

James Connolly

Visit of King George

V

(1910)

Fellow-Workers,

As you are aware from reading the daily and weekly newspapers, we are about to be blessed with a visit from King George V.

Knowing from previous experience of Royal Visits, as well as from the Coronation orgies of the past few weeks, that the occasion will be utilised to make propaganda on behalf of royalty and aristocracy against the oncoming forces of democracy and National freedom, we desire to place before you some few reasons why you should unanimously refuse to countenance this visit, or to recognise it by your presence at its attendant processions or demonstrations. We appeal to you as workers, speaking to workers, whether your work be that of the brain or of the hand – manual or mental toil – it is of you and your children we are thinking; it is your cause we wish to safeguard and foster.

The future of the working class requires that all political and social positions should be open to all men and women; that all privileges of birth or wealth be abolished, and that every man or woman born into this land should have an equal

opportunity to attain to the proudest position in the land. The Socialist demands that the only birthright necessary to qualify for public office should be the birthright of our common humanity.

Believing as we do that there is nothing on earth more sacred than humanity, we deny all allegiance to this institution of royalty, and hence we can only regard the visit of the King as adding fresh fuel to the fire of hatred with which we regard the plundering institutions of which he is the representative. Let the capitalist and landlord class flock to exalt him; he is theirs; in him they see embodied the idea of caste and class; they glorify him and exalt his importance that they might familiarise the public mind with the conception of political inequality, knowing well that a people mentally poisoned by the adulation of royalty can never attain to that spirit of self-reliant democracy necessary for the attainment of social freedom. The mind accustomed to political kings can easily be reconciled to social kings – capitalist kings of the workshop, the mill, the railway, the ships and the docks. Thus coronation and king's visits are by our astute neversleeping masters made into huge Imperialist propagandist campaigns in favour of political and social schemes against democracy. But if our masters and rulers are sleepless in their schemes against us, so we, rebels against their rule, must never sleep in our appeal to our fellows to maintain as publicly our belief in the dignity of our class – in the ultimate sovereignty of those who labour.

What is monarchy? From whence does it derive its sanction? What has been its gift to humanity? Monarchy is a survival of the tyranny imposed by the hand of greed and treachery upon the human race in the darkest and most ignorant days of our history. It derives its only sanction from the sword of the marauder, and the helplessness of the producer, and its gifts to humanity are unknown, save as they can be measured in the pernicious examples of triumphant and shameless iniquities.

Every class in society save royalty, and especially British royalty, has through some of its members contributed something to the elevation of the race. But neither in science, nor in art, nor in literature, nor in exploration, nor in mechanical invention, nor in humanising of laws, nor in any sphere of human activity has a representative of British royalty helped forward the moral,

“The Right Divine of Labour
To be first of earthly things;
That the Thinker and the Worker
Are Manhood’s only Kings.”

James Connolly

Direct Action in Belfast

(1911)

Irish Worker, 16 September 1911.
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We have just had, and taken, the opportunity in Belfast to put into practice a little of what is known on the Continent of Europe as ‘Direct Action’.

Direct Action consists in ignoring all the legal and parliamentary ways of obtaining redress for the grievances of Labour, and proceeding to rectify these grievances by direct action upon the employer’s most susceptible part – his purse. This is very effective at times, and saves much needless worry, and much needless waste of union funds.

Direct Action is not liked by lawyers, politicians, or employers. It keeps the two former out of a job, and often leaves the latter out of pocket. But it is useful to Labour, and if not relied upon too exclusively, or used too recklessly, it may yet be made a potent weapon in the armoury of the working class.

The circumstances under which we came to put in practice the newest adaptation of it in Belfast were as follows:—

A dock labourer named Keenan was killed at the unloading of a ship owing to a bag being released by one of the carriers a moment too soon. Flying down the chute it struck Keenan, knocking him to the ground and killing him. The accident happened owing to the practice of the stevedores of backing in a team of horses about ten minutes before the meal hour, and demanding that the men rush the work in order to load the vans before quitting for their meals. It was in this perfectly needless rush the sad affair happened.

What was our surprise to read in the report of the inquest that the solicitor for the merchant insinuated that the man was killed because he was a non-union man – that in short he was murdered by the union members! As a matter of fact he had promised to join, and being an old dock labourer had been given a few days grace in which to come up to our offices and make good.

All the papers of Belfast gave prominence to this “Extraordinary Allegation”, as one journal called it, and the matter was commented upon freely throughout the city.

After due deliberation, thinking over all the possible means of redress for *this foul libel* we resolved to take the matter into our own hands, and put a little pressure upon the purse of the man who employed this libeller to slander the Union.

Accordingly at dinner time we told the men employed on the ship in question – the *Nile* – not to resume work until the merchant repudiated the libel or disclaimed all responsibility therefor. The men stood by loyally, and immediately all the forces of capital and law and order were on the alert. The news spread

around the docks as on a wireless telegraph, and both sides were tense with expectancy.

