

# James Connolly

## Socialist Party of Ireland

(1910 or early 1911)

**(Headquarters: 42e Great Brunswick Street, Dublin)**

The Socialist Party of Ireland seeks to organise the workers of this country, irrespective of creed or race, into one great PARTY OF LABOUR. It believes that the dependence of the working class upon the owners of capitalist property, and the desire of these capitalists and landowners to keep the vast mass of the people so subject and dependent, is the great and abiding cause of all our modern social and political evils – of nearly all modern crime, mental degradation, religious strife, and political tyranny. Recognising this, it counsels the Irish working class to follow the example of the workers in every civilised country in the world, whether subject or free, and organise itself industrially and politically with the end in view of gaining control and mastery of the entire resources of the country.

Such is our aim: such is Socialism. Our method is: Political organisation at the Ballot Box to secure the election of representatives of Socialist principles to all the elective governing Public Bodies of this country, and thus to gradually transfer the political power of the State into the hands of those who will use it to further and extend the principle of common or public ownership. We mean to make the people of Ireland the sole and sovereign owners of Ireland, but leave ourselves free to adapt our methods to suit the development of the times. The

Socialist Party of Ireland may, as the occasion seems to warrant, either enter the political battlefield with candidates of our own or else assist in furthering every honest attempt on the part of Organised Labour to obtain representation through independent working-class candidates pledged to a progressive policy of social reform. We know that every victory won for progress today is a victory for Socialism, even when the victors most anxiously repudiate our cause.

We live in times of political change, and even of political revolution. More and more civic and national responsibility is destined to be thrust upon, or won by, the people of Ireland. Old political organisations will die out and new ones must arise to take their place; old party rallying cries and watchwords are destined to become obsolete and meaningless, and the fires of old feuds and hatreds will pale and expire before the newer conceptions born of a consciousness of our common destiny. In this great awakening of Erin, Labour, if guided by the lamp of Socialist teaching, may set its feet firmly and triumphantly upon the path that leads to its full emancipation. But if Labour does not rise to the occasion, and allows itself to be swallowed up in and identified with new political alignments, scattering and dissipating its forces instead of concentrating them upon Socialist lines, then indeed will our last state be worse than our first.

We therefore appeal to all workers, and to all honest friends of progress in any rank of life, to throw in their lot with the Socialist Party of Ireland, and assist it in giving force, clearness and effectiveness to the gathering Working Class Movement of this country. And on its part that Party, conscious of its high mission, pledges itself to pursue, unfalteringly and undeviatingly, its great object – common ownership of the means of producing and distributing all wealth. In other words, common ownership of our common country, the material basis of the higher intellectual and moral development of the future.

**James Connolly**

# Labour and Politics in Ireland

(1910)

From **The Harp**, April, 1910.

We have not any knowledge of any country in which the working class more readily rallies to an appeal to its class feeling than in Ireland. Whilst the knowledge of theoretical socialism is but meagrely distributed amongst the workers, that feeling or knowledge which the socialists call class consciousness is deep-seated, wide-spread and potent in its influence. A striking manifestation of this fact was evinced in the action of the trade unions during the first elections under the Local Government Act of 1898. Previous to the passing of this Act the Irish workers had no vote in municipal elections, with the necessary result that local municipal government was completely in the hands of the Irish capitalist class, who kept our Irish cities pest-holes of disease and slovenliness, and made our Irish slums a horror and a byword among the cities of Europe. But in that year the aforementioned Act placed the municipal suffrage upon the same basis as the parliamentary. Immediately there sprang into existence all throughout Ireland organisations of workers aiming at wresting the municipal government from the hands of the capitalist class, and placing it in the hands of the working class. Those organisations were formed under the authority of the various Trade Councils and Land and Labour Associations, and were termed Labour Electoral Associations. They selected the constituencies, wards, to be fought solely according to the working class character of these wards, and without regard to the supposed political views of the other candidates. Loyalist and Home Ruler

were equal to them; their standard was the standard of labour and under that standard the workers rallied.

