealth to pay for

certain items before profit appears. They must pay for the cost of raw material, the wear and tear of machinery, buildings, etc. (the depreciation of capital), the wages of superintendence, their own wages, and a certain amount to be left aside as a reserve fund to meet all possible contingencies. After, and only after, all these items have been paid for by their labour, all that is left is profit.

With this company the profit amounted to 20 cents on every dollar invested.

What does this mean? It means that in the course of five years – five times 20 cents equals one dollar – the workers in the industry had created enough profit to buy the whole industry from its present owners. It means that after paying all the expenses of the factory, including their own wages, they created enough profit to buy the whole building, from the roof to the basement, all the offices and agencies, and everything in the shape of capital. All this in five years.

And after they had so bought it from the capitalists it still belonged to the capitalists.

It means that if a capitalist had invested \$1,000 in that industry, in the course of five years he would draw out a thousand dollars, and still have a thousand dollars lying there untouched; in the course of ten years he would draw two thousand dollars, in fifteen years he would draw three thousand dollars. And still his first thousand dollars would be as virgin as ever.

You understand that this has been going on ever since the capitalist system came into being; all the capital in the world has been paid for by the working class over and over again, and we are still creating it, and recreating it. And the oftener we buy it the less it belongs to us.

The capital of the master class is not their property; it is the unpaid labour of the working class – “the hire of the labourer kept back by fraud.”

*Oh, the capitalist has his anxieties too. And the worker has often a good time.*

Sure: Say, where were you for the holidays?

\* \* \*

Were you tempted to go abroad? Did you visit Europe? Did you riot, in all the abandonment of a wage slave let loose, among the pleasure haunts of the world?

Perhaps you went to the Riviera; perhaps you luxuriated in ecstatic worship of that glorious bit of nature's handiwork where the blue waters of the Mediterranean roll in all their entrancing splendor against the shores of classic Italy.

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Perhaps you rambled among the vine-clad hills of sunny France, and visited the spots hallowed by the hand of that country's glorious history.

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Perhaps you sailed up the castellated Rhine, toasted the eyes of bewitching German frauleins in frothy German beer, explored the recesses of the legend haunted Hartz mountains, and established a nodding acquaintance with the Spirit of the Brocken.

Perhaps you traversed the lakes and fjords of Norway, sat down in awe before the neglected magnificence of the Alhambra, had a cup of coffee with Menelik of Abyssinia, smelt afar off the odors of the streets of Morocco, climbed the Pyramids of Egypt, shared the hospitable tent of the Bedouin, visited Cyprus, looked in at Constantinople, ogled the dark-eyed beauties of Circassia, rubbed up against the Cossack in his Ural mountains, or ...

Perhaps you lay in bed all day in order to save a meal, and listened to your wife wondering how she could make ends meet with a day's pay short in the weekly wages.

And whilst you thus squandered your substance in riotous living, did you ever stop to think of your master – your poor, dear, overworked, tired master?

\* \* \*

Did you ever stop to reflect upon the pitiable condition of that individual who so kindly provides you with employment, and does no useful work himself in order that you may get plenty of it?

\* \* \*

When you consider how hard a task it was for you to decide in what manner you should spend your Holiday; where you should go for that ONE DAY, then you must perceive how hard it is for your masters to find a way in which to spend the practically perpetual holiday which you force upon them by your love for work.

\* \* \*

Ah, yes, that large section of our masters who have realised that ideal of complete idleness after which all our masters strive, those men who do not work, never did work, and with the help of God and the ignorance of the people – never intend to work, how terrible must be their lot in life!

\* \* \*

We, who toil from early morn till late at night, from January till December, from childhood to old age, have no care or trouble or mental anxiety to cross our mind – except the landlord, the fear of loss of employment, the danger of sickness, the lack of common necessities, to say nothing of luxuries, for our children, the insolence of our superiors, the unhealthy condition of our homes, the exhausting nature of our toil, the lack of all opportunities of mental cultivation, and the ever-present question whether we shall shuffle off this mortal coil in a miserable garret, be killed by hard work, or die in the Poorhouse.

With these trifling exceptions we have nothing to bother us; but the boss, ah, the poor, poor boss!

He has everything to bother him. Whilst we are amusing ourselves in the hold of a ship shoveling coal, swinging a hammer in front of a forge, toiling up a

ladder with bricks, stitching until our eyes grow dim at the board, gaily riding up and down for twelve hours per day, seven days per week, on a trolley car, riding around the city in all weather with teams or swinging by the skin of our teeth on the iron framework of a skyscraper, standing at our ease OUTSIDE the printing office door listening to the musical click of the linotype as it performs the work we used to do INSIDE, telling each other comforting stories about the new machinery which takes our places as carpenters, harness-makers, tinsmith-workers, labourers, etc., in short whilst we are enjoying ourselves, free from all mental worry.

Our unselfish tired-out bosses are sitting at home, with their feet on the table, softly patting the bottom button of their vests.

Working with their brains.

Poor bosses! Mighty brains!

Without our toil they would never get the education necessary to develop their brains; if we were not defrauded by their class of the fruits of our toil we could provide for education enough to develop the mental powers of all, and so deprive the ruling class of the last vestige of an excuse for clinging to mastership, viz., their assumed intellectual superiority.

I say “assumed,” because the greater part of the brainwork of industry today is performed by men taken from the ranks of the workers, and paid high salaries in proportion as they develop expertness as slave-drivers.

As education spreads among the people the workers will want to enjoy life more; they will assert their right to the full fruits of their labour, and by that act of self-assertion lay the foundation of that Socialist Republic in which labour will be so easy, and the reward so great, that life will seem a perpetual holiday.

\* \* \*

*But Socialism is against religion. I can't be a Socialist and be a Christian.*

O, quit your fooling! That talk is all right for those who know nothing of the relations between capital and labour, or are innocent of any knowledge of the processes of modern industry, or imagine that men, in their daily struggles for bread or fortunes, are governed by the Sermon on the Mount.

But between workingmen that talk is absurd. We know that Socialism bears upon daily life in the workshop, and that religion does not; we know that the man who never set foot in a church in his lifetime will, if he is rich, be more honored by Christian society than the poor man who goes to church every Sunday, and says his prayers morning and evening; we know that the capitalists of all religions pay more for the service of a good lawyer to keep them out of the clutches of the law than for the services of a good priest to keep them out of the clutches of the devil; and we never heard a capitalist, who, in his business, respected the Sermon on the Mount as much as he did the decisions of the Supreme Court.

These things we know. We also know that neither capitalist nor worker can practice the moral precepts of religion, and without its moral precepts a religion is simply a sham. If a religion cannot enforce its moral teachings upon its votaries it has as little relation to actual life as the pre-election promises of a politician have to legislation.

We know that Christianity teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves, but we also know that if a capitalist attempted to run his business upon that plan his relatives would have no difficulty in getting lawyers, judges and physicians to declare him incompetent to conduct his affairs in the business world.

