

IRISH MILITANT

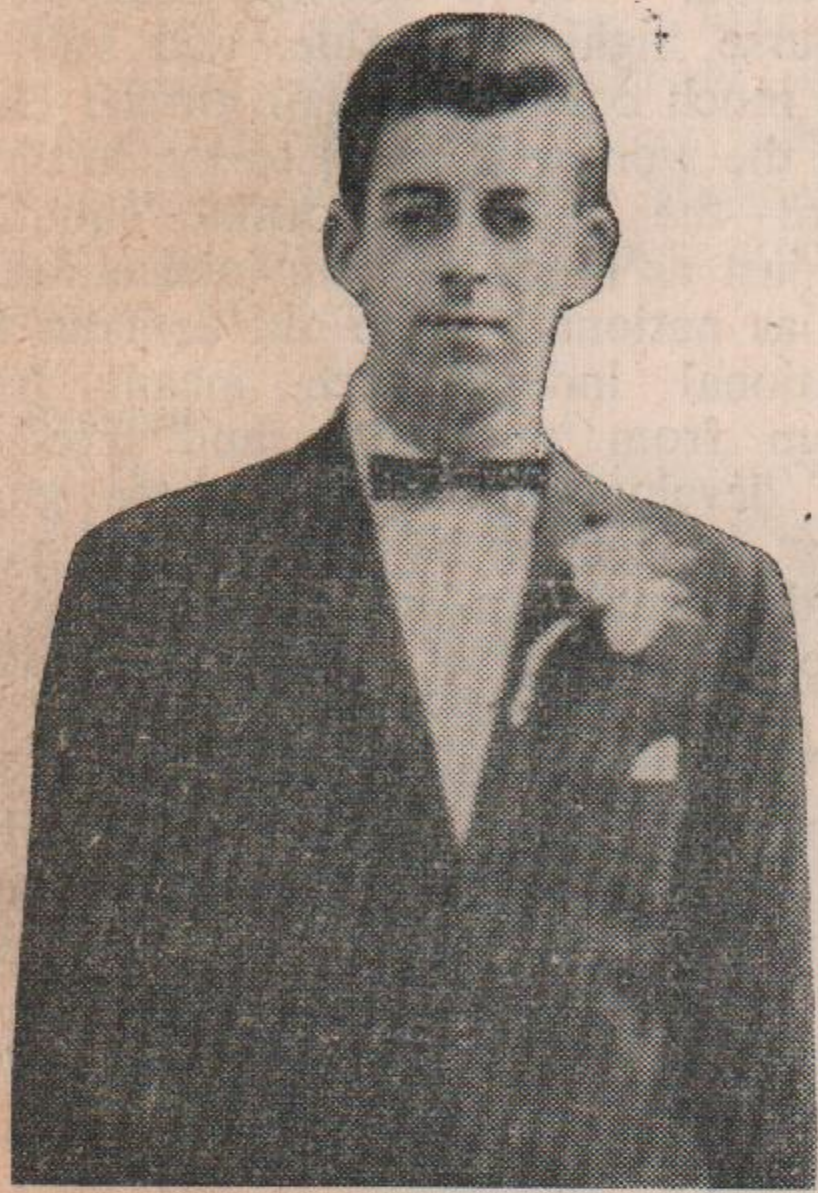
FOR AN IRISH WORKERS' REPUBLIC

VOL. 2. NO. 6.

JUNE 1967

SIXPENCE

VICIOUS SENTENCE ON YOUNG REPUBLICAN



Joe Dillon

"I'm sorry, but we are bankrupt"

The Northern Ireland budget, presented last month, showed that the economic situation is bad and getting worse. Even the meaningless "Imperial Contribution"—the amount which the Six Counties annually pays into Whitehall coffers—has been reduced from £3½ million to £2 m.

Finance Minister Kirk said it was a matter for regret that "we have had to reduce even the token figure of Northern Ireland's contribution to all the great national services from which we benefit.

"A matter for regret, but still nothing to be ashamed of. In all parts of the Kingdom (sic) the citizen pays his taxes according to his resources, and receives the benefit of government expenditure according to his needs.....

"So it is that in Northern Ireland with our high child population, high unemployment, lower average income and great need for development expenditure, we must be expected to contribute less than richer areas."

No confidence

The freeze has hit Northern Ireland hard. The growth rate over the last year was 3% against the forecast 4½% and Kirk admitted that the Government was only just able to finance its expenditure, and that it was not possible to predict revenue with even a small degree of confidence.

There was little or no public interest in the budget. Stormont controls less than ten percent of the revenue and has no effective power to control economic trends. It was significant only insofar as it spelled out the extent of the crisis and underlined the inability of the Unionist regime to do anything about it. Kirk's speech was a confession of impotence, the debate that followed it a meaningless charade, with politicians of all parties skating across the surface of the real problems. The need for a coherent socialist voice posing a radical alternative is more urgent than ever.

On May 5th Joe Dillon, 22, a republican and a member of the Dublin No 2 branch of the ITGWU, was sentenced to five years in gaol. He had been charged with the attempted armed robbery of a Dublin Corporation rent office at Harmonstown Estate in December 1965. This was a vicious miscarriage of justice by the Fianna Fail regime.

