David Howell

A Lost Left

Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism

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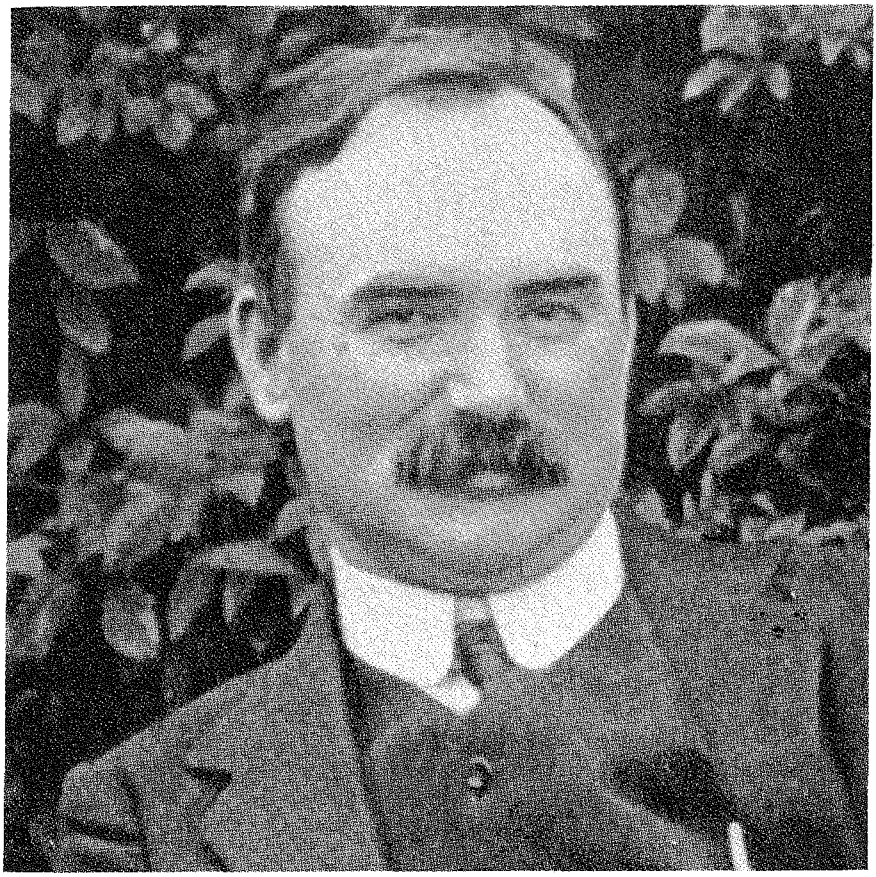


The red and the green

Railway stations in the capital cities of Western Europe are not usually named after left-wing socialists. Passengers from London to Manchester do not depart from the Engels station, nor is it likely that their counterparts from London to Sheffield will ever depart from Scargill station. Yet in Dublin, the capital of a State with a weak Socialist movement, passengers for Belfast must go to the Connolly station. This terminus is named after a Marxian Socialist and Syndicalist, the accomplice of Larkin in the 1913 Lock Out that had alarmed respectable Dublin opinion.

The name of a railway station offers an insight into the difficulties in analysing Connolly's career. He is commemorated there not as a Socialist, but as a leading actor in the Easter Rising, the initiative which forms such a fundamental element in the ideology of the modern Irish State. Any approach to his politics requires a journey through a quagmire of claims and counter-claims. Their content has reflected the political achievements that followed 1916, but also a Socialist insistence that this institutional revolution was not accompanied by any economic and social radicalism. The political divisions of the Free State, and then the Republic have borne the imprint of the unfinished political business of 1921. Inevitably, the durability of Partition, and more recently the re-emergence of violent conflict in the Six Counties have influenced assessments of Connolly.

Official eulogies have often ignored or played down his Socialism. In response those Socialists who characterise the Easter Rising as a progressive initiative suggest that Connolly provided an effective synthesis of nationalist and socialist precepts.[1] Sometimes, it is claimed that his writings offer unambiguous and relevant guidance for contemporary Irish Socialists. This commendation may be fuelled by a concern with the Social Revolution That Never Happened; that it is possible to go back to Connolly's ideas and then apply them to the politics of the Republic. Such anachronism is over-shadowed however by the suggestion that he also offers guidance to the politics of the Six Counties. His supposed blending of National and working-class claims is then applied as a general precept without asking those awkward questions: 'which nation, which working class?'.[2]

Such hagiographies have inevitably provoked anti-heroic responses.

