

James Connolly

Notes on the Front

(1915)

Workers' Republic, 16 October 1915].

This week we give first place to an extract from an American writer, William Randolph Hearst. This newspaper man is proprietor of a great number of American daily papers which cover the entire American continent, and whose combined circulation runs into the millions. Yet we quote him not so much for what he is, as for the truth of what he says. He is speaking of the billion dollar loan from America to finance the war of the All Lies, and he warns the American money lenders that the people of Europe may repudiate the loan, and hang the kings and financiers who borrowed it. Read this warning:—

If any reader, accustomed to the sound and stable government of this country, believes that revolution is not now possible in any European State, let him ask himself frankly how long he believes the strong-bodied, stern-minded, plain people of Europe are going to endure the immeasurable misery of this unnatural war into the hellish depths of which they have been precipitated by the vanities and inanities, the enmities and jealousies of their arrogant and ambitious rulers.

Revolutions are not respectful of royalty, nor of constituted authority, nor of the established order. Revolutions are not regardful of the financial obligations of a deposed and discarded system. Revolutions exhibit no such soft and suave

consideration for money and the money power as calm and conservative governments do.

The heads of plutocrats and aristocrats dropped side by side into the baskets on the Place de la Concorde from the impartial edge of the revolutionary guillotine. And so it may be that the tongues of the European statesmen and financiers, which so glibly guarantee this loan to-day, may loll mute in mouths eternally silent when the day of repayment arrives.

Strong language that, dear reader, but who shall say it is too strong.

Let us consider our case – the case of Ireland. Consider it, not impartially, but with hearts beating fiercely with anger against all the organised injustice that threatens our existence.

Impartiality in the face of injustice is the virtue of a slave, or of well-fed beneficiaries of the fruits of injustice. Thank God, we are not impartial.

What is our case? England is at war; because England is at war we are dragged into the conflict also. No, that is wrong! To be *dragged* into anything means that the person who drags goes in front. That is not our case. England does not go in front. No, we are *pushed* into war by people who stay behind in safety, or only pass on when the dead bodies of Irishmen have paved the way.

We are pushed into War. Consider what that means. For over 68 years the population of Ireland has been declining, the lifeblood of Ireland has been draining away. Whilst every European state has increased in population despite war and turmoil Ireland has gone steadily down the hill.

We have the most beautiful climate in the world, a climate which a wise national government could even improve by restoring the forests that once covered the island and broke the rainfall that comes in from the Atlantic ocean. We have a lively, quick minded, intelligent people, rich in soft kindness, and graced with womanly beauty and manly vigour.

For centuries this people have been treated as outcasts in their own land, shut out from every chance of developing its resources, and ruled by an insolent class of land thieves and its followers.

A social system the worst in Europe held the people in its grasp, and punished as a crime every improvement their industry added to the soil. A political system based upon this landlordism governed the country, and under its rule every man of free spirit became a suspect, every hater of slavery walked a path hemmed in by prison cells and dominated by a gibbet.

Continued revolutionary action of the people upon the land destroyed the power of the evil social system, but it left behind it the system of government based upon hatred and fear of the Irish people. Forty-two Boards under the control of the British Government control every elected body in Ireland, and make a farce of free government.

Heartbroken in such a land where the amenities and gifts of life are reserved for those most sordid in soul, where the possession of public spirit damns the career of the possessor, the young men and women have been deserting her as life deserts the things of this world upon whom Death has set its seal.

But still the nation persisted in claiming its right to existence, in determinedly planning a future built upon those young people who remained. But suddenly like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky England rushes into war, and all the unclean things bred by seven centuries of corruption call upon Ireland from behind to rush to England's side.

But what is the price of war – the price as it must be paid by a nation? That all the young and vigorous men go out to be killed, and all the unfit and diseased stay at home to be fathers of the next generation. All those splendidly developed young Irish men whose bones now lie mouldering beneath the soil in Flanders or upon the shores of the Dardanelles – all those physically perfect Irish men would in due course have been the husbands of young Irish women, the fathers of Irish children inheriting the vigour and virility of their parents.

But now those young Irish women are doomed to go husbandless through life, or to mate with the diseased and unfit who stayed at home, or the diseased and crippled who will return.

The perfect Irish children of perfect Irish parents will never be born. They who would have been their fathers lie dead in far off countries. Think of the colossal nature of this crime. The children of Ireland are being killed before they are born, the Irish race of the future denied an existence.

A competent English authority says that among the upper class of England there is not left one man of marriageable age for every twelve women of the same class, and that all the chances are against any girl between the ages of 19 and 22 ever getting married if she is not already engaged to someone in civil life.

It is safe to say that in Ireland amongst that section of the community who have yielded to the seductions of the recruiting sergeant the same is true. There are streets in Dublin, in the poorer quarters, where every family has lost a man, there are sections in the country where the toll of death has been so heavy that every man has gone.

Ever and anon we read in the press the gloating remark that out of such and such a village with a small population three-fourths or four-fifths of the men are at the front. It reads to us as the triumph yells of the old time pirates must have sounded as they exulted in the number of the slaves captured in a piratical raid, such as the historic Sack of Baltimore.

Upon the top of this sacrifice of the living comes the borrowing of money to continue the work of hell, and this borrowing means pawning the labour and genius of the future to the financial leeches and usurious money-lenders of Europe and America.

Generations yet unborn are to be taxed to pay for the blood madness of the rulers of this; our children and our children's children are to be compelled to pay in sweat and blood and tears for our weakness in submitting to the criminal ambitions of our rulers.

We did not all submit, a fact for which such of the Irish as exist in the future will bless us. Every Irish man or woman who helped to persuade a young Irish man to abandon Ireland and go to Flanders or the Dardanelles helped at the same time to assassinate Ireland, to rob her of her future children, to stifle the coming generation before it was born.

And every man who kept such a man at home helped by doing so to preserve the race, to keep for Ireland and for humanity the fathers of the future generation. That generation, those children yet unborn are the heritors of our hopes, the heirs of all those holy things for which our poets sung, our soldiers fought, our martyrs died.

Who then can doubt the truth of the words of that American whose eloquent sentences are at the beginning of these *Notes*? Who can believe that the peoples of Europe in general, of Ireland in particular, will consent to pay the leeches whose money has made this war possible after having made it inevitable, will consent to pay in sweated labour after having paid in the blood of their bravest and best.

It is unthinkable! The people of Europe have held back from violence because bloodshed and armed strife had grown repulsive as a result of years of Socialist propaganda. The war madness has swept away that humanitarian feeling, and revealed our rulers as what they are – Monsters, red in tooth and claw.

Yes, Revolution is no longer unthinkable in Europe, its shadow already looms upon the horizon

James Connolly

Without Principle

(1915)

Workers'

Republic,

9

October

1915.

The recently concluded election in the Harbour Division of the city of Dublin was an illuminating proof of how low politics fall in Ireland when the galvanising force of an opposition based upon a great principle is withdrawn. [1] There are people in this country who sincerely deprecate anything in politics that seems to break what is called national unity, as there are ten times as many who repeat the parrot cry of 'faction' and 'factionism' because they will not use the brains with which they are endowed, but are content to be the mouthpieces of every dominant faction that imposes itself upon the nation.

But the sincere patriot who looks beyond the dust of conflict, and refuses to regard politics as an area in which the uniformity of old-time military drill is essential or even desirable, will realise that what is called 'faction' is often the vitally necessary stirring of intellectual life without which parties are corrupted and nations die.

It may seem paradoxical to say it, but it is absolutely true that the healthiest nation, the nation most potent in its influence upon the well-being of the world, is ever that which has the most factions in its intellectual life, whose sons and daughters the most readily contend for principles they hold dear. Ireland is a shining example. Had any of the parties which have hitherto spoken in the name of Ireland been in reality the custodian of all the hopes and ideals of Ireland, it is certain that centuries ago the identity of Ireland as a nation would have disappeared. The destruction or corruption of the party would have meant the final conquest of Ireland.

But as it was, Ireland was a land of factions, of contending parties, of diverse ideals. No sooner had the foreign enemy destroyed one party, and joyfully declared that Ireland was done for, than he discovered that another party with another method of fighting, and pursuing a somewhat different ideal, had sprung up in its place, and all his work was to be done over again.

All Irish parties fought for freedom, all did not agree in their ideas of what constituted freedom. All Irish parties loved Ireland, all could not unite in formulating a political policy which embodied their love for Ireland. Indeed, the greatest political parties were those which most resolutely avoided all attempts at definitions.

There is a unity in diversity, an underlying identity in things apparently conflicting, but this great truth is unknown to the shallow-minded windbags and petty wirepullers who to-day pose as Irish leaders. They can only recognise submission and obedience, which for their own purposes they rechristen as unity and discipline. A new principle, a new idea merely represents to them a force they cannot control. The greater it is the more they fear it.

In the Harbour Division we had seeking the support of the electors three candidates between whom there scarcely existed any differences except in the degree of their objectionableness to decent minded men. We refrained from condemning any one of these men in the fear that we might help in returning any of the others. Half of the electors of the Division shared our views on the matter, and refused to go to the poll, and bereft of the vitalising effect of a contest for principles the election became one of the most pitiful travesties ever seen in Ireland.

Each candidate endorsed the war, but strove to represent to the electors that he was not as recreant to Ireland as his opponents. Each candidate held to a policy which makes loyal addresses and the flunkeyism of Irish slaves a matter of routine hereafter, but two of them protested that they could not tolerate the man who did in the past what they were prepared to do in the future.

No principle was at stake. It was not a contest for principle, it was a contest for a job at £400 per year.

No principle will hereafter be at stake in an Irish election until Labour chooses to enter in the arena to purify the political atmosphere by the introduction of a higher principle.

Note

[1.](#) The election, on 1 October, was won by Alderman Alfie Byrne, but all three candidates had pledged to join the Home Rule party in parliament if elected.

James Connolly

In Praise of the Empire

(1915)

From Workers' Republic, 9 October 1915.

We want to say a few words in praise of the Empire. Now, do not get startled, or shocked, nor yet think that we are only sarcastic. We are not abandoning our

principles, nor forgetting our wrongs, nor giving up as hopeless the fight for our rights, nor yet exercising the slave's last privilege – that of sneering at his masters.

We do not love the Empire; we hate it with an unqualified hatred, but, nevertheless, we admire it. Why should we not!

Consider well what this Empire is doing today, and then see if you can withhold your admiration.

At the present moment this Empire has dominions spread all over the seven seas. Everywhere it holds down races and nations, that it might use them as its slaves, that it might use their territories as sources of rent and interest for its aristocratic rulers, that it might prevent their development as self-supporting entities and compel them to remain dependent customers of English produce, that it might be able to strangle every race or nation that would enter the field as a competitor against British capitalism or assert its independence of the British capitalist.

To do this it stifles the ancient culture of India, strangles in its birth the new-born liberty of Egypt, smothers in the blood of ten thousand women and children the republics of South Africa, betrays into the hands of Russian despotism the trusting nationalists of Persia, connives at the partition of China, and plans the partition of Ireland.

North, south, east and west it has set its foot upon the neck of peoples, plundering and murdering, and mocking as it outraged. In the name of a superior civilization it has crushed the development of native genius, and in the name of superior capitalist development it has destroyed the native industries of a sixth of the human race.

In the name of liberty it hangs and imprisons patriots, and whilst calling High Heaven to witness its horror of militarism it sends the shadow of its swords between countless millions and their hopes of freedom.

Despite all this, despite the fact that every day the winds of the earth are laden with the curses which its unwilling subjects in countless millions pray upon its flag, yet that flag flies triumphantly over every one of its possessions, even whilst its soldiers are reeling discomfited and beaten before the trenches of Turk and German.

The British Empire never fought a white European foe single-handed, never dared yet to confront an equal unaided, yet it has laid upon its subjects everywhere from Ireland to India and from India to Africa, the witchcraft of belief in its luck, so that even whilst they see it beaten to its knees they are possessed with the conviction that it will pull through in some fashion. The Devil's children have their father's luck!

Without that belief, without that conviction of the slaves that their master must remain in possession of his mastership, the British Empire would today be everywhere lit up with the fires of mutiny and insurrection.

In the labour movement we have long ago learned that it is the worker who is convinced of the power of the capitalist, who believes that "the big fellows are sure to win," it is he who really keeps labour in subjection, defeats strikes and destroys Trade Unions. The problem before the labour movement is always to find out how this hopeless feeling can be destroyed, and confidence implanted in the bosom where despair usually reigns.

The moment the worker no longer believes in the all-conquering strength of the employer is the moment when the way opens out to the emancipation of our class.

The master class realise this, and hence all their agencies bend their energies towards drugging, stupefying and poisoning the minds of the workers – sowing distrust and fear amongst them.

The ruling class of the British Empire also know it, and hence they also utilise every agency to spread amongst the subject races a belief in the luck of England, in the strength of England, in the omnipotence of England. That belief

is worth more to the British Empire than ten army corps; when it goes, when it is lost, there will be an uprising of resurgent nationalities – and a crash of falling Empires.

Should we not therefore admire the Empire that in face of danger can yet fascinate and enthral the minds of its slaves and keep them in mental as well as physical subjection?

James Connolly

Notes on the Front

(1915)

Workers' Republic, 2 October 1915.
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Now, everyone has a chance to be happy! All we have to do to support the Government in its prosecution of the war for Civilisation and Small Nationalities is to continue eating, drinking and smoking as usual.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

The poor old mother, worn out by a lifetime of toil amid misery and wretchedness, need no longer weep bitter tears over her inability to help the war against the Huns. The kind British Government comes to her aid, and enables her to contribute to the successful prosecution of the war without moving from her seat in the corner at the fire. Every time her son or grandson, daughter or granddaughter, wish to give her a cup of tea the kind British Government steps in and forbids the Christian act until they have first paid over to that Government a tax to enable it to buy something to kill Germans.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

Your mother may be dying for want of a cup of tea to cheer her old age, your child may be in the last agonies of fever or ague, and fainting for a warm drink, your wife may long for a cheering cup to soothe her nerves after a day of trouble and sickness – no matter. The Government will forbid you doing your duty to these sufferers until you first enable it to push on the work of killing Germans – and pay the extra duty on the tea.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

Your old father may be passing away and longing for a smoke to ease his last days, but he cannot get a smoke of tobacco until you pay the Government the extra tax to enable it to carry on the war. You may hate the war, and believe it to be a product of hell – conceived in sin, and begotten in iniquity – but pay for it you must before you can get a smoke, or the old father 'get a blast of the pipe'.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

The food of the poor is taxed to pay for the wars of the rich. The tax that will be put upon the working man and woman will be equal to an increase of at least 6/8 in the £ in prices, and on many articles equal to 10/- in the £. This means that the wages of the working class will be reduced one third at least, and in some cases one half.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

How can we pay it? Already the working class is staggering under the heavy prices put on all the necessaries of life since the beginning of the war; already the war has meant less food on our tables; less clothes on our backs; less coal on our fires; less boots on our own or our children's feet. More taxes on food means more starvation, more nakedness, more wretchedness and general misery. The working class has seen its best blood driven into the army by the compulsion of hunger and the threat of hunger, now it is to see the miserable relatives of those recruits and reservists, and those defiant ones who refused to be either driven or fooled, alike compelled to pay for the war in hunger and suffering by a tax upon its necessaries of life.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

Up and down Ireland on every Monday morning there is to be seen outside the Post Office the spectacle of Irish wives and mothers and children standing patiently in line like criminals, waiting for the receipt of the blood money which the British Government allows them in return for the limbs and lives of their husbands, sons or fathers. Some have given the limbs and lives of their nearest and dearest with sorrow and reluctance, some with bitter protests and unavailing tears, a few with willingness and drunken joy, but the Government now reaches out its hand and takes back from all alike half of its blood money by a tax upon the food these poor people must buy in order to live.

The tax upon the food of the poor is equal to an increased tax of fifty per cent. Yet what a howl would go up if it were proposed to tax the rich with a fifty per cent tax. As it is the increased income tax will still not represent one tenth part of the income of a rich man, whilst the increased prices which will follow the tax on food will undoubtedly mean the loss to the worker of at least one half of his weekly income. In other words, it will soon take One Pound to buy the same necessaries of life as could have been bought for ten shillings before the war.

The purchasing power of your wages will be cut in half.

THE BUDGET DOES IT.

Hurrah for the Budget. I don't think.

From the Huddersfield **Worker** we take the following parable written during the American Civil War by America's famous humorist, Artemus Ward. It reads as if it were written yesterday:

WILLIAM, A PATRIOT RE-DEDICATED TO WAR EXPLOITERS

I.

"No, William Barker, you cannot have my daughter's hand in marriage until you are her equal in wealth and social position."

The speaker was a haughty old man of some sixty years, and the person whom he addressed was a fine looking young man of twenty-five.

With a sad aspect the young man withdrew from the stately mansion.

II.

Six months later the young man stood in the presence of the haughty old man.

"What! YOU here again," angrily cried the old man.

"Aye, old man," proudly exclaimed William Barker, "I am here, your daughter's equal and yours!"

The old man's lips curled with scorn. A derisive smile lit up his cold features; when, casting upon the marble centre table an enormous roll of dollar greenbacks, William Barker cried:

"See! Look on this wealth. And I've tenfold more! Listen, old man! You spurned me from your door. But I did not despair. I secured a contract for furnishing the Army of the – with beef –"

“Yes, yes!” eagerly exclaimed the old man.

“– and I bought up all the disabled cavalry horses I could find –”

“I see, I see!” cried the old man. “And good beef they make, too.”

“They do! they do! and the profits are immense.”

“I should say so!”

“And now, sir, I claim your daughter’s fair hand!”

“Boy, she is yours. But hold! Look me in the eye. Throughout all this have you been loyal?”

“To the core!” cried William Barker.

“And,” continued the old man, in a voice husky with emotion, “are you in favour of a vigorous prosecution of the war?”

“I am! I am!”

“Then boy, take her! Maria, child, come hither. Your William claims thee. Be happy, my children! And whatever our lot in life may be, LET US ALL SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT!”

That sounds home-like, does it not? We have a good many jingo patriots here (save the mark) who are making a fortune in the same way, and of course howling for the war as long as it pays them a good thumping profit.

The Americans coined the phrase to describe the Civil War that it was:

A RICH MAN’S WAR BUT A POOR MAN’S FIGHT.

It was a good phrase, terse and descriptive. But are all wars not rich men’s wars, in the sense that they are made for the profit of the rich, and poor men’s fights in the sense that it is the blood of the poor that is spilt in them all?

But some day the sons of the poor will determine to fight only in their own interest, and against All the Ruling Thieves of Civilisation.

And then –

The proud throne shall crumble,
The diadem shall wave,
The Tribes of Earth shall humble
The pride of those who reign.
And war shall lay its pomp away
The fame which heroes cherish,
And glory born in bloody fray
Shall fade, decay and perish.

James Connolly

Labour and the Budget

Dublin Transport Workers' Protest

(1915)

Workers' Republic, 2 October 1915.
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A meeting to “call upon all sections of labour to oppose the attempt of the British Government to heavily tax the food of the people to pay war expenses” was held in Beresford Place on Sunday September 26, under the auspices of the Transport Workers’ Union. [...]

Mr James Connolly remarked that before they were asked to pay the blood tax of the war it was surely right that the Irish race should have been asked to consent to waging war at all. Their representatives should have come to Ireland and laid before them a full and accurate statement of what led to it. Why were they asked to make war upon the German people, and believe that the Germans were their natural enemies – that it was a high and holy and righteous thing and pleasing in the sight of God that they should arm themselves and go out to slaughter men who never did them any harm – (hear, hear) – brothers of theirs in toil and labour, to kill them, to manure the soil with their corpses, and offer up their own lives in the attempt to do so (cheers).

Some had said that Labour should send a candidate forward in the Harbour Division as a protest against this Budget. Who cared about such a protest and what should it avail? One man’s voice against that of 600 and more in the great House of Thieves in Westminster. He could tell them a more effective way of protesting. In the time of war Labour was weak politically, but strong industrially. Let them protest where they were strong. The Government was a rich man’s Government, the Employers controlled it in their own interest. Then let them tell the employers that every increase of taxation upon the necessities of life must mean an increase of wages, and when the employers learned that they would bring pressure to bear upon the Government to reduce the taxes upon the food of the poor. More taxes must mean more wages.

They were prepared to fight industrially or any other way that became necessary (cheers).

James Connolly

James Keir Hardie

(1915)

From **Workers' Republic,** 2 October 1915.

By the death of Comrade James Keir Hardie labour has lost one of its most fearless and incorruptible champions, and the world one of its highest minded and purest souls.

It is not easy for us who knew him long and personally to convey to the reader how much of a loss his taking away is to the labour movement. We feel it with the keenness of a personal loss.

James Keir Hardie was to the labour movement a prophetic anticipation of its own possibilities. He was a worker, with all the limitations from which no worker ever completely escapes, and with potentialities and achievements such as few workers aspire after, but of which each worker may be the embodiment.

James Keir Hardie himself was ever too modest to say, but we who were his comrades often thought, that he was a living proof of the truth of the idea that labour could furnish in its own ranks all that was needed to achieve its own emancipation, the proof that labour needed no heaven-sent saviour from the ranks of other classes. He had been denied the ordinary chances of education, he was sent to earn his living at the age of seven, he had to educate himself in the few hours he could snatch from work and sleep, he was blacklisted by the employers as soon as he gave vent to the voice of labour in his district, he had to face unemployment and starvation in his early manhood and when he began to

champion politically the rights of his class he found every prostitute journalist in these islands throwing mud at his character, and defaming his associates.

Yet he rose through it all, and above it all, never faltered in the fight, never failed to stand up for truth and justice as he saw it, and as the world will yet see it.

When the vultures of capital descended upon Dublin, resolved to make Dublin the grave of the new unionism, James Keir Hardie was one of the first to take his stand in the gap of danger by our sides. And when many of our friends weakened or were led astray, in the midst of the clamour of reviling tongues, and rising above it, we could always catch the encouraging accents of James Keir Hardie bidding the Dublin fighters to stand fast.

And when the latest great iniquity was being rushed upon the world, and the contending hosts of Europe were being marshalled by their masters for the work of murder, James Keir Hardie stood resolutely for peace and brotherhood among the nations – refusing to sanction the claim of the capitalist class of any nation to be the voice of the best interests of that nation.

May the earth rest lightly over his bosom.

James Connolly

**Some Irish
Slaves and
Slavishness**

(1915)

Workers'

Republic,

25

September

1915.

At last meeting of the Dublin Trades Council the secretary of a small affiliated body, the Brassfounders, wrote in intimating the withdrawal of his society from the Council. The reason alleged was that the Council had instructed their representatives on the Technical Education Committee of the Dublin Corporation to oppose the loan of some valuable and delicate machinery to the Government for Munitions Work. The Council and, as it transpired, the majority of the Technical Education Committee took the view that the machines would be rendered useless for the delicate work of the school by such employment, and that a Government that can spend about five millions a day on the war could easily afford £2,000 in buying these machines from the Corporation. If the Government really needed the machines, let them buy them as they buy horses, mules, or provisions at top prices from farmers or merchants.

Surely no more reasonable offer was ever made! In the Technical Schools of England there are hundreds of such machines, and in no one case have these been even asked for on the same terms as these machines were asked for in Dublin – indeed nowhere – has an English Technical School been asked to do or give anything without payment. In this as in all others greater sacrifices are asked from Irishmen than from Englishmen, and unfortunately it would appear from the letter spoken of at the beginning of this article that there are Irishmen slavish enough in spirit to deem it right that it should be so.

But the men who ordered this letter written, and the men in the Technical Education Committee who supported the proposal to give away the property of

the citizens of Dublin should be made to understand in what company they belong.

What is that company? When a foreign invader plants himself in a country which he holds by military force his only hope of retaining his grasp is either that he wins the loyalty of the natives, or if he fails to do so that he corrupts enough of them to enable him to disorganise and dishearten the remainder.

The chief method of corruption is by an appeal to self-interest. To illustrate: At one time in the history of Ireland the presence of an English garrison in a city or territory was a hateful thing in the eyes of Irishmen, and ever and anon some Irish chief and clan would swoop down upon that garrison and exterminate it, and all who had dealings with it. But gradually with the growth of the capitalist system the English garrisons found Irishmen who for the sake of the gain in gold they would make by supplying the garrison with food and supplies were anxious to see garrisons amongst them and over them. Hence we have seen the spectacle of Irishmen posing as patriots actually petitioning the English Government to establish military garrisons in their districts. Willing that a foreign army should be in a position to coerce them, that their sons may be lured into its bloodstained service, and their daughters ruined by its lustful military – willing to help all this iniquity along if only they were allowed to make a profit by selling something to the army that stood between their country and its freedom.

By such means the invader tightens his hold upon the country. The profit of the merchant supplying the garrison is followed by the jobs and pensions of that portion of the natives which sells itself to assist in administering the laws of the invader, and that again by the smaller jobs and more pitiful pensions of those who sell themselves as bludgeon men in the police or hired assassins in the army which holds the natives down and prevents them ruling and owning their own country.

If you throw a stone into a pond it will make a small ripple upon the smooth surface, but gradually the ripple spreads, ring follows ring until the effect is felt upon the farthest shore. So with the spread of corruption in a subject nation.

Corruption sends out its waves over the souls of the people, and evil begets evil until its loathsome effects are all pervading.

The Trade Union that secedes from the ranks of the Labour Movement because that movement scorns to aid the invader in his murderous conspiracy against a free nation, the trade union that exults in the prospect of being allowed to prostitute its skill in the furtherance of the work of making weapons of murder which may first be used on its own fellow citizens, the trade union that rushes in to proclaim that Irishmen should sacrifice more for the British Empire than Englishmen should – that trade union is a worthy descendant of those who in the past in the armies of the invader saw not the assassins of their country's liberty, but only prospective customers from whom an Irish slave might derive a slave's profit.

We do not believe that the members of the Brass Founders Society ever were consulted before their officials rushed in to proclaim their baseness to the wondering world.

In fact we know they were not consulted. What are they going to do about it?

James Connolly

**God Help the Poor
Irish**

(1915)

To all thoughtful labour men and women the recent meeting of the British Trade Union Congress presented a rather sorrowful spectacle. Time was when that Congress was regarded as embodying all the bright hopes and aspirations of a working class rapidly freeing itself from the mental and political fetters inherited from ages of servitude. Time was when the most beloved spokesmen of that Congress were those who most passionately declared that it was the duty of the workers to overthrow all the social, political and military tyrannies rooted in the capitalist system of which the British Empire is the perfected fruit. Time was when the unanimous voice of that Congress declared that the working class had no enemy except the capitalist class – that of its own country at the head of the list. Time was when the orators at all the meetings attendant upon that Congress declaimed their love of human brotherhood, and their contempt for all the racial, religious and national catchcries that were used to keep the peoples separate and warring.

But now! Alas, how have the mighty fallen! Gone are all the bright hopes of a class fighting to free itself from fetters, and scornfully contemptuous of the interests or ambitions of its masters. Instead we have a Congress deliberately putting aside the hopes of the workers in order to help the schemes of murder set on foot by the capitalist state. We have a Congress where a leader like George N. Barnes uses his position to attack his own Union for insisting upon its Trade Union rights where a leader like the President of the Congress advises his hearers not to read literature presenting a different view on the war to that popularised by the capitalist newspapers; where a leader like Ben Tillett foams at the mouth against those who desire peace as a few months ago he foamed at the mouth against those who desired war; where every voice belched forth hatred of their brothers under a different government, and where the quarrels fomented by the capitalist class were made more important as standards of worth than services in the interests of Labour, or aspirations for a world where men can live guiltless of plotting the murder of their fellowmen. A Congress which declared against

compulsory service or conscription, but in the same breath declared it would accept it if its rulers declared it to be necessary.

We have ere now looked hopefully to the British Trade Union Congress, but our hopes are gone. The British Empire is ruled by the most astute ruling class in the world; the British working class is the most easily fooled working class in the world.

God help the poor Irish as long as they remain yoked to such a combination.

James Connolly

Protect Your Women

(1915)

Workers'

Republic,

11

September

1915.

This is the slogan, the war cry of all the press to-day. Protect your women! To that rallying cry many thousands of this nation have responded; with their blood set on fire by the lying hysterics of a lying press thousands of young men, and men not too young, have left home and kindred and marched forth to foreign lands to battle under a flag they have detested all their lives; marched forth to battle in the belief that their battling was in some mysterious way serving their women.

And whilst they battled and shed their blood abroad what was happening to their women? In the latest exploit of Dublin Capitalism we have the answer. There is in Dublin a firm known as Williams and Woods, manufacturers of preserves, pickles, sauce and confectionery. This firm employs a large number of girls and women.

Their industry is scheduled under the Trade Boards Act as a Sweated Industry. Under the provisions of this Act there is established what is known as a Minimum Wage Board, which has the power to fix the minimum rate of wages in any industry scheduled under the Board. Upon this Board there are representatives of the Employers, of the Workpeople and of the Board of Trade. It is therefore not a wildly democratic or revolutionary body. And it is well known that before fixing wages this Board takes into account the present state of prices, and makes allowance for a 'reasonable' profit. In fact every care is taken of the interest of the employer.

The industry of Messrs Williams and Woods came under the notice of this Board. A meeting was held at which the employers were represented, and at which the workers were misrepresented by a creature of the employers, and at this meeting the wages of women and girls in the employment were fixed at –

10/10 for Female Workers of 18 years and upwards, and 22/9 for Male Workers of 22 years and upwards. For younger workers the rates begin for Girls at 5/- per week, and for Boys at 6/-, proceeding by yearly increases to the amount stated for workers at 18 years.

These wages you will say are small enough in all conscience. They are! But small as they are Messrs Williams and Woods refuse to pay them. And in order to evade the law and to continue sweating their women workers, despite the law, this firm of loyal, God-fearing, Christian philanthropists have

Served Notice of Dismissal upon 150 Women
and Girls over 18 years of age,

and are making ready to take in a number of young persons to fill the places of the people they are discharging. Some of these women under notice have served the firm loyally for ten and fifteen years, and even longer, and now this firm, with less bowels of compassion than a tiger in a jungle, is preparing to cast them out to starve. What an evil name Dublin is getting because of its greedy, soulless, unscrupulous employers! Philanthropists, every one of them. Kind, charitable beings, who contribute to charity freely, giving away to charitable societies with one hand as much as a farthing in the pound out of the money they have stolen from the workers with the other.

Oh, let us march out to battle, and fight and die in Flanders or the Dardanelles in order that we may protect our women! And whilst we are fighting and dying abroad our women will be sweated, rackrented, dismissed in hundreds and turned out to starve by kind, loyalist firms like Messrs Williams and Woods.

Protect our women! Protect them at home! Protect them from dismissal, from hunger, from oppression. We call upon all our readers to warn their women and girls against entering the employment of this firm unless these notices are withdrawn. Down with Sweating.

PROTECT YOUR WOMEN!

James Connolly

The Party *versus* the People

(1915)

On Monday, August 30th, the **Freeman's Journal** devoted a long leading article to telling of the many changes for the better that have been wrought in Ireland for the past forty years. The political changes, the changes in the laws governing the owning and occupying of land, the various ameliorations of the condition of the poor in the country districts, the increase of public control in affairs of local government – all these things were gone into with a wealth of detail and at the same time with a florid style and boastfulness of description that the mere parliamentarian has made us all familiar with to the point of nausea. And why are we treated to this story? We are treated to this story in an attempt to silence the critics of the Home Rule Party by representing that all the great and beneficent changes mentioned in the Freeman are due to the activities of that Party, and that therefore the critics of the Party are foolish and ignorant, or are basely ungrateful.

Readers of the **Freeman's Journal** if they can be deceived by such rubbish are surely unfit to be entrusted with the franchise, or, indeed, with any power over the destinies of their country. The benefits that have been gained, and some of them are undoubted, have been gained by the heroic fighting and sacrifices of the Irish people, and a political party was only one, and not the most important one, of the many weapons forged and used by the Irish people during that fighting, and as a result of their sacrifices. Landlordism in its worst phases was not abolished, the right of a tenant to security in his tenure was not secured, the purchase of proprietary rights by the tenantry was not accomplished by the mere presence of eighty-five spouters in the British House of Commons. On the contrary these vain-glorious gentlemen were only able to secure a hearing by virtue of the fact that the Land League by its fighting in Ireland had brought this country into civil war, and had so utterly destroyed the value of Irish landed property that not a moneylender in Europe would then loan money upon its security. The Home Rule Party were merely the ambassadors at a Foreign Court – ambassadors who remained powerless until the popular armies in Ireland had

struck down Landlordism in spite of evictions, battering rams, imprisonment and death. The extent of our indebtedness to the Home Rule Party can be gauged by measuring the relative achievements of the people who fought and won the fight on the land question – a fight fought and won outside Parliament – and the people who fought and lost the battle of Home Rule – a purely parliamentary battle.

The people met all the combined forces of landlordism and the British Crown, broke up the social system they had imposed upon the agricultural population, and tore a measure of social freedom and economic security from their reluctant grasp. The Irish parliamentarians met the British politicians on their own chosen field of battle – and lost every move of the game. Every time the astute British politicians called for a sacrifice on the part of the Irish Home Rule Party that party yielded the point and sacrificed their principles. They yielded to sacrifice Ulster and divide their country, they yielded the control of taxation, they yielded control over the Post Office, Customs and Excise; in short, they yielded everything that gives life and power to a nation. And finally, when their grandest opportunity came in the breath of war they yielded up countless thousands of the lives of their trusting fellow-countrymen.

And in return they achieved – NOTHING. Home Rule, pitiful abortion as it is, is hung up, and side by side with the law suspending it is framed the declaration of the English Prime Minister that it would in his opinion be unthinkable to force Home Rule upon Orange Ulster. So that the politicians as a result of their forty years babbling in the wilderness at Westminster can only record their failure to achieve that which was to them as the breath of their nostrils, whereas the Irish people fighting in Ireland upon the battleground of their farms, leagues, and trade unions, have compelled an unwilling legislature to pass measure after measure enacting as law that which the power of the people had already won as rights.