While we were thus waiting and watching the stevedore of the *Nile* sent for the merchant, and asked me through one of his foremen to wait on the spot for him. I waited, but whilst I waited one very officious Harbour official ordered me off the Harbour Estate. The Harbour of Belfast, unlike Dublin or Liverpool, is practically enclosed property. I informed Mr Constable that there was no meeting in progress, and that I was only waiting an answer to our request for a disclaimer from the merchant. He then became rude and domineering, and eventually began to use force. I then told him that if I, as a union official, could not speak to the men individually on the Harbour Estate we would take the men off where we could talk to them.

So we gave the word and called off every man in the Low Docks. In ten minutes 600 men responded and left the docks empty.

In ten minutes more a District Superintendent, merchants, managers, detectives, and Harbour underlings generally were rushing frantically up to the Union rooms begging for the men to go back and “everything would be arranged.”

Well, everything was arranged within an hour. The offending solicitor, after many hoity-toity protests that “he would not be dictated to by the dockers,” climbed gracefully down and dictated a letter to the Press disclaiming any intention to impute evil actions to the Union members, and the letter accordingly appeared in all the Belfast papers.

In addition the Harbour Master assured us that he regretted the action of the constable, which would not be allowed to happen again, and that we would be given full liberty to go anywhere in the docks or ships at all times.

It was all a great object lesson, and has had its full effect on the minds of the Belfast workers. It has taught them that there are other ways than by means of expensive law-suits to vindicate the character and rights of the toilers; and as a result it has given dignity and self-respect to the members of the Union.

We have found it necessary, in order to cope with the needs of our increasing membership, to open new offices for the Ballymacarret side of the city. These offices are at 6 Dalton Street, and will be in charge of a Union official between the hours of 4 and 7 p.m. during the week, and from 12 to 5 p.m. on Saturdays. They will be a great convenience to the local Quay and to our new members from the Chemical Works.

Our campaign against the sweating conditions in the Rope Works is now in full swing. Breakfast and dinner hour meetings are being held when the gospel of discontent and wise organisation is preached to the sweated employees of this huge capitalist concern. We expect good results to the workers from this campaign.

On Tuesday, September 11th, we held a most successful joint demonstration with the seamen and firemen, with Father Hopkins as our chief speaker. The magnitude of the meeting surprised and delighted our comrade, and his speech surprised and delighted the vast audience.

Mr D.R. Campbell, President Belfast Trades Council, was in the chair, and the following resolution was moved by James Connolly, seconded by James Flanagan, supported by Father Hopkins, and passed amid great enthusiasm:—

Resolved — “That in the opinion of this meeting of Belfast workers, the action of Wexford employers in discharging men for joining the Irish Transport Workers’ Union was an outrageous attack upon the liberty of the workers; and that we call upon our Wexford brothers to stand firm, and also call upon all trade unionists in Ireland to answer this outrage by boycotting all the bicycles and other products manufactured by the firm in question.”

The meeting closed with ringing cheers for Father Hopkins, singing of *He’s a jolly good fellow*, and cheers for the Transport Workers’ Union. — Yours,

CONNOLLY.

James Connolly

Walter Carpenter Free

Public Congratulations Sunday's Meeting in Beresford Place

(1911)

Irish Worker, 2 September 1911.
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A public meeting under the auspices of the Socialist Party of Ireland was held last Sunday at Beresford Place to congratulate Mr Walter Carpenter on his discharge from Mountjoy Prison, where he had been confined for a term on a charge of having used language alleged to be derogatory to King George of England. There was a considerable attendance, which included numbers of the National Boy Scouts in their uniform. Unlike previous meetings in Beresford Place, which were attended by a considerable force of the DMP, there was *not a single Cossack* at Sunday's gathering.

Mr James Connolly, Organiser Irish Transport Workers' Union, Belfast, presided. In the course of his address opening the proceedings Mr Connolly said he was glad to see such a large meeting despite the rain and other adverse

circumstances. They had their comrade, Carpenter, again with them, and next to him, but perhaps higher in the degree of criminality, they had Miss Molony (applause). It is, continued Mr Connolly, perfectly shocking to hear you cheer such criminals. I take it that in expressing my own sentiments in this matter I am expressing the sentiments of every man around me – that is to say, that in welcoming Carpenter on his release from prison, we take that opportunity, not only of associating ourselves with him in the crime that he committed, but of declaring our fullest sympathy, and not only our fullest sympathy, but our *completely unqualified endorsement of teh words for which he was sent to prison* (cheers). We are to-day living in times of change – in times of what it is no exaggeration to describe as a revolution. On such an occasion it is but fitting that the party to which our friend Carpenter and Miss Molony belong – the Socialist Party of Ireland – should come forward and take their position with the people in the great crisis with which we have been face to face. It is a pleasure to me as one of the oldest pioneers of trades unionism in Dublin to say how glad I am to be able to call your attention to the fact that in the two great crises – the national crisis and the industrial crisis – in both of which the people of Dublin were met with all kinds of temptations and bribery and with all kinds of poison in order, if possible, to lead them astray and destroy their national spirit – in both these crises the Socialist Party of Ireland were ready with the people to recognise that the national cause and the industrial cause were at stake, and that their place was in the firing line in front of the people (cheers). I am glad to recognise that during these crises you and they acted up to the fullest sense of your responsibilities as men and women. In the first of these crises they had to encounter *a perfect orgy of flunkeyism*. According to the English newspapers Dublin was the most loyal place in all the dominions of the king of England, and the people were supposed to be like bellowing slaves going down on their knees and protesting their loyalty and selfless adulation and worship to a king who rules, we are told, according to the grace of God, but with forty thousand bayonets at the back of him (cheers and laughter). Despite all this attempt to represent Dublin as enthusiastically loyal about a month ago, no sooner had his Gracious (?) Majesty taken his departure from their shores than they saw Dublin a seething mass of discontent – seething with rebellion and ready to go to any extreme in the attempt to gain freedom. I cannot tell you how this old heart of mine rose with gladness when in the North I

heard that the people of Dublin – the workers of Dublin – had taken the measure of their responsibilities and *had unfurled the banner of freedom* – of national and industrial freedom – not only for themselves, but for their struggling brothers across the water. Those men and women who were most enthusiastically national in the first of these crises were at the same time most enthusiastic in support of the industrial uprising during the last few days and weeks; and whether in the workshop or outside it were amongst the first to support their brothers who took active steps to uphold the dignity and the rights of the working classes (cheers). Let us draw the lesson of this great struggle of the last few days and weeks. The newspapers told them that England was one mass of rebellion. Fifty thousand troops were concentrated in London, four warships were in the Mersey, and the guns of these warships and the bayonets of the soldiers were pointed, not against Germany, not against Russia, but against the working classes in the cities of England, just as they were presented against the working classes here in Dublin. All the newspapers had been full of this great upheaval in England, in Dublin, and in Belfast and elsewhere. They had been telling you in great headlines of the terrible news of the great strike in England, Ireland, and Scotland – everything was powerless, works had been suspended and railway communication cut off, and the nation had been threatened with bankruptcy. AS MR MAHONY DECLARED in the Dublin Police Court, if this went on society would be dissolved. Why? Because the workers had stopped work – the poor ill-considered, badly-paid, ill-requited, slave-driven and degraded workers had stopped working; and mark you, my friends, the moment you stopped working society went to chaos, to everlasting smash. Does not that teach you a great lesson – the power of the people; the power of the working classes? We are living in a new age – the age of solidarity of labour. You must recognise that you are living not only in an age of progress, but in an age of revolution. We in Ireland did our part in that struggle, and we have shown that we are determined to win for the workers complete industrial freedom, and the right to live in the country in which they were born. They had but one thing to serve in this struggle, and that was to maintain and uphold the dignity of labour, and they would do that by acting their part as men and as women. In conclusion Mr Connolly read for the meeting the following resolution, which would be proposed for adoption:– “That this meeting of Dublin workers tenders a cordial welcome to Mr Walter

Carpenter on his release from prison, and heartily congratulates him on his timely and effective protest against the recent outburst of flunkeyism in the city” (cheers). [...]

James Connolly

Belfast Dockers

Their Miseries and their Triumphs

(1911)

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Probably the readers of **The Irish Worker** will be glad to learn something of the condition of affairs in the port of Belfast. In the stress and storm of building a Union during and immediately after a strike there is not much time left to an organiser to do much descriptive writing, and hence I have not been able to keep in as close touch with the journal of the Union as I would have wished to, but will in the future. But this battle of the working class should be recorded, and the tale of its martyrdom preserved – the first as an inspiration and the second as a warning. Belfast has had its battles of Labour, and the record of Labour in the port of Belfast for the past five years has every right to be recorded as a record of martyrdom.

Never have I seen the evil results of want of organisation better exemplified than in the Low Docks of Belfast prior to our recent strike.

With the usual fiendish ingenuity of the capitalist class, every device was employed to spur on the dockers to increased activity, and to promote discord and strife. With the disruption of the Union the men were left dispirited and powerless, and stevedores, shipowners, and foremen wrought their sweet will upon them. In order to extract the last ounce of energy out of their bodies a system of bonuses was introduced among the grain labourers. Every gang turning over more than 120 tons of grain received as a bonus the magnificent sum of 6d per man. This, taking 100 tons as an average day's work, meant that for one-fifth of a day's work extra crowded in the ten hours they received one-tenth of a day's pay. This in itself was bad enough, but in actual practice it worked out even more mischievously. By tips to winchmen, firemen, and others, the pace was kept up upon the unfortunate fillers and carriers – curses, obscene epithets, and even physical violence were freely used to supplement the usual fear of dismissal, while the tallymen and checkers were forbidden to reveal the actual tonnages being done until the end of the day's toil. As a result of this systematic slave-driving the average day's work was driven higher and higher, until 160, 180, and 200 tons as a day's work ceased to excite any comment or be considered anyway remarkable. If the reader unacquainted with the technical details of dock labouring at grain vessels will try and realise that this means that one man of each gang, the man carrying to the ship's rail from the ship's hatch, has to carry over his own back all this immense weight, he will begin to understand the depths of slavery to which these men were reduced, as well as the cold-blooded cruelty and avarice of their employers. All day long in the suffering heat of a ship's hold the men toil barefooted and half naked, choked with dust; while the tubs rushed up and down over their heads with such rapidity as to strain every muscle to the breaking point in the endeavour to keep them going, and with such insane recklessness as to be a perpetual menace to life and limb. Add to this inferno of industrial slavery that the men could not even retire to attend to the wants of nature unless they paid a substitute to take their place, that a visit to a WC or a drinking fountain often entailed dismissal, and that every slave-driving foreman or lick-spittle "master's man" had a free hand to apply the spur, and the reader

will have some conception of the depths of degradation to which our unfortunate Belfast brothers were reduced. Accidents were common, as is always the case when men are rushed to the breaking point, and physical break down was so prevalent that it was but rarely that men were able to finish three days' work in succession, the inevitable consequences of their exhausting labours compelling men to remain idle in order to recruit their strength, followed in the complete demoralisation of the workers.

Dockers are as a rule not famed for steadiness and sobriety, but when the nature of their casual labour is taken into account the fact cannot be wondered at. Were some of their 'cultured' critics subject to the same conditions perhaps their genteel varnish would not survive the strain very well. Labour carried to such an excess that men must rest on alternate days to recuperate naturally produces demoralisation and evil habits; hence the organiser and agitator who preaches rebellion against exhausting, ill-paid labour is doing more to uplift and regenerate humanity than they who preach righteousness, but tolerate and encourage slavish conditions and the slavishness begotten of them. The men engaged in timber carrying, in general cargo, and in the coal boats all suffered, in varying degrees, such abominable conditions as these I have but faintly described. In general it may be said that since the general exodus from the Union after our friend, Jim Larkin, left this city the exploiters of labour had piled outrage upon outrage and iniquity upon iniquity until every man in the port with a spark of manhood left was ripe for rebellion. It but required a spark to ignite the magazine; that spark came in the fullness of time.

I had been agitating all up and down the docks, and at every available street corner since the inception of the seamen's strike, urging the men to seize the golden opportunity to strike a blow for their brothers, the seamen, and incidentally for themselves, and found the stream of recruits slowly, if surely, gathering in volume, when I learned that the proprietors of the Head Line, the Ulster SS Co, had refused to pay the Belfast seamen and firemen on the *Innishowen Head* the rate of wages the same firm was paying in the British Channel. Seizing the opportunity along with Mr Bennett, the Secretary of the Seamen and Firemen's Union, we called upon the dockers at that boat, and all

their mates around the docks to come out at once, strike a blow for the sailors, and end their own slavery. Before night we had 600 men on our hands – the battle had begun. How this battle was won I need not remind you. That it was won was largely due to the noble help so generously given by the Dublin men we are not likely to forget. We had not a penny in our funds when we struck. We paid 4s strike pay on the tenth day of our strike, and 4s 6d on the second week. Of this sum more than half came from Dublin, the remainder came from street collections among the loyal-hearted workers of Belfast.

What has been the result of this battle – the fruits of this victory? To tell it in detail would involve the printing of many technicalities, the meaning of which would be lost on many of our readers. But in general it might be said that in wages the grain labourers have gained an increase of at least 3s per week, while their gain in improvement of conditions and increased self-respect cannot be overestimated. On returning to work I announced as organiser that the Union would insist upon the day's work being restricted to 100 tons per gang, and that any gang exceeding that amount would be treated as scabs. It is a great pleasure to record that in enforcing this restriction the Union has been able to count with certainty upon the loyal support of its members. Despite the fact that the employers renewed their offer of a bonus for increased output, no gang have yet consented to earn it. Indeed, in order to make it more attractive the employers offered a bonus of 6d per every 25 tons “or practical part thereof” over 100 tons. Thus a gang turning over 100 tons and one cwt would be entitled to claim this bonus, but it lies yet unclaimed. The awful memory of their recent slavery has made our members watchful. Also, all the slave-driving, curses, obscenity and physical violence on the part of the bosses is a thing of the past. All have been warned that any attempt at a renewal of it will be met with a strike for the dismissal of the offender. Similar conditions have been gained for the timber labourers, and for the men on general cargo. Increase of wages all round, abolition of slave-driving, full and complete unionising of all labour on foreign-going vessels, and spread of the union all around the Coal Quay, is our present record. We have enforced union conditions for the Seamen and Firemen on all ships coming into the Low Dock, downing tools on about a dozen occasions in order to do so; and we stopped work on railway waggons ten minutes after