Sean O'Casey offered an early polemical portrait of Connolly abandoning Socialism for what proved to be a conservative Nationalism.[3] More recently, some Irish writers influenced by working-class divisions in the Six Counties, have taken a hostile view of Socialists who see traditional Republicanism as progressive. The traditional celebrations of Connolly are indicted for their contribution to such an identification. This revolution is significant in that it offers not an idealised Nationalist–Socialist, but a substantive historical figure who faced difficult decisions and inevitably made many mistakes. At least such analyses present Connolly's political choices in terms that permit reasoned historical discussion.[4]

Such will be the style of this analysis. Connolly's writings and actions will be located in their varied contexts. His judgements will be subjected to the demanding interrogation posed by available evidence. The answers may be debatable, but at least they will be responses to significant historical and political problems. He was too important to be left to the myth-makers.

Chapter 1
Edinburgh

The class structure of the city in which Connolly served his Socialist apprenticeship bore the imprint of Edinburgh's status as the Scottish capital.[1] Its professional middle class was unusually large; its industrial base was relatively limited.[2] This environment left its mark on one of his first pieces of journalism:

> The population of Edinburgh is largely composed of snobs, flunkeys, mashers, lawyers, students, middle-class pensioners and dividend hunters. Even the working-class portion of the population seemed to have imbibed the snobbish would-be respectable spirit of their 'betters', and look with aversion upon every movement running counter to conventional ideas.

Yet Connolly was optimistic about the prospects for Socialism in Edinburgh. It:

> is now recognised as an important factor in the life of the community, a disturbing element which must be taken into account in all the calculations of the political caucuses.[3]

This was an exaggeration, but it pointed to a significant development in the politics of the Edinburgh Left. Despite the relative importance of traditional consumer crafts within the local economy, Edinburgh trade unionism faced similar pressures to those found in other urban centres. Artisans found their positions threatened by technical changes and by managements' desire to strengthen their authority in the workplace. Organisation of the semi-skilled and unskilled had made a significant advance in the late 1880s amongst many sectors including the Leith waterfront. As elsewhere, 'New Unionist' gains were eroded as local firms gained important victories and the Leith dockers were hit by the aggressive anti-unionism of the Shipping Federation. Increasingly, Edinburgh disputes either reflected or were part of wider conflicts. This widening of perspectives was emphasised in the Winter of 1890–1, when the Trades Council intervened in the unsuccessful Scottish railway strike.[4]

This process meant that some of the divisions between craft workers and the semi- or unskilled began to decline. The conception of a broadly based labour movement began to make more sense, at least as an ideal. The political allegiances of trade unionists and of the Trades Council also began to shift. Trades Council commitment to the Legal Eight Hour Day became firmer and in 1893 the Council held a joint May Day

demonstration with the Socialists. There were still tensions. Co-operation in municipal elections often remained a frustrated hope. Socialists could still take a dim view of the value of industrial action but essentially the Edinburgh labour movement of the 1890s followed a similar path to its counterparts elsewhere.

Local Socialism was organisationally complex. There had been a Socialist presence since the early days of the Social Democratic Federation. The branch had quickly adopted the title, Scottish Land and Labour League, reflecting thereby a dominant preoccupation of Scottish Radicals. Under the guidance of the Austrian, Andreas Scheu, many from the branch had joined the Socialist League and this organisation maintained a relatively strong presence for the next four years. Eventually moves towards re-unification produced the formation of a Scottish Socialist Federation in September 1889. Although this was intended as a broad Scottish initiative, it was effective only in Edinburgh, and with the demise of the Socialist League, the SSF became essentially a branch of the SDF.[5] This body was the focus for much of Connolly's political work – outdoor propaganda meetings, studying the few Marx texts available in English, and eventually in 1894–5 contesting local elections. This educational experience was likely to incorporate a strongly deterministic emphasis into any prognostication about the future of capitalism. This strand can certainly be found in many of Connolly's writings. Yet the strength of the Socialist League connection could generate a less reductionist emphasis; arguably the strongly normative element in some of Connolly's later work owes something to this influence.[6]

The Scottish Socialist Federation did not stand alone on the Edinburgh Left. The Scottish Labour Party had a presence in the city, and after initial problems managed to work in relative harmony with the Trades Council. Thus in July 1892, a broad alliance of trade unionists, socialists and temperance enthusiasts supported the parliamentary candidacy of the Broxburn Miners' Agent, John Wilson, in Edinburgh Central. The following summer, the SLP's Edinburgh Central branch took the title of 'Independent Labour Party', with James Connolly serving for some months as Secretary.[7]

Such developments and organisations – a Trades Council moving away from Liberalism as a result of industrial experiences, an explicitly Socialist body, a less clear-cut Labour group – highlight general themes of the 1890s. Despite the distinctive character of Scottish politics leaving its mark in the title, Scottish Land and Labour League, and in the formation of the Scottish Labour Party, this was an essentially British Movement. What was noticeable about Edinburgh, and distinguished it from many, although not all centres of Socialist development, was its ecumenism. Connolly imbibed Marxism within the SSF and organised

within both the Federation and the ILP. He was already emphasising the centrality of a Marxist understanding, but equally, he was committed to the search for a broadly-based mobilisation for immediate objectives.