As servants of England the members of the Home Rule Party are perhaps entitled to their salaries, but if their claim to £400 per year is based upon achievements for Ireland the claim is but an impudent attempt to obtain money under false pretences.

James Connolly

Wee Joe Devlin

(1915)

From **Workers' Republic**, 28 August 1915.

That great, that heroic figure, Wee Joe Devlin, at the recent Convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin), told how his society had rallied to the Empire in its day of difficulty – that difficulty for which all good Irish Nationalists were wont to pray:

“All the funds of the society were invested in Irish securities so that the money was retained in Ireland for the benefit of the Irish people, with the exception of £12,000 which had been invested in the new War Loan at 4½ per cent, a fact which, taken with the numbers of those who had joined the colours, ought to demonstrate beyond question or doubt that in regard to the war the society, as a whole, recognised, in sympathy with the overwhelming majority of the Irish people, the obligation of supporting the cause of justice and freedom as represented by the Allies, as against the brute force, materialism and tyranny for which Germany stands in the present world conflict (applause).”

When you read a speech like that you at once realise that if Germany has discovered poisonous gas, we in Ireland have suffered from it for years. As I think

of the hundreds of good men I have known, fathers of families, husbands, sons with aged parents, etc., who have been enticed to leave their homes and dear ones and march out to battle for an Empire that never kept faith with the Irish race, and think that it was Wee Joe's influence that led them to their folly, I think things that the Defence of the Realm Acts will not permit me to print.

Belfast opponents of Joe Devlin usually refer to him sarcastically as the 'Wee Bottlewasher,' alluding to his position before he climbed into power. The sarcasm is pointless. A bottlewasher was an honest occupation, but a recruiting sergeant luring to their death the men who trusted him and voted him into power is – ah well, let us remember the Defence of the Realm Act.

The present writer cannot ride up the Falls Road in his own motor car, the penny tram has to do him. But thank God, there are no fresh made graves in Flanders or the Dardanelles filled by the mangled corpses of men whom he coaxed or bullied into leaving their homes and families.

And that consolation counts more to the peace of his soul than would the possession of a motor car, or the companionship of grossly overfed boon companions of the bottlewasher – or of the bottle.

There are widows in Belfast today whose husbands would still be with them if they had taken my advice; there are orphans in Belfast today whose fathers would still be able to work for them and love them if they had taken my advice; there are stricken mothers and fathers in Belfast today whose sons would still be smiling and happy at the family hearth today if my advice had been listened to. And I am confident that it will not be long before these widows, orphans and bereaved parents with every sob and sigh will breathe a curse upon the conscienceless politician to whose advice they did listen.

You can fool all the people some of the time, you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

What is true of my attitude in Belfast is true of our attitude in Dublin and all over Ireland wherever our voice and influence could reach.

We saved the lives of thousands, held together thousands of homes, and amid all the welter and turmoil of a gigantic and unparalleled national betrayal we presented to the world the spectacle of the organised Irish working class standing steadfastly by the highest ideals of freedom, so that the flag of Labour became one with the standard of national liberty.

James Connolly

Coercion in England

(1915)

Workers' Republic, 28 August 1915.

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The news which came to hand as we went to press last week that the offices of the **Labour Leader** had been raided in London and Manchester is of a gravity that cannot be minimised. Press prosecutions, and even ruthless suppressions of the press we are familiar enough with in Ireland – so familiar that we appear to have lost even the capacity of resenting it, so familiar, indeed, are we with it that when the **Irish Worker** was suppressed there was not a Labour or Socialist journal in Great Britain protested against the act, or thought it important enough to devote a paragraph to deprecating it.

But press prosecutions, raids upon printing offices in Great Britain, especially raids upon printing offices controlled by a political party with hundreds of branches and widespread ramifications through the country, that is a fact of much more sinister significance than any suppression in Ireland. We have had before now governments which were openly tyrannical and oppressive in Ireland, but which were nevertheless on the general side of greater freedom in England; we have had governments which abolished the right of trial by jury in Ireland, and at the same time extended the suffrage in England. Just as it is said that there is seldom to be found a man wholly bad, a man who has not some good points; as no ruffian is wholly depraved, so there was seldom in modern times a British Government which did not cover its evil deeds in Ireland with a pretence at good deeds in England.

Therefore when we meet with the spectacle of a government which is brutally destructive of liberty – in Ireland, which muzzles one part of the press and corrupts the other – in Ireland, which abolishes the right of trial by jury – in Ireland, which denies the sanctity of the home and gives the right of search to every ignorant and insolent policeman – in Ireland, which destroys Free Speech, gives untrammelled licence to speakers of one political party and jails the spokesmen of another – in Ireland, when we meet with the spectacle of such a government actually daring to extend some of those ‘blessings of British rule’ to England, to its own dearly beloved ‘God’s Englishmen’ we are stricken with wonder and feel that the foundations of the world are being swept away.

Either this government is mad, or else the panic cowardice of fear has set its grasp upon it, and it is reeling stupidly to its doom.