

# James Connolly

## The Larne Strike II

(1913)

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**Forward,** 28 June, 1913.  
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The first strike broken in Ireland by the direct intervention of the clergy has recently ended in Larne, County Antrim. At that port the workers in the Aluminium works, to the number of over 300, lately joined the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and came out on strike for an improvement of their conditions. The overwhelming majority of these workers are Protestants, and on Sunday 15th June, they took advantage of their strike holiday to attend their respective places of worship. As they have been working 12 hours a day 7 days a week, this was the first occasion upon which a good many of them had had the opportunity to attend divine services. The Belfast papers upon Monday 16th June, announced that at all the Protestant churches on Sunday the strikers were asked to remain after services until the minister has an opportunity of speaking to them in private.

It is understood that at these private conferences in the Protestant churches after service, the clergymen urged upon the men to return to work and trust to the goodwill of the manager. As a result, upon Monday, the work gates were besieged by a mob of men clamorously begging for leave to return at any terms the manager chose to impose. The Irish Transport Workers' Union upon the

Saturday had paid half strike pay to all the men on strike, none of whom were more than three weeks in the Union, and had promised more substantial aid for the ensuing week. But the fires of sectarian and political bigotry had been let loose, the chief argument used being that as the headquarters of the Union are in Dublin it is a 'Fenian' and 'Papist' organisation, and by this specious devilry the strikers were whipped back to their work, and the twin forces of scabbism and Carsonism won a glorious victory.

Clerical interference in industrial disputes has been common in Ireland, but it is a matter of bitter comment in Labour circles here that the only occasion upon which this clerical dictation succeeded in acting the part of strike breaker should be among and with Protestants, in an Orange community, in the most Orange part of the North-East of Ulster.

During the six months lock-out of the foundry workers in Wexford almost all of the clergy used their influence from the altar, in the confraternities, and in the homes of the workers, to coerce them into giving up the Union, but although that was the only point at issue, the men resolutely but respectfully told the clergymen to mind their own business, and despite all that these gentlemen could do, the boys of Wexford fought on, and suffered on, until they won.

But in Larne! It is to laugh!

I have often said, to the scandal of my hearers here, that the North-East corner of Ulster is the only priest-ridden part of Ireland. And it is true if by 'priest-ridden' we mean a part of the country where by appeals to theological hatreds the populace can be got to act contrary to their material interests. In other parts of Ireland the populace compel the priests to become their leaders or to remain powerless to command political or social obedience; here at the command of sectarianism the interests of trade unionism, of social progress, of material well-being are all forgotten, and in the midst of a battle against abominably slavish conditions, the workers are induced to abandon their trade organisation, to bite the hand that fed them, and to throw away the only weapon that could protect them.

For 17 years they slaved 12 hours per day, 7 days per week, and were loyal and submissive and true blue. The agitators of the Irish Transport Workers' Union succeeded in lighting in their breasts the divine spark of rebellion and in keeping it alight for a whole week. But the returning wave of sectarian bigotry guided by the hands of God's ministers has again drowned the spark, and peace reigns once more in Larne.

And the irony of it all lies in the fact that the strike was practically won when the collapse took place. Internal arrangements had been made for a start on the basis of an Eight Hour Day, or 56 hours per week, and this has in fact been adhered to from the start. But whereas the output for gang or for men for eight hours would have remained as before the strike, now the gangs have been re-shuffled, with the end in view of compelling the Eight Hour's shift to produce as nearly what a 12-hour shift formerly did, as scientific slave-driving operating upon disorganised men can do. This and a reduction in wages averaging from 2/6 to 3/- per week, sum up the glorious achievement of our clergy in Larne.

Net result of the strike – A reduction of hours to eight per day.

Net result of clerical dictation – Victimization of men made possible, increased slave-driving of a merciless character, average reduction of wages from 2/6 to 3/- per week, and smashing up of the local branch of the Union.

A great victory for the apostles of 'civil and religious liberty' in the very home of their apostolate!

**James Connolly**

**The Larne Strike I**

(1913)

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**Forward,** 14 June, 1913.  
From the collection: **Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table**, Cork Workers' Club 1975.  
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At Larne, in the County Antrim, a place noted for its irreproachable loyalty, there has been a slight break in the monotony of the relations between the slaves and the slave-drivers. The principal industry in the district is the manufacture of aluminium, the name of the company being the British Aluminium Company. The men in the service of this company in the production of the commodity in question have been compelled to work, as their normal routine, a weekly total of 84 hours labour, or 12 hours per day, 7 days per week.