The police force did not arrest Joe Dillon until six months after the incident. Then, on the night of 6th/7th June 1966, he was taken from his home by members of the Special Detective Unit of Dublin Castle (who specialize in political cases), taken to Bridewell police prison and put on an identification parade with two other Republicans from the Raheny, Harmonstown area. Witnesses were produced—the rent collector, the owner of a car taken on the night before the attempted robbery and a number of local people who were in the rent office at the time. None of the witnesses identified any of the people on the parade.

All the arrested men were released within a few hours—except Joe Dillon.

Before his arrest he had been offered bribes by the Special Branch to inform on the IRA and other bodies. When he refused he was told that the Special Branch would "get him."

EVIDENCE

A year later he has been brought to trial and found guilty of taking a car without the owner's consent and illegal possession of a revolver with intent to rob and endanger life. The only evidence was a thumbprint on the driving mirror of the getaway car. A State witness stated that this bore fourteen points of resemblance to Dillon's print. (Scotland Yard normally demands 21 points of resemblance before they will make a positive identification.)

The sentence was passed by Mr "Justice" O'Caomh, an in-law of De Valera and Fianna Fail Attorney-General for many years. Even he, never, to put no finer point upon it, noted for impartiality, had to admit that he was "probably in error when I impose a sentence of five years," and was "leaving myself open to criticism". Which was putting it mildly.

No matter what the background to the case this should call forth the strongest protest from the Irish, British and world labour movement. But there is more to it.

Joe Dillon was an active republican. For years the rump of the Irish Republican Army has acted as a substitute for a revolutionary movement in Ireland, functioning as a safety-valve to prevent the bourgeois state

from bursting at the seams, and eternally throwing up new sterile bourgeois groupings.

One such anti-revolutionary tendency is at present in control of the IRA and seems set to follow the path already trodden by De Valera and Co.

Joe Dillon was one of the leaders of an opposition grouping inside the IRA which was moving towards a Marxist position. This is the real reason why the Special Branch decided to "get him" and O'Caomh passed such a vicious sentence. The Fianna Fail tenants of power have a vested interest in maintaining the present "leadership's" control of the Republican Movement. So Joe Dillon gets this savage sentence, a) to remove him personally from the political scene, and b) to deter others from following in his footsteps.

For these reasons the largest possible protest on an international scale should be mounted. The Irish Militant appeals to its supporters everywhere to mobilize in conjunction with a protest movement in Ireland to demand Joe Dillon's release, and to demonstrate at Embassies and Consulates of the Irish Government. Resolutions of protest should be moved at all levels of the Labour movement and directed to Mr Brian Lenihan, Department of Justice, Merrion St., Dublin 3.

The London Branch of the Irish Workers' Group, in conjunction with the Irish Militant, has called a public meeting at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Rd., Kings Cross on Sunday 18th June at 8 o'clock. We appeal to all sections of the British and Irish Labour and Republican movements to attend this meeting.



'JUSTICE' MINISTER LENIHAN

Release Joe Dillon!

A public meeting will be held at the LUCAS ARMS, GRAYS INN RD., (near Kings Cross Tube) at 8 p.m. on Sunday, June 18th to organize protests against the imprisonment of Joe Dillon. Speakers from Labour and Republican movements.

Release Joe Dillon!

How not to commemorate Connolly

Scéim na gCeardchumann, IALSO and the Belfast YS were not allowed to march under their own banners on this year's Connolly Commemoration parade in Dublin. Once again the Dublin Trades Council, dominated by timid Labour and pro-Fianna Fail elements tried to "take the politics out of Connolly". Up to a point they succeeded.

The speeches at the end of the march reached a platitudinous height rarely achieved even in Dublin Labour politics. Mr Bob Thompson, President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions said, more or less: "have trust in us and all will be well." This, coming after the recent publication in the Irish Militant of the ICTU document on trade-union law raised many a hollow laugh. The general impression was that the depth of the TU bosses' hypocrisy is incapable of over-estimation.

Tension

A Sinn Féin pamphlet distributed during the march reflected the tension building up inside the Republican Movement. It listed "ten good reasons why workers should vote Sinn Féin". It then enumerated a series of suggested reforms designed to serve "the interests of the people of Ireland." If the working-class majority in the rank and file of Sinn Féin read the series of articles by Vincent McDowell at present being published by their own newspaper, the "United Irishman", they will see that the phrase "people of Ireland" has for half a century been used to hide the class differences within that "people" and to camouflage repeated sellouts of the masses to the capitalists, big and small. On page two of the pamphlet there was a quotation from Connolly which presented a cast-iron case for the adoption by Republicans of a clear socialist line and a commitment to the workers' republic. It's just about time that republicans faced up to the implications of their appeals to workers.

Concern

The deepening concern over the TU bosses' willingness to accept openly anti-union legislation was reflected in the placards, primarily those of the ATGWU. A Scéim na gCeardchumann leaflet stated that the leadership "was engaged in a very suspicious exercise of co-operation with the employer class" and was accepting "a complete sell-out of Connolly's principles "which were 'not to make slavery more tolerable but to overthrow it by a free and independent workers' republic."