To those of us who were privileged to be in the fight in Ireland in those days the manner in which the Irish working class responded to the appeal made to them in 1899 was a promise and a guarantee for the future which no subsequent happenings can ever efface from the memory. All over the island the candidates of the working class swept to victory – in Dublin, in Cork, in Limerick, down to the smallest agricultural districts, practically every bona-fide labour man showed up well in the balloting, sweeping the old political parties into confusion. Mr. John Redmond, M.P., begged the Irish workers to show their moderation by electing landlords to the various bodies in Ireland in order to show those gentry that they had nothing to fear from Home Rule. The Irish workers laughed to scorn the whining counsel of this “half-emancipated slave” and stood by the men of their own class, thus ending for ever the jobbing and grafting of the landed gentry at the expense of the rural population. The upheaval of the Irish workers was magnificent.

But with victory came demoralisation. We have said that the Irish worker was thoroughly true to his own class, but lacking in socialist knowledge. This alone offers an explanation of the subsequent setback to the labour cause in Ireland. The men elected all over Ireland had been elected on an independent platform, and all during the election most of them had steadily refused to merge their cause in any other, and had kept their independence intact and unsullied. The splendid vote they received was the emphatic endorsement by the Irish workers of this political independence of labour. But as soon as they were elected they forgot, or seemed not to realise, this fact, and instead of forming a distinct and independent party of their own in the various councils, they allied themselves to one or other of the factions of the capitalist parties, and became labour tails of the capitalist political kites.

As soon as the shrewd old party politicians saw this they realised immediately that they could regain their lost supremacy. The honest Irish working man – honest himself and inclined to believe in the honesty of others – was no match for the political tricksters of the capitalist parties. When he found

himself flattered and courted, invited to dinners and private gatherings of the Home Rule councillors, plied with drink by his associates and asked to favour them by seconding the resolutions affirming their position on certain debatable matters to come up in the council next day, etc., he did not realise that his genial hosts were destroying his independence, and digging the ground from under him.

Yet so it was. The labour party was a party only in name; it came to signify only certain men who could be trusted to draw working class support to the side of certain capitalist factions. Unfortunately, the only candidate run by the Irish Socialist Republican Party in that year, Mr. E.W. Stewart, the only candidate in the interest of labour who really understood the political trickery of the capitalists, and the manner in which that trickery would manifest itself, and who by his knowledge and pugnacity might have saved the situation, was defeated by a very small majority.

In the years immediately following that first result of the Irish workers on the field of local government the hopeless incapacity to uphold the principle of independent political action in which they had been elected, had its natural result in the overwhelming defeat of every candidate who professed to stand on a labour platform. The Irish capitalists had learned of the real weakness of the labour movement which had at first so terrified their guilty consciences, and the Irish workers had become disgusted at the poor results shown by the men they had elected. Though they were perhaps not able to frame it in so many words the Irish workers realised that a working man member of a capitalist party is not necessarily any better than a capitalist member of the same party, perhaps not so good; but that a working man who wishes to safeguard the interests of his class must withdraw from all capitalist political affiliation. *And in deciding how he should vote in any great question should consult, not with the capitalist members of the Corporation, but with the committee of the organisations which secured his election.*

Now we propose to the toilers of Ireland that it is time to make an effort to retrieve the situation, and once more to raise the banner of a militant Irish labour movement upon the political field. The victories once achieved can be more than duplicated, the mistakes once made will serve as beacons of warning for the

guidance of our future activities. What were the factors at work in 1899? They were: First, a Labour Electoral Association representing an aroused working class in hot rebellion against its social and political outlawry, but ignorant of the real causes of its subjection; second, a small Socialist Republican Party, not much more than two years old, but militant, enthusiastic and with a thorough knowledge of the causes of social and national slavery. These two factors operated independently – the socialists at all times supporting the labour men, the labour men not always supporting the socialists.

In the nature of things this could not well have been otherwise at that time. But what are the elements in the labour movement in Ireland today? They are a strong socialist movement, representing some of the best intellects in Ireland, an independent socialist feeling and education on socialist thought in every city of industrial activity in Ireland, and a general feeling of comradeship and sympathy between the trade unions and the socialists

The times are ripe for a forward move! We suggest, then, the formation of a political party in Ireland which shall be composed of all bodies organised upon the basis of the principle of labour; that in order to form such a party the Trade and Labour Council of Dublin shall be invited by the socialists to take the lead in calling a conference of labour and socialist organisations of the capital city, that it be set forth in such call that the purpose is to form a party which shall act and be distinct from all others, and entirely guided by the interests of labour. And in order to secure and maintain the integrity of such party we also suggest that no one should be eligible for office in this party, or eligible to be considered as one of its candidates for any ward or constituency, unless he or she is a member of an affiliated labour union. When this has been perfected in Dublin then calls should be sent to other Irish cities and towns for the purpose of forming similar bodies; and when a sufficient number have been formed, then a national conference should be called in order to formulate a common programme and concerted action. The Irish trade unions, the land and labour associations and the socialist party of Ireland could easily find a common ground of action which would leave each free to pursue its ordinary propaganda, to maintain its own separate existence and to serve itself whilst serving others.