After an uninterrupted run of 17 years there has at last come a strike for a reduction in the hours of labour. The strike took place with dramatic suddenness, following a refusal of the management to consent to an interview with officials of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, under whose banner the men in question have recently organised themselves.

The day shift decided half-an-hour before commencing work to strike to compel the management to consent to an interview and in another half-an-hour they were joined by the full force of the day shift. The strike had lasted ten days, when the first distribution of Strike Pay took place on the 14th inst. and the men were as determined as ever. But as they were only three weeks in the Union when the strike took place, their Committee had decided to issue an appeal for funds to enable them to supplement the sums granted out of the Union exchequer.

Any reader of **Forward** who can afford any help to assist in this uprising against such intolerable conditions as I have mentioned – a normal working week of 84 hours – should send along their mite to the Secretary, 122, Corporation

Street, Belfast. The Belfast press when chronicling the strike stated that the management felt aggrieved at the precipitate action of the men, as it “had always been ready to listen to and remedy the grievances of the employees”.

For cool, unblushing effrontery that statement would need some beating. Always ready to remedy grievances and yet compelling its poor unfortunate slaves of employees to work 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and, to make matters worse, no regular meal hours, but the worker compelled to snatch his meals as best he could, whilst keeping up his labour under the most wretched conditions of physical toil.

I am informed that this company has another branch in Scotland, at Kinlochleven. If this is true, can some reader inform me what are the conditions of labour, and will some industrial rebel in that vicinity agitate among the Aluminium slaves there to make a move for greater freedom now.

Talking about the Belfast press moves me to mention that that arch exponent of the vilest Ulster Toryism, the **Belfast Evening Telegraph**, publishes every Saturday, a so-called Labour column, supposedly devoted to chronicling of happenings in the world of Labour.

Anything more utterly reactionary or opposite to everything the Labour Movement stands for than the writings in this Labour column would be hard to find, even in the organs of the Shipping Federation, or of the Liberty and Property Defence League. The writer positively gloats in every opportunity to pour cold water upon every forward move. In no single case that I can recall has he ever approved of any strike. No matter how horrible may have been the conditions, how revolting the slavery, how atrociously small the wage, the strike has always been unjustifiable, deplorable, and a menace to the prosperity of the nation. No Labour candidature is ever anything but anathema, and the whole industrial world is treated as one would expect it to be treated by a slave currying favour with a slaveowner.

When I am inclined to be angry in my estimate of Belfast human nature, I am often brought back to sweet toleration by remembering that a people who

have been brought up on such mental pabulum as to fit them to believe that such writings represent the Labour Movement, cannot be expected to believe as a progressive people would.

**James Connolly**

# **The Awakening of Ulster's Democracy**

**(1913)**

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**Forward,** 7 June, 1913.  
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The largest Labour Demonstration seen in Dublin in this generation took place on Sunday, 25th May. It was on the occasion of the holding of a May demonstration, and if a little belated, it made up in size and in enthusiasm for the tardiness of the celebration.

But the mere size of the demonstration was not even its most remarkable point – that was provided rather by its character than by its dimensions. There have ere now been held in Dublin Labour Demonstrations greater in magnitude, and perhaps other generations have seen some even surpassing the one under notice. But all such demonstrations have been part of some other movement – for

instance, a Labour Demonstration of the supporters of Home Rule, the Land League, or as in O'Connell's days, of the Repeal Movement. It was of some such demonstration that Charles Gavin Duffy wrote one of his finest poems – the poem containing that verse so frequently quoted since by Home Rule politicians desirous of winning the English Labour vote: “Ever to toil, ever to moil, This is our social charter; And city slave and peasant serf, Each its unfailing martyr.”

Then as now the Home Rule politician was bubbling over with sympathy for Labour, provided that Labour knew how to behave itself, and keep its proper place.

Its proper place, of course, being as one of the assets of the political movement of some section of its masters. Thus Labour is ever encouraged to revolt against the Orange sweaters of the North, but nothing must be done to encourage any such revolt against the Nationalist sweaters of the South.

As the song says: “Oh, no, we never mention them: Their names are never heard!”