receiving word from our General Secretary and the Executive of ASRS in Dublin. The Belfast branch of the Railway Servants were still considering the matter for days after they received word from their Executive, but the Belfast Branch of the Irish Transport Workers' Union acted in the Railwaymen's interest ten minutes after we got the joint mandate from Dublin. The timber labourers in the employ of Messrs Dixon were locked out in Dublin; we immediately withdrew our men from Messrs Dixon's yards in Belfast. As a result of this promptitude our Dublin brethren were reinstated with pay for the last day. A boat belonging to Messrs G. & R. Burns (*Lord Inverclyde*) was sent down to the Low Docks for 500 tons of grain. It had on board Messrs Burns' own "constant hands", men who would not join the union, and cheerfully scabbed all during the recent strike. We told them we would give them to breakfast time to join the union; they said that according to the newspapers there was to be no discriminations; we told them that we would give them an experience that would lead them to have less faith in newspapers. They did not join, and much to their surprise our members refused to give their boat another pound weight, and after lying all day it had to be taken out of the dock, and down to Larne.

The Branch has rented extensive premises at 122 Corporation Street, and intend having a smoking and reading room in connection therewith; we are considering the organisation of a band, and have in contemplation also the launching of many other schemes for the moral, social, and financial uplifting of the members.

We are proud of taking part in the recent wonderful revolution in the World of Labour, and look forward, with pleasure, to future activities in the same cause, and to future successes under the banner of the Irish branch of that great onward moving, conquering army of toil, which is destined, I believe in our own time, to conquer and to own the world.

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union is in the vanguard of that Irish branch of the Army of Labour, and we are honoured when we carry its banner. – Yours,

CONNOLLY.

James Connolly

**Sweatshops
Behind the
Orange Flag
(1910)**

From **Forward**, March 11, 1911.

“For nearly a century the question of Home Government has barred with triple steel every door of progress. It has paralysed the energies of the country, and diverted the currents of national activity into the unfruitful charmers of incessant political struggle. But, indeed, it could not fail to be otherwise. For a hundred years the vast body of the Irish people had neither sympathy with, nor confidence in, the executive and administrative government of Ireland. That Government has no natural root in the soil of Ireland. Bureaucratic government cannot soar on ampler wings. Forty-two Boards, without corelation or connection, and almost without responsibility, control the destinies of Ireland.”

The above extract from the manifesto of Ulster Liberal Protestants, issued on 5th December, 1910, will serve as a text for my article this week. I would especially

direct the attention of the thoughtful reader to the opening phrase in the quotation. *“For nearly a century the question of Home Government has barred with triple steel every door of progress.”* How true this is every one acquainted with the inner life of Ireland – its civic and social life as distinguished from its political partisanship – can testify. Ireland is a land of contradictions. Just as it is true that the perfervid orators of the United Irish League, who screech most vehemently for national freedom are in domestic affairs in Ireland the allies and champions of social reaction, and the enemies of intellectual freedom, so also it is true that true blue loyalist leaders, who on every platform assert their unquenchable enthusiasm for the cause of Protestant liberty, are the slimiest enemies of the social advancement of the Protestant working class. It may be news to some of your readers, but it is an undoubted fact that the Catholic labourers in the Catholic districts of Ulster reap the advantage of the Acts empowering Boards of Guardians to erect labourers’ cottages to a degree far in excess of any advantage given to the Protestant agricultural labourers in the Protestant districts. The enemies of Home Rule and Popery are, it appears, also enemies of low rents and sanitary cottages for their labourers. Where his mind is not obsessed with the fear of compromising the national demand, the Irish Catholic labourer seems to be enough of a democrat to insist upon his social rights as against his Catholic employer or representative; but his Protestant fellow-worker in the north seemingly allows a blatant parade of loyalty to “our Protestant institutions” to compensate for all manner of treachery to the cause of labour.

I have pointed out before that the harmless Act to empower a public provision for the feeding of necessitous school children was kept out of Ireland with the connivance – if not directly at the desire – of the Home Rule Party. Let me add that the Ulster beaters of the Orange drum were equally guilty in that respect. Public meetings to demand the application of this Act to Ireland have already been held in Dublin and Cork. The Dublin Trades’ Council has acted, a general committee composed of representatives from the Socialist Party of Ireland, the Daughters of Erin, and the Trades Council have held a public meeting in the Mansion House in furtherance of this object, and induced the Lord Mayor of the city to preside in person; and the Dublin Corporation have

unanimously passed a resolution calling for this Act for Ireland. But Belfast and 'Derry have not moved, the Orange orators are too busy dancing imaginary war dances on the banks of the Boyne to trouble about the starving children of Belfast, or of the city by the Foyle.

The Corporation of Catholic Cork granted me the use of their City Hall for a public meeting for this purpose, as have also the Urban District Council at Queenstown. But the cries of the starving children of Ulster cannot pierce the loyal ears attuned to the after-dinner oratorical efforts of Mr. McMordie, or the poisonous, religious, rancorous ravings of Sir Edward Carson.

But perhaps it will be argued that the prosperity of Belfast is so great that such an Act would be quite unnecessary, and did not Mr. McMordie rise in his place in the House of Commons and work in a free advertisement for workers in the linen trade of that city, by telling of the great demand for workers there, and of its great and abundant prosperity. I extract from the **Belfast Newsletter**, a rabidly loyalist paper, of September 8, 1910, the following short report of a speech delivered in the Ulster Hall, Belfast, by Miss Mary Galway, Secretary of the Millworkers, on the conditions of sweated outworkers in the linen industry in Belfast. It shows how the Godly Protestant employers of Belfast sweat and rob the Godly Protestant workers, and how zeal for the Empire is made a cloak to trick out a mad desire to amass wealth by grinding the faces of the poor:

“Miss Galway then displayed samples of the work done in the home, and gave figures regarding the rate of pay. She said for clipping cotton pocket handkerchiefs with 120 clips on each a sum of 1d. per dozen was paid, and it took an expert worker five hours to clip twelve dozen. For threaddrawing pure linen handkerchiefs supplied by one of the best and oldest firms in the city, 1d. per dozen was paid, and six dozen could be drawn in one hard day's work. A widow with seven children could earn at most 4/- per week at hand-spoke work, the rate of payment being 1/3 per dozen handkerchiefs. For clipping the threads on an elaborately embroidered bedspread, 88 ins. by 100 ins., 3/4d. was paid, and it took fully an hour to do that work. Another woman was engaged three long days embroidering a linen teacloth, 45 ins. by 43 ins., for which she was paid 8d. Thread-drawing of pillow-cases was paid at the rate of 4d. per dozen, and four

could be done in an hour. On a cotton handkerchief there were 112 dots, and the worker was paid 6d. per dozen handkerchiefs, while at shirtmaking an expert worker could earn about 1/3 in fourteen hours. She could quote other instances showing the long hours and wretched pay of these workers, and yet they were asked was there any sweating?"

Since then, in answer to his unctuous self-congratulations in Parliament, Miss Galway has challenged Mr. M'Mordie, M.P., to take a walk with her to houses within fifteen minutes of the Belfast City Hall, and she would show him still more outrageous cases of sweating; but no acceptance is yet forthcoming.

But when election time rolls around, the smug representative of orangeism will beat the big drum of "*saving the union*" before the working class voters, and with that discord in their ears they will be deaf to the cry of the helpless victims of capitalist oppression.

Oh, words of burning truth! "*For nearly a century the question of Home Government has barred with triple steel every door of progress!*"

The question of Home Government, the professional advocacy of it, and the professional opposition to it, is the greatest asset in the hands of reaction in Ireland, the never-failing decoy to lure the workers into the bogs of religious hatreds and social stagnation.

The Protestant workers of Belfast are essentially democratic in their instincts, but not a single Belfast loyalist M.P. voted for the Old Age Pensions' Act. The loyalist M.P.s knew that the beating of the orange drum would drown every protest within their constituencies.

The development of democracy in Ireland has been smothered by the Union. Remove that barrier, throw the Irish people back upon their own resources, make them realise that the causes of poverty, of lack of progress, of arrested civic and national development, are then to be sought for within and not without, are in their power to remove or perpetuate, and ere long that spirit of democratic progress will invade and permeate all our social and civic institutions.

Believing that that day is approaching, the Socialist Party of Ireland seeks to prepare for it by laying now the foundations of that socialist movement, whose duty it will be to guide and direct the efforts of labour in Ireland, to find and fashion a proper channel of expression and instrument of emancipation.

That labour movement of the future, as well as the socialist movement of today must, indeed, draw inspiration from the successes of our comrades abroad, but must also shape its course to suit the conditions within our own shores.

The Socialist Party of Ireland recognises and most enthusiastically endorses the principle of internationalism, but it realises that that principle must be sought through the medium of universal brotherhood rather than by self-extinction of distinct nations within the political maw of over-grown Empires.

When once all the socialists in Ireland recognise this principle, and unite with us, they will have cause to wonder at the readiness with which the workers of Ireland will respond to the socialist appeal.

If all the socialists in Ireland who waste their time in cursing the unprogressiveness of the Irish workers, had only sufficient moral courage to declare themselves, they would be astonished at the multitude of their numbers, and would then realise that they were strong enough to ensure respect and toleration.

Until they do, we will be compelled to see Irish Tory employers hiding their sweatshops behind orange flags, and Irish home rule landlords using the green sunburst of Erin to cloak their rackrenting in the festering slums of our Irish towns.

James Connolly

Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P.

His Strength and Weakness

(1911)

Forward, 18 March, 1911.

In endeavouring to give readers in Great Britain some real conception of the realities of Irish political life, one finds the task of explanation made increasingly difficult by the spectacular nature of the campaign waged by the Redmondites on the one hand, and the reactionary, lying stupidities of the Irish Tories on the other. The fact that national political freedom is both desirable and necessary blinds many people to the truth that the advocates of such freedom on the political field may be most intensely conservative on the social or economic field and, indeed, may be purblind bigots in their opposition to all other movements making for human progress or enlightenment.

On the other hand there are not wanting, even among Socialists, many who seeing the socially reactionary character of much of the agitation for national freedom, became opposed to the principle because of the anti-Socialist character of some of its advocates.

The Socialist Party of Ireland avoids the dangers of either course. It recognises that national political freedom is an inevitable step towards the attainment of universal economic freedom, but it insists that the non-Socialist leaders of merely national movements should be regarded in their true light as

champions of the old social order and not exalted into the position of popular heroes by any aid of Socialist praise or glorification. A fact many of our British comrades are apt to forget.

We need not beslaver the United Irish League because we detest the Tories. We can detest them both. In fact they represent the same principle in different stages of social development. The Tories are the conservatives of Irish feudalism, the United Irish Leaguers are the conservatives of a belated Irish capitalism. It is our business to help the latter against the former only when we can do so without prejudice to our own integrity as a movement.

How difficult this becomes, at times, is best illustrated by the position of Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P., "Leader of the Irish race", as his followers enthusiastically assure us. Mr. Redmond has a record as a reactionist difficult to excel. Long before the Parnell split, he denounced the Irish agricultural labourers in a speech at Rathfarnham, near Dublin, for forming a trade union to protect their own interests. On the granting of Local Government in 1898, a measure that first enfranchised the Irish working class on local bodies, Mr. Redmond made a speech counselling the labourers to elect landlords to represent them – a speech truly characterised by Mr. Michael Davitt in the House of Commons as the "speech of a half-emancipated slave". The labourers in town and country treated Mr. Redmond's advice with contempt and elected men of their own class all over Ireland. Compelled by the imperative necessity of maintaining in power a Home Rule government, Mr. Redmond votes for every measure of social reform the defeat of which would lead to the resignation of said government, but quietly acquiesces in every exemption of Ireland from progressive measures. Mr. Redmond believes that the Irish people are capable of governing their country, but opposed the proposal of Mr. T.W. Russell to allow the Irish people to control their own schools under the Local Government Act of 1898. Mr. Redmond bewails the fact that lack of employment compels the Irish workers to emigrate at the rate of 30,000 per year, but opposed the attempt of the Labour party to compel the government to recognise its duty to provide work for them at home; Mr. Redmond believes that all public servants and representatives should be paid for their services to the State from the funds of the state, but is opposed to

payment of members being extended to Ireland; Mr. Redmond's heart bleeds for the poor of Ireland, but he would not vote for the Feeding of School Children's Act to be applied to Ireland, and Mr. Redmond is a friend of the Labour party in England (!), but his party fights to the death against every independent candidature of Labour throughout the purely Nationalist districts of Ireland.

If we are, as we are, capable of running our own country, how comes it we are not fit to be trusted with our own schools? And if the public control of schools by the Catholic Irish people would lead to atheism and to the persecution of the clergy, how has it not produced the same effect in Canada which Mr. Redmond is continually praising as an example for Ireland? Here is what a clergyman, the Rev. J.E. Burke, in a recent speech in the Assembly Hall, Belfast, said of the educational system of Canada – that country so beloved of Mr. T.P. O'Connor and Mr. Redmond:

They had no church schools – nothing but state schools. While the priest and the parson were at liberty to visit the schools and give advice and encouragement, they had nothing to do in the management. The children of all nationalities and all creeds and classes attended these schools and grew up together in them, and he believed that the result of this was a better understanding amongst them in after life.

Mr. Redmond exalts Canada as a model for Irish Government, but opposes in Ireland all these domestic institutions which make free government a success in Canada.

If it was right, as it undoubtedly was, to demand aid for Irish farmers, why is it not equally right to demand state aid or local aid for starving Irish school children?

If, as Mr. Redmond claims, Ireland is overtaxed to the extent of over two millions per year, how will payment of Irish members of Parliament be a gift from the 'British' Treasury? Does one feel like the recipient of a 'gift' when you get back some of your own?

How then does Mr. Redmond and his party maintain their hold despite their essentially reactionary position? Simply because the Irish Unionists are still more reactionary. It is almost a choice between the devil and the deep sea.

Observe: In the debate in the House of Commons on the M'Cann case, Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P., taunted the Orange bigots with the fact that none of their clergymen had been on the Anti-Sweating platform in the Ulster Hall, Belfast. As a matter of fact, the same was true of the Catholic clergymen. None of them were on that platform either, but the stupid Orange reactionaries could not think of a better answer to Joe than to deny the fact of the sweating. The obvious retort was apparently beyond their capacities.

Another illustration: In the debate upon the issue of the writ for North Louth, an Orange member, Mr. William Moore, moved to suspend the issue of the writ for four months on the ground that 'Protestants' had been assaulted. This motion was made despite the fact that the whole trend of the evidence had been to prove that every species of intimidation and bribery had been brought to bear upon Catholics who refused to bow to the dictates of the official Home Rule gang. That, in short, it was Catholics who needed to be protected and not Protestants.

A motion to suspend the issue of the writ pending a Parliamentary investigation into the workings of the organisations responsible for the wholesale terrorism exercised upon the electors of North Louth – irrespective of religion – would have opened the way for a capable man to give such an exposure of the workings of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) and its relation to the United Irish League, as might have led to the extirpation of that pest in Ireland, but no one could expect such *statesmanship* from the Orange quarter.

But just imagine what a real Irish democrat could have made of such a situation! Then he could have dealt with the pilgrimage of the M.P.'s to America and Canada to beg from Irish exiles money towards the Irish cause, how our exiled brothers and sisters stinted themselves of, perhaps, even the necessaries of life in order to help to "free Ireland and uplift poor Mother Erin", and how the money thus procured was used to debauch Irish men and women, to destroy

political purity, to purchase bludgeons to smash in the heads of Irish men, and to terrorise the peaceful countryside?

A real representative of the Irish democracy might go on to show how Mr. Joseph Devlin's organisation, the A.O.H., supposed to be the Ancient Order of Hibernians, but by some believed to be the Ancient Order of Hooligans, has spread like an ulcer throughout Ireland, carrying social and religious terrorism with it into quarters hitherto noted for their broad-mindedness and discernment.

How it has organised the ignorant, the drunken and the rowdy, and thrown the shield of religion around their excesses; how it has made it impossible to conduct a political contest in the South of Ireland except on the lines of civil war; and how, every man who dares to oppose the Redmondite party, or every man within that party who opposes the A.O.H., must be at all times prepared to take his life in his hands ...

Every shade of political feeling in Ireland, outside of the official gang at the head of the United Irish League, agree that this organisation of Mr. Devlin's creation, and of whose work Mr. Redmond accepts the fruits, is the greatest curse yet introduced into the political and social life of Ireland. It is the organised ignorance of the community placing itself unreservedly at the disposal of the most insidious and inveterate enemies of enlightenment. In West Belfast it calls upon the Labour vote, upon the Socialists, to vote for 'Wee Joe Devlin', and in Queenstown [\[1\]](#) it foments a riot in order to prevent a Socialist speaker delivering his message; it is a true reincarnation of mediaeval intolerance masquerading in the guise of Christian charity ...

Such is the problem, or rather some factors in the problem, in Ireland. Say, ye British Socialists, have your leaders any conception of this problem, or do they imagine that an Irish branch of a British Socialist organisation can grapple with this problem, or do anything with it save make a mess of it?

Or that it can be grappled with in any manner save from within the Irish nation by the workers of Ireland uniting in a party of their own to throw off the incubus of social slavery and religious intolerance? Such is the work the Socialist

Party of Ireland sets out to accomplish. In that work the Socialists of Ireland know well that they can expect no help or countenance from the bigots of either Green or Orange persuasion, and while ever insisting upon the right of Ireland to control its own destinies, it allows precedence in its thoughts and plans to no interest but one, that of the working class. To the Redmonds and the Devlins, the Carsons and the Moores – it leaves the apostleship of religious bigotry; in our ranks there is no room for that type of politician of whom the poet writes that:–

With all his conscience and with one eye askew,
So false he partly took himself for true;
Whose pious talk, when most his heart was dry,
Made wet the crafty crow's-foot round his eye;
Who never naming God except for gain,
So never took that useful name in vain;
Made Him his cat's paw, and the Cross his tool,
And Christ his bait to trap his dupe and fool;
Nor deeds of gift, but gifts of grace, he forged,
And, snakelike, slimed his victim ere he gorged.

Footnotes

[1.](#) Since renamed Cobh. A reference to the organised attack on one of Connolly's Socialist meetings there. – The text here is not the full text of the article. The omitted portions consist of very long quotations from the **Cork Free Press**, organ of William O'Brien, M.P., and Mr. Lindsay Crawford, leader of the Independent Orangemen, both exposing the sectarian activities of the A.O.H.