Our own hope is to see all Irish economic organisations welded into one great body directing the whole force of labour in Ireland upon any given point at once. But the initiation of our political union need not wait upon the realisation of our economic or industrial union. It can begin now. *Who will achieve the honour of first moving in that direction? Who will bring this dream of so many minds, this hope of so many souls, to the concrete point of a resolution to test the feelings of the bodies interested?* We have suggested Dublin first, but it is only a suggestion. It is open to any man anywhere who realises that the field of our hopes and destinies in Ireland is lying crying for the hand of the sower to nerve himself to the task.

*“England,”* said the flamboyant orator of Irish capitalism, *“has sown dragon’s teeth and they have sprung up armed men.”* Shall we not say that as capitalism has sown poverty, disease and oppression among our Irish race so it will see spring up a crop of working class revolutionists armed with a holy hatred of all its institutions.

If we were asked what would be the attitude of such a party towards Sinn Fein, Home Rule, Parliamentary Parties, etc., we would reply that the attitude of such organisations towards the party would determine its attitude towards them. Such a party, resting upon the working class – which is the only class capable of embracing the whole human race – must necessarily make of itself and its class a touchstone by which all other bodies must be tested. It must grow to the dignity of affirming that labour is not on trial; it is civilisation that is on trial – and all the elements of civilisation in Ireland, as elsewhere, must stand or fall as they are true or not to the cause of labour.

**James Connolly**

**Industrialism**

# and the Trade Unions

(1910)

From **International Socialist Review**, February 1910.

In the second part of my book **Socialism Made Easy**, I have endeavoured to establish two principles in the minds of my readers as being vitally necessary to the upbuilding of a strong revolutionary Socialist movement. Those two principles are: First, that the working class as a class cannot become permeated with a belief in the unity of their class interests unless they have first been trained to a realization of the need of industrial unity; second, that the revolutionary act – the act of taking over the means of production and establishing a social order based upon the principles of the working class (labour) – cannot be achieved by a disorganized, defeated and humiliated working class, but must be the work of that class after it has attained to a commanding position on the field of economic struggle. It has been a pleasure to me to note the progress of Socialist thought towards acceptance of these principles, and to believe that the publication of that little work helped to a not inconsiderable degree in shaping that Socialist thought and in accelerating its progress. In the following article I wish to present one side of the discussion which inevitably arises in our Socialist party branches upon the mooted question of this question. But as a preliminary to this presentation I would like to decry, and ask my comrades to decry and dissociate themselves from, the somewhat acrid and intolerant manner in which this discussion is often carried on. Believing that the Socialist Party is part and parcel of the labour movement of the United States, and that in the growth of that movement to true revolutionary

clearness and consciousness it, the Socialist Party, is bound to attract to itself and become mentor and teacher of elements most unclear and lacking in class consciousness, we should recognize that it is as much our duty to be patient and tolerant with the erring brother or sister within our ranks as with the rank heathen – outside the fold. No good purpose can be served by wildly declaiming against ‘intellectuals’, nor yet by intriguing against and misrepresenting ‘impossibilists’. The comrades who think that the Socialist Party is run by ‘compromisers’ should not jump out of the organization and leave the revolutionists in a still more helpless minority; and the comrades who pride themselves upon being practical Socialist politicians should not too readily accuse those who differ with them of being potential disrupters. Viewing the situation from the standpoint of an industrialist I am convinced that both the industrialist and those estimable comrades who pander to the old style trade unions to such a marked degree as to leave themselves open to the suspicion of coquetting with the idea of a ‘labour’ party, both, I say, have the one belief, both have arrived at the one conclusion from such different angles that they appear as opposing instead of aiding, auxiliary forces. That belief which both share in common is that the triumph of Socialism is impossible without the aid of labour organized upon the economic field. It is their common possession of this one great principle of action which impels me to say that there is a greater identity of purpose and faith between those two opposing (?) wings of the Socialist Party than either can have with any of the intervening schools of thought. Both realize that the Socialist Party must rest upon the economic struggle and the forces of labour engaged therein, and that the Socialism which is not an outgrowth and expression of that economic struggle is not worth a moment’s serious consideration.