He would not be half as certain of reaching Heaven in the next world as he would be of getting into the 'bughouse' in this.

And, as for the worker. Well, in the fall of 1908, the New York World printed an advertisement for a teamster in Brooklyn, wages to be \$12 per week. Over 700 applicants responded. Now, could each of these men love their neighbours in that line of hungry competitors for that pitiful wage?

As each man stood in line in that awful parade of misery could he pray for his neighbour to get the job, and could he be expected to follow up his prayer by giving up his chance, and so making certain the prolongation of the misery of his wife and little ones?

No, my friend, Socialism is a bread and butter question. It is a question of the stomach; it is going to be settled in the factories, mines and ballot boxes of this country and is not going to be settled at the altar or in the church.

This is what our well-fed friends call a “base, material standpoint,” but remember that beauty and genius and art and poetry and all the finer efflorescences of the higher nature of man can only be realised in all their completeness upon the material basis of a healthy body, that not only an army but the whole human race marches upon its stomach, and then you will grasp the full wisdom of our position.

That the question to be settled by Socialism is the effect of private ownership of the means of production upon the well-being of the race; that we are determined to have a straight fight upon the question between those who believe that such private ownership is destructive of human well-being and those who believe it to be beneficial, that as men of all religions and of none are in the ranks of the capitalists, and men of all religions and of none are on the side of the workers the attempt to make religion an issue in the question is an intrusion, an impertinence and an absurdity.

Personally I am opposed to any system wherein the capitalist is more powerful than God Almighty. You need not serve God unless you like, and may refuse to serve Him and grow fat, prosperous and universally respected. But if you refuse to serve the capitalist your doom is sealed; misery and poverty and public odium await you.

No worker is compelled to enter a church and to serve God; every worker is compelled to enter the employment of a capitalist and serve him.

As Socialists we are concerned to free mankind from the servitude forced upon them as a necessity of their life; we propose to allow the question of all kinds of service voluntarily rendered to be settled by the emancipated human race of the future.

I do not deny that Socialists often leave the church. But why do they do so? Is their defection from the church a result of our attitude towards religion; or is it the result of the attitude of the church and its ministers towards Socialism?

Let us take a case in point, one of those cases that are being paralleled every day in our midst. An Irish Catholic joins the Socialist movement. He finds that as a rule the Socialist men and women are better educated than their fellows; he finds that they are immensely cleaner in speech and thought than are the adherents of capitalism in the same class; that they are devoted husbands and loyal wives, loving and cheerful fathers and mothers, skilful and industrious workers in the shops and office, and that although poor and needy as a rule, yet that they continually bleed themselves to support their cause, and give up for Socialism what many others spend in the saloon.

He finds that a drunken Socialist is as rare as a white blackbird, and that a Socialist of criminal tendencies is such a rare avis that when one is found the public press heralds it forth as a great discovery.

Democratic and republican jailbirds are so common that the public press do not regard their existence as 'news' to anybody, nor yet does the public press think it necessary to say that certain criminals belong to the Protestant or Catholic religions. That is nothing unusual, and therefore not worth printing. But a criminal Socialist – that would be news indeed!

Our Irish Catholic Socialist gradually begins to notice these things. He looks around and he finds the press full of reports of crimes, murders, robberies, bank swindlers, forgeries, debauches, gambling transactions, and midnight orgies in which the most revolting indecencies are perpetrated. He investigates and he discovers that the perpetrators of these crimes were respectable capitalists, pillars of society, and red-hot enemies of Socialism, and that the dives in which the

highest and the lowest meet together in a saturnalia of vice contribute a large proportion of the campaign funds of the capitalist political parties.

Some Sunday he goes to Mass as usual, and he finds that at Gospel the priest launches out into a political speech and tells the congregation that the honest, self-sacrificing, industrious, clean men and women, whom he calls 'comrades' are a wicked, impious, dissolute sect, desiring to destroy the home, to distribute the earnings of the provident among the idle and lazy of the world, and reveling in all sorts of impure thoughts about women.

And as this Irish Catholic Socialist listens to this foul libel, what wonder if the hot blood of anger rushes to his face, and he begins to believe that the temple of God has itself been sold to the all-desecrating grasp of the capitalist?

While he is yet wondering what to think of the matter, he hears that his immortal soul will be lost if he fails to vote for capitalism, and he reflects that if he lined up with the brothel keepers, gambling house proprietors, race track swindlers, and white slave traders to vote the capitalist ticket, this same priest would tell him he was a good Catholic and loyal son of the church.

At such a juncture the Irish Catholic Socialist often rises up, goes out of the church and wipes its dust off his feet forever. Then we are told that Socialism took him away from the church. But did it? Was it not rather the horrible spectacle of a priest of God standing up in the Holy Presence lying about and slandering honest men and women, and helping to support political parties whose campaign fund in every large city represents more bestiality than ever Sodom and Gomorrah knew?

These are the things that drive Socialists from the church, and the responsibility for every soul so lost lies upon those slanderers and not upon the Socialist movement.

\* \* \*

*Well, you won't get the Irish to help you. Our Irish-American leaders tell us that all we Irish in this country ought to stand together and use our votes to free Ireland.*

Sure, let us free Ireland!

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

Let us free Ireland!

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

Let us free Ireland !

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

Let us free Ireland!

“The land that bred and bore us.” And the landlord who makes us pay for permission to live upon it.

Whoop it up for liberty!

“Let us free Ireland,” says the patriot, who won't touch Socialism.

Let us all join together and cr-r-rush the br-r-rutal Saxon. Let us all join together, says he, all classes and creeds.

And, says the town worker, after we have crushed the Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do?

Oh, then you can go back to your slums, same as before.

Whoop it up for liberty!

And, says the agricultural workers, after we have freed Ireland, what then?

Oh, then you can go scraping around for the landlord's rent or the money-lenders' interest same as before.

Whoop it up for liberty!

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

Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the Poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the Poorhouse door to the tune of *St. Patrick's Day*.

Oh, it will be nice to live in those days!

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

Whoop it up for liberty!

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

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

Therefore, I say, let us organise as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organise to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organise to wrench from their robber clutch the land and workshops on and in which they enslave us; organise to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man.

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

**SPEED THE DAY**

**James Connolly**

**Erin's Hope**

**The End & The Means**

**(1909)**

The [first edition](#) (1897) is also included in this archive.  
Revised American edition published in 1909 as part of the **Harp Library** by J.E.C. Donnelly.

“Our Independence must be had at all hazards. If the men of property will not help us, they must fall; we will free ourselves by the aid of that large and respectable class of the community – the men of no property.”

– *Theobald Wolfe Tone*

## Introduction

In publishing an American edition of **Erin’s Hope** in the interest of the Irish Socialist Federation, the author is of opinion that a few words of explanation of the circumstances attending its first publication in Ireland in 1897 may be both useful and interesting.

The Irish Socialist Republican Party was founded in Dublin in 1896 by a few workingmen whom the author had succeeded in interesting in his proposition that the two currents of revolutionary thought in Ireland – the Socialist and the National – were not antagonistic, but complementary, and that the Irish Socialist was in reality the best Irish patriot, but that in order to convince the Irish people of that fact he must first of all learn to look inward upon Ireland for his justification, rest his arguments upon the facts of Irish history, and be the champion against the subjection of Ireland and all that it implies. That the Irish National question was at bottom an economic question, and that the economic struggle must first be able to function freely nationally before it could function internationally, and as Socialists were opposed to all oppression, so they should ever be foremost in the daily battle against all its manifestations, social and political. As the embodiment of this teaching, the party adopted the watchword, Irish Socialist Republic, and by deduction therefrom, the aforementioned name of their organization.

This policy received its formal endorsement by the International Socialist movement when at the International Socialist Congress at Paris in 1900 the

delegates of the I.S.R.P. were formally seated as the delegates of a nation separate from England.

It is no exaggeration to say that this organization and its policy completely revolutionized advanced politics in Ireland. When it was first initiated the word 'republic' was looked upon as a word to be only whispered among intimates; the Socialists boldly advised the driving from public life of all who would not openly accept it. The thought of revolution was the exclusive possession of a few remnants of the secret societies of a past generation, and was never mentioned by them except with heads closely together and eyes fearfully glancing around; the Socialists broke through this ridiculous secrecy, and in hundreds of speeches in the most public places of the metropolis, as well as in scores of thousands of pieces of literature scattered through the country, announced their purpose to muster all the forces of labor for a revolutionary reconstruction of society and the incidental destruction of the British Empire. The Socialists of Dublin conceived of and organized the great Anti-Jubilee Protest of 1897, which startled the world and shattered all the elaborate attempts of the British government to represent Ireland as loyal. They held the first meeting of protest against the Boer war, and at that meeting of over 2,000 persons in College Green, Dublin, passed the first resolution in Ireland calling upon the Irish in the Transvaal to take up arms against the armies of the British capitalist government; they conducted the first campaign against enlistment in the army; they were the first to contest elections upon a platform openly declaring for a revolution, and they were the first to point out all the immense amelioration of the conditions of life in Ireland which could be realized without waiting for Home Rule. In short, the Irish Socialist Republican Party has to itself the credit of having opened up practically all the new fields of thought and action now being exploited by other and less revolutionary organizations.

Needless to say, when this policy was first entered upon it aroused interest alike among Nationalists and Socialists. Thence came requests for enlightenment, each side inquiring upon that part of the policy which seemed to touch most closely their own previous ideas of politics. The advanced nationalists of Ireland had at that time only one monthly literary magazine, the **Shan Van Vocht**, ably

edited by Miss Alice Milligan and published at Belfast. In response to a request from that lady, the article, *Can Irish Republicans be Politicians?* was written and published in that magazine in November, 1896. Mr. J. Keir Hardie, the editor of the **Labor Leader**, Glasgow, and Socialist member of the English Parliament, also wrote asking for a series of articles upon the relation of the Irish question to Socialism, and in response to the invitation, the other articles were written. The I.S.R.P. afterwards combined the two sets of articles and made of them the pamphlet which we now reproduce.

We now present those articles to the Irish Workers in America in hope that we may induce them to study and accept our position, viz.:

That the Irish question is at bottom a Social question, that Socialism alone can lay the material foundation necessary for the free development of the intellectual and spiritual forces of the scattered children of the Clan-na-Gael, and that the Socialist message to Ireland and to America is identical, and calls for the Industrial and Political Organization of Labor as the Means by which that End may be reached.

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## Erin's Hope

In the October issue of the **Shan Van Vocht**, the editor, in commenting upon the strictures passed by one contributor on the French Revolution, asks for an expression of opinion on the relative merits of revolutionary uprisings and moral force agitations. As both the article in question and the editorial note suggesting the discussion, apparently take it for granted that the query with which this communication is headed, must be answered in the negative, an assumption which I believe to be entirely erroneous, and the fundamental mistake in the calculation of our modern Irish revolutionists, I would suggest that as the

broader and more comprehensive question, this be instead the basis of the proposed controversy. To make my position more plain, I may say, I write as one who believes that the concession to Ireland of such a limited form of local autonomy as that embodied in Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, would not, in any sense, be a step towards independence, but would more likely create effectual barriers in the way of its realization.

The question thus arises, are those who see in an Irish Republic the only political ideal worth striving for to eschew political action and seek, in secret conspiracy alone, to prepare for revolution? Up to the present every genuine Irish revolutionist has acted on this belief, that political action was impossible for republicans.

Now I assert the contrary. A revolution can only succeed in any country when it has the moral sanction of the people. It is so, even in an independent country; it is doubly so in a country subject like Ireland, to the rule of another. Within this century, no Irish revolutionist had obtained this sanction before he took the field. In 1848 the majority of the Irish people pinned their faith to the Repeal Association, which had disavowed even the right to resist oppression, and the Young Irelanders themselves had made no reasonable effort to prepare the popular mind for revolution, but had rather been precipitated into it against their will. Under such conditions, failure was inevitable. Those who were willing to 'rise' had no means of knowing how far their aspirations were shared by their fellow-countrymen elsewhere, and lacking confidence in themselves, with the recognized leaders of public opinion against them, the effort ended in disaster. The history of the Fenian movement was somewhat similar. The number of actually enrolled members formed but an insignificant minority of the population, the vast majority of our countrymen, though perhaps sympathizing with the Fenian ideal, put their trust in politicians who preached tame submission under the name of 'prudence' and 'caution,' and in the critical period of the movement flung the weight of their influence on the side of 'law and order.'

In both cases the recognized leaders of national thought were on the side of constituted authority, and against every revolutionary effort. The facts are as undeniable as they are lamentable, and they speak in trumpet tones in favor of

such a re-modelling of Irish revolutionary tactics as shall prevent a recurrence of similar disasters in the future. This, I hold, can be best accomplished by a political party seeking to give public expression to the republican ideal. One point needs to be emphasized in this connection, viz., it is not republicanism, but the counsel of insurrectionary effort to realize republicanism, which gave to previous Irish movements their odor of illegality. A candidate for political honors (?) is as much at liberty to put the attainment of a republic on his programme as he is to pledge himself to Home Rule, or any other scheme of political reconstruction. Were a political party formed in Ireland to educate the people in sound national ideas by pledging every candidate to openly repudiate the authority of the Crown, and work for the realization of republican principles, it would achieve a much needed transformation in Irish politics.

Hitherto every Irish agitation has sought to make its programme as broad and loosely defined as possible, in order to enrol under its banner every section of Irish national opinion – loyal Home Rulers, Conservative Nationalists, Compromising Whigs, and Nationalist Democrats – all alike were welcome. Such a basis is undoubtedly best for the purposes of an ‘agitation’, but it is worse than useless for the purposes of earnest revolutionists seeking a definite end. But such a party as I speak of, with an avowedly republican programme, would, in its very definiteness and coherence, have immense advantage to recommend it to the consideration and support of practical-minded men. It would prevent the emasculation of our young men by the vaporings of ‘constitutional’ patriots; it would effectually expose the sham Nationalists, and, let us hope, drive them from political life; it would at every election in which it took part, afford a plebiscite of the people for or against the republic; it would enlist the sympathy of many earnest patriots whose open natures shrink from secret conspiracy; it would ascertain with mathematical accuracy the moment when the majority of the Irish people were ripe for revolution, and it could not be suppressed while representative government was left in Ireland.

By adhering steadily to the policy of pledging every candidate to its full programme, whether they stood for Parliament or local governing bodies, it would insure that when a majority of the Irish people had at the ballot boxes

declared in favor of the revolutionary party every soldier of the cause would know that in the fight he was waging, he was not merely one of a numerically insignificant band of malcontents, but a citizen soldier fighting under orders publicly expressed in face of all the world by a majority of his fellow-countrymen. This, I hold to be an eminently practical method of obtaining our end. It would exclude the possibility of our national principles being betrayed in the moment of danger, or compromised in the hour of success to suit the convenience of interested party politicians; it would inspire confidence in the most timid by its recognition of the fact that to counsel rebellion without first obtaining the moral sanction of the people would be an act of criminal folly which would only end in disaster. It would make Irish republicanism no longer the 'politics of despair', but the Science of Revolution.

It may be urged against such a proposal that the first need of Irish politics is unity, and that such a party would only accentuate the division at present existing. This, however, could only be the case if our present representatives refuse to accept the pledge of loyalty to the free Irish Republic, and to it alone. If they do so refuse, then they are unfit to be representatives of the Irish democracy, and cannot be removed too soon. The objection in itself implies a suspicion of the genuine nature of the patriotism so loudly vaunted by our party politicians. Unity is a good thing, no doubt, but honesty is better, and if unity can only be obtained by the suppression of truth and the toleration of falsehood, then it is not worth the price we are asked to pay for it. I would, in conclusion, earnestly recommend my readers to study the suggestions contained in this paper, and to act accordingly. Should this meet with a favorable reception, I may give in a future issue my ideas on the programme of political and social reform, on which such a party might fight in Parliament and the country, while the public opinion of Ireland was ripening behind them, and pending the arrival of the propitious moment for action.

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## Ireland before the Conquest

“Before the time of the conquest, the Irish people knew nothing of absolute property in land. The land belonged to the entire sept; the chief was little more than managing member of the association. The feudal idea which came in with the conquest was associated with foreign dominion, and has never to this day been recognized by the moral sentiment of the people.”

In these few words of Mr. John Stuart Mill the impartial student may find the key for unravelling the whole tangled skein of Irish politics. Latter-day politicians, both on the English and Irish side, have done their utmost to familiarize the public mind with the belief that the Irish question arises solely out of the aspirations of the Irish people to have more complete control over the internal administration of the affairs of their country than it is possible for them to exercise while the seat of government is located at Westminster, and that, therefore, some form of local self-government, as, for instance, Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, is all that is needed to settle this question, and lay forever the troubled spirit of Irish discontent. According to this luminous (?) exposition of Irish history, we are to believe that the two nations have for seven hundred years been engaged in unceasing warfare, that the one country (Ireland) has during all that time been compelled to witness the merciless slaughter of her children by famine, pestilence and the sword; that each succeeding generation has witnessed a renewal of the conflict and a renewal of the martyrdom, until the sensitive mind recoils from a perusal of Irish history as from the records of a shambles, and all, forsooth, because Irishmen and Englishmen could not agree upon the form of political administration best suited for Ireland.

If this new reading of Irish history were true the intelligent foreigner might be forgiven for rating at a very low standard the intelligence of the two nations which during seven hundred years had not evolved a satisfactory solution of such a simple question. At precisely the same low standard may safely be rated the political acumen of the English and Irish party leaders who are today complacently trotting out the discredited abortion of Home Rule as a sovereign remedy for Ireland's misery.

The Irish question has, in fact, a much deeper source than a mere difference of opinion on forms of government. Its real origin and inner meaning lay in the circumstances that the two opposing nations held fundamentally different ideas upon the vital question of property in land. Recent scientific research by such eminent sociologists as Letourneau, Lewis Morgan, Sir Henry Maine, and others has amply demonstrated the fact that common ownership of land formed the basis of primitive society in almost every country. But whereas in the majority of countries now called civilized such primitive communion had almost entirely disappeared before the dawn of history, and had at no time acquired a higher status than that conferred by the social sanction of unlettered and uneducated tribes, in Ireland the system formed part of the well-defined social organization of a nation of scholars and students, recognized by Chief and Tanist, Brehon and Bard, as the inspiring principle of their collective life, and the basis of their national system of jurisprudence. Such a striking fact will, of course, be interpreted in many ways, according to the temperament and political or racial sympathies of the reader. The adherent of the present order of society will regard it as proof of the Irish incapacity for assimilating progressive ideas, and will, no doubt, confidently assert that this incapacity is the real source of Ireland's misery, since it has unfitted her sons for the competitive scramble for existence, and so fore-doomed them to the lot of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The ardent student of sociology, who believes that the progress of the human race through the various economic stages of communism, chattel slavery, feudalism, and wage-slavery, has been but a preparation for the higher ordered society of the future; that the most industrially advanced countries are but, albeit often unconsciously, developing the social conditions which, since the breakup of universal tribal communism, have been rendered historically necessary for the inauguration of a new and juster economic order, in which social, political and national antagonism will be unknown, will perhaps regard the Irish adherence to clan ownership at such a comparatively recent date as the Seventeenth Century as an evidence of retarded economical development, and therefore a real hindrance to progress. But the sympathetic student of history, who believes in the possibility of a people by political intuition anticipating the lessons afterwards revealed to them in the sad school of experience, will not be indisposed to join with the

ardent Irish patriot in his lavish expressions of admiration for the sagacity of his Celtic forefathers, who foreshadowed in the democratic organization of the Irish clan the more perfect organization of the free society of the future.

Whichever be the true interpretation of Irish history, one fact at least stands out clear and undeniable, viz., that the conflict between the rival systems of land ownership was the pivot around which centered all the struggles and rebellions of which that history has been so prolific. The Irish regarded with inveterate hostility their English rulers, at all times set little store upon promises of incorporation within the pale of the constitution, and rose with enthusiasm under their respective rebel chiefs, because they regarded this as the all-important question, because in their eyes English rule and Dublin parliaments were alike identified as the introducers and upholders of the system of feudalism and private ownership of land, as opposed to the Celtic system of clan or common ownership, which they regarded, and, I think, rightly, as the pledge at once of their political and social liberty.

The English Government were also astute enough to perceive that the political or national subjection of Ireland was entirely valueless to the conquerors while the politically subjected nation remained in possession of economic freedom. Consequently, we find that the first stipulation made to the Irish tribe upon its submission always provided that the lands of the tribe should be regarded as the private property of the chief; that he should therefore accept them as a grant from the crown, from which he should in future hold them; that he should drop his Irish title, which proclaimed him the freely elected chief of a free community, and should instead accept an English title, such as duke or earl, and in all things conform to English ideas of civilization and social order. All these stipulations were in the last degree repugnant to Irish ideas. The chief, as Mill has justly observed, was but the managing member of the tribal association, although in the stress of constant warfare they usually limited their choice to the members of one or two families; yet the right of election was never abdicated by the tribesmen. Whenever the seductions of English gold overmastered the patriotism of an Irish chief and succeeded in inducing his acceptance of the alien property system and the alien title (as in the case of Art O'Neil and Nial Garbh

O'Donnell, the Queen's O'Reilly and the Queen's Maguire), they immediately elected another chief in his stead; and from that moment the unfortunate renegade became an outlaw from his own people, and could only appear in his native territory under an escort of English Spears.

The Irish System was thus on a par with those conceptions of social rights and duties which we find the ruling classes today denouncing so fiercely as 'Socialistic'. It was apparently inspired by the democratic principle that property was intended to serve the people, and not by the principle so universally acted upon at present, viz., that the people have no other function in existing than to be the bondslaves of those who by force or by fraud have managed to possess themselves of property. They did not, indeed, regard all forms of productive property as rightfully belonging to the community; but when we remember that the land alone was at that time of importance, all other forms of property being insignificant by comparison, we see that they were as Socialistic as the industrial development of their time required. The English civilization against which they fought was, on the other hand, thoroughly individualistic; and, as it triumphed, we are reaping the fruits to-day in the industrial disputes, the agricultural depressions, the poorhouses, and other such glorious institutions in Church and State as we are permitted the luxury of enjoying in common with our fellow-subjects in this 'integral portion of the British Empire'. The results of the change on the national life of Erin are well illustrated in the scornful words in which Aubrey De Vere apostrophizes the new race of exploiters which then arose:

The chiefs of the Gael were the people embodied;  
The chiefs were the blossoms, the people the root.  
Their conquerors, the Normans, high-souled and high-blooded,  
Grew Irish at last from the scalp to the foot;  
And ye, ye are hirelings and satraps, not nobles –  
Your slaves they detest you, your masters, they scorn;  
The river lives on, but the sun-painted bubbles  
Pass quickly, to the rapids incessantly borne.

## Ireland under British rule

The break-up of the Kilkenny Confederation in 1649, and the consequent dispersion of the Irish clans, was the immediate cause of that confusion of thought and apparent lack of directness in aim which down to our day has characterized all modern Irish politics. Deprived of any form of political or social organization which might serve as an effective basis for its practical realization, the demand for the common ownership of the land naturally fell into abeyance until such time as the conquest of some form of political freedom should enable the dispossessed Irishry to substitute for the lost tribal association the fuller and broader conception of an Irish nation as the natural repository and guardian of the people's heritage. But when the fusing process of a common subjection had once more welded the heterogenous elements of Irish society into one compact nationality it was found that in the intervening period a new class had arisen in the land – a class which, while professedly ultra-nationalistic in its political aims, had nevertheless so far compounded with the enemy as to accept the alien social system, with its accompanying manifestations, the legal dispossession and economic dependence of the vast mass of the Irish people, as part of the natural order of society.

The Irish middle class, who then by virtue of their social position and education stepped to the front as Irish patriot leaders, owed their unique status in political life to two entirely distinct and apparently antagonistic causes. Their wealth they derived from the manner in which they had contrived to wedge themselves into a place in the commercial life of the 'Saxon enemy', assimilating his ideas and adopting his methods, until they often proved the most ruthless of the two races in pushing to its furthest limits their powers of exploitation. Their political influence they derived from their readiness at all times to do lip service to the cause of Irish nationality, which in their phraseology meant simply the transfer of the seat of government from London to Dublin, and the consequent transfer to their own or their relatives' pockets of some portion of the legislative fees and lawyers pickings then, as at present, expended among the Cockneys. With such men at the helm it is no wonder that the patriot parties of Ireland have always ended their journey upon the rock of disaster. Beginning by accepting a

social system abhorrent to the best traditions of a Celtic people, they next abandoned as impossible the realization of national independence. By the first act they set the seal of their approval upon a system founded upon the robbery of their countrymen, and by the second they bound up the destinies of their country with the fate of an Empire in the humiliation of whose piratical rulers lies the Irish people's only chance of national and social redemption.

As compensation for this gross betrayal the middle class politicians offer – Home Rule. To exactly analyse what Home Rule would confer on Ireland is a somewhat difficult task, since every one interprets the 'thing' in his own way and according to his own peculiar bent. Perhaps the safest way, and at any rate the one least open to objection, will be to regard as Home Rule the Bill introduced by Mr. Gladstone. As this scheme represents the utmost that the statesmanlike prowess of Mr. Parnell, with a solid phalanx of eighty-six members behind him, could wrest from the fear or favor of English Liberalism, it is surely safe enough to assume that no other merely political body from Ireland is ever likely to improve upon this concession by any alliance with either of the great factions who watch over the interests of the English propertied class. Home Rule proposed to establish in Ireland a domestic legislature that would be carefully divested of all those powers and attributes which by the common consent of civilized peoples are regarded as properly belonging to the sphere and functions of government; that would have no power in controlling diplomacy, post office, commerce, telegraphs, coinage, customs and excise, weights and measures, copyrights and patents, succession to the Crown, or army, navy, militia or volunteers.

The only conceivable result of such a state of affairs would have been to create in Ireland a host of place-hunters and Government officials, who, secure in the enjoyment of a good income themselves, would have always acted as a barrier between the people and their oppressors. As a method whereby the English legislature might have been relieved of some of its duties at home, and thus left more free to pursue its policy of plunder and aggression abroad, it ought to have delighted the heart of the Jingo politicians. That they were too dunderheaded to

see their opportunity is a mercy for which far-seeing Irish democrats can never be sufficiently thankful.

The second Home Rule Bill was slightly more democratic than the first, therefore the Government made no effort to force it upon the Upper House. The English Liberal Party – the most treacherous political party in Europe – has always had two favorite devices for destroying obnoxious proposals of reform. First: unscrupulous slander and opposition; second: theoretical acceptance of the principle of reform, but indefinite postponement of its practical realization, continued on one pretext or another, until the hearts of the reformers are broken and their organizations disrupted. The first was defeated by the genius of Parnell; how well the second method has succeeded let the present political chaos of Ireland testify.

Realising that, taken on its own merits, Home Rule is simply a mockery of Irish national aspirations our middle class leaders have industriously instilled into the public mind the belief that the advent of Home Rule would mean the immediate establishment of manufactures and the opening up of mines, etc., in every part of Ireland. This seems to them the highest possible ideal – an Irish society composed of employers making fortunes and workers grinding out their lives for a weekly wage. But, to say the least, the men who talk in this manner must either be woefully ignorant of the conditions of modern industry, or else, for some private reason of their own, are wilfully deceiving those who believe in them. To establish industry successfully to-day in any country requires at least two things, neither of which Ireland possesses, and one of which she never can possess. The first is the possession of the wherewithal to purchase machinery and raw materials for the equipment of her factories, and the second is customers to purchase the goods when they are manufactured. Now, we find that England, who has had the start in manufacturing over every other nation, who has been extending her commerce and perfecting her machinery for a hundred and fifty years at least, who has created a nation of highly skilled artisans, adept in every form of industrial achievement – England, the wealthiest country in the world, has brought her industries to such a degree of mechanical perfection that her customers cannot keep her going. She can supply goods of every description

much quicker than the world is able to purchase and consume them, and as a direct consequence of this vast producing power she is compelled every few years to either wholly or partially stop her machinery and close her factories, to discharge her artisan subjects, and compel them to walk about in enforced idleness and semi-starvation until such time as the goods they have produced are purchased and consumed by other people – their customers.

Bear this in mind, and remember also, that Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Russia, every state on the continent of Europe and America, India, China and Japan, are all entering into the struggle; that each of them is striving hard, not only to provide what it had formerly relied on England to provide, but also to beat England out of the markets of the world. Remember that for all those countries the great difficulty is to find customers, that the old-established firm in the business – viz., the British Empire – finds that her customers cannot keep her mills and factories going. Remember all this, and then tell me how poor Ireland, exhausted and drained of her life-blood at every pore, with a population almost wholly agricultural and unused to mechanical pursuits, is to establish new factories, and where she is to find the customers to keep them going. She cannot create new markets. This world is only limited after all, and the nations of Europe are pushing their way into its remote corners so rapidly that in a few years time, at most, the entire world will have been exhausted as a market for their wares.

Go to the factory towns, to the ship-building centers, to the coal mines, to the Trade Unions, or to the Stock Exchanges of England, the continent of Europe or America, and everywhere you will hear the same cry: “The supply of cotton and linen goods, of ironwork, of coal and of ships of every description, is exceeding the demand; we must work short time, we must reduce the workers’ wages, we must close our factories – there is not enough customers to keep our machinery going.” In the face of such facts the thoughtful Irish patriot will throw rant aside and freely recognize that it is impossible for Ireland to do what those other countries cannot do, with their greater advantages, viz., to attain prosperity by establishing a manufacturing system in a world-market already glutted with every conceivable kind of commodity. It is well also to remember that even under the most favorable circumstances, even if by some miracle, we were able to cover

the green fields of Erin with huge, ugly factories, with chimneys belching forth volumes of poisonous smoke and coating the island with a sooty desolation – even then we would quickly find that under the conditions born of the capitalist system our one hope of keeping our feet as a manufacturing nation would depend upon our ability to work longer and harder for a lower wage than the other nations of Europe, in order that our middle class may have the opportunity of selling their goods at a lower price than their competitors. This is equivalent to saying that our chance of making Ireland a manufacturing country depends upon us becoming the lowest blacklegs in Europe. Even then the efforts would be doomed to failure, for the advent of the yellow man into the competitive arena, the sudden development of the capitalist system on China and Japan, has rendered forever impossible the uprising of another industrial nation in Europe.

Again, it is said we need not perhaps establish industry or try it, but we can at least establish peasant proprietary, and make every man the owner of his farm, let every man live, if not under his own vine and fig tree, at least upon his own potato patch. In the first place, I consider such an act to be, even if practicable, one of very questionable justice. To make the land of a country the property of a class is to my mind equally iniquitous, whether that class number a few hundreds or a few thousands. The land of a country belongs of right to the people of that country, and not to any particular class, nor even to any single generation of the people. The private ownership of land by the landlord class is an injustice to the whole community, but the creation of a peasant proprietary would only tend to stereotype and consecrate that injustice, since it would leave out of account the entire laboring class as well as the dispossessed millions of former tenants whom landlord rule had driven into the Irish towns or across the sea.

It is, of course, manifestly impossible to reinstate the Irish people on the lands from which they have been driven, but that fact only lends additional point to the demand for the nationalization of land in the hands of the Irish State. Setting that fact aside, however, have our advocates of peasant proprietary really considered the economic tendencies of the time, and the development of the mechanical arts in the agricultural world. The world is progressive, and peasant proprietary, which a hundred years ago might have been a boon, would now be

powerless to save from ruin the agriculture of Ireland. The day of small farmers, as of small capitalists, is gone, and wherever they are still found they find it impossible to compete with the improved machinery and mammoth farms of America and Australia. Whereas each Irish farm is burdened with the support of its field workers for the entire 365 days in the year, the capitalist farmer of the States hires his 'hands' by the hundred for harvesting operations, and discharges them immediately it is completed, thus reducing to one-fourth the annual wages bill of his workers.

How are our small farmers to compete with a state of matters like this, or like unto that revealed in the report of the American Social Science Association, even as far back as 1878? It tells how science and invention, after devoting so much time to industry, have turned their attention to agriculture, and as a result have effected almost a revolution in that branch of human activity. Ploughs which, driven by horses, plough more than five acres per day, or the extent of many an Irish farm, and steam ploughs which do much more; machines for sowing seeds, with which a boy and horse can do three times the work of a man, and do it much better; reaping machines, with which a man with one or two pairs of horses can do the work of at least sixty men with reaping hooks; reaping machines which not only cut the harvest, but tie it as well, are now so common in England and America as to fail to attract attention, and we hear on good authority of machines which cut, thrash, winnow, and sack it, without the intervention of any other human hands than those of the engineer who tends the machine. In cutting the corn a man or boy, with a horse and machine, can do the work of twenty men cutting an acre an hour.

All this, be it remembered, is only possible to the farmer who holds his thousands of acres. The first cost of any one of those machines would be enough to ruin the average small farmer in Ireland, and the result is that while he is painfully laboring on his farm his American competitor can bring in his harvest, send it thousands of miles by railroad, load it into ships, send it across the Atlantic, and eventually sell it practically at our doors as cheap as, and cheaper than, our home produce. The competition of New Zealand beef and frozen mutton has already inflicted incalculable harm upon the Irish cattle trade, and

within the last few months I have received private information of a contract entered into with the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company to transport butter from the huge cattle ranches of Australia to any port in Great Britain and Ireland at a price that spells ruin to the dairy farms of these countries. While, then, in order to avoid even the appearance of injustice, we may rigidly respect those 'rights of property' in land our peasant farmers have acquired by purchase, we must recognize that peasant proprietary in itself offers no hope of a free and unanxious life – not even to the peasant proprietor.