The march was more a ritual than a demonstration. Labour Party badges were on sale. On the reverse side of these was the Starry Plough. I did not see one person wearing the Labour Party side outwards.

S. Morrissey

IRISH MILITANT

Editor:
Eamonn McCann

Business Manager:
Liam Boyle,
37, Salisbury St.,
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AIMS

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The defeat of the
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North and South

For an Irish
Workers Republic

Articles, particularly short
reports of local activities,
and brief letters are welcomed.

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Go, West

Last month Harry West was kicked out of the Unionist government for the least of his crimes. A few days before this hilarious event his picture appeared on the front page of the "Farm Weekly". He was pulling on a gum-boot. The caption was "The Minister Booted."

On a more serious note—Mr West campaigned for the public development of certain lands in Co. Fermanagh. He bought two hundred and sixty two acres of this land from a cousin of his for £24,250. Sure enough ninety nine acres of this land was claimed for development. Mr West demanded £37,000 compensation. Subsequently the Land Tribunal decided that the 99 acres was worth £13,450 and Mr West was sacked.

The Ulster Farmers Union was most annoyed at this highhanded sacking of a former president.

Mr West has been in office nine years. When he became Minister of Agriculture in 1958 there were 57,000 farms in Northern Ireland. There are now 38,000. Moreover, under the terms of the new Agricultural Bill which he was to have introduced this summer in conjunction with Westminster (no pun intended) the minimal economic farm unit was to be one of not less than 600 man-days per year. There are only 4,000 such farms in the North today.

What did Mr West and U.F.U. think was going to happen to the remaining 34,000 farmers? Get a job in Northern Ireland's healthy industry?

As I said it was the least of his crimes.

J. Martin

THE SAD STORY OF CONNOLLY'S HEIRS

SEAN MATGHAMNA

The men whose sons now rule Ireland viewed the Easter Rising as Larkinism run amok, and hastened to pass the following resolution: "The Council of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce hereby assure his Gracious Majesty of the loyalty of the commercial community to his person and his throne. They also do record their abhorrence of the dreadful scenes of murder, carnage and destruction resulting from the action of a section of the community in the city."

Quoting this in his recent pamphlet* George Gilmore explores the attitudes of the political leaders on both sides of the class line from the years leading up to the Proclamation of the Republic to its scuttling in 1921; and the forces which made for the Republic's rise and those which overthrew it: the Connolly/Larkin labour movement, and Griffith's Sinn Fein.

The sharp class line between them was drawn early in the industrial battles. Mobilising on each side of it were the forces which on the one hand established the Republic, and on the other hand destroyed it. Gilmore's conclusion, the logical one for him, is not, however, nearly so relevant as his description of these forces and events. Griffith, despite his racialism towards everything English, had an ideal of England and Ireland as partners in world imperialist plunder. A monarchist, he advocated an Anglo-Hibernian Empire, crowned by a dual monarchy, to give the Irish manufacturing class what can only be called 'Imperial Equality'. In 1911 his paper 'Sinn Fein' demanded that British troops "cope with" "irresponsible fermentations of sympathetic strikes". In the same class camp were the recruiting sergeants for the imperialist war in Europe, the gentlemen who passed the above resolution, and the vultures who screamed for Connolly's death in May 1916.

In the War of Independence anti-republicans such as Griffith, murmuring soothing words about a Republic, masquerading as revolutionaries, led the national upsurge; they kept tight control, used the IRA to prevent land seizures, and held back the masses under their 'Republican' camouflage. Until finally, trapped between these masses who were striving for a Republic of the working people, and imperialism, they handed over the counter for the best price they could get the Republic which they had reduced to an empty formula.

On the other side, stood Labour. Led by Connolly and joined by the old IRB of Pearse, it had tried to strike the first light for a "fire that would not burn out," all things being favourable, until "the last bond and debenture had burned to dust

on the grave of the last war-lord". Their goal was not Griffith's flesh-pots of Empire, but a Workers' Republic, in alliance with the workers of a socialist Europe.

But Connolly left no heirs. In his place stood a bunch of the most tepid, timid, treacherous old women which ever immobilised and misled the working class. The Citizen Army was just another section of the IRA volunteers, and Labour was dragooned into line behind the bourgeois sham republicans. Here, a bolshevik combat party would have continued to lead the workers and small farmers in fighting for their own politics and their own demands, even while marching together with the anti-imperialists of the IRB; it would have carried on the fight of Connolly to the end. But no such party existed, and Gilmore shows just how tenuous had been Connolly's position within the ITGWU. As a result it was Griffith, and not any follower of Connolly, who stood in the leadership of the Republic with full power to sell out and scuttle.

Death Agony

This, for Gilmore, sums up the situation. Being a republican first and a socialist second, he concludes that Republicanism, to succeed, needs Labour. No doubt this is true: but for us the question must be, does the working class need Republicanism?

The social explosive material that gave Republicanism its force 45 years ago was the question of the land—allied to the old hatred of English tyranny. Today, the land question in its old form has been eliminated: the farmers' struggles are more like those of a death agony, and they could only play a revolutionary part if led by the working class. This class, augmented by the recent industrialisation and aggressive on the industrial front, is more than ever the only consistently revolutionary force in Ireland. The rump Republican movement has meanwhile vegetated: the Border in all these years has not called forth a revolutionary movement to end it. The IRA efforts have been a mockery.