There, then, we have found something upon which we agree, a ground common to both, the first desideratum of any serious discussion. The point upon which we disagree is: Can the present form of American trade unions provide the Socialist movement with the economic force upon which to rest, or can the American Federation of Labour develop towards industrialism sufficiently for our needs? It is the same problem stated in different ways. I propose to state here my reasons for taking the negative side in that discussion.

Let it be remembered that we are not, as some good comrades imagine, debating whether it is possible for a member of the American Federation of Labour to become an industrialist, or for all its members, but we are to debate whether the organization of the American Federation of Labour is such as to permit of a modification of its structural formation to keep pace with the progress of industrialist ideas amongst its members. Whether the conversion of the membership of the American Federation of Labour to industrialism would mean the disruption of the Federation and the throwing of it aside as the up-to-date capitalist throws aside a machine, be it ever so costly, when a more perfectly functioning machine has been devised.

At this point it is necessary for the complete understanding of our subject that we step aside for a moment to consider the genesis and organization of the American Federation of Labour and the trade unions patterned after it, and this involves a glance at the history of the labour movement in America. Perhaps of all the subjects properly pertaining to Socialist activity this subject has been the most neglected, the least analysed. And yet it is the most vital. Studies of Marx and popularizing (sic) of Marx, studies of science and popularizing of science, studies of religion and application of same with Socialist interpretations, all these we have without limit. But of attempts to apply the methods of Marx and of science to an analysis of the laws of growth and incidents of development of the organizations of labour upon the economic field the literature of the movement is almost, if not quite, absolutely barren. Our Socialist writers seem in some strange and, to me, incomprehensible manner to have detached themselves from the everyday struggles of the toilers and to imagine they are doing their whole duty as interpreters of Socialist thought when they bless the economic organization with one corner of their mouth and insist upon the absolute hopelessness of it with the other. They imagine, of course, that this is the astutest diplomacy, but the net result of it has been that the organized working class has never looked upon the Socialist Party as a part of the labour movement, and the enrolled Socialist Party member has never found in American Socialist literature anything that helped him in strengthening his economic organization or leading it to victory.

Perhaps some day there will arise in America a Socialist writer who in his writing will live up to the spirit of the Communist Manifesto that the Socialists are not apart from the labour movement, are not a sect, but are simply that part of the working class which pushes on all others, which most clearly understands the line of march. Awaiting the advent of that writer permit me to remind our readers that the Knights of Labour preceded the American Federation of Labour, that the structural formation of the Knights was that of a mass organization, that they aimed to organize all toilers into one union and made no distinction of craft, nor of industry, and that they cherished revolutionary aims. When the American Federation of Labour was organized it was organized as a dual organization, and although at first it professed a desire to organize none but those then unorganized, it soon developed opposition to the Knights and proceeded to organize wherever it could find members, and particularly to seek after the enrolment of those who were already in the Knights of Labour. In this it was assisted by the good will of the master class, who naturally preferred its profession of conservatism and identity of interest between capital and labour to the revolutionary aims and methods of the Knights. But even this assistance on the part of the master class would not have assured its victory were it not for the fact that its method of organization, into separate crafts, recognized a certain need of the industrial development of the time which the Knights of Labour had failed up to that moment to appraise at its proper significance.

The Knights of Labour, as I have pointed out, organized all workers into one union, an excellent idea for teaching the toilers their ultimate class interests, but with the defect that it made no provision for the treating of special immediate craft interests by men and women with the requisite technical knowledge. The scheme was the scheme of an idealist, too large-hearted and noble-minded himself to appreciate the hold small interests can have upon men and women. It gave rise to jealousies. The printer grumbled at the jurisdiction of a body comprising tailors and shoemakers over his shop struggles, and the tailors and shoemakers fretted at the attempts of carpenters and bricklayers to understand the technicalities of their disputes with the bosses.

To save the Knights of Labour and to save the American working class a pilgrimage in the desert of reaction, it but required the advent of some practical student of industry to propose that, instead of massing all workers together irrespective of occupation, they should, keeping the organization intact and remaining bound in obedience to one supreme head, for administrative purposes only, group all workers together according to their industries, and subdivide their industries again according to crafts. That the allied crafts should select the ruling body for the industry to which they belonged, and that the allied industries again should elect the ruling body for the whole organization. This could have been done without the slightest jar to the framework of the organization; it would have recognized all technical differences and specialization of function in actual industry; it would have kept the organization of labour in line with the actual progress of industrial development; and would still have kept intact the idea of the unity of the working class by its common bond of brotherhood, a universal membership card, and universal obligation to recognize that an injury to one was an injury to all.