The revolt of Labour when it can be manipulated as an asset of the Home Rule movement is all right, but the revolt of Labour against the slum landlords, grabbers and sweating employers who control that movement is a very naughty, unpatriotic, anti-Irish, irreligious, blasphemous, immoral, factionist, traitorous, cloven-hoof sort of iniquity that ought to be suppressed.

Hence the significance of the demonstration of Labour on Sunday, 25th May, will be appreciated when it is understood that it was not only not under the patronage of any political party, but was out flatly and defiantly in opposition to them all. The reporters of the capitalist press were ordered off the platforms, and hooted by the assembled multitude.

The working class of Dublin in a greater proportion than that of any of the great cities of these countries, has made up its mind in favour of independent political action. The fact that it is sternly Nationalist does not alter that fact. With it Nationalism is not a thing to be argued about, any more than the existence of

Ireland is a matter of controversy or speculation. But having that fact allowed, it does not propose any longer to be made the sport of politicians whom it suspects of using Nationalist aspirations to cloak and protect capitalist outrages.

Thus the rising vote in favour of Labour at all municipal elections in Dublin, despite the fact that such elections are made political tests by the United Irish League. Given Home Rule, and payment of election expenses, Dublin would go Labour at the first election.

It is often said that the Irish flag is a green flag to suit a green people, but the Dublin workers are not so green as to believe that a party which voted against the Right to Work Bill, the Minimum Wage for Miners, and the Minimum Wage for Railwaymen, which intrigued against the application to Ireland of the Feeding of Necessitous School Children and the Medical Benefits of the Insurance Act, can be described as anything else than a treacherous "friend" of Labour.

Some day a similar spirit will come up North, and the workers of the North-East corner will get tired of being led by the nose by a party captained by landlords, and place-hunting lawyers. Here in Ulster the ascendancy party does not even need to pretend to be favourable to the aspirations of Labour; it is openly hostile, and the inculcation of slavish sentiments is a business it never neglects. In that is the main difference between the parties – the growth of a rebellious spirit amongst the Nationalist democracy has compelled the Home Rule politicians to pay court to Labour, to assume a virtue even when they have it not, but the lack of such a spirit in this section has enabled the Orange leaders to openly flout and antagonise the Labour movement.

But times change, and we change with them. Ulster democracy is awakening also, and we long and will see in Belfast movements of Labour as great as, if not greater than any of which Dublin can boast. Already the dry bones are stirring. There is, thanks to our ceaseless propaganda at mill doors, more active and intelligent discontent in the mills of Belfast today than at any time past. The ranks of the Irish Textile Workers' Union are being recruited by hundreds, an emphatic demand is being made for the extension to the entire linen industry of the Trade Boards Act, and a great demonstration for that purpose is to be held on

Monday, 9th June, in Smithfield, to be addressed by A. Conley of the Clothiers Operatives of Leeds, and Councillor Tom Lawlor of Dublin. It is to be hoped that all the Belfast readers of **Forward** will attend.

In Larne the oppressive conditions in the Aluminium works have also produced a revolt, and the poor slaves there who have been working 84 hours per week have turned to the Irish Transport Workers' Union for relief, with the result that a betterment is already in sight. The dock labourers in the same port have joined the above union to a man, and in fact Labour in the North is beginning to shake its chains.

On the Belfast docks also the section of the dockers who, under the influence of religious prejudice and political intriguing, have held aloof from organisation, are now joining in troops, and increases have already been obtained for sections of these workers.

In the shipyards the agitation in favour of an Eight Hour Day is being seriously discussed, and the forces of Labour generally seem to be gathering for a battle of battles for the things that really matter. In that glorious day Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right, but all those leaders who now trumpet forth that battle cry will then be found arrayed against the Ulster democracy.

**James Connolly**

# **Many-Headed Opposition**

**(1913)**

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That our readers might understand the position, it is as well to state that for some years back the main interest of the Congress has centred around the proposal to establish an Irish Labour Party. At last year's Congress at Clonmel this proposal was carried, much to the chagrin of the reactionary elements.

The opposition to the proposal came from most strangely assorted forces. The Hibernians opposed it, the Orangemen opposed it, the All-for-Irelanders (William O'Brien's followers) opposed, and the members of the Belfast Branch of the British I.L.P. opposed it in the name (wonder of wonders!) of international solidarity. To this wonderful combination of Orangemen, United Irish Leaguers, O'Brienites and Socialists (?) were opposed the Irish Trade Unionists who were sick of all the old parties, and had already fought them in municipal elections, and the Socialists, who adhered to the policy of the Socialist Party of Ireland. That policy was the policy of encouraging the working class of Ireland to work in harmony with the national aspirations of Ireland, but to go on with the formation of a definite class party to fight all the old parties upon the political field.

Although the Labour Party resolution, as it was called, was carried, circumstances have prevented it taking other than a municipal direction so far, and it is believed in some quarters that an effort will be made at Congress under some guise to have the question re-opened.

If it is re-opened, we may expect again to see Belfast Socialists who still retain their affiliation with the I.L.P. of Great Britain, uniting with Orangemen and Hibernians to strangle the infant movement of an Irish Labour Party. Already that element was the chief agent in securing by a majority of one the withdrawal of the Belfast Trades Council from the Irish Trades Congress. As the Orangeman says "We will not have Home Rule," so the Belfast dissenters from the position accepted by most Socialists in Ireland say "We will not have an Irish

Labour Party.” So he repeats in the Labour movement the same feelings of hatred and distrust of his Catholic brothers and sisters, as his exploiters have instilled into him for their own purposes from infancy.

The great majority of Socialists in Ireland have united under one banner and one name, that of the Independent Labour Party of Ireland, quite distinct from the Trade Union organisation, but also in harmony with it. But a small section of Belfast Socialists still holds aloof, unconsciously influenced by old prejudices against the rest of Ireland, and trying to fool itself into the belief that it is opposing the development of the political movement of the working class in Ireland – in the interests of internationalism. The kind of internationalism that is most eloquently advocated by Sir Edward Carson and his followers under another and more genuine name.

It will be interesting to see this young infant of the political movement of Labour in Ireland grapple with this many-headed opposition at Cork.

**James Connolly**

**Catholicism,  
Protestantism &  
Politics**

**(1913)**

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From time to time I propose to give some attention to the elucidation of the problems peculiar to Ireland and particularly to this part of it. For the present, it is sufficient to emphasise the fact that the religious affiliations of the population of Ulster determine their political leanings to a greater extent than is the case in any part of Europe outside the Balkans. But the manner in which this has developed is also unique. I believe that it is true to say that, politically speaking, the Protestantism of the North of Ireland has no parallel outside this country, and that the Catholicism of the Irish Catholics is, likewise, peculiar in its political trend.

To explain – I mean that, whereas, Protestantism has in general made for political freedom and political Radicalism, it has been opposed to slavish worship of kings and aristocrats. Here, in Ireland, the word Protestant is almost a convertible term with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the “lower classes”.

And in the same manner, Catholicism which in most parts of Europe is synonymous with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the lower classes, in Ireland is almost synonymous with rebellious tendencies, zeal for democracy, and intense feelings of solidarity with all strivings upward of those who toil.

Such a curious phenomenon is easily understood by those who know the history of Ireland. Unfortunately for their spiritual welfare – and I am using the word “spiritual”, not in its theological but in its better significance as controlling mental and moral development upward – the Protestant elements of Ireland were, in the main, plantation of strangers upon the soil from which the owners

had been dispossessed by force. The economic dispossession was, perforce, accompanied by a political and social outlawry. Hence every attempt of the dispossessed to attain citizenship, to emerge from their state of outlawry, was easily represented as a tentative step towards reversing the plantation and towards replanting the Catholic and dispossessing the Protestant.

Imagine this state of matter persisting for over 200 years and one realises at once that the planted population – the Protestants – were bound to acquire insensibly a hatred of political reform and to look upon every effort of the Catholic to achieve political recognition as a insidious move towards the expulsion of Protestants. Then the Protestant always saw that the kings and aristocrats of England and Ireland were opposed by the people whom he most feared and from recognising that it was but an easy step to regard his cause as identical with theirs. They had a common enemy, and he began to teach his children that they had a common cause, and common ideals.

This is the reason – their unfortunate isolation as strangers holding a conquered country in fee for rulers alien to its people – that the so-called Scotch of Ulster have fallen away from and developed antagonism to political reform and mental freedom as rapidly as the Scots of Scotland have advanced in adhesion to these ideals.