Despite his underlying optimism about the prospects for Socialism, Connolly soon felt the frustration of propagandising amongst an unreceptive working class. Although he claimed some progress in fashionable Edinburgh, he saw little ground for satisfaction in proletarian Leith. Conventional Socialist expectations seemed to be unfulfilled and Connolly fell back on the characteristic explanation of the chastened Social Democrat:

> Whatever be the reason whether it be for lack of backbone, or for want of knowledge, or through sheer unadulterated cowardice, it is hard to say.

But attempts at Socialist propaganda seemed to have achieved little:

> there are only a few Socialists in Leith, in spite of all the educational work performed at our open-air meetings during the summer months.[8]

All he could offer was a renewed exercise in propaganda – this time with more determination and hopefully more success. It was the perennial response of the Socialist evangelist to the problem of securing and maintaining support.

Orthodox Social Democrats had another strategy for expanding their influence; they could contest elections. Inevitably Connolly with his commitment and his organisational zeal became involved in electoral politics. During the spring and summer of 1894, he was involved in ultimately abortive negotiations for an ILP candidate for Central Edinburgh and a few months later in November, he stood as a 'Socialist' municipal candidate in the St Giles Ward. The contest was four-cornered with an Independent, as well as a Tory and a Liberal. Connolly argued for the displacement of confusing side-issues: Liberal and Independent with their claims to represent the working class should withdraw and:

> leave the ground clear for the real battle of the Election betwixt the representative of rankest Toryism and the representative of militant Social Democracy.[9]

In fact, the Liberal was victorious, and with this knowledge, Connolly argued an amended version of the same thesis, that the basic battle lay between Social Democracy and the Liberal as the stronger capitalist party.[10] Yet, as he acknowledged, the Liberals retained a deceptively progressive image, and in a complex contest, electors could be persuaded to vote Liberal to keep the Tory out:

> hundreds of men who would otherwise have voted Socialist, cast their votes reluctantly for Mr Mitchell as the candidate most likely to ensure the defeat of the Tory.[11]

The wasted vote argument was a perennial problem for Socialists. Their response tended to assume that there existed a group of naturally Socialist voters who could be persuaded by an unambiguous policy. Some of the emphases in this first campaign of Connolly were to be constants in his strategic thinking – the desire to have a clean-cut issue as between Socialist and capitalist politicians; the claim that Liberal progressive blandishments were illusory with the implication that Socialists must keep well clear of Liberal overtures. Conventional politics were a damaging distraction for the working class:

> I know several working men who will not be able to rest in their beds at night until the Town Council decides who is to be Lord Provost. It is a most momentous question no doubt. And yet it seems to me that we will still be rack-rented and sweated, over-worked and under-paid, insulted and bullied, humiliated and despised, ground beneath the heel of landlord and capitalist, foreman and manager, whether the honours go round or remain in the hands of the Liberal ring.[12]

It was an argument that Connolly would apply to all manner of politicians – most persistently of course to the Irish National Party.

His judgement of the significance of Socialist electioneering was as yet firmly within the conventional Social Democratic wisdom. During his campaign he emphasised immediate questions such as housing and the inclusion of fair wages' clauses in council contracts,[13] but he viewed the short-term significance of any Socialist election success as propagandist:

> The election of a Socialist to any public body at present, is only valuable in so far as it is the return of a disturber of the political peace.[14]

Until a Socialist majority was a realistic hope, the task must be to cast a searching light on Tory and Liberal activities. For Connolly this was not simply a question of muck-raking: the disturbance of the peace would involve the propagating of an alternative set of priorities that could generate a mass Socialist following:

> by constantly placing our doctrines and our efforts upon the same platform as the class interests of the workers, to create such a public feeling in our favour as shall enable us to bridge the gulf between the old order and the new, and lead the people from the dark Egypt of our industrial anarchy into the Promised Land of industrial freedom.[15]

Connolly's vote in November was respectable – 263 – and he looked forward with optimism to the Spring 1895 inaugural elections for the Poor Law authorities:

> The workers will then have an opportunity of humanising this iniquitous system by placing upon every Parish Council, a sufficient number of Social Democrats to counteract the despotic tendencies of our Liberal and Tory taskmasters.[16]

This time however his vote was much lower – 169. The frustrations of Socialists seeking to expand support beyond the committed few were all too apparent. Propaganda plus elections as a strategy made far-reaching assumptions about workers' receptivity to Socialist argument. These were backed by claims about the radicalising impact of expected economic changes. Despite disappointments, Connolly adhered to this strategy and it was as a conventional Social Democrat that he left Edinburgh for Dublin in May 1896.