Republicanism is reduced to the Big Solution of One-Nation-Alone. This, of course, is a solution to nothing. The old garrison imperialism, from which Ireland suffered for 700 years, has given way in most areas of the world to modern dollar-type imperialism, which cares little if its victims run their own diminutive armies, have their own parliaments, their own chair at the UN, or speak Arabic, Swahili, Urdu or Gaelic. It has its own language—money. National 'Independence' has been

graciously granted to the mass of former colonies because the Great Powers can rely on their overpowering economic strength to maintain their old dominance in a new form. Divided or not, capitalist Ireland will still advertise in foreign journals inviting businessmen to come and exploit Irish labour.

British imperialism will very likely encourage a capitalist unification of Ireland, given entry to the Common Market. But a unified Ireland, of course highly desirable, will still be as much equal to Britain or the USA as the worker is equal to the millionaire—the bourgeois formal 'equality' is just as much a sham internationally as nationally. The old demand for national independence meant freedom from oppression and freedom of development. Today these goals can no longer be reached by pure and simple "Independence"—but by the linking up of a free Federation of Socialist States.

Thus, for revolutionary socialist workers today, traditional republicanism is itself just not revolutionary. The heroic republican tradition must be translated into the conditions of our day: advocating national independence, we must be clear that in the capitalist world economy, this is little more than a formality. Demanding reunification we must understand that it will be brought about, if not by the capitalists themselves, then as an incidental in the establishment of a workers' republic. Supporting even limited struggles against imperialism, our task is to build a revolutionary movement of the working class to overthrow capitalism and join the world's workers in abolishing modern imperialism.

Preparation for the coming workers' revolution is the only objectively revolutionary activity in Ireland today. Gilmore's basic approach is to look for an alliance of bourgeois nationalists and proletarian socialists. But as long ago as the 1930s republicans like Gilmore and ex-revolutionary socialists, Stalinists, who had lost confidence in the workers and looked for a future bourgeois revolution, formed such an alliance—the Republican Congress. It failed. Only those who attempt to rouse the workers on their own class programme are revolutionary today: to place all the emphasis on an alliance against imperialism of workers and republican bourgeois is like searching for last night's dream.

Nevertheless, Gilmore is a republican with a certain claim to sympathy—and for its historical analysis, this pamphlet can be a milestone for many republicans.

*) *Labour and the Republican Movement*, by George Gilmore, Republican Publications, price 1/6.

The tin-pot tyrant of Dunne's stores

Mr Ben Dunne, of Dunne's Stores, owns a big house, runs horses, and is generally regarded by his employees as a pig. Some time ago a phone call came through to his office in Patrick St., Cork while he was on the shop floor talking to his supervisors. A young girl was sent down to tell him. She approached him and said: "excuse me Mr Dunne, but you are wanted on the telephone." Mr Dunne ignored her. She repeated the message. Mr Dunne ignored her. She made a third attempt and then a fourth to communicate with him. Dunne stared steadfastly into space, silent as a monk on retreat.

Bewildered and distressed by it all the girl went back to the office, made

an excuse to the caller and hung up.

Some time later a supervisor came and chastised her for addressing Mr Dunne in such a fashion; and the reason for his strange, mystic behaviour became clear. Conversation with Mr Ben Dunne is, apparently, a matter of ritualistic protocol. The girl was told that if she ever again had cause to communicate with Mr Dunne she should give her message to a supervisor who would, in turn, pass it on to the boss himself. If there was no supervisor available and the message was urgent she could then speak directly to him—but he would not answer unless addressed as "Mr Chairman."

Just who does the bird-brained old

blaggard think he is? A few facts: his workers are about the lowest paid in the distributive industry. He employs kids out of school at rock-bottom rates. Most of them leave at the first opportunity. He was responsible for the late opening of stores in the Dublin suburbs. There are, of course, union rules against this. (He took on non-union staff as the Irish Union of Distributive Workers had a ban on late opening. However, the WUI and ITGWU accepted some of the girls as members without raising any objection to the hours. The IUDW promptly forgot its ban and recruited the remainder). He treats his staff like coolies, then struts about like an over-stuffed cockerel, ignoring them unless they acknowledge his megalomaniac pretensions. Definitely, one of the more objectionable parasites.

E. McC.

IF YOU KNEW SUZY

Councillor Mrs Susan Bowler-Geraghty, solicitor, housewife and slum-landlord, had been in the Labour Party two years, having joined after Fianna Fail declined to nominate her in the 1965 General Election. Labour could not, literally, afford to be so high-handed with a nice lady bearing large sums of money. Suzy was selected as official candidate for Dublin North Central.

Her main campaign weapons were free sweets for the kiddies, free cups of tea for the parents, her own pregnancy and (shades of Indira Ghandi!) her fortuneteller. Many people appear to have approved of this return to Alfie-ism. Suzy was but narrowly defeated by Michael O'Leary; she actually won more first preferences than him.

Bed Fellows

Since then, Suzy and Labour have been, so to speak, uncomfortable bedfellows. O'Leary has firmly squashed proposals that she be allowed to set up her own paper branches in his constituency. She has made no attempt to understand Labour policy and principles. Her most definite ideological statement was her celebrated cry to O'Leary "... but Michael, property has rights as well!" Her reversion to Independency is a merciful release for all concerned.

Now, wouldn't it be nice if Paddy Norton did the decent thing and followed her example?

Fergus Mac Art

Socialism and Republicanism the key question

By CHRIS GREY

The Best of Connolly

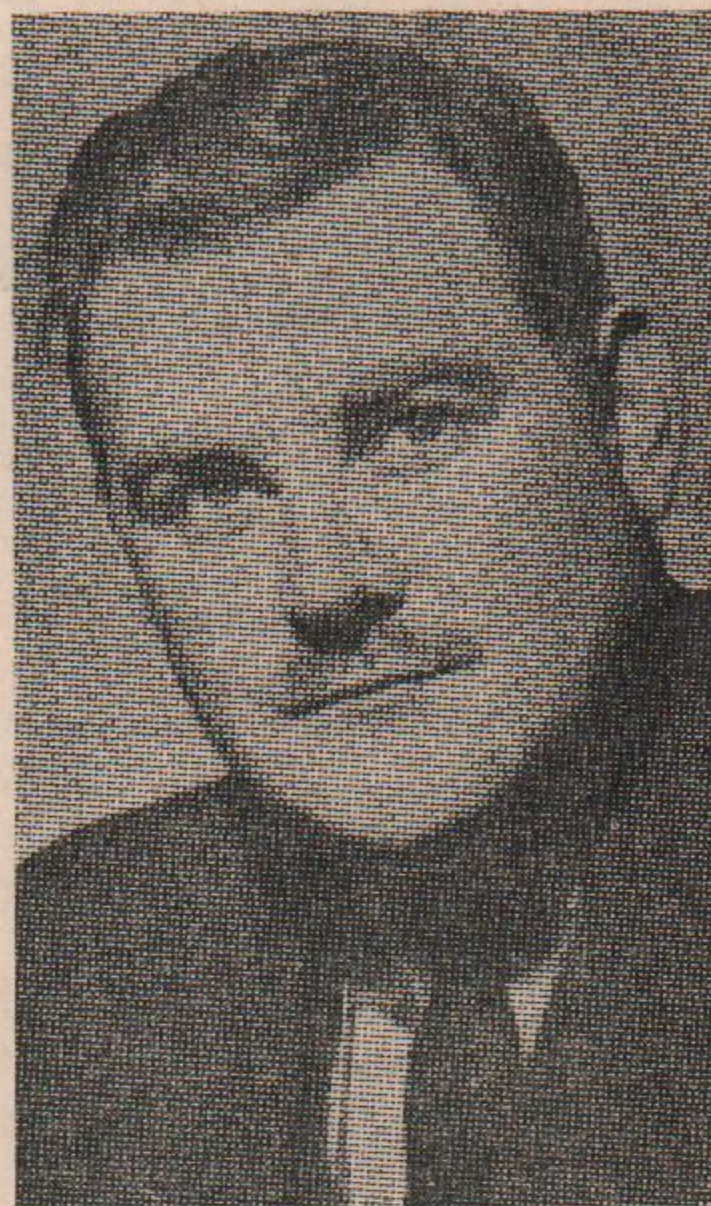
(Edited by Proinsias Mac Aonghusa and Liam O'Reagain)

The appearance of this selection of Connolly's writings is to be welcomed in view of the increase in price of Three Candles editions of Connolly. So if you don't feel like paying for those, ten shillings spent on this volume will give you a fair idea of Connolly's political writings.

The introduction leaves something to be desired, however. At its head stands a quotation from Mazzini, which, in relation to Connolly, is one-sided and misleading. "Do not imagine," says Mazzini, "that you can free yourselves from unjust social conditions before winning a country of your own. Do not be seduced by the idea of improving your material conditions without first solving the national questions." Mazzini draws a distinction between the national and social question which is quite foreign to Connolly. As is clear from Connolly's writings, Connolly followed Marx in regarding the two questions as indissolubly linked. Because the working class has no country—in the sense of control over the means of production within a given territorial area—the emancipation of the workers in colonial countries cannot be brought about except in opposition to imperialism. This means that for Irish workers their struggle is

part and parcel, indeed the culmination, of the national struggle; the Irish working class struggle takes on a national form.

Thus any discussion of Connolly leads straight to what is still one of the key questions of Irish politics, the relationship between Irish labour and Irish republicanism.



Proinsias Mac Aonghusa

Here the editors do not help us although they do point to some of Connolly's most important remarks on the subject.

Connolly has been with us as a political thinker for fifty years. Like Marx, Antonio Gramsci and others, he has been "canonized": every socialist favours his ideas, either without showing in detail their relevance to the existing political situation, or else contradicting rival interpretations in such a way as to make choice between them difficult if not impossible. Hence the appearance of one-sided quotations in introductions. What we need is a comprehensive, historical and concrete treatment of Connolly's position which will lay the ghosts of interpretation and establish which tendency is in the true line of succession from him.

THE WORKERS REPUBLIC

RUSSELL ON U.S. WAR
CRIMES
TROTSKY ON TRADE
UNIONISM

Plus articles on Aden, France,
automation, art etc. etc.
1/6 from G. LAWLESS,
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FREE-STATE THOUGHT-POLICE

"Any form of censorship is an infringement of my personal liberty. It limits the range of my consciousness, restricts the area of my freedom. It means that someone, somewhere can, without reference to me, sit down and decide what I shall be able to see, hear, experience. The basic objection to censorship must always be that it is anti-democratic."

In a novel called '1984' the English writer George Orwell developed the concept of 'Thought Police', a body of men whose raison d'être was the censorship and control of all thoughts which might be construed as harmful to the all-embracing state. The concept was based on fantasy; regrettably, fantasy approaches reality in the Irish Free State.

Ever since its inception this State has cosseted and shuttered the eyes and the minds of its 'children' in a sort of mental chastity belt. It has interfered in the distribution of books, films and contraceptives. It has banned Sartre, Hugo, Joyce, Steinbeck, Hemingway, O'Connor. It has banned Cuairt an Mhean Oiche to all except those children who read compulsory Irish in schools. It has made itself a laughing stock before the rest of Europe.

Some banned books are great, others of passing interest. There are some that are not worth banning, others that will be taught and read in our colleges and schools when their detractors are rotting in their whitened sepulchres. But it is largely

irrelevant what is banned; what is important is that books are banned. Some fall victim to a 'silent' censorship, e.g. some of the works of James Connolly. Others are forbidden outright, mainly for sexual reasons.

Sexual reasons—God only knows why. Few Irish priests, and fewer still politicians, would condemn the Yankee war in Vietnam. That war provides napalmed children and mutilated peasant women, whereas even illicit sex (if there is such a thing) at worst breeds, not corpses, but Children. Yet the Irish censorship board would have us believe that it is the only crime. Sodomy is less destructive than napalm; casual sex is better than exploitation without conscience or battle without compassion.

What would they have us believe? Do they really, seriously imagine that the writings of, say, Sam Hannabell, if circulated in the South, would cause the country to writhe in the throes of mammoth sexual orgy? That altar boys would masturbate in the crypt? Convent school girls establish bordellos? Nuns burst through their trusses and respectable suburbanites swop wives?

When a Southern cabinet minister was in Belfast two years ago he enquired of a member of the Queen's University Literific Society, where he could procure contraceptives for himself. That same man would defend to the last twitch in him the right of sanctimonious celibates to dictate to the Irish people what they

ought and ought not to read. For this is what censorship amounts to. It represents a deliberate attempt to interfere in the democratic right of any man or woman to engage in private, without harm to others, in any activity he or she desires.

"But what about the young?", they say. I dare say that after the virginal brainwashing of Irish schools many of our youngsters would be prone to the temptations of the Old Testament. The fault clearly lies with the system. For surely there is something very wrong with a system that relies on the coercion of censorship to guard itself against the free circulation of ideas? The existence of censorship implies that the Irish people are neither adult nor mature enough to reject material that might be 'harmful' to them; that they have the minds of mental defectives and the sexual urges of baboons. If they are as gullible as the Censorship Board would have us believe, why are newsagents' stalls littered with American and British war comics which do not leave to the imagination such highly moral occupations as ramming bayonets in German/Japanese/Korean guts and the bombing of peasant villages?

But then the making of war is an O.K. pastime. Alastair MacIntyre once asked, "Why are unbreakable rules always about sex and not about war?" One of these days the people who attempt to control our minds are going to waken up to the fact that there are itinerants living in squalor on our roadsides, children being born into poverty in our slums and farms. But by then it will be too late for them.

PADDY LYNCH

WE KNOW YOU KNOW

There were two Special Branch men at the Irish Workers Group meeting in Belfast on Easter Sunday night. Just thought we'd let them know that we know.

NOTES FROM NOWHERE

Reports that the sun spun in the heavens and swooped dramatically earthwards during the Pope's recent visit to Portugal have not been entirely discounted by Vatican commentators. Said one: 'The fact that it rained continually for forty eight hours and that the sky was overcast does not rule out entirely the possibility that behind the clouds the sun was in fact spinning and swooping dramatically earthwards.'

When a West Indian Family, complete with a gaggle of beautiful little black children, took up residence in a rural community in Co. Galway some time ago, much indignation was caused in liberal circles by reports that local inhabitants were persistently 'molesting' the children. A team of colour-bar investigators descended on the village from Dublin. The locals couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. Said one venerable ancient: 'Sure we were only touchin' their wee, black heads so that some of the goodness from St. Martin de Porres will rub off on our skins.' The investigators left in embarrassment, weeping for lost innocence.

The Rev. I.R.K. Paisley has issued a statement denying that he is a Practising Homosexual. His wife said: "He was just crying because his white goose had died. It was an unashamed Protestant."

Two Czechoslovakian government officials visited Derry in May to inquire into the possibility of establishing a leather factory in the area. Latest reports are that there is every possibility of such a factory opening. Wonder what strange double-think process the 'Derry Journal' will use to explain away the morality of Catholics working for Communists?

Tony Stone

Election workers needed

Jim Quinn has been selected as Labour candidate for No 5 area of Dublin in the local elections. In spite of the recent gerrymander of local electoral areas by Fianna Fail there is a good chance that the Labour seat in this area—held for many years by Big Jim Larkin—will be held.

Jim has an impressive record as a Trade Union militant and a social-

ist activist. He has been the most consistent and hard-hitting socialist on the Labour Party's A.C. since he joined it last October, and his election to Dublin Corporation would be a definite gain for the left.

But it will be a hard fight and election workers are sorely needed to ensure that every Labour vote in the area is polled.

Six Co. Labour massacred in farcical local elections

By Paddy Lynch

The ratepayers of the six counties went to the polls last month to cast their votes in the triennial farce known as the Northern Ireland Local Government Elections. Farce because you don't have a vote unless you own a house. Farce because if you're a businessman you can indulge in that democratic institution known as multiple voting. Farce because boundary lines are gerrymandered out of recognition anyhow.

If anything this year's elections were more farcical than ever, with the hustings manned by a veritable host of splinter and splinter of splinter groups, ranging from Unofficial Newry Labour through Protestant Unionist to Unaffiliated Protestant Unionist. This, said the pundits, was democracy in action. This, said the press, was the most vital and exciting election in years. 'There is change in the air!' crowed the opposition groups in breathless cliché. 'A Protestant Party for a Protestant People' echoed the new Carsonites. 'It is social issues that matter now', prophesied the Northern Ireland Labour Party, mounting its biggest ever election challenge. John Duffy's National Democratic Party, 'quietly confident' that 'progressive' nationalism was going to sweep the boards, had a massive array of candidates fighting up and down the country. The Paisleyites were out in force, trumpeting the clarion call of 'Unashamed Protestantism.' (Read neo-Fascism)

Mud-slinging

In Dock Ward the fight for the Aldermanship between Gerry Fitt and Frank Millar, a Unionist so far to the right that even the Prime Minister disowned him, had reached a new low in vituperation and mud-slinging. In Derry, Eddie McAteer told a nationalist rally in the Little Diamond area of the city that a vote for labour was a vote for educating Catholic children in Protestant schools. In Belfast's St. George's Ward, Mrs. Irene Paisley was escorted to the polls by a 'Kick the Pope' band and a bible-waving, hymn-singing rabble.

It was the biggest, dampest, squib in the whole world. The Northern Ireland Labour Party was massacred, losing seats and votes up and down the province, its complement in Belfast City Hall reduced to two. The National Democratic Party was led like a lamb to the slaughter. Its great challenge fizzled out; it even lost two seats in Belfast. As for the Paisleyites, the Loyalists of the 6 Cos. repudiated the new Carson in no uncertain terms. For the Nationalists, it was mixture as before: no gains, but no losses either.

Main opposition

Of all the opposition parties, only Republican Labour emerged triumphant. It made sweeping gains in the wards it contested, while Gerry Fitt trounced his Unionist opponent and increased dramatically his share of the poll. As a result of its gains it has now replaced the Northern Ireland Labour Party as the main opposition group in Belfast's City Hall.

One thing is very clear — with the exception of Republican Labour, none of the 'serious' opposition groups (as opposed to the lunatic Paisleyites) have succeeded in breaking the stranglehold. In traditionally Unionist areas, Unionism triumphed. In traditionally Nationalist areas, the Nationalist Party showed that a few green flags, a few green songs, and a few meaningless mumbles in the direction of Faith and Fatherland were all that was necessary to secure victory.

Many political commentators were looking to Derry to provide a pointer to the future. Former Northern Ireland Labour Party M.P. David Bleak-

ley had said that if there was to be any crack in the sectarian edifice then it would manifest itself in Derry. And in truth the NILP, fighting its first local elections in the city, did rather better than was expected, polling roughly a third of all votes cast. It was an indication that, given the proper leadership, Derry would reject its two Tory parties. But the proper leadership was not forthcoming from the Northern Ireland Labour Party. The sad fact of the matter is that in the 'Protestant' wards, Labour fought on a Protestant ticket, while in the south ward, overwhelmingly Catholic, 'Protestant' issues were played down. It was as sad a spectacle of opportunism as one could wish to find anywhere.

Debate

Bui if the NILP made a reasonable showing in Derry, its performance in the rest of the province amounted to little more than a debacle. Labour Party officials are blaming the poor showing on a low turn out and the unpopularity of the Labour Party in Britain. But the blame for the low turn-out must be laid fair and square at the feet of the Party itself. Apathy in an electorate in symptomatic of a deep-seated discontent with the proffered candidates. In the Wards where Republican Labour was fighting, on the other hand, the turn-out was exceptionally high. In Dock, for example, 72 per cent of the electorate voted. And of all the opposition groups, only Republican Labour, fighting under the banner of James Connolly, could lay any claims to being a socialist party: the very word socialism was best noted for its absence from NILP handouts. If Re-

publican Labour did anything, it was to show yet again that a party fighting on a socialist platform can unite the Catholic and Protestant working class.

While all that NILP's Sam Napier could say was 'The people who really decided this election were the people who stayed at home', in Dock Gerry Fitt could say, "The figures prove that we have the support of both the Protestant and Catholic working classes."

Allegiance

In short, the working-class people of Dock, Smithfield and Falls, or those of them allowed to vote under the anti-working class voting laws, showed that, if the lead is given, their allegiance lies with socialism and not with Toryism, pinkeyism, or 'progressive' nationalism.

The Northern Ireland Labour Party, which claims to represent the 6 Cos. working-class, has been rejected by that class utterly. For the truth of the matter is that it is not, nor has it ever been a socialist party. The writing is on the wall. Unless the party presents itself to the working-class voters of the North as a genuine socialist alternative with a socialist policy (and that means a socialist policy on partition) then it will go the way of its many predecessors: nowhere.

But it is by now obvious that the present leadership is too compromised and too deeply entrenched in its respectable middle-class paternalism ever to lead an aggressive socialist movement. The message for the rank and file is clear. Get rid of the leadership or watch the party wither into oblivion.

Democracy under fire at WUI Conference

At the Workers Union of Ireland Conference last month Eamonn Dillon demanded that the union press for the 11th round wage increase. He pointed out that the 12% (1964) and the one pound a week (1966) increases had already been eroded by higher prices and rents. The Government had crumbled before millers' blackmail and sanctioned the rise in bread prices; and then Hillery turns round and talks to the unions as if they were delinquents. The only answer to Hillery, said Eamonn Dillon, was to demand the 11th round now. The question was referred to the executive after Jim Larkin had promised that this did not imply Executive Council opposition.

The E. C. may not indeed oppose the idea. They may however decide to do nothing about it. The rank and file will have to be on guard against this. The extent of the union leaderships' sell-out to the government was revealed in last months "Irish Militant". They have no stomach for a real fight. Only sustained pressure from below will ensure even a struggle to make wages keep up with price increases.

Discussion on the proposed merger between the W.U.I. and the Irish Transport and General Worker's Union completely missed the point. The bureaucrats used every stroke in the book to create a smokescreen, even to the extent of putting old-time militant Peter Purcell on the platform as dressing. The discussion was organised on the lines of a history seminar, with a load of pedantic nonsense about whether the WUI originally broke away from the ITGWU or vice-versa, and whether it was Jim or Peter Larkin who organised the WUI. The left must have been asleep.

It is not a question of big unions or small unions, and, as an immediate issue, it doesn't matter two balls of blue who broke from whom forty years ago.

The merger would create a massive organisation of 200,000 members which would dominate the whole union movement in Ireland. It would, if present plans go through, be controlled by a bureaucratic apparatus which is not independent of the state and which numbers among its members some who are open supporters of the Fianna Fail party. They would practically be able—and would certainly be willing—to hand over the working class, trussed and bound, to the Government.

Independence

The central issues are the necessity to keep the union organisation independent of the state and the need for real internal democracy. The attitude of members to the merger should be "no... unless." No merger which does not clearly establish the absolute independence of the union at every level. No merger which further erodes the rights of the rank and file. Let all officials of the proposed union be elected by the rank and file and let it be set out clearly in the constitution that union policy is determined only by the members themselves meeting at branch level.

Hillery will continue to move against the working class. He would be delighted to negotiate with a bunch of spineless bureaucrats with the "right" to speak for 200,000 workers. It is up to the members themselves to see that he doesn't get the chance.

J. McC

Aden protest diverted from British Embassy

The "Irish Youth Campaign for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen" organised a march to the British Embassy last month demanding the withdrawal of British troops from Aden. Participating organisations included the Internationalists, the Connolly Youth Movement and the Fabian Society. When the march reached the top of Merrion Square and veered towards the Embassy, two people (called Bates and Edwards) appeared and directed the marchers not to approach it. After some confusion the marchers complied.

Purpose

At a public meeting in Abbey St. and in advertising handouts it was stated that the whole purpose of the march was to go to the Embassy. The marchers came with this in mind. Why then did Bates and Edwards divert the whole thing? And why did Bates say the night before the march that "anyone who tries to start anything with the police will have to deal with us first"? This wasn't just collaboration; it was complete co-operation with the authorities.

This was in no way an isolated incident. Bates, Edwards and their friends have acted consistently to divert any meaningful protest against capitalism and imperialism. They will attempt to head off anything which challenges the beloved "peaceful road."

It was quite obvious that the ordinary marchers wanted to go to the Embassy. They should now think the incident through, and recognise that Bates and Edwards didn't make a "mistake"; they were not merely over-cautious. They were consciously treacherous. If the Trinity Republican Club and the Connolly Youth Movement are serious they should root out such elements.

P. H.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"He (Connolly) was a member of the second International and one of his early triumphs was in securing independent representation for Ireland at the Conference of the International at Basle in Switzerland, the first time ever that Ireland was recognised as a nation in an international conference."

(Vincent McDowell, writing in "Impact", magazine of the Queen's University Belfast Labour Group.)

"Twenty-four European communist parties were represented at the Karlov Vary Conference. The following is the list of participants: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Italy..."

(Le Monde, 28th April 67.)

"I believe that in view of all the circumstances and our general cultural level, it is not for us to initiate the Socialist revolution. We lack the necessary forces; the objective conditions for it do not exist in our country."

The Menshevik Nogin at the April Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Party, 1917.