The Catholics, for their part, and be it understood I am talking only of the Catholic workers, have been as fortunately placed for their political education as they were unfortunately placed for their political and social condition. Just as the Socialist knows that the working class, being the lowest in the Social system, cannot emancipate itself without as a result emancipating all other classes, so the Irish Catholic has realised instinctively that he, being the most oppressed and disfranchised, could not win any modicum of political freedom or social recognition for himself without winning it for all others in Ireland. Every upward step of the Catholic has emancipated some one of the smaller Protestant sects; every successful revolt of the Catholic peasant has given some added security even to those Protestant farmers who were most zealously defending the landlord. And out of this struggle the Catholic has, perforce, learned toleration. He has learned that his struggle is, and has been, the struggle of all the lowly and

dispossessed, and he has grown broad-minded with the broad-mindedness of the slave in revolt against slavery.

But with the advent of Home Rule, nay even with the promise of Home Rule and the entrance of Ireland upon the normal level of civilised, self-governing nations, the old relation of Protestant and Catholic begins to melt and dissolve, and with their dissolution will come a new change in the relation of either faith to politics. The loss of its privileged position will mean for Protestantism the possibilities of an immense spiritual uplifting; and emergence into a knowledge of its kinship with its brothers and sisters of different creeds. Whether the entrance of Catholicity into a position of mere numerical voting power will lead, in its turn, to a withering up of those kindly feelings born of its past sufferings is another matter. I do not believe that it will, at least amongst the toilers. Our apprenticeship to misery has been too long, our journeyings in the desert of slavery have surely implanted in our breasts a sense of the criminality of any attempt to impose fetters upon others such as we ourselves have worn. And out of that belief the writer looks forward with confidence to the future believing that the tale these Notes from Ireland will have to tell will be a hopeful one, even if the hope is nurtured amid storm and stress.

**James Connolly**

# **British Labour and Irish Politicians**

**(1913)**

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I have spent a great portion of my life alternating between interpreting Socialism to the Irish and interpreting the Irish to the Socialists. Of the two tasks, I confess, that while I am convinced that the former has been attended with a considerable degree of success, the latter has not. At least as far as the Socialists of Great Britain are concerned, they always seem to me to exhibit towards the Irish working-class democracy of the Labour movement the same inability to understand their position and to share in their aspirations as the organised British nation, as a whole, has shown to the struggling Irish nation it has so long held in subjection.

No one, and least of all the present writer, would deny the sympathy of the leaders of the British Labour movement towards the Labour and Socialist movements of Ireland, but a sympathy not based upon understanding is often more harmful than a direct antagonism. A case in point will serve to illustrate my meaning as well as to provide a guide and a warning for the future.

Upon the passing of the Local Government Act, establishing household suffrage for the municipalities and local governing bodies of Ireland, in 1898, the Trades Councils and other trades bodies all over this country proceeded to form independent Labour Electoral Associations for the purpose of running Labour candidates against the nominees of both the orthodox Irish political parties.

At once, as was natural, the capitalist politicians took fright, and in press and on platform the Irish workers were denounced for daring to abandon their 'natural leaders'.

But the Irish workers who knew the Irish political cliques and their leaders at first hand and appraised them accordingly at their just value, went on with the nomination of their candidates, practically every trades council in this country

being actively engaged in the work of fighting for independent Labour representation.

The small British Socialist press which then existed had given, up till this, a cordial approval of this hopeful development of the political side of the Irish Labour movement.

But so ominous did this movement appear to the interests which control the Home Rule party that eventually the present leader of that party took the field against it, and in a carefully reported speech, declared that 'Labour and Nationality must march together', meaning as all his hearers knew, as everybody in Ireland knew, that Labour must abandon its political adventure as a separate cause, and must be content to seek its fortunes as a subordinate issue in the Home Rule camp.

Labour, in Ireland, did not pay much attention to this pronouncement against it, but the responsible leaders of the Labour movement in Great Britain immediately seized upon this phrase and in press and on platform it was heralded in that country as a 'magnificent pronouncement of the Irish party *in favour of Labour*'.

In the **Workers' Republic**, March, 1901, and October, 1901, Connolly made similar criticisms of the British Labour attitude; in his final article he wrote: "Mr. Keir Hardie, MP, and his colleagues on the **Labour Leader** have been assiduously instilling into the minds of the British Socialists the belief that Mr. John Redmond's Home Rule Party are burning with enthusiasm for Labour and are favourably inclined towards Socialism. We beg our readers in Ireland not to laugh at this ... We do not agree with Hardie's general policy, would decidedly not adopt it as our own, but we believe in his honesty of purpose. We ask nothing from the English democracy but we do not wish to cross one another's path. We believe the Irish working class are strong enough to fight their own battles and we would be the last to advise them to seek outside help in the struggle that lies before them. We do not propose to criticise Hardie's voting alliance with the Home Rulers, but a voting alliance need not be accompanied by indiscriminate praise of your temporary allies." In his first article Connolly wrote: "The Irish

Home Rule party is essentially a capitalist party ... Its chiefs do indeed 'recognise that there is a Labour question', but they recognise it only in order to sidetrack and postpone indefinitely its discussion."