As yet, he was far from developing a cogent position linking his Socialism, to his Irish identity. But, inevitably, the fact of that identity plus the attempts by Edinburgh Socialists to establish links with Irish workers left an important and early legacy for his politics. It was not just an Irish working-class Socialist who would be bemused by the role of the Irish in British politics in the 1880s and 1890s. To many Socialists, Irish agrarian agitations and parliamentary strategies seemed the prime radical hope. Here was a mass movement that had confronted the British State, a parliamentary group that had pressurised the Liberal Party into adopting Home Rule and in so doing had effectively remoulded British politics. The exemplars for radical agitation and electoral and parliamentary organisation were attractive. Yet there was another side. The Irish in Britain were overwhelmingly working class. They seemed natural recruits for a Socialist organisation, but attached as they were to the Irish National League; involved in distinctive religious and cultural bodies, they could appear as a divisive sectarian grouping. When INL pressure was in favour of a Liberal vote, then recriminations between Irish leaders and Socialists could become bitter.[17]

In Edinburgh, as elsewhere in Scotland, an effective alliance between Irish and Scottish workers could be undermined by divisions of ethnicity, religion and skill. When the President of the Edinburgh Trades Council, the Carpenter, A.C. Telfer, was asked during evidence to the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, about the attitude of slum dwellers to their living conditions, his reply was revealing:

> Properly speaking it is generally the Irish element, labourers and what not, who live in that locality, and I must confess that I do not come into communication with them as a rule, so as to feel as it were the touch of their inner feelings in that respect.[18]

In the industrial circumstances of the 1890s, many of the Edinburgh trade unionists who shifted into the Socialist movement were skilled workers. Connolly, as a carter, was perhaps exceptional;[19] Connolly as an Irish-Catholic carter most certainly was. The gap between Edinburgh Socialists and the local Irish working class should not be attributed simply to the politics of the latter's organisations.

During his Edinburgh years, Connolly's references to the Irish

dimension are scattered through his journalism and correspondence. His principal emphasis was on the relationship between the Irish vote in Britain, and Socialist and Labour organisations, but consideration of this led to some suggestions about Labour politics in Ireland. As yet, he did not develop any cogent arguments about Socialist attitudes to the National Question as such. Nevertheless one of his Edinburgh comrades, John Leslie had given some thought to this issue during the Winter of 1893–4, and the results of Leslie's work provide a useful context for the analysis of Connolly's early ideas.

As a former member of the Irish National League and a leading figure in the Scottish Socialist Federation, Leslie had possibly been led to consider the problem on account of Irish organisational opposition to Edinburgh's first Labour municipal candidate in November 1893. He subsequently lectured to the SSF on the National Question, wrote a series of articles for *Justice* under the title 'Passing Thoughts on the Irish Question', and then published them as a pamphlet, *The Present Position of the Irish Question*.[20]

This was, in several respects, an occasional piece. It bore the stamp of its immediate origins – the defeat of the Second Home Rule Bill in the Lords, and the electoral tensions between Irish and Socialist organisations. Nevertheless it offered an insight into the discussion of some Edinburgh Socialists, and some themes emerged that found echoes in Connolly's subsequent writings. One was the view stated sharply at the start that political independence is insufficient. In a phrase, close to one employed later by Connolly, Leslie denied that:

> the Alpha and the Omega of the Irish Question consists in the hoisting of the green and gold banner above the old Parliament House in Dublin.[21]

Instead, the root of Ireland's problem was located in the institution of private property:

> Let there be no mistake about it, the cause of Irish misery is not to be found in the incorporation of the Irish Parliament in that of England, (although such incorporation undoubtedly tends to aggravate the evil), but it is to be found in the fact that the means by which the Irish people must live are in possession of a class, which class will not allow the people to use these means unless by so doing a profit will accrue to this class.[22]

Here was a theme that would secure much more elaboration in Connolly's writings, culminating in his *Labour in Irish History*. It would be supported by some of Leslie's emphases. Thus the latter viewed critically the 'revolutionaries' of 1848 with the exception of James Fintan Lalor. The Fenians as a spontaneous democratic movement were regarded more favourably,[23] but the paradigm of Irish democratic organisation was presented as the Land League:

the new doctrine ... obliterated all narrow sectarianism, and it forms an instructive object lesson for the Socialist inculcating the necessity of unceasing watchfulness for the opportune moment ...[24]

It was an initiative seen as destroyed by the Kilmainham Treaty which replaced the land agitation by the single plank of Home Rule.[25] Despite this, Leslie's – and later Connolly's – view of Parnell was positive, a leader who was committed to the Nationalist viewpoint and who developed an effective political organisