

James Connolly

# The Solidarity of Labour

(1914)

From **Forward**, 18 April 1914.

This being Easter week, the news from Ireland for the readers of **Forward** will necessarily be of a short and scrappy character. We are all busy enjoying ourselves, and as this is the last Easter before the red flames of war will light up our hilltops and the red rivers of blood flow along our valleys (ahem!), our amusements must perforce be absorbing and exciting. For it is an awful and serious thing to think that in a month or two the wooden guns of Ulster may go off, and the trained ambulance corps may be wrestling with the problems of how to tie up broken heads or staunch the flow of blood from bleeding noses.

We may not see “red ruin and the breaking up of laws,” but we may see the breaking of window panes and hear the rattle of cobble stones upon our doors.

The wooden guns of Ulster! Aye, but let us be frank with ourselves and confess that the wooden guns of Ulster have, at least, succeeded in frightening the Liberals, or if they have not frightened them, then the Liberals are engaged in the greatest game of sham these countries have ever seen. They are pretending to be frightened in order to cover their action in going back on all the promises with

which they have held the Home Rulers of Great Britain and Ireland in leash for a generation. Charles Stewart Parnell could have got Home Rule with Ulster excluded thirty years ago. We have been told *ad nauseam* about the statesmanlike qualities of John E. Redmond as the leader of the Irish race, and yet it appears that his statesmanship has brought his followers to the point of accepting with joyful eagerness and gratitude that which Parnell rejected with scorn thirty years ago. A more miserable fiasco than this ignominious collapse of a great national movement is not recorded in history.

To this poor end have come all the glorious promises, and this poor reward is all the Irish Party can show for its persistent fight against Labour in every three-cornered election in Great Britain, in every municipal election without exception in Ireland.

It is to us a grim comment upon the boasted solidarity of Labour when we see a Labour M.P., in Great Britain, calmly announcing that he prefers to follow the official representatives of Irish capitalism rather than the spokesman of 86,000 organised Irish workers, and that he does so because the latter are yet too weak to protect themselves politically – have no votes to deliver in Parliament, whereas their enemies have.

Personally I make no complaint about the position taken up by Mr. George N. Barnes, M.P., and his colleagues. I do not complain because I expected it. I have always preached in Ireland that politically we were far behind the English and Scots workers, that many of the measures we required as an imperative necessity were already in working order in Great Britain, and that it was absurd to expect the British working men to turn aside to fight our political battles when his own required so much effort and sacrifice.

On these lines of argument I have fought for the establishment of a Labour Party in Ireland, for the separate political organisation of the Irish workers and for the separate economic and industrial organisation of the Irish workers on a more revolutionary basis than was usual in England and Scotland. This I felt to be wise, because, as much of Ireland is practically unorganised, I do not see the necessity of us committing all the mistakes in organisation already made in

Britain, when we have so much practically virgin soil to till in industrial organisation here.

In doing this, in carrying on such a propaganda, I have been continually subject to misrepresentation and even abuse. I have been told that I was no Internationalist, that I was preaching hatred of England, that I was a disruptor. In vain for me to insist that the usual mistake of the Englishman, viz., that he understood Irish problems better than the Irish did themselves applied quite as strongly to British Socialists as to the British ruling class, and that therefore the Irish Socialists should work out their own policy and create their own literature, and that we must expect to be misunderstood until we could compel recognition by our own strength. For preaching this doctrine I have generally suffered the boycott from the official Socialists in Great Britain, and dislike from those in Ireland who followed their lead. But now comes along Comrade George N. Barnes, M.P., and he blandly acknowledges that Socialism in England in the votes of its Parliamentary representatives will take its cue from the representatives of an Irish party that openly avows in Ireland its hatred of Socialism and its opposition to Independent Labour representation in this country. This, I take it, is a confirmation of my position that the Irish workers must work out their own salvation, and that in the process of working it out they need not be astonished if the working-class leaders in Great Britain utterly fail to understand them.

This question of presenting Socialism so that it will appeal to the peculiar hereditary instincts and character of the people amongst whom you are operating is one of the first importance to the Socialist and Labour movement. A position, theoretically sound, may fail if expressed in terms unsuited to the apprehension of those to whom you are appealing. For years I fretted at what I considered the utterly foolish attitude of certain Socialist propagandists in Great Britain. Their arguments did not appeal to me, and I did not believe that they could appeal to anyone else. Since then I have come to believe that these people, perhaps, understood the psychology of their own countrymen better than I did, and that this question of psychology or mental make-up was of fundamental importance. Since that dawned upon me, I have painstakingly stuck to the endeavour to translate Socialist doctrines into terms understood by the Irish, in or out of

Ireland. I fancy that I have at least in that respect set a headline for abler persons than myself to copy in future. But we cannot deal with Ireland without getting entangled in the question of religion. Hence I have got frequently involved in disputes centring around that point. Now observe this confession! I have, I believe, fairly well presented my case on that subject, but my case was the case for workers to whom the traditions and aspirations of Irish Nationality had been of prime importance. That achievement was reserved for, and I think has been most excellently performed by our Comrade John Wheatley and his colleagues of the Catholic Socialist Society. Nowhere have I come across literature so well suited for the purpose of making Socialists of Catholics; my own poor attempts have been, as I have said, directed to the enrolment in my ranks of Irish workers.

All this is a digression in a sense, but an understanding of it may explain to the reader 'that tired feeling' that comes across us in Ireland when we witness the love embraces which take place between the Parliamentary Labour Party deadliest enemies – the Home Rule Party. I say our deadliest enemies, because the Unionist Party is only a negligible quantity except in a small corner of Ireland, and in that corner it is not destined to be permanent. We do not get angry when we see these things or read such letters; we simply say – “What the devil is up with those fellows?”

There will be no bad feeling over such letters as Mr. Barnes', or the implied refusal of the Labour Party to pay any attention to the request of organised Labour in Ireland, but it will not help on a better understanding between the militant proletariat of the two islands.

## **James Connolly**

# The Exclusion of Ulster

(1914)

From

**Forward,**

11

April

1914.

Socialists and Labour people generally in Great Britain have had good reason to deplore the existence of the Irish question and to realise how disastrous upon the chances of their candidates has been the fact of the existence in the constituencies of a large mass of organised voters whose political activities were not influenced solely or even largely by the domestic issues before the electors. Our British comrades have had long and sore experience of contests in which all the arguments and all the local feeling were on the side of the Socialist or Labour candidate, and yet that local candidate was ignominiously defeated because there existed in the constituency a large Irish vote – a large mass of voters who supported the Liberal, not because they were opposed to Labour, but because they wanted Ireland to have Home Rule.

Our British comrades have learned that the existence of that Irish vote and the knowledge that it would be cast for the Home Rule official candidate, irrespective of his record on or his stand upon Labour matters, caused hundreds of thousands who otherwise would have voted Labour to vote Liberal in dread that the Irish defection would “let the Tory in.” For a generation now the Labour movement in Great Britain has been paralysed politically by this fear; and all hands have looked forward eagerly to the time when the granting of Home Rule would remove their fear and allow free expression to all the forces that make for a political Labour movement in that country. Even many of the actions and votes of

the Labour party in the House of Commons which have been strenuously complained of have been justified by that Party on the plea that it was necessary to keep in power the government that would get Home Rule out of the way. Now, in view of this experience of the Socialist movement in Great Britain, we can surely not view with any complacency a proposal that will keep that question to the front as a live issue at British elections for six years longer or rather for a totally indefinite period. We know that this "six years period" so glibly spoken of by politicians has no background of reality to justify the belief that that term can be considered as more than a mere figure of speech.

In the **Daily News and Leader** of 6th April, Mr. H.W. Massingham, writing of the Ulster Limit, says, and the saying is valuable as indicative of the trend of Liberal thought:

"Should we, therefore, make an absolutely dead halt at the six years— milestone? Both parties implicitly admit that that is impossible, for one Parliament cannot bind another."

And in the previous week the Liberal Solicitor General declared in Parliament that if within the six years— period

"the other side brought in a Bill to exclude Ulster, it would have a royal and triumphant procession to the foot of the throne."

Thus we have it clearly foreshadowed that there is no such thing as a six years' limit which can be binding upon future Parliaments and that therefore the question of Home Rule for the Ulster Counties will be a test question at future elections in Great Britain, and will then play there the same disastrous role for the Labour movement as the question of Home Rule does now. The political organisation of the Home Rule party will be kept alive in every industrial constituency on the pretext of working for a 'United Ireland,' and in the same manner the Unionist Party will also keep up its special organisations, Orange Lodges, etc., in order to keep alive the sectarian appeal to the voters from Ireland who will be asked to "vote against driving Ulster under the heels of the Papish Dublin Parliament." Labour men in and out of Ireland have often declared that if

Home Rule was wanted for no other purpose, it was necessary in order to allow of the solidifying of the Labour vote in Great Britain, and the rescue of the Irish voters in that country from their thralldom to the Liberal caucus. It might not be far from the truth to surmise that the Liberal Party managers have seen the same point as clearly as we did ourselves, and have quietly resolved that such a good weapon as the Nationalist Party sentiment should not be entirely withdrawn from their armoury. The reader will also see that with a perfectly Mephistophelian subtlety the question of exclusion is not suggested to be voted upon by any large area where the chances for or against might be fairly equal, where exclusion might be defeated as it might be if all Ulster were the venue of the poll, and all Ulster had to stay out or come in as a result of the verdict of the ballot box. No, the counties to be voted on the question are the counties where the Unionists are in an overwhelming majority, and where therefore the vote is a mere farce – a subterfuge to hide the grossness of the betrayal of the Home Rule electors. Then again each county or borough enters or remains outside according to its own vote, and quite independent of the vote of its neighbours in Ulster. Thus the Home Rule question as far as Ulster is concerned, may be indefinitely prolonged and kept alive as an issue to divide and disrupt the Labour vote in Great Britain.

The effect of such exclusion upon Labour in Ireland will be at least equally, and probably more, disastrous. All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old political battle cries will be shattered, and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will be still used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class. I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised Labour movement in Ireland when I say that we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out.

Meanwhile, as a study in political disparity, watch the manoeuvres of the Home Rule Party on this question. The deal is already, I believe, framed up, but when the actual vote is to be taken in the Counties of Down, Antrim, Derry and Armagh and the Boroughs of Belfast and Derry, Messrs. Redmond, Devlin and Co. will tour these counties and boroughs letting loose floods of oratory asking for votes against exclusion and thus will delude the workers into forgetting the real

crime, *viz.*, consenting to make the unity of the Irish Nation a subject to be decided by the votes of the most bigoted and passion-blinded reactionaries in these four counties where such reactionaries are in the majority. The betrayal is agreed upon, I repeat, the vote is only a subterfuge to hide the grossness of the betrayal.

It still remains to be seen whether the working class agitation cannot succeed in frightening these vampires from the feast they are promising themselves upon the corpse of a dismembered Ireland.

**James Connolly**

**Ireland and  
Ulster:  
An Appeal to the Working  
Class  
(1914)**

From Irish Worker, 4 April 1914.

In this great crisis of the history of Ireland, I desire to appeal to the working class – the only class whose true interests are always on the side of progress – to take

action to prevent the betrayal of their interests contemplated by those who have planned the exclusion of part of Ulster from the Home Rule Bill. Every effort is now being made to prevent the voice of the democracy being heard in those counties and boroughs which it is callously proposed to cut off from the rest of Ireland. Meetings are being rushed through in other parts of Ireland, and at those meetings wirepullers of the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) are passing resolutions approving of the exclusion, whilst you who will suffer by this dastardly proposal are never even consulted, but, on the contrary, these same organisations are working hard to prevent your voice being heard, and have done what they could to prevent the calling of meetings, of holding of demonstrations at which you could register your hatred of their attempt to betray you into the hand of the sworn enemies of democracy, of labour, and of nationality.

An instance of this attempt to misrepresent you may be quoted from the Irish press of March 26. In a letter from the Irish Press Agency it says:

“The proposal, representing the limit of concession and made ‘as the price of peace’ would only mean, if accepted, that the Counties of Down, Derry, Antrim and Armagh would remain as they are for six years at the end of which time they would come in automatically under Home Rule. They know, too, that the Nationalists in these four counties are perfectly willing to assent to this arrangement and that they are the Nationalists most concerned.”

Remember that this is a quotation from a letter sent out by the Irish Press Agency and that copies of it are supplied by the agents of the Irish Parliamentary Party to every newspaper in Ireland and to Liberal papers in England, and you will see how true is my statement that you are being betrayed, that the men whom you trusted are busily engaged in rigging up a fake sentiment in favour of this betrayal of your interests. For the statements contained in the letter just quoted are, in the first part, deliberately misleading and, and in the second part, an outrageous falsehood.

The statement that the counties excluded would come in automatically at the end of six years is deliberately misleading because, as was explained in the House

of Commons, two General Elections would take place before the end of that time. If at either of these General Elections the Tories got a majority – and it is impossible to believe that the Liberals can win the other two elections successively – it would only require the passage of a small Act of not more than three or four lines to make the exclusion perpetual. And the Tories would pass it. What could prevent them? You can prevent them getting the chance by insisting upon the whole Home Rule Bill and no exclusion, being passed now. If you do not act now, your chance is gone.

The second part of the statement I have quoted is an outrageous falsehood, as every one knows. The Nationalists of the four counties have not been asked their opinion, and if any politician would dare to take a plebiscite upon this question of exclusion or no exclusion, the democracy of Ulster would undoubtedly register a most emphatic refusal to accept this proposal. And yet so-called Home Rule journals are telling the world that you are quite willing to be cut off from Ireland and placed under the heel of the intolerant gang of bigots and enemies of progress who for so long have terrorised Ulster.

Men and women, consider! If your lot is a difficult one now, subject as you are to the rule of a gang who keep up the fires of religious bigotry in order to divide the workers, and make united progress impossible; if your lot is a difficult one, even when supported by the progressive and tolerant forces of all Ireland, how difficult and intolerable it will be when you are cut off from Ireland, and yet are regarded as alien to Great Britain, and left at the tender mercies of a class who knows no mercy, of a mob poisoned by ignorant hatred of everything national and democratic.

Do not be misled by the promises of politicians. Remember that Mr. Birrell, Chief Secretary, solemnly promised that a representative of Dublin Labour would sit upon the Police Inquiry Commission in Dublin, and that he broke his solemn promise. Remember that Mr. Redmond pledged his word at Waterford that the Home Rule Bill would go through without the loss of a word or a comma, and almost immediately afterwards he agreed to the loss of four counties and two boroughs. Remember that the whole history of Ireland is a record of betrayals by politicians and statesmen, and remembering this, spurn their lying promises and

stand up for a United Ireland – an Ireland broad based upon the union of Labour and Nationality.

You are not frightened by the mock heroics of a pantomime army. Nobody in Ulster is. If the politicians in Parliament pretend to be frightened, it is only in order to find an excuse to sell you. Do not be sold. Remember that when soldiers were ordered out to shoot you down in the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907 no officer resigned then rather than shed blood in Ulster, and when some innocent members of our class were shot down in the Falls Road, Belfast, no Cabinet Ministers apologised to the relatives of the poor workers they had murdered. Remember that more than a thousand Dublin men, women and children were brutally beaten and wounded by the police a few months ago, and three men and one girl killed, but no officer resigned, and neither Tory nor Home Rule press protested against the coercion of Dublin. Why, then, the hypocritical howl against compelling the pious sweaters of Ulster and their dupes to obey the will of the majority? Remember the A.O.H., the U.I.L. and the Irish Parliamentary Party cheered on the Government when it sent its police to bludgeon the Nationalist workers of Dublin. Now the same organisation and the same party cheers on the same treacherous Government when it proposes to surrender you into the hands of the Carsonite gang. As the officers of the Curragh have stood by their class, so let the working-class democracy of Ulster stand by its class and all Irish workers from Malin Head to Cape Clear and from Dublin to Galway will stand by you.