A more ridiculous perversion of facts it would be hard to conceive. But all during these fiercely contested Local Government elections in Ireland where Irish MP's were brought down in shoals into the municipal wards to fight against the nominees of the Irish Trade Unions, these same MP's had no better weapons in their armouries than the eulogies which, in England, were being lavished by responsible Labour men upon the Home Rule leaders – eulogies based upon and only made possible by a wresting of the language of a politician from all relation to the circumstances which inspired it.

If some one had said, in England, that "Labour and Liberalism must march together", no one would have or could have construed it into a declaration of Liberalism in favour of the Labour movement, but all would have recognised it as a declaration against that political independence of Labour which is the very essence of the movement. So it was with the former declaration in Ireland; but the British Socialists, accustomed to think of the Home Rule party as a minority party, utterly misunderstood its attitude and language when speaking in Ireland as a majority party deprecating all political activities not under the control of its officials.

This is but one sample out of many that could be quoted of the difficulty of making the comrades in Great Britain understand the totally different conditions in Ireland and also understand that these conditions naturally produce catch-words, phrases and rallying cries which bear no relation to the conditions which prevail in Great Britain.

The Labour party in Parliament tries to surmount this difficulty by, so to speak, establishing Home Rule in its relations with Ireland. Thus, if a trade union in Ireland writes to the Labour party asking that a certain question be raised in Parliament, if that question pertains to a district represented by a member of the Home Rule party, the answer sent to the trade union generally is that the

question has been turned over to the Irish party, and that should that Party raise it in the House, the Labour Party will support it.

As the Irish Parliamentary Party desires to pose in Ireland as opposed to all class division, and as a cold matter of fact is generally bossed locally by small sweating employers, slum landlords and publicans, the MP from the district never brings the question up and the incident never is made public, but only serves to accentuate “the pleasant relations which exist in the House between the Irish Party and Labour”. Ahem!

As a result of these “pleasant relations”, there was no one in the House to fight for the inclusion of Ireland in the Meals for *Necessitous* School Children Act and thus while reformers in England are now fiercely fighting for the right to feed children during holidays, the school children of Ireland are yet denied the primary right of being fed during school hours.

A threat from the Labour Party to wreck the Insurance Bill unless Ireland was included in the Medical Benefits would have secured that, the best part of the Act, for Ireland. But that would have disturbed the pleasant relations also, and Ireland was left out, and a totally inadequate, unworkable Act without that provision foisted upon this country.

Ireland is, to-day, the battle-ground almost daily of fierce industrial disputes. In these disputes there are continual outrages by a police and constabulary over whom no popularly elected body in city or country exercises the smallest control; but in no case are these outrages upon Labour made the subject of Parliamentary questions by the Irish parties. Strikers arrested in industrial disputes are tried and sentenced by resident magistrates drawn entirely from the possessing classes; but although their findings and sentences are usually a travesty upon law and an outrage upon justice, the smug serenity of our lawmakers is never troubled by any question pertaining thereto.

Labour and Nationality, now as in 1898, are marching together (in Parliament) and the fierce battles of the labourer in the towns of Ireland for bread must not disturb their pleasant relations.

Oh yes, the Home Rulers are great democrats – in England; great friends of Labour – in England; heroic defenders of the common people – in England. But in Ireland. Ah! that is another matter.

During a lock-out in Dundalk at the beginning of last year, a girl picket was arrested for striving to induce another girl not to blackleg. She was summarily tried and sentenced to prison on a charge of “indecent conduct in the streets”. No unclean language or action had been attributed to her and the police evidence simply stated that she had persisted in picketing, yet the cold-blooded scoundrelism of the authorities framed a charge against her calculated to blast her character and ruin her whole life. If she had been a daughter of an Irish farmer fighting an Irish landlord in Land League days the then Irish Party would have made the world ring with their denunciations of such character assassinations; but she was only an Irish working girl fighting an Irish employer, and none of the Irish heroes who, on the platforms of the Liberal Party in England, are fighting for the “Glory of God and the Honour of Erin”, had time to waste on such as her.

Small wonder that we in Ireland are working to establish a Labour Party of our own. We have no fault to find with the Labour Party in Great Britain. We recognise that it has its own problems to face and that it cannot well be expected to turn aside to grapple with ours. And, Heaven knows, these problems are serious enough to require the most earnest study and undivided attention of men on the spot. They require more study and attention that can be given by men absorbed in the urgent problems of the greater population across the water.

From time to time I propose to give some attention to the elucidation of the problems peculiar to Ireland and particularly to this part of it. For the present, it is sufficient to emphasise the fact that the religious affiliations of the population of Ulster determine their political leanings to a greater extent than is the case in any part of Europe outside the Balkans. But the manner in which this has developed is also unique. I believe that it is true to say that, politically speaking, the Protestantism of the North of Ireland has no parallel outside this country, and that the Catholicism of the Irish Catholics is, likewise, peculiar in its political trend.

To explain – I mean that, whereas, Protestantism has in general made for political freedom and political Radicalism, it has been opposed to slavish worship of kings and aristocrats. Here, in Ireland, the word Protestant is almost a convertible term with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the 'lower classes'.

And in the same manner, Catholicism which in most parts of Europe is synonymous with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the lower classes, in Ireland is almost synonymous with rebellious tendencies, zeal for democracy, and intense feeling of solidarity with all strivings upward of those who toil.

Such a curious phenomenon is easily understood by those who know the history of Ireland. Unfortunately for their spiritual welfare – and I am using the word 'spiritual', not in its theological but in its better significance as controlling mental and moral development upward – the Protestant elements of Ireland were, in the main, a plantation of strangers upon the soil from which the owners had been dispossessed by force. The economic dispossession was, perforce, accompanied by a political and social outlawry. Hence every attempt of the dispossessed to attain citizenship, to emerge from their state of outlawry, was easily represented as a tentative step towards reversing the plantation and towards replanting the Catholic and dispossessing the Protestant.

Imagine this state of matters persisting for over 200 years and one realises at once that the planted population – the Protestants – were bound to acquire insensibly a hatred of political reform, and to look upon every effort of the Catholic to achieve political recognition as an insidious move towards the expulsion of Protestants. Then the Protestant always saw that the kings and aristocrats of England and Ireland were opposed by the people whom he most feared and from recognising that it was but an easy step to regard his cause as identical with theirs. They had a common enemy, and he began to teach his children that they had a common cause, and common ideals.

This is the reason – their unfortunate isolation as strangers holding a conquered country in fee for rulers alien to its people – that the so-called Scotch of Ulster have fallen away from and developed antagonism to political reform and mental freedom as rapidly as the Scots of Scotland have advanced in adhesion to these ideals.

The Catholics, for their part, and be it understood I am talking only of the Catholic workers, have been as fortunately placed for their political education as they were unfortunately placed for their political and social condition. Just as the Socialist knows that the working class, being the lowest in the social system, cannot emancipate itself without as a result emancipating all other classes, so the Irish Catholic has realised instinctively that he, being the most oppressed and disfranchised, could not win any modicum of political freedom or social recognition for himself without winning it for all others in Ireland. Every upward step of the Catholic has emancipated some one of the smaller Protestant sects; every successful revolt of the Catholic peasant has given some added security even to those Protestant farmers who were most zealously defending the landlord. And out of this struggle the Catholic has, perforce, learned toleration. He has learned that his struggle is, and has been, the struggle of all the lowly and dispossessed, and he has grown broad-minded with the broad-mindedness of the slave in revolt against slavery.

But with the advent of Home Rule, nay even with the promise of Home Rule and the entrance of Ireland upon the normal level of civilised, self-governing nations, the old relation of Protestant and Catholic begins to melt and dissolve, and with their dissolution will come a new change in the relation of either faith to politics. The loss of its privileged position will mean for Protestantism the possibilities of an immense spiritual uplifting; an emergence into a knowledge of its kinship with its brothers and sisters of different creeds. Whether the entrance of Catholicity into a position of mere numerical voting power will lead, in its turn, to a withering up of those kindly feelings born of its past sufferings is another matter. I do not believe that it will, at least amongst the toilers. Our apprenticeship to misery has been too long, our journeyings in the desert of slavery have surely implanted in our breasts a sense of the criminality of any

attempt to impose fetters upon others such as we have ourselves worn. And out of that belief the writer looks forward with confidence to the future, believing that the tale these Notes from Ireland will have to tell will be a hopeful one, even if the hope is nurtured amid storm and stress.