Tentative steps in such a direction were already being taken when the American Federation of Labour came upon the scene. The promoters of this organization, seizing upon this one plank in the Knights of Labour organization, specialized its work along that line, and, instead of hastening to save the unity of the working class on the lines above indicated, they made the growing realization of the need of representation of craft differences the entering wedge for disrupting and destroying the earlier organization of that class.

Each craft was organized as a distinct body having no obligation to strike or fight beside any other craft, and making its own contracts with the bosses heedless of what was happening between these bosses and their fellow-labourers of another craft in the same industry, building, shop or room. The craft was organized on a national basis, to be governed by the vote of its members throughout the nation, and with a membership card good only in that craft and of no use to a member who desired to leave one craft in order to follow another. The fiction of national unity was and is still paid homage to, as vice always pays homage to virtue, by annual congresses in which many resolutions are gravely

debated, to be forgotten as soon as congress adjourns. But the unifying (?) qualities of this form of organization are best revealed by the fact that the main function of the congress seems to be to provide the cynical master class with the, to them, pleasing spectacle of allied organizations fiercely fighting over questions of jurisdiction.

This policy of the American Federation of Labour coupled with the unfortunate bomb incident of Chicago, for which the Knights of Labour received much of the blame, completed the ruin of the latter organization and destroyed the growing unity of the working class for the time being. The industrial union, as typified today in the Industrial Workers of the World, could have, as I have shown, developed out of the Knights of Labour as logically and perfectly as the adult develops from the child. No new organization would have been necessary, and hence we may conclude that the Industrial Workers of the World is the legitimate heir of the native American labour movement, the inheritor of its principles, and the ripened fruit of its experiences. On the other hand the American Federation of Labour may truly be regarded as a usurper on the throne of labour, a usurper who occupies the throne by virtue of having strangled its predecessor, and now, like all usurpers, raises the cry of "treason" against the rightful heir when it seeks to win its own again. It is obvious that the sway of the American Federation of Labour in the American labour movement is but a brief interregnum between the passing of the old revolutionary organization and the ascension into power of the new.

But, I fancy I hear some one say, granting that all that is true, may we not condemn the methods by which the American Federation of Labour destroyed, or helped to destroy, the Knights of Labour, and still believe that out of the American Federation of Labour we may now build up an industrial organization such as we need, such as the Industrial Workers of the World aims to be?

This we can only answer by clearly focusing in our mind the American Federation of Labour system of organization in actual practice. A carpenter is at work in a city. He has a dispute with the bosses, or all his fellow-carpenters have. They will hold meetings to discuss the question of a strike, and finding the problem too big for them they will pass it on to the headquarters, and the

headquarters pass it on to the general membership. The general membership, from San Francisco to Rhode Island, and from Podunk to Kalamazoo, will have a vote and say upon the question of the terms upon which the Chicago carpenters work, and if said carpenters are called out they will expect all these widely scattered carpenters to support them by financial and moral help. But while they are soliciting and receiving the support of their fellow-carpenters they are precluded from calling out in sympathy with them the painters who follow them in their work, the plumbers whose pipes they cover up, the steamfitters who work at their elbows, or the plasterer who precedes them. Yet the co-operation of these workers with them in their strikes is a thousandfold more important than the voting of strike funds which would keep them out on strike – until the building season is over and the winter sets in. In many cities today there is a Building Trades' Council which is looked upon by many as a beginning of industrialism within the American Federation of Labour. It is not only the beginning but it is as far as industrialism can go within that body, and its sole function is to secure united action in remedying petty grievances and enforcing the observance of contracts, but it does not take part in the really important work of determining hours or wages. It cannot for the simple reason that each of the thirty-three unions in the building industry are international organizations with international officers, and necessitating international referendums before any strikes, looking to the fixing of hours or wages, are permissible. Hence, although all the building trade branches in a given district may be satisfied that the time is ripe for obtaining better conditions, they cannot act before they obtain the consent of the membership throughout the entire country, and before that is obtained the moment for action is passed. The bond that is supposed to unite the carpenter in New York with the carpenter in Kokomo, Indiana, is converted into a wall of isolation which prevents him uniting, except in the most perfunctory fashion, with the men of other crafts who work beside him. The industrial union and the craft union are mutually exclusive terms. Suppose all the building trades branches of Chicago resolved to unite industrially to form an industrial union. Every branch which became an integral part of said union, pledged to obey its call to action, would by so doing forfeit its charter in the craft union and in the American Federation of Labour, and outside Chicago its members would be considered as scabs. The Brewers Union has been fighting for years to obtain the