Let your motto be that of James Fintan Lalor, the motto which the working class Irish Citizen Army has adopted as its aim and object, viz.:

That the entire ownership of Ireland [all Ireland] – moral and material – is vested of right in the entire people of Ireland.

And, adopting this as your motto, let it be heard and understood that Labour in Ireland stands for the unity of Ireland – an Ireland united in the name of progress, and who shall separate us?

## **James Connolly**

# The War in Ulster

(1914

**Forward,** 28 March 1914.  
From the collection: **Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table**, Cork Workers' Club 1975.

Now that all the world and its wife has its eyes fixed upon Ulster, and now that I am back at my Post in Belfast, it is, I suppose, strictly in order that I shall this week say something about the Ulster crisis.

At the time of writing (Sunday afternoon) all the posters of the **Sunday Press** are announcing in great letters that "Ulster is on the brink of war"; that "The outlook is black"; that "100 officers have resigned"; that "Regiments throw down their rifles"; that "Warships are in Belfast Lough"; and that, briefly speaking, hell has been let loose. All of which seems to convince us that we are living in stirring times.

Strangely enough, Belfast itself seems bent upon its use lines of strict attention to the business of profitmaking, and when I look around for the "grim, determined faces", so celebrated in the song and story of the Tory Press, I fail to see them, and see instead in all the shop windows the usual alluring advertisements of next week's sales; in the columns of the Tory Press the usual invitation to buy and sell and leave all sorts of property; and in the faces of the people in the streets the same unimaginative smugness, tempered by the effects of a Calvinistic theology in some cases, and by drink in many more.

Are these, then, the signs of times that try men's souls? Belfast may or may not go to war, but if she does she still wears the outward appearances of respectable mediocrity and slave-driven wagedom. There is none of the enthusiasm of rebellion for a holy cause, nor the excitement of men who do and dare all things for a great principle; here are only the signs and symbols of a people who have pawned their souls for a usurer's promise of prosperity – a people who would breathe the spirit of the Past into all the institutions of the Present, and continually shrinking from a contemplation of the Future, recite as their Litany and Article of Faith a thanksgiving that they are not as other men.

Have the governing forces of these countries shrunk from their people in fear of their powers on the field of battle? Has the Liberal Government really a dread that the motley hosts of Orangemen led by landlord rack-renters, capitalist sweaters, and lawyers on the make, will take the field against the forces of the Crown? If they have, it is at least certain that the Home Rule population of Belfast, indeed of Ulster generally, have no fears whatever upon the score. Nationalists, Socialists, Liberals, to put them in the order of their numerical importance, feel quite confident that were the forces of the Crown withdrawn entirely, the Unionists could or would put no force into the field that the Home Rulers of all sections combined could not protect themselves against with a moderate amount of ease. Why, then, this sudden flurry in Government circles?

The present writer is quite satisfied that the "war" scare is all part of a great piece of theatricals, carefully arranged between the Liberal Ministry, the official Home Rule party, and the Unionist leaders.

He is quite assured that the exclusion of a part of Ulster from the Home Rule Bill is already agreed upon between those tricky gentry, and that the so-called scene in Parliament between Devlin and Carson, the latter's flight from the House to Ulster, and the rush of troops to this province, are all parts of a carefully arranged programme having for its end the blinding of Nationalist Ireland to the infamous character of the Partition scheme to which Redmond and Devlin had given their consent.

Without some such theatricality the democracy of Nationalist Ireland would have had time to think – to think how any of their leaders in the past would have received such a proposal, and had they so thought those who accepted it now would have been hounded out of Irish public life.

Think, for instance of the position of the Nationalists of Belfast! If they are included in the Home Rule Bill now it will be Sir Edward Carson they will have to thank, as Joe Devlin was willing to leave them out if Sir Edward would agree.

To prevent the people understanding this infamy we are treated to columns of balderdash about civil war. You may think my accusation over-strained. Wait and see. And while you are waiting ponder over the circumstance that Sir Edward Carson has not given a definite refusal, that Bonar Law has given a qualified acceptance, and that all the threats of the Government are accompanied by a renewal of the offer – a renewal made with the tacit consent of the Home Rule leaders.

I wish to state it to be my most solemn conviction that the only real obstacle in the way of the Exclusion policy being accepted by both sides in Parliament is the fear of the business men of Ulster that it would ruin their trade with the other provinces.

That the orders to certain regiments to march upon Ulster has been the cause of a large number of officers resigning is, I am sure, an unwelcome fact to all the official parties. The Carsonite officials are not at all pleased, I suspect, at the readiness with which the poor fools of officers acted. Lawyers and politicians use language inciting to mutiny under certain contingencies, but they always reserve to themselves the right to say whether those contingencies have or have not arrived, and always save their precious skins by deciding that the contingency which justifies mutiny has not arrived, not quite. Thus they save their skins, even although they lose their honour. But they sometimes by their language lead into real mutiny other men who are not quite such discriminating judges, and who are more solicitous of their honour than their skins. I rather think that those officers are in this position, and I suspect that the greatest suffering that will befall them

will be the shock to their feelings when they discover that neither Bonar Law nor Carson will stand sponsor for their acts.

But suppose mere privates on being ordered to march against strikers had refused, what would befall them. Imagination fails to picture the columns of the Tory, Liberal, and Home Rule Press during the ensuing week. But of one thing we may be assured, viz., that any one of such privates so refusing who was out of prison inside of twelve months would be a lucky man.

It is to be hoped that the growing number of Socialist privates in the Army and Navy are not forgetting to drive this lesson home to their mess-mates, so Carson will not have lived in vain if he thus helps to popularise amongst these men the idea involved in the historic appeal – don't shoot!

**James Connolly**

# **Industrial Unity and Political Division in Ireland**

**(1914)**

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I have so often animadverted upon the manner in which the Transport Unions of Great Britain have scabbed upon the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in Dublin that I feel a real pleasure in being able to announce to the readers of **Forward** that a definite movement is now on foot among the same bodies to compel the proprietors of the Ulster Head Line of steamers to reinstate our members in Belfast and Dublin.

The fact that the weakness of our Union owing to the aforementioned scabbing taking place at the end of our struggle had enabled the Shipping Federation to reintroduce the Federation "slip" among the seamen and firemen upon the steamers in question served no doubt to emphasise the suicidal nature of the conduct I have complained of so bitterly.

The Scottish Union of Dock Labourers, whose Executive I interviewed on Friday, March 6, were the first to promise action, and the other Unions involved are now falling in line. As a result, I am glad to say that I see the probability of a speedy, successful ending of this particular phase of the struggle.

We had a recrudescence of police brutality in Dublin on Friday, March 13. A mass meeting of the unemployed was held in Beresford Place to demand that provision be made for supplying work to the unemployed. Several of the speakers pointed out that every possible hindrance had been put in the way of the men to prevent them registering their names in the Labour Exchange; that the great number of unemployed now in the city was quite abnormal, and was due principally to the number of scabs brought in by the employers during the dispute, and that there were various much-needed schemes of public improvement ready for commencement if the public Boards would only act.

At the conclusion of the Meeting, Captain White announced that he would lead a procession of the unemployed to the Mansion House. Gathering together about thirty of the younger ones he arrayed them in military order, furnishing them with long broom handles used by the stewards to marshal our processions, and the remainder of the crowd falling in behind started off to interview the Lord

Mayor. They had not gone two hundred yards when a mail cart driver attempted to drive through the ranks at top speed. Captain White held up his stick to remonstrate with the driver, and in a moment there was a charge of police with batons striking like machines. The crowd was sent flying by the suddenness of the attack, five of the number who attempted resistance being stretched upon the ground, and Captain White arrested after being most unmercifully beaten. He made a fierce resistance, and the uniformed savages clubbed him until their arms must have ached. At present he has forty stitches in his head, and it was no fault of his assailants that his life was not taken.