**James Connolly**

**Belfast  
Municipal  
Elections  
January 1913**

**Dock Ward: Election of a Councillor**

**(1913)**

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*January 1913*

To the Electors:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In view of the fact that the National Health Insurance Act comes into working operation on January 13, and that one of the governing bodies to administer that Act will be an Insurance Commission partly elected by the City Council, it is felt, because of the well-known hostility to labour of our present representatives, that some steps should be taken to have a labour representative on the Council in order to try and prevent enemies of the working class being sent from that Council to the Insurance Commission. For this reason a General Meeting of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, very largely composed of residents in this Ward, unanimously decided to ask me to contest Dock Ward in the labour interest. The Belfast Trades and Labour Council also unanimously passed a resolution approving of this contest and recommending the labour candidate to the electors. As the Irish Trades Congress at its recent meeting in Clonmel also declared in favour of organised labour in Ireland taking steps to secure independent labour representation, I feel compelled to accept this duty, and therefore I ask your hearty support in our resolve to capture this seat, and thus let the voice of labour be heard in the City Council, in spite of the stupid, intolerant, and labour-hating gang who rule there.

I desire to be returned in order to advocate, among other things, that the Act for the feeding of children at school at present in force in Great Britain, be applied to Ireland. We have a right to demand equal treatment for Irish and British workers, and as the British workers have secured that their children must be fed before being educated (because it is impossible to educate hungry children), we also claim that when the poverty, or neglect, of the parents is such that the children are suffering, that the Local Authorities should be empowered to make provision for the supply of at least one good meal per day to each child. To those who object that this would 'pauperise' the children, I answer that the children of the working class have as much right to be maintained thus as have the children of royalty. If it does not pauperise the one it cannot pauperise the other.

The Corporation of Dublin and many other Public Boards in Ireland have declared for this measure; it is time Belfast City Council was interesting itself

more about such matters and less about the perpetuation of the religious discords that make Belfast a byword among civilised nations.

My general attitude, if elected, will be to insist upon the importance of the interests of labour being studied; that wherever possible all Corporation work be done by direct employment of labour; that the trade union clause be enforced in all Corporation contracts; that a minimum wage of at least 6d. per hour be established for all Corporation employees; that membership in a trade union be made compulsory for all wage-earners in Corporation employment; and that the Tramways Committee and its manager be compelled to supply covered cars for workers, morning and evening.

As every citizen in Belfast is interested in the proper administration of the Harbour, I favour the abolition of the present undemocratic and unrepresentative Board and the establishment in its place of a Harbour Board elected on the same franchise and at the same time as the Aldermen of the city. If elected, I will move that the City Council promote a bill on these lines.

I stand as a labour candidate, totally independent of any political party. But as the personal views of a candidate cannot be ignored – and as mine are likely to be misrepresented – I judge it well to state mine here that I may at least be heard in my own defence.

Believing that the present system of society is based upon the robbery of the working class, and that capitalist property cannot exist without the plundering of labour, I desire to see capitalism abolished, and a democratic system of common or public ownership erected in its stead. This democratic system, which is called socialism, will, I believe, come as a result of the continuous increase of power of the working class. Only by this means can we secure the abolition of destitution, and all the misery, crime, and immorality which flow from that unnecessary evil. All the reform legislation of the present day is moving in that direction even now, but working class action on above lines will secure that direct, voluntary, conscious, and orderly cooperation by all for the good of all, will more quickly replace the blundering and often reluctant legislation of capitalist governments.

As a lifelong advocate of national independence for Ireland, I am in favour of Home Rule, and believe that Ireland should be ruled, governed, and owned by the people of Ireland.

I believe that men and women having to face the battle of life together, could face it better were all enjoying the same political rights.

Fellow workers: I leave my case in your hands. As a trade union official, I stand for the class to which I belong. If you are content to be represented by men belonging to some section of the master class, then do not vote for me, but if you want your cause represented from Dock Ward by one of your own class, who will battle for your rights, who is the determined enemy of the domination of class over class, of nation over nation, of sex over sex, who will at all times stand for the cause of the lowly-paid and oppressed, then vote for

Yours  
fraternally,  
JAMES CONNOLLY.