## Ireland's future

Ere we can forecast the future we must understand the present and bring a just sense of proportion to our review of the history of the past. What, then, are the conditions which govern life in Ireland to-day, and of what are those conditions the outcome? According to the most eminent authorities who have ever dealt with the subject the soil of Ireland is capable of sustaining a population many times larger than she has ever borne upon its surface, yet Ireland is in a state of chronic starvation. Every ship that leaves our ports is laden down with harvest for human consumption, while the people whose strong hands have reaped that harvest pine in wretchedness and want, or fly from the shores of this fertile land as from the arid sands of a desert. The landlord class, infatuated with that madness which always precedes destruction, press for their rents to the uttermost farthing wherever they can wheedle or coerce a too-compliant legislature and executive to support them in their exactions. The capitalist farmer, driven to the wall by the stress of the competition, seeks in vain to maintain his foothold in life by unceasing struggle with the lord of the soil on one hand and a ruthless oppression of the laborer on the other; the small farmer, bereft entirely of hope for the future, settles despairingly into a state of social wretchedness for which no savage land can furnish a parallel; the agricultural laborer, with his fellow in the towns, takes his strength, his brains, his physical and intellectual capabilities to the market, and offers them to his wealthier fellow-creatures, to be exploited in return for a starvation wage. On all sides anarchy and oppression reign supreme,

until one could scarcely wonder if even the most orthodox amongst us were tempted to echo the saying of the Spanish Don Juan Aguila after the battle of Kinsale: "Surely Christ never died for this people!"

These are the conditions under which life is endured in Ireland to-day. From what do such conditions spring? There are two things necessary for the maintenance of life in Ireland, as in every other country. They are land and labor. Possessed of these two essentials, the human race has at its command all the factors requisite for the well-being of the species. From the earth labor extracts alike its foods and the mineral wealth with which it contrives to construct and adorn its habitations and prepare its raiment. Therefore the possession of the soil is everywhere the first requisite of life. Granting this as a proposition too self-evident to need elaborate demonstration, we at once arrive at the conclusion that since the soil is so necessary to our existence the first care of every well-regulated community ought to be to preserve the use of that soil, and the right to freely share in its fruits, to every member of the community, present or prospective, born or unborn.

The moment when the land of a country passes from the care of the community as a public trust, and from being the common property of the entire people becomes the private property of individuals, marks the beginning of slavery for that people and of oppression for that country. With the land held as the property of individuals there are immediately created two antagonistic classes in society – one holding the land and demanding from the other a rent for permission to live upon it, and the other driven by a constant increase of their own numbers to offer larger and larger shares of the produce of their labor as tribute to the first class, who thus become masters of the lives of their fellow-beings. With the land held as the common property of the people an abundant harvest would be eagerly welcomed as an addition to the wealth of the community, guaranteeing against want every one of its members. With the land held as private property the abundant harvest must be sold to satisfy the exactions of the holder of the soil, and as he jingles in his pockets the result of the sale of his tenants' produce the families who reaped it may be perishing of want.

As one crime begets another, so one economic blunder invariably brings in its train a series of blunders, each one more fruitful of disaster than the first. When the production of food for public use was abandoned in favor of production of agricultural produce for private sale and private profit, it was almost inevitable that the production of almost every other necessary of life should be subjected to the same conditions. Thus we find that food, clothes, houses and furniture are not produced in order that people may be fed, clad, sheltered or made comfortable, but rather in order that the class who have obtained possession of the land, machinery, workshops and stores necessary for the production of these essentials should be thereby enabled to make a comfortable living at the expense of their fellow creatures. If the landlord and employing class think they can make a rent or profit by allowing the people to feed, clothe, or house themselves, then the latter are allowed to do so under the direction of the former – when, where, and how the masters please. If, on the contrary, they imagine it will pay them better to refuse that right (as they do in every eviction, strike, or lock-out), then they do refuse that permission, and their countrymen go forth starving, their children die of want before their eyes, and their wives and mothers pine in wretchedness and misery in what their forefathers were wont to call the ‘Isle of the Blest’.

By the operation of certain historic causes the workers have been deprived of everything by which they can maintain life and are thus compelled to seek their livelihood by the sale of their capacity for work, their labor power. The worker thus finds that the most essential condition which he must perform in order that he may possess his life is to sell part of that life into the service and for the profit of another. Whether he sells it by the hour, the day, the week, or the month is immaterial – sell it he must or else starve.

Now, the worker is a human being, with all the powers and capabilities of a human being within him, just as is a landlord, a capitalist, or any other ornament of society. But when he approaches the capitalist in order to complete that bargain, which means the sale of his life piecemeal in order that he may enjoy it as a whole, he finds that he must carefully divest himself of all claims to be considered as a human being, and offer himself upon the market subject to the same law as govern the purchase or sale of any inanimate, soulless commodity,

such as a pair of boots, a straw hat or a frock coat. That is to say, the price he will receive for this piecemeal sale of himself will depend upon how many more are compelled by hunger to make the same horrible bargain.

In like manner with the farmer seeking to rent a farm in the open market. Each competitor seeks to outbid the other, until the rent is fixed usually out of all proportion to the price which will in the future be obtained for the produce of the farm bidden for. The agriculturist finds that in years of universal plenty, when throughout the world the earth brings forth its fruits in teeming profusion, the excess of supply over effective demand operates to lower the price of his farm produce, until it scarcely repays his labor in garnering it, and in times of scarcity, when a good price might be obtained, he has little to sell, his customers have not the wherewithal to buy, and the landlord or the money lender are as relentless as ever in their exactions.

As a remedy for such an array of evils Home Rule stands revealed as a glaring absurdity. The Home Rule parties either ignore the question altogether or else devote their attention to vain attempts to patch up the system with schemes of reform which each day tends to discredit more and more. The tenant who seeks in the Land Court for a judicial valuation of his holding finds that in face of the steady fall in agricultural prices (assisted by preferential railway rates in favor of foreign produce) the 'fair' rent of one year becomes the rack-rent of another, and the tenant who avails himself of the purchase clauses of the Land Act finds that he has only escaped from the personal tyranny of a landlord to have his veins sucked by the impersonal power of the money lender.

Confronted with such facts, the earnest Irish worker turns in dismay and joins his voice to that of the uncompromising Nationalist in seeking from the advocate of an Irish Socialist Republic the clue of the labyrinthine puzzle of modern economic conditions. The problem is a grave and difficult one, alike from the general ignorance of its controlling conditions and because of the multiplicity of vested interests which must be attacked and overthrown at every forward step towards its solution. The solution herein set forth is therefore not guaranteed to be absolutely perfect in all its details, but only to furnish a rough draft of a scheme of reform by means of which the ground may be prepared for that

revolutionary change in the structure of society which can alone establish an approximation to an ideally just social system.

The agriculture of Ireland can no longer compete with the scientifically equipped farmers of America, therefore the only hope that now remains is to abandon competition altogether as a rule of life, to organize agriculture as a public service under the control of boards of management elected by the agricultural population (no longer composed of farmers and laborers, but of free citizens with equal responsibility and equal honor), and responsible to them and the nation at large, and with all the mechanical and scientific aids to agriculture the entire resources of the nation can place at their disposal. Let the produce of Irish soil go first to feed the Irish people, and after a sufficient store has been retained to insure of that being accomplished, let the surplus be exchanged with other countries in return for those manufactured goods Ireland needs but does not herself produce.

Thus we will abolish at one stroke the dread of foreign competition and render perfectly needless any attempt to create an industrial hell in Ireland under the specious pretext of 'developing our resources'.

Apply to manufacture the same social principle, let the co-operative organization of the workers replace the war of classes under capitalism and transform the capitalist himself from an irresponsible hunter after profit into a public servant fulfilling a public function and under public control. Recognize the right of all to an equal opportunity to develop to their fullest capacity all the powers and capabilities inherent in them by guaranteeing to all our countrymen and women, the weak as well as the strong, the simple as well as the cunning, the honest equally with the unscrupulous, the fullest, freest, and most abundant human life intelligently organized society can confer upon any of its members.

"But," you will say, "this means a Socialist Republic; this is subversive of all the institutions upon which the British Empire is founded – this cannot be realized without national independence." Well, I trust no one will accuse me of a desire to fan into flame the dying embers of national hatred when I state as my deliberate and conscientious conviction that the Irish democracy ought to strive

consistently after the separation of their country from the yoke that links her destinies with those of the British Crown. The interests of Labor all the world over are identical, it is true, but it is also true that each country had better work out its own salvation on the lines most congenial to its own people.

The national and racial characteristics of the English and Irish people are different, their political history and traditions are antagonistic, the economic development of the one is not on a par with the other, and, finally, although they have been in the closest contact for seven hundred years, yet the Celtic Irishman is to-day as much of an insoluble problem to even the most friendly English as on the day when the two countries were first joined in unholy wedlock. No Irish revolutionist worth his salt would refuse to lend a hand to the Social Democracy of England in the effort to uproot the social system of which the British Empire is the crown and apex, and in like manner no English Social Democrat fails to recognize clearly that the crash which would betoken the fall of the ruling classes in Ireland would sound the tocsin for the revolt of the disinherited in England.

But on whom devolves the task of achieving that downfall of the ruling classes in Ireland? On the Irish people. But who are the Irish people? Is it the dividend-hunting capitalist with the phraseology of patriotism on his lips and the spoil wrung from sweated Irish toilers ill his pockets; is it the scheming lawyer – most immoral of all classes; is it the slum landlord who denounces rackrenting in the country and practices it in the towns; is it any one of these sections who to-day dominate Irish politics? Or is it not rather the Irish working class – the only secure foundation on which a free nation can be reared – the Irish working class which has borne the brunt of every political struggle, and gained by none, and which is to-day the only class in Ireland which has no interest to serve in perpetuating either the political or social forms of oppression – the British connection or the capitalist system? The Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself it must, perforce, free its country. The act of social emancipation requires the conversion of the land and instruments of production from private property into the public or common property of the entire nation. This necessitates a social system of the most absolute democracy, and in establishing that necessary social system the working class must grapple

with every form of government which could interfere with the most unfettered control by the people of Ireland of all the resources of their country.

On the Working Class of Ireland, therefore, devolves the task of conquering political representation for their class as the preliminary step towards the conquest of political power. This task can only be safely entered upon by men and women who recognize that the first action of a revolutionary army must harmonize in principle with those likely to be its last, and that, therefore, no revolutionists can safely invite the co-operation of men or classes, whose ideals are not theirs, and whom, therefore, they may be compelled to fight at some future critical stage of the journey to freedom. To this category belongs every section of the propertied class, and every individual of those classes who believes in the righteousness of his class position. The freedom of the working class must be the work of the working class. And let it be remembered that timidity in the slave induces audacity in the tyrant, but the virility and outspokenness of the revolutionists ever frightens the oppressor himself to hide his loathsomeness under the garb of reform. And thus remembering, fight for your class at every point.

Our people are flying to the uttermost ends of the earth; seek to retain them at home by reducing the hours of labor wherever you have the power and by supporting every demand for legislative restriction. Your Irish railways employ thousands of men, whose working hours average twelve per day. Were they restricted to a forty-eight-hour week of labor, employment would be provided for thousands of Irishmen who at present are driven exiles from their native land. Let your representatives demand an eight-hour bill for railways. Our Irish municipalities and other public bodies controlled by popular vote employ also many thousands of men. What are their hours of labor? On the average ten, and their wages just above starvation point. Insist upon Irish corporations establishing the eight-hour day in all their works. They at least do not need to fear foreign competition. If you have no vote in the corporation you can at least help to hound off the political platform elsewhere every so-called patriot who refuses to perform this act of justice. Every Irish corporation which declines to institute an eight-hours' working day at a decent wage for its employees has

virtually entered into a conspiracy with the British Government to expatriate the Irish people, rather than pay an additional halfpenny in the pound on the rates. In all our cities the children of the laboring class are dying off before their time for lack of wholesome nourishing food. As our municipalities and public trusts provide water for the people free of direct payment and charge the cost upon the rates, let them also provide at our schools free breakfasts, dinners and teas to the children in attendance there, and pay for it from the same source. No matter what may be the moral character of the parent, let us at least save the helpless children of our race from physical and mental degeneracy, and save our teachers from the impossible task of forcing education upon a child whose brain is enfeebled by the starvation of its body. As the next step in organization, let the corporations and public bodies everywhere throughout the country establish depots for the supply of bread and all the necessaries of life to the people, at cost price and without the intervention of the middleman.

When, in addition to the foregoing reforms, we have demanded the abolition of our hateful poor-house system, and the imposition of a heavy and steeply graduated income tax on all incomes over £400 a year, in order to provide comfortable pensions for the aged, the infirm, and widows and orphans, we will have aroused a new spirit in the people; we will have based our revolutionary movement upon a correct appreciation of the needs of the hour, as well as upon the vital principles of economic justice and uncompromising nationality; we will, as the true revolutionist should ever do, have called into action on our side the entire sum of all the forces and factors of social and political discontent. By the use of the revolutionary ballot we will have made the very air of Ireland as laden with 'treason', as fully charged with the spirit of revolt, as it is to-day with the cant of compromise and the mortal sin of flunkeyism; and thus we will have laid a substantial groundwork for more effective action in the future, while to those whom we must remove in our onward march the pledge of our faith in the Social Revolution will convey the assurance that if we crush their profit-making enterprises to-day, yet when the sun dawns upon our freedom, if they have served their fellow creatures loyally in the hour of strife, they and their children and their children's children will be guaranteed against want and privation for all time by the safest guarantee man ever received, the guarantee backed by all the

gratitude, the loyal hearts, the brains and industry of the Irish people, under the Irish Socialist Republic.