The Liberal Government is making quite a record for itself as a Government by outrage and coercion. Its attacks upon the women, its brutality towards the men, its general attitude towards all progressive forces – when these forces are weak – have all the marks of a Government saturated with medieval ideas – a Government resolved to stamp out all opposition by carefully calculated exhibitions of brutality. The exhibition of the brutality in the most odious and shameless manner possible is an essential part of the scheme. Indeed, the scheme revolves around the idea that by brute force nakedly exercised, the ideas of progress may be frightened out of existence. Supposing that Captain White had committed an illegal act in impeding the progress of His Majesty's mail, the fact remains that a summons to appear at the police court would have served all the requirements of the law. The Captain is not a fly-by-night, his residence is well known to the police; his standing is such that even on the lowest grounds it would not pay him to evade the law or disobey the summons.

But such a summons would necessarily result in a trial when the whole case would be argued out cold-bloodedly and strictly according to the legal aspects of the conduct of all parties concerned, *i.e.*, the mail van driver, the Captain, the police. But when the arrest is preceded by an unprovoked baton charge, when such a baton charge necessarily would produce an attempt at resistance (since human beings have a natural objection to having their heads broken), then the police are compelled to exaggerate the importance of every incident, to represent a hand lifted in remonstrance as a hand lifted to strike, and to outswear everybody in order to secure a conviction. Then the press gets an opportunity, of

which it is eager to take an advantage, to work up excitement upon the incident, and to make it the basis of an attack upon its opponents. Under such circumstances, a fair trial is impossible; it becomes imperative for all the forces of law and order to secure conviction, even by sheer forgery and intimidation.

The circumstances attending the arrest of Mrs. Pankhurst in Glasgow are another exemplification of the policy pursued by the Government in effecting arrests of this nature. No sane man but must admit that Mrs. Pankhurst could easily have been arrested outside the hall, but that would not have produced the terroristic effect aimed at. It was necessary for the purposes of the Government that the arrest should be carried out with every accompanying show of murderous brutality and reckless severity. That this brutality and severity was exercised against women was from the point of view of this Liberal Government rather fortunate than otherwise, since it demonstrated the perfect control over the coercive forces possessed by the capitalist class and its executive. When policemen can be safely relied upon to baton, kick and maltreat women, then it is certain that no mere striker can hope anything from their mercy, and therefore every such outrage is a training in cruelty for the forces upon which capitalism relies for its future defence.

Here in Ireland the proposal of the Government to consent to the partition of Ireland – the exclusion of certain counties in Ulster is causing a new line of cleavage. No one of the supporters of Home Rule accepts this proposal with anything like equanimity, but rather we are already hearing in Ulster rumours of a determination to resist it by all means. It is felt that the proposal to leave the Home Rule minority at the mercy of an ignorant majority with the evil record of the Orange party is a proposal that should never have been made, and that the establishment of such a scheme should be resisted with armed force if necessary.

Personally I entirely agree with those who think so; Belfast is bad enough as it is; what it would be under such rule the wildest imagination cannot conceive. Filled with the belief that they were after defeating the Imperial Government and the Nationalists combined, the Orangemen would have scant regards for the rights of the minority left at their mercy.

Such a scheme would destroy the Labour movement by disrupting it. It would perpetuate in a form aggravated in evil the discords now prevalent, and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make division more intense and confusion of ideas and parties more confounded.

Before closing this week, I wish to make a special appeal to readers of **Forward** for some financial help to enable us to pay some little strike pay to the victimised Dublin girls. Hundreds of these are starving; scores are forced to sleep on the floors of slum dwellings, already overcrowded by the families of the friends and acquaintances who give them this poor privilege, and who have themselves been victimised.

They are in dire need, and any sum forwarded for that purpose, and marked "For Victimised Girls", will be applied exclusively to their aid. I have every confidence that the readers of **Forward**, who have laboured so splendidly in the past in this respect, will personally and by securing grants from their Unions come to the rescue now of those splendid, whole-hearted, and brave-souled daughters of Erin.

**James Connolly**

# **The Outrages at Jacob's**

**(1914)**

In the course of the abortive Board of Trade Inquiry into the Labour situation in Dublin, Mr Tim Healy, acting as Counsel for the employers, waxed eloquent upon the high esteem in which the people of Ireland held the Quakers owing to the exceedingly charitable work performed by members of that religion during the years of the great Irish famine. As a piece of historical information it was based upon facts; as what it was intended to be, a justification of the industrial practices of Messrs Jacob's, it was a senseless pandering to a foolish sentiment. Foolish, because as no sect or party can be held responsible for the acts of individuals acting as individuals, neither can individuals shelter themselves behind the record of their sect or party in matters foreign to their own conduct as individuals. That the Quakers organised charitable relief to the Irish victims of an absurd and aggressive social system does not justify the Quakers of another generation seeking to mercilessly crush the Irish victims of that system in their day. The difference of method employed does not materially alter the fact of the aggression. A work girl, sweated in a biscuit factory, is, or should be, as sacred in the eyes of humanity as a tenant farmer, rackrented and starving on an Irish farm.

Especially does this show true when dealing with practices by members of a sect, which are totally antagonistic to the principles of that sect, which in another and stricter day would have led to expulsion from that sect as the acts of unworthy members.

And this is especially and emphatically the record of Jacob's. If Quakerism – the principles of the Society of Friends – claims to be the embodiment of the most rigid application of the higher moral teachings of Christianity, it must be conceded that the commercial principles which in Messrs Jacob's are practised in their crudest, most shameless form, are the negation or denial of those principles – are, in fact, the very essence of diabolical cruelty.

Let us be a little more explicit. At the calling off of the strike in Dublin [\[1\]](#) it was understood that since the workers were willing to handle all goods, the employers' lock-out would also be called off. Especially was this believed as the employers had been declaring their desire for peace and restoring harmonious relations with their employees, and as at each conference they had been vehement in their repudiations of any intention to victimise.

Furthermore it must be conceded that the great majority of the employers have so acted as to justify their claims. Among those who have refused to fall in line with the effort to restore harmony in Dublin, and whose mean and petty souls saw only in the occasion an opportunity to wreak vengeance, the employers of women labour are the worst offenders, and the worst among the worst are the firms of Paterson's, Match Makers, and G. Jacob's, Biscuit Manufacturers. Paterson's we will deal with another time; at present Messrs Jacob's deserve our attention as exhibiting the basest characteristics, and the most cowardly swinishness in dealing with its former employees. It is difficult to believe that in Ireland there could be found any man capable of giving vent to passions as low and bestial as must have filled the man whose actions we are about to describe.

Messrs Jacob's have recently been luxuriating in a crop of threats of actions for libel against journalists who dared to mention the conditions under which their slaves have toiled in the past. We propose to give them in this article a few grounds for action against us, and we cheerfully invite them to go ahead with their action and give us the greater audience before which we may expose the scoundrelly and blackguardly conduct of their Manager, Mr Dawson, to the girls who have applied to him for re-employment.

Let it be remembered that in Jacob's case the girls were locked out because they refused to surrender their right to wear a Union Badge, or be false to the Irish Women Workers' Union.

We have been told that when the girls apply for re-employment this manager, after brutally insulting them before the scabs whom he brings in, in order that he may parade the applicants before them, compels them to submit to his examination of their clothes, their hats, skirts and blouses, to submit while he

pinches their arms, and examines their physical condition, and that all through this degrading examination he keeps up a running fire of insulting remarks of which the following are a fair sample:—

“So you had to come back when you got hungry, had you?”

“You have bad teeth, that is with eating the rotten English food, from the food ships.”

“Did you get that coat from Larkin?”

“It is a wonder that the Englishmen did not give you a better pair of boots.”

“Why did you not go to the Liberty Hall kitchen instead of coming here? Oh, I forgot, this kitchen is closed, and you are coming here for us to feed you now.”

[\[2\]](#)

“So you are one of Larkin’s girls? It’s a wonder he didn’t feed you better.”

“Is this one of the Liberty Hall blouses you have on?”

“Where did you get that skirt? Did you get it from Larkin?”

But why go on sullyng our paper with further quotations from the language of this brute, especially when we know that no quotation in print can convey the vile nature of the insults heaped upon girls whose boots he is not worthy to clean.

In addition to this the girls have to strip to the waist, take off boots and stockings, and then in a semi-nude state go before a doctor to be examined. After submitting to all this they receive the final verdict from the manager. Usually that verdict is a refusal to re-employ – a refusal that was determined on before the ordeal, and was only delayed in order to give this vile brute of a manager an opportunity to gloat over the sufferings of the girls.

In the re-employment that has taken place the higher-paid girls have been usually refused, and only the lower-paid get a ghost of a chance. And boys or girls

who get maimed in this service have absolutely no chance of re-employment. The firm seizes gloatingly upon the opportunity to victimise them.

That such things should be possible and provoke no protest from those who are eternally preaching to Labour upon its immoral conduct and lack of true Christian charity. Could the records of all the Labour Unions combined exhibit any vileness to equal this gloating over poor girls whose one fault it was to be beaten in a struggle to maintain their rights as workers to organise in the manner they thought best?

As we have said before, the brute capable of such conduct is not morally fit to blacken the shoes of those girls – our sisters.

Now, bring on your libel action!

***JAMES CONNOLLY.***

## Notes

1. The workers returned to work in early 1914.

2. Strikers and their families received food and clothing at Liberty Hall during the lockout, much of it sent by workers in Britain.

# James Connolly

# Labour and the Proposed

# Partition of Ireland

(1914)

From Irish Worker, 14 March 1914.

The recent proposals of Messrs. Asquith, Devlin, Redmond and Co. for the settlement of the Home Rule question deserve the earnest attention of the working class democracy of this country. They reveal in a most striking and unmistakeable manner the depths of betrayal to which the so-called Nationalist politicians are willing to sink. For generations the conscience of the civilised world has been shocked by the historical record of the partition of Poland; publicists, poets, humanitarians, patriots, all lovers of their kind and of progress have wept over the unhappy lot of a country torn asunder by the brute force of their alien oppressors, its unity ruthlessly destroyed and its traditions trampled into the dust.

But Poland was disrupted by outside forces, its enemies were the mercenaries of the tyrant kingdoms and empires of Europe; its sons and daughters died in the trenches and on the battlefields by the thousands rather than submit to their beloved country being annihilated as a nation. But Ireland, what of Ireland? It is the trusted leaders of Ireland that in secret conclave with the enemies of Ireland have agreed to see Ireland as a nation disrupted politically and her children divided under separate political governments with warring interests.

Now, what is the position of Labour towards it all? Let us remember that the Orange aristocracy now fighting for its supremacy in Ireland has at all times been based upon a denial of the common human rights of the Irish people; that the Orange Order was not founded to safeguard religious freedom, but to deny religious freedom, and that it raised this religious question, not for the sake of any religion, but in order to use religious zeal in the interests of the oppressive property rights of rackrenting landlords and sweating capitalists. That the Irish people might be kept asunder and robbed whilst so sundered and divided, the Orange aristocracy went down to the lowest depths and out of the lowest pits of hell brought up the abominations of sectarian feuds to stir the passions of the ignorant mob. No crime was too brutal or cowardly; no lie too base; no slander too ghastly, as long as they served to keep the democracy asunder.

And now that the progress of democracy elsewhere has somewhat muzzled the dogs of aristocratic power, now that in England as well as in Ireland the forces of labour are stirring and making for freedom and light, this same gang of well-fed plunderers of the people, secure in Union held upon their own dupes, seek by threats of force to arrest the march of idea and stifle the light of civilisation and liberty. And, lo and behold, the trusted guardians of the people, the vaunted saviours of the Irish race, agree in front of the enemy and in face of the world to sacrifice to the bigoted enemy the unity of the nation and along with it the lives, liberties and hopes of that portion of the nation which in the midst of the most hostile surroundings have fought to keep the faith in things national and progressive.

Such a scheme as that agreed to by Redmond and Devlin, the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish Labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured.

To it Labour should give the bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death, if necessary, as our fathers fought before us.

**James Connolly**

**The Lenten  
Pastorals:  
A Challenge**

**(1914)**

From **Irish Worker**, February 28, 1914.

A year ago at the meeting of the Maynooth Union a paper was read on *Syndicalism* which attracted widespread attention at the time because of the sympathetic attitude towards organised Labour taken up by the reverend author of the paper in question, and because the same sympathetic note was struck by most of the speakers who took part in the discussion following the reading of the paper. We were amongst the number of writers to the press who commented upon this phenomenon, and in our press, the *Irish Worker*, we emphasised the fact that in the main the speakers who gave this turn to the discussion seemed to represent the younger clergy – the younger clergy who had been students while the modern labour movement was influencing the literature and thought of the world. Now today we are confronted with another phenomena upon a somewhat similar field. The united Irish Hierarchy have issued to the faithful in Ireland a joint Pastoral upon the labour question in the light of the Dublin dispute.

As representing the union most actively involved in that dispute, we take it that it will be thought no impertinence or undue self-importance on our part if we avail ourselves now of the opportunity to comment upon the Pastoral from the standpoint of labour, and to place before our readers the construction we place upon the events with which that Pastoral deals. We are workers. And we speak for the class to which we belong.

As workers then we feel that we have no apology to offer for our share in the recent dispute. The Pastoral admits that it is the right, nay, that it is the duty of the workers to combine for their own advancement; it admits that there will always be the possibility of disagreement, leading to conflict even when the best intentions exist upon both sides; it contends that against such possibilities of strife the best remedy in Ireland is a strong Irish Trades Union, and impresses upon all the desirability of a Conciliation Board to obviate the dangers of industrial war. Well, then, we submit that on all these points – and they are the cardinal points of the Pastoral – our action in the past has been entirely upon the lines suggested. We found the workers disorganised, and we proceeded to organise them. We taught them to use their organisation for their own moral and material advancement, and as a result have endued them with a higher sense of the dignity of manhood and womanhood, and weaned them from their former habits of dissipation and recklessness. Against the possibility, the certainty of disagreements between employers and employed when the latter sought for relief from intolerable burdens of toil and low wagery we established an Irish trade union, absolutely independent of British control or influence, and appealing solely to the spirit of self-reliance we sought to inculcate in the Irish working class.

And finally, in order to prepare a way of escape out of the strife that might follow upon hotheadedness on the part of employers or upon our own part, we proposed in the Dublin Trades Council and in our own press the establishment of Conciliation Boards for the prevention, or if that failed, for the settlement of labour disputes. In other words, our activity has been entirely upon the lines indicated in the Pastoral as being the proper lines to follow in our position. If, then, our activity did not bring peace but a sword the fault lies with those who

prefer to take the sword rather than suffer the loss of any portion of the profits and domination they lusted for, and had so long enjoyed at the cost of the suffering and damnation of so many thousands of our class. From beginning to end of the dispute – if it can be said to have ended – we have offered to meet and to discuss with our opponents; from beginning to end our opponents have refused to meet and discuss directly with us, even in the two abortive Conferences, insisting upon keeping the two directly interested bodies from getting into friendly discussion. We would most respectfully challenge the Hierarchy to name any one point of importance that we refused to concede, which they, had they been in our place, would have conceded, to our opponents. They cannot name one and be true to the position they take up in their Lenten Pastoral.

It is of little practical value in this rough work-a-day world of ours to enunciate principles, however sublime, and to refuse to take into account the very imperfect human material with which those principles have to deal. We had and have to deal with a set of employers the most heartless and the most ignorantly selfish in Christendom, employers too lazy to adapt themselves to modern methods of business and seeking by fiendish undercutting of wages to meet the legitimate competition of employers elsewhere who do use modern methods and adopt modern business ideas. In any large centre elsewhere the manager who persisted in using the antiquated methods and the slipshod lack of system that characterises the Dublin employers as a whole would be fired out of his job quicker than he could draw his first week's salary. But up to the present the constantly available supply of cheap labour has prevented the development of up-to-date methods of business in Dublin, and when the Irish Transport and General Workers' Trade Union began to push up the rate of wages and to destroy the supply of cheap labour, instead of the Dublin employers moving with the times and changing their wasteful methods accordingly their only thought was to destroy the union, and to remain in the unprogressive, slovenly, unenterprising state which now and in the past has excited the laughter of every observant visitor.

In any other city an attempt to raise the wages of tramwaymen from the low standard at which they were in Dublin would not have caused a lock-out. The wages would have been raised, and the managing director would have sought by cheaper fares and other attractions, to attract greater receipts to compensate for greater outlays. It is now well-established that cheaper fares by tram or rail or steamer mean greater numbers travelling and hence greater receipts.

But in Dublin such a thing was impossible. An increase of wages was not met by a development of enterprise, no, but the suggestion of an increase was met with an outburst of eighteenth century barbarity and a perfect carnival of ferocity towards labour. This attitude of Mr. William Martin Murphy is typical of the whole class in Dublin to which he belongs. Like the Bourbons “they learn nothing and they forget nothing.” The whole world is advancing around them, labour is everywhere stirring out of the depths of subjection and advancing upward to the heights of citizenship and towards the responsibilities of freedom. But all this shaking up of old systems of thought, all this stirring into life of the dormant germs of social consciousness amongst our long oppressed people leaves them absolutely untouched. As the tiger reared upon flesh can never lose his craving for that food, so the Dublin employer reared as employer upon the flesh and blood of cheap labour can never wholly relinquish, and in most cases cannot even partially relinquish, his lust after cheapness in the labour he exploits. The highest industrial authorities in the world declare that cheap labour never pays in the end; the Dublin employers declare that unless they can have a plentiful supply of cheap and helpless labour, civilisation’s hopes in Ireland are for ever doomed. The ineffective pigmies of capitalist Dublin oppose their ridiculous theories to the world-wide experience of the giants of international capitalism.

In face of this the beautiful theories of the Lenten Pastorals seem rather weak and ineffective. The whole record of the Dublin master class has been marked by a contemptuous and cynical disregard for every principle of social conduct set forth by his Holiness Pope Pius X, or his Holiness Pope Leo XIII. Not an independent professional man, not an unselfish literary man or woman of genius, not a clergyman of any denomination, not an important public servant who investigated the merits of the dispute had during our long agony failed to

acknowledge finally the justice of our cause or to be won to admiration by the patient suffering and steadfast adherence to an ideal exhibited by the Dublin workers. Be it remembered that even his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin publicly expressed his agreement with the proposals for a settlement which we put forward. On the first occasion the employers met his prayer for peace by importing British scabs; on the second, when he blessed our peace proposals on the eve of Christmas, they contemptuously refused even to look at them. Again we ask, we challenge the Hierarchy to name the point of importance which we refused to concede which they, were they in our place, would have conceded to our opponents.

Let it be at once understood that the strictures upon socialism and syndicalism embodied in the Pastorals leave us unmoved. As complete systems of thought these two principles do not exist, whatever some extremists may say or imagine. As lines of action they do exist, and their influence is wholly beneficial. It is only when taken as offering a completely worked-out system of thought capable of dictating human conduct in all possible phases, and hence governing human morals accordingly, that either of them came under the strictures of theologians with any degree of justification. But in their present stage in the labour movement, viz., as indicating lines of activity in the industrial and political world – the only stage in which they are ever likely to be popular or useful in Ireland – the most consistent socialist or syndicalist may be as Catholic as the Pope if he is so minded.

And it may help the learned authors of the Lenten Pastoral to a becoming frame of mind that the recent exposure of the soul-corrupting and murderous tenements in which this capitalistic system condemned so many thousands of their and our co-religionists to rot and suffer and die was not due to any crusading against slums or the things that make for and maintain slums on the part of either Hierarchy or of the parochial clergy, but was solely due to the fierce revolt of the victims, and the reckless campaigning of their leaders. If and when a purified Dublin arises, with clean streets, healthy homes and happy citizens, it will surely be remembered that whatever its foundations may be in lime, mortar or brick, its real foundations were the hunger, suffering and martyrdom even

unto death of the working class men, women and girls of Dublin; that their hunger, suffering and martyrdom by challenging the conscience of the civilised world laid the foundation of that sweeter, happier city of which we and Ireland shall yet be proud.

**James Connolly**

# **The Isolation of Dublin**

**(1914)**

From **Forward**, 9 February 1914.

It is not necessary, I presume, to remind our readers of the beginnings of the Dublin struggle. Let us, just for convenience sake, take up the fight at the moment it became a subject of national action on the part of the British Labour movement.

A public meeting had been proclaimed in Dublin in a brazen illegal manner. For declaring that this proclamation was illegal, and advising their leaders to disregard it and stand to their rights, a number of leaders of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union had been arrested and imprisoned. A wholesale

batoning of the people had followed, and Dublin was the scene of the most unparalleled police brutality.

An appeal was made to the British Trades Union Congress, then happily sitting, and that body in the name of the British working class nobly rose to the occasion, and pledged the credit of the whole British labour movement to see their Dublin comrades through the fight. As a result, the right of free speech was re-asserted in Dublin, a supply of food was arranged for through the despatch of specially chartered steamers, and a huge amount of money was raised to enable the men and women of Dublin to keep the fight going. Never was seen such enthusiasm in a labour fight. Trade unionists, socialists of all kinds, anarchists, industrialists, syndicalists, all the varying and hitherto discordant elements of the labour movement found a common platform, were joined together in pursuit of a common object. Now, permit me to underscore that point, and emphasise its great importance. For long years we have been preaching to the labour movement the necessity of concerted industrial action, telling it that the time was rotten ripe for industrial unity, and declaring that as the interests of each were the concern of all, our organisations should be rearranged with a view to the conserving of their common interests.

We found that to a large extent these ideas were taking root in the minds of the workers, but that to a still larger extent the tacit acceptance of our ideas failed to evoke concerted action built upon these lines. The forces of our enemies were united and wielded with all the precision and relentlessness with which the general staff of an army would wield the battalions and brigades which formed the component parts of that army, but the battalions and brigades of the army of labour when engaged in battle had no efficient general staff to guide and direct the whole army to the salvation of its individual units; and, worse still, had none of that esprit-de-corps which on the military battle-field would make the desertion of any section to its fate an unthinkable course to the officers of the divisions not engaged. We had seen at London, at Leith and elsewhere that whereas the whole force of the Shipping Federation has been actively engaged in fighting the dockers of these ports, the dockers and seamen of the other ports had maintained the peace, and left their Leith or London brothers to bear alone the

full force of the Federation attack, instead of meeting that attack by a movement against the flanks and rear of the Federation in these other ports. We know that although much of this blundering was due to the sectional jealousy of various union leaders, much was also due to the fact that the conception of common action on a national scale by the whole working class had not yet entered the minds of the rank and file as a whole. Something had been wanting – something that would make the minds of the workers more responsive, more ready to accept the broader idea, and act upon its acceptance. That something Dublin supplied.

The dramatic suddenness with which the Dublin fight was thrust upon public attention, the tragic occurrences of the first few days – working class martyrdom, the happy coincidence of a Trade Union Congress, the intervention of British trade unionists to assert the right of public meeting for Irish workers – filling the gap in the ranks caused by the jailing of Irish Trade Union leaders, the brilliant inspiration of a food ship, and last but not least the splendid heroism of the Dublin men and women showing out against the background of the squalor and misery of their houses.

There are times in history when we realise that it is easier to convert a multitude than it ordinarily is to convert an individual; when indeed ideas seem to seize upon the masses as contra-distinguished by ordinary times when individuals slowly seize ideas. The propagandist toils on for decades in seeming failure and ignominy, when suddenly some great event takes place in accord with the principles he has been advocating, and immediately he finds that the seed he has been sowing is springing up in plants that are covering the earth. To the idea of working class unity, to the seed of industrial solidarity, Dublin was the great event that enabled it to seize the minds of the masses, the germinating force that gave power to the seed to fructify and cover these islands.

I say in all solemnity and seriousness that in its attitude towards Dublin the working class movement of Great Britain reached its highest point of moral grandeur – attained for a moment to a realisation of that sublime unity towards which the best in us must continually aspire. Could that feeling but have been crystallised into organic expression, could we but have had real statesmen amongst us who, recognising the wonderful leap forward of our class, would have

hastened to burn behind us the boats that might make easy a retreat to the old ground of isolation and division, could we have found labour leaders capable enough to declare that now that the working class had found its collective soul it should hasten to express itself as befitted that soul and not be fettered by the rules, regulations and codes of organisations conceived in the olden outworn spirit of sectional jealousies; could these things have but been vouchsafed to us, what a new world could now be opening delightfully upon the vision of labour? Consider what Dublin meant to you all! It meant that the whole force of organised labour should stand behind each unit of organisation in each and all of its battles, that no company, battalion or brigade should henceforth be allowed to face the enemy alone, and that the capitalist would be taught that when he fought a union anywhere he must be prepared to fight all unions everywhere.

For the first days and weeks of the struggle, the working classes of Great Britain attained to the height of moral grandeur expressed in that idea, all labour stood behind Dublin, and Dublin rejoiced. Dublin suffered and agonised, but rejoiced that even in its suffering it was the medium for the apostolate of a rejuvenating idea. How often have I heard the responsive cheers to the question whether they would be prepared to stand by others as these others had stood by them!

And now? Dublin is isolated. We asked our friends of the transport trade unions to isolate the capitalist class of Dublin, and we asked the other unions to back them up. But no, they said we would rather help you by giving you funds. We argued that a strike is an attempt to stop the capitalist from carrying on his business, that the success or failure of the strike depends entirely upon the success or non-success of the capitalist to do without the strikers. If the capitalist is able to carry on his business without the strikers, then the strike is lost, even if the strikers receive more in strike pay than they formerly did in wages. We said that if scabs are working a ship and union men discharge in another port the boat so loaded, then those union men are strike breakers, since they help the capitalist in question to carry on his business. That if union seamen man a boat discharged by scabs, these union seamen or firemen are by the same reason strike-breakers,

as also are the railwaymen or carters who assist in transporting the goods handled by the scabs for the capitalist who is fighting his men or women. In other words, we appealed to the collective soul of the workers against the collective hatred of the capitalist.

We asked for no more than the logical development of that idea of working class unity, that the working class of Britain should help us to prevent the Dublin capitalists carrying on their business without us. We asked for the isolation of the capitalists of Dublin, and for answer the leaders of the British labour movement proceeded calmly to isolate the working class of Dublin. As an answer to those who supported our request for the isolation of Dublin we were told that a much better plan would be to increase the subsidies to enable us to increase strike pay. As soon as this argument had served its purpose, the subsidies fell off, and the 'Dublin Fund' grew smaller and smaller as if by a pre-arranged plan. We had rejected the last terms offered by the employers on the strength of this talk of increased supplies, and as soon as that last attempt at settlement thus fell through, the supplies gradually froze up instead of being increased as we had been promised.

In addition to this the National Union of Railwaymen, whilst in attendance at the Special Conference in London on 9th December, had actually in their pockets the arrangements for the re-starting of work on the London and North-Western boat at the North Wall of Dublin, and in the train returning to Dublin the day after the Conference, we read of the line being re-opened. No vote was taken of the men on strike; they were simply ordered back to work by their officials and told that if they did not return, their strike pay would be stopped. The Seamen's and Firemen's Union men in Dublin were next ordered to man the boats of the Head Line of steamers, then being discharged by free labourers supplied by the Shipping Federation. In both Dublin and Belfast the members refused, and they were then informed that union men would be brought from Great Britain to take their places. Union men to be brought from Britain to take the place of members of the same union who refused to desert their brothers of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. We were attempting to hold up Guinness' porter. A consignment was sent to Sligo for shipment there. The local

Irish Transport and General Workers' Union official wired me for instructions. I wired to hold it up; his men obeyed, and it was removed from Sligo, railed to Derry, and there put on board by members of Mr. James Sexton's National Union of Dockers on ships manned by members of Mr. Havelock Wilson's National Union of Seamen and discharged in Liverpool by members of Mr. James Sexton's Union. Whilst the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company was still insisting upon carrying the goods of our worst enemy, Jacob's (who is still enforcing the agreement denounced by Sir Geo. Askwith) the members of the Seamen and Firemen's Union were ordered to sign on in their boats, although our men were still on strike. We were informed by Mr. Joe Houghton of the Scottish Dockers that his union would not hold up any boat for us unless joint action was taken by the National Transport Workers' Federation. As on a previous occasion, his members at Ayr had worked coal boats belonging to a Belfast firm that was making war upon the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, we do not blame Joe very much. He had been disobeyed at Ayr – perhaps he was coerced in Glasgow.

But why go on? Sufficient to say that the working class unity of the first days of the Dublin fight was sacrificed in the interests of sectional officialism. The officials failed to grasp the opportunity offered to them to make a permanent reality of the union of working class forces brought into being by the spectacle of rebellion, martyrdom and misery exhibited by the workers of Dublin. All England and Scotland rose to it; working class officialdom and working class rank and file alike responded to the call of inspiration; it would have raised us all upward and onward towards our common emancipation. But sectionalism, intrigues and old-time jealousies damned us in the hour of victory, and officialdom was the first to fall to the tempter.

And so we Irish workers must go down into Hell, bow our backs to the lash of the slave driver, let our hearts be seared by the iron of his hatred, and instead of the sacramental wafer of brotherhood and common sacrifice, eat the dust of defeat and betrayal.

Dublin is isolated.

**James Connolly**

# **A Lesson From Dublin**

**(1914)**

From

**Forward,**

2

February

1914.

Some time ago I reprinted in **Forward** an extract from an article I had contributed to the **Irish Review** defending and expounding the idea of the sympathetic strike. That was at the beginning of the Dublin struggle. Now, the members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union who have returned to work in Dublin have done so after signing an agreement to handle all classes of goods, that is to say, to renounce for the time the idea and practice of the sympathetic strike.

This, by the way, is the only agreement yet signed by members of that union. In those firms which still insist upon the former Employers' Agreement banning the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union the strike or lock-out is still in active operation.

But the question arises: what reason is to be derived from our experience of the sympathetic strike in Dublin? What lesson can be learned from a cool and reasoned study of our struggle?

Let me repeat the essence of the article alluded to as an explanation of the nature of the sympathetic strike. It pointed out that we in Dublin had realised that the capitalist cannot be successfully fought upon the industrial field unless we recognise that all classes of workers should recognise their common interests, that such recognition implied that an employer engaged in a struggle with his workpeople should be made taboo or tainted, that no other workers should cooperate in helping to keep his business growing, that no goods coming from his works should be handled by organised workers, and no goods going to his works should be conveyed by organised workers. That he should, in effect, be put outside the pale of civilisation, and communication with him should be regarded as being as deadly a crime as correspondence with an enemy in war time. I tried to illustrate this by citing examples of social warfare conducted on similar lines in the past by various societies and classes.

It may then be asked: how far has the Dublin experience justified or failed to justify those who, like myself, contended for the practicability of this policy? We have been forced in Dublin to abandon the policy temporarily because other unions whose cooperation was necessary had not adopted a similar policy. It was not practicable to enforce the policy of tainted goods in Dublin whilst the goods so held up could be transported from other ports and handled across channel by other unions. The executives of other unions failing to sanction the cooperation of their members, the enforcement of this policy became an impossibility. Hence I submit that the main difficulty in the way of the success of this policy is in the multiplicity of unions and executives. Every union not immediately engaged in the conflict is a union whose material interests – looked at from a narrowly selfish point of view – are opposed to being drawn into the struggle. Therefore, every executive naturally aligns itself in opposition to the policy of a sympathetic strike, except when it is its own union that is immediately concerned. When it is one of the principals in the fight then each union becomes as enthusiastically in favour of the sympathetic strike as it formerly was against it. We have seen this

exemplified recently in London in the cases of the Coalmen's strike and the London Builders' lock-out. In fact every union that nowadays becomes involved in a strike appeals to sympathetic action immediately, even after condemning its theory when at peace. It is no use pointing out the inconsistency of such action; it is merely a case of following the immediate material interests of their union, instead of the broader material and moral welfare of their class. But when we recognise this ugly fact, what lesson ought we to derive from it?

We ought, I think, to learn that the first duty of the militant worker today is to work for industrial unionism in some form. To work for the abolition or merging of all these unions that now divide our energies instead of concentrating them – and for the abolition of all those executives whose measure of success is the balance sheet of their union, instead of the power of their class. The doctrine of 'tainted goods' is vitally necessary for the salvation of labour upon the industrial field, but its enforcement is not possible as long as labour is split up by unions whose executives look upon fellow workers in conflict with dread as possible sources of depletion of their treasuries. Be it remembered that it is scarcely humanly possible that these executives should act otherwise if the consciousness of class solidarity has not entered into the minds and hearts of their membership; but if and when it has so entered, then a bigoted conservatism based upon old traditional methods of action becomes a crime against the progress of the species.

This is to my mind the lesson of Dublin. Industrial unionism, the amalgamation of all forces of labour into one union, capable of concentrating all forces upon any one issue or in any one fight, can alone fight industrially as the present development and organisation of capital requires that labour should fight. This will not be accomplished in a day, nor in a year, but should be definitely aimed at, no matter how long may be the period of its accomplishment.

The organisation of all workers in any one industry into a union covering that entire industry, and the linking up of all such unions under one head is a different thing from the mere amalgamation of certain unions. But whilst not necessarily antagonistic, it is certainly more in the line of industrial development, and more effective in the day of conflict.

The name also helps to retrieve the workers' movement from the unnatural alliance with mere antipoliticalism so unfortunately and unnecessarily introduced as a fresh dividing issue at this juncture when all our minds ought to be set upon unity.

**James Connolly**

# **Mr Murphy's Great New Year Speech**

(Exclusive to the *Irish Worker*)

**(1914)**

**Irish**

**Worker,**

**3**

**January**

**1914.**

We are informed that on Wednesday, December 31st (New Year's Eve), a special meeting of the Employers' Association was held in the Antient Concert Rooms to hear an address by Mr William Martin Murphy. The meeting was called at the personal request of that gentleman, and was the most remarkable gathering that has been held since the beginning of the dispute. The great hall was taxed to its utmost, and the remarkable address was listened to in absolute silence, in fact with a feeling almost of awe-struck wonderment. We dare not speculate upon the possible results of this unique pronouncement.

Mr Murphy said: "Gentlemen, I have called you together on the eve of the New Year, 1914, because I have something to tell you that I feel can better be told upon such an occasion than upon any other. It has long been the custom amongst Christian nations to make the closing of the old year and the opening of the book of the new an occasion for the promulgation of new policies, and for the renunciation of old sins. Such of us as feel wearied and worn out with old forms of iniquity and desirous of aspiring after a newer life in which to qualify for a greater righteousness naturally choose that period in which the thoughts of men turn to change as the period best suited to mark their change of heart. For that reason I have fixed upon this evening as the most auspicious occasion, and the one most calculated to awaken in your breasts a responsive throb for the review of the past and the announcement of the change of policy I intend to follow upon my change of heart (sensation). Yes, gentlemen, I intend to embark upon a new line of policy – a policy that I hope will reconcile me at last to the great heart of the Dublin public, of the generous Irish public from whom I have been so long estranged.

"For years I have followed in Ireland a policy which set my own interests above and before everything else. I have schemed and contrived by every means to obtain control of every kind of business, even if in doing so I had to destroy the business and wreck the prospects of helpless orphans. I have never followed any policy of Christian charity, of humane pity, even of common decency, to restrain me when engaged trying to obtain possession of the business interests of those whom I considered as business rivals. I have made a fine art, or perhaps I should say a scientific business of the accumulation in my own hands of the fortunes and control of destinies of others. My path through the business world has been marked by the ruin of others, and all over Dublin and the other scenes of my activities can be traced the sufferers – suffering in silence for the most part, as I have successfully manipulated into silence every avenue of publicity by means of which they could make themselves heard.

"What I have done to the business people in this business world I have done even more ruthlessly and unscrupulously to those members of the working class who dared to cross my path. You all know the tale of the West Clare Railway.

How I terrorised the whole countryside into acceptance of my terms, how I evicted poor Irish labourers for daring to ask as a weekly wage a sum not sufficient to pay for a box at the Opera for one of my guests at Dartry Hall, how I secured that this eviction should pass and win the approval of a venal Home Rule Press which had grown into popularity by the denunciation of evictions not one half as cold-blooded and merciless, and how in spite of this eviction of my poor countrymen and women I still managed to pose before the public as a pure-souled patriot and lover of my kind. All this you know, gentlemen! You also know – for you have been participating in my crime – how I managed our latest attempt to reduce to soulless slavery the gallant workers of Dublin. You know how I managed to secure a sufficient number of slaves prepared to sell their manhood for a chance to earn a few miserable shillings; how I used those slaves, and when I was sure of their slavishness proceeded to goad the more manly workers into revolt, and then supplanted them by the help of those Judases. How I had prepared my plans so that the Judge who tried the strikers, arrested by a police force drunken with rural hatred of the city, should feel that his own right to dividends was on trial when confronted by a working class prisoner, and should hit out vindictively with fiendish sentences accordingly. You also know, none better, how we had our secret agents in every club, society and gathering place in the city. How we encouraged them to play upon the most sacred offices and the most hallowed institutions and to divert them to our uses. How we made priests of the Most High imagine they were obeying the call of God when in reality they were only being galled by our carefully poisoned suggestions – made them mistake the insinuations of the devil for the inspirations of God. How we secured that through the influence of some of our lady shareholders the uniformed ruffians of the police should be let loose to insult with foul-mouthed indecencies the brave girls who dared to strike against the unbearable conditions you imposed upon them, and when in the pride of their outraged purity they resented the insults the same police bullies beat them, arrested them, and perjured themselves to swear their liberties away. All this you know, gentlemen! You also know how we made the streets of Dublin a place of terror for every worker not prepared to sell his class; how our uniformed brutes (whom I despised even whilst using them) batoned, kicked and maimed all and sundry; how we murdered two men in Dublin and left another widow and six orphans in

Kingstown [\[1\]](#); how we armed scabs to shoot at will, and how, in short, we have made of the Capital City of our country a place of slaughter, of misery, and a byword amongst the nations.

“Well, gentlemen, what has it all profited us? At the end of it all we find that the workers of Dublin are still unsubdued, and I now believe are unsubduable and unconquerable. You can extract what comfort you may from that fact. For myself now at the opening of the New Year I am determined to do what I can in the few years left me to try and make amends for all the long array of crimes against my kind of which I have been guilty. I, at least, will no longer make war upon the liberties of my poorer brothers and sisters, or use my ill-gotten wealth to exploit others. What I have done I cannot restore, but I can restore to the working class the rights of which I used my wealth to deprive them. From this night, gentlemen, I cease to hold the pistol of starvation at the heads of the poor to make them surrender their souls and liberties. I propose to go down to the Tramway Depots and hunt away the foul vermin who now pollute the cars by their presence. I propose to open the dispatch business of the **Independent** and **Herald** with Transport Union members, and if they will permit me I will grasp the hand of each and beg their pardon for my crimes against their manhood. These will be but the beginning.

“From this day forward I am at the service of every honest cause, and I trust that the closing years of a life spent in unscrupulous acquisition of gold may be worthy of some honour when spent as they will be spent in trying to win instead the esteem of my fellows.

“To-day I am sending to Jim Larkin, whom I have grown to esteem and value as a worthy citizen, an invitation to do me the honour of consenting to dine with me on New Year’s Day at the Imperial Hotel. There on the spot made historic by Larkin [\[2\]](#), I propose that he and I shall make a pact of friendship, and trust that united our efforts will succeed in purging Dublin and Ireland of much of its squalor and misery, and set its feet upon the upward path that leads towards righteousness.”

**(NOTE.** – Up to the present the invitation has not arrived, and we are wondering whether our reporter invented the speech of Mr Murphy, as Murphy’s supporters have hitherto invented so many speeches attributed to Mr Larkin.)

***JAMES CONNOLLY.***

## **Notes**

1. James Nolan and James Byrne were killed by a police baton charge, and another James Byrne died on hunger strike in prison.
2. It was from a balcony of the Imperial Hotel that Larkin spoke on Bloody Sunday.