right to organize all brewery employees. It is hindered from doing so, not only by the rules of the American Federation of Labour, but by the form of organization of that body. Breweries, for instance, employ plumbers. Now if a plumber, so employed, would join the Brewers Union and obey its call to strike he would be expelled from his craft union, and if he ever lost his job in the brewery would be considered as a scab if he went to work where union plumbers were employed. A craft union cannot recognize the right of another association to call its members out on a strike. A machinist works today in a machine shop; a few months from now he may be employed in a clothing factory attending to the repairs of sewing machines. If the clothing industry resolves itself into an industrial union and he joins them, as he needs must if he believes in industrialism, he loses his membership in the International Association of Machinists. And if ever he loses his factory job and seeks to return to the machine shop he must either do so as a non-union man or pay a heavy fine if he is permitted to re-enter the International Association of Machinists. A stationary engineer works today at the construction of a new building, three months from now he is in a shipyard, six months from now he is at the mouth of a coal mine. Three different industries, requiring three different industrial unions.

The craft card is good today in all of them, but if any of them chose to form industrial unions, and called upon him to join, he could only do so on penalty of losing his craft card and his right to strike benefits from his old organization. And if he did join, his card of membership in the one he joined would be of no value when he drifted to any of the others. How can the American Federation of Labour avoid this dilemma? Industrialism requires that all the workers in a given industry be subject to the call of the governing body, or of the vote of the workers in that industry. But if these workers are organized in the American Federation of Labour they must be subject only to the call of their national or international craft body; and if at any time they obey the call of the industry in preference to the craft they are ordered peremptorily back to scab upon their brothers.

If in addition to this organic difficulty, and it is the most insuperable, we take into consideration the system of making contracts or trade agreements on a craft basis pursued by old style unions we will see that our unfortunate brothers in the

American Federation of Labour are tied hand and foot, handcuffed and hobbled, to prevent their advance into industrialism. During the recent shirt-waist makers' strike in New York when the question was mooted of a similar strike in Philadelphia our comrade Rose Pastor Stokes, according to our Socialist press, was continually urging upon the shirt-waist makers of Philadelphia the wisdom of striking before Christmas, and during the busy season. No more sensible advice could have been given. It was of the very essence of industrialist philosophy. Industrialism is more than a method of organization – it is a science of fighting. It says to the worker: fight only at the time you select, never when the boss wants a fight. Fight at the height of the busy season, and in the slack season when the workers are in thousands upon the sidewalk absolutely refuse to be drawn into battle. Even if the boss insults and vilifies your union and refuses to recognize it, take it lying down in the slack season but mark it up in your little note book. And when work is again rushing and master capitalist is pressed for orders squeeze him, and squeeze him till the most sensitive portion of his anatomy, his pocket-book, yells with pain. That is the industrialist idea of the present phase of the class war as organized labour should conduct it. But, whatever may have been the case with the shirt-waist makers, that policy so ably enunciated by comrade Rose Pastor Stokes is utterly opposed to the whole philosophy and practice of the American Federation of Labour. Contracts almost always expire when there is little demand for labour. For instance the United Mine Workers' contract with the bosses expires in the early summer when they have before them a long hot season with a minimum demand for coal. Hence the expiration of the contract generally finds the coal operators spoiling for a fight, and the union secretly dreading it. Most building trade contracts with the bosses expire in the winter. For example, the Brotherhood of Carpenters in New York, their contract expires in January. A nice time for a fight, in the middle of a northern winter, when all work in their vicinity is suspended owing to the rigours of the climate!

The foregoing will, I hope, give the reader some food for consideration upon the problem under review. That problem is intimately allied with the future of the Socialist Party in America. Our party must become the political expression of the fight in the workshop, and draw its inspiration therefrom. Everything which

tends to strengthen and discipline the hosts of labour tends irresistibly to swell the ranks of the revolutionary movement, and everything which tends to divide and disorganize the hosts of labour tends also to strengthen the forces of capitalism. The most dispersive and isolating force at work in the labour movement today is craft unionism, the most cohesive and unifying force, industrial unionism. In view of that fact all objections which my comrades make to industrial unionism on the grounds of the supposedly, or truly, anti-political bias of many members of the Industrial Workers of the World is quite beside the mark. That question at the present stage of the game is purely doctrinaire. The use or non-use of political action will not be settled by the doctrinaires who may make it their hobby today, but will be settled by the workers who use the Industrial Workers of the World in their workshop struggles. And if at any time the conditions of a struggle in shop, factory, railroad or mine necessitate the employment of political action those workers so organized will use it, all theories and theorists to the contrary notwithstanding. In their march to freedom the workers will use every weapon they find necessary.

As the economic struggle is the preparatory school and training ground for Socialists it is our duty to help guide along right lines the effort of the workers to choose the correct kind of organization to fight their battles in that conflict. According as they choose aright or wrongly, so will the development of class consciousness in their minds be hastened or retarded by their everyday experience in class struggles.

# **A New Labour Policy**

**(1910)**

From

**The**

**Harp,**

January,

1910.

With this issue of **The Harp** we begin a new edition – and a new epoch of our existence. For the past two years this journal has been printed and published in America as the official journal of the Irish Socialist Federation of the United States. Many circumstances – chief among them being the cheering news of the reorganisation of the forces of Socialism in Ireland on a basis wide enough for all the activities of all its adherents – have induced us to transfer the office of publication to Dublin.

Socialism in Ireland needs a representative in the press devoted to its cause, and unhampered by any other affiliation. That representative we propose to be. It shall be our aim to place our columns and our poor abilities at the service of all the brave and unselfish men and women who are battling for social righteousness against the forces of iniquity which control and poison human life today. We shall not demand that the man or woman whose hand or voice is raised in protest or rebellion against tyranny must be at one with us upon the means to be taken to build the new social order; let us but agree that the social order must be built anew to serve the ends of righteousness, and built upon a recognition of our common heirship and ownership, and, we believe, the incidents of the struggle against the common enemy will, in itself, force the necessary tactics upon the mind of all. Therefore we can wait, and we ask those socialists who differ from us in our conception of what the tactics of the army of revolution should be, to wait also. Let us have patience with one another; let us remember the truth that Irishmen are ever ready to forget, viz., that we must tolerate one another or else be compelled to tolerate the common enemy. This does not mean that we have altered or abandoned, or propose to alter or abandon, our belief in the correctness of the principles for which we stood in Ireland from 1896 onward. We still believe that those principles contain the salvation of Ireland, socially and nationally, we still believe that the struggle of Ireland for freedom is a part of the worldwide upward movement of the toilers of the earth, and we still believe that the emancipation of the working class carries within it the end of all tyranny - national, political and social.

But we have come to the opinion that in the struggle for freedom the theoretical clearness of a few socialists is not as important as the aroused class

instincts and consciousness of the mass of the workers. Therefore we are willing to work and cooperate heartily with any one who will aid us in arousing the slumbering giant of labour to a knowledge of its rights and duties. Whilst we are as firm as ever in our belief that the only hope for Ireland, as for the rest of the world, lies in a revolutionary reconstruction of society, and that the working class is the only one historically fitted for that great achievement, we are prepared to cooperate with all who will help forward the industrial and political organisation of labour, even should the aim they set for such organisation be far less ambitious than our own. We invite the cooperation of all who will work with us toward that end. **The Harp** shall be a free platform from which every friend of freedom can voice his aspirations without fear, favour or affection; this paper will not muzzle its readers, and will not allow itself to be muzzled. We scorn the puny weapons in the intellectual armoury of the capitalist enemy, and we shall welcome the criticisms of our friends.

In conclusion then, let us state the work that, in our opinion, lies before the socialists of Ireland as the more immediately pressing, after the inculcation of the principles of socialism. That work is the proper organisation of the working class of Ireland as a coherent whole, under one direction and in one organisation. That the workers of Ireland be organised on the industrial field not as plumbers, painters, bricklayers, dock labourers, printers, agricultural labourers, carters, shoemakers, etc., but that all these various unions be encouraged to become subdivisions of one great whole whose aim it should be to perfect an organisation in which the interests of all should be the interests of each - in which the right of membership should rest not in proficiency at a craft or trade, but in the fact of being a member of the working class. Such a welding together of all the forces of organised labour in Ireland would make it possible to effect a settlement of most, if not all, of the questions which today are the stock-in-trade of every quack reformer and politician, as indeed they have also been for fifty years and more. A militant organisation of the working class of Ireland, in town and country, would have as dominant and controlling an effect upon the fortunes of the Irish working class as the Land League had upon the fortunes of the Irish farmer.

It would enable labour to dictate terms to the employing class, to raise wages and to give greater possibilities of life and happiness to all, to shorten hours and to give the parent more time to spend in the bosom of his family, and give the working boy and girl more time to self-improvement and study. It would create a force which could at any time settle the question of supporting Irish manufacture by refusing to handle all goods whose use or sale in Ireland tended to deprive Irish men and women of a chance to earn their living in their own country, and it would tend to create in the Irish working class the spirit of self-reliance which comes from grappling with problems affecting a whole class, as distinguished from the sectional selfish spirit which is bred by our present system of independent trade unions.

It would do more. The feeling of power, the consciousness of strength which would follow upon this unification of the forces of labour, would develop in our working class an ambition to do and dare greater things, to march forward to the achievement of their emancipation. The spectacle of the whole force of organised labour in Ireland acting as a unit in the enforcement of any demand made by any of the unions in the organisation would make in the least thoughtful a newer, brighter, more hopeful conception of human relations than is to be found in the ranks of any unions which accept the capitalist idea of individualism. Capitalism teaches the people the moral conceptions of cannibalism – the strong devouring the weak; its theory of the world of men and women is that of a glorified pig-trough where the biggest swine gets the most swill. The idea of human relations which would grow out of the working class of Ireland solidifying and concentrating their forces for their common benefit – and their abandonment of the idea behind the English system of trade unions which has hitherto cramped and dwarfed their mind and powers would make for human brotherhood and a conception of the universe worthy of a really civilised people.

It shall be our purpose in **The Harp** to work for such a reorganisation of the forces of organised labour in Ireland – the organisation of all who work for wages into one body of national dimensions and scope, under one executive head, elected by the vote of all the unions, and directing the power of such unions in united efforts in any needed direction.

At present we shall do no more than suggest the idea to the trade unionists of Ireland, reserving a fuller outline of the principles of organisation involved until a future date. It is to be hoped that those who are to-day loyally working for the benefit of organised labour, under the hampering conditions of old style trade unionism, will seriously consider the great advantages which this new style would give to their organisations, and bring the subject of a national organisation of labour in Ireland up for discussion in their unions. And let them remember that the system of organisation we suggest is that which has enabled the Industrial Workers of the World in America (the I.W.W.) to defeat the Steel Trust, the most powerful Trust in the world – to defeat it in the very hour of its victory over the old style trade unions; it has enabled the French Confederation of Labour to win last year eighty-three per cent of its strikes; and it gave victory to the agricultural labourers of Parma, Italy, despite all the military power of the Government which aided the landlords and used the military as scabs in the harvest field.

One other question we propose to drop here as a seed in the minds of the toilers of Ireland, to germinate and fructify until the time comes to harvest it. It is this; We have often heard our fellowworkers in the ranks of organised labour in Ireland complain about City Councils, Poor Law Guardians, Rural and Urban Councils, Catholic and Protestant Churches, Railroads, Dock and Harbour Boards, and other public bodies, as well as private capitalists, importing into Ireland articles which could be produced as well in Ireland, and the production of which on Irish soil would keep at home many thousands who are now compelled to flee to the moral abyss of American or British cities. Now, suppose you had a national organisation of Irish workers controlling all the building and transport trades, as well as the others, and suppose the executive of this union were issuing an order to its members to refuse to handle transport, or work beside anyone engaged in handling or transporting such imported articles, and suppose the toilers of Ireland responded to such a call – as the farmers of Ireland had responded to similar calls in the Land League days – how long do you suppose such importation would continue?

Some socialists will accuse us of being chauvinistic. We are not. But we believe that the toilers of each country should control the industries of their

country and they cannot do so if these industries have their location for manufacturing purposes in another country. Therefore, after long and mature deliberation upon the matter in all its aspects we affirm it as our belief that the working class of Ireland should prevent, by united action, the conquest of the Irish market by any capitalist or merchant whose factories or workshops are not manned by members of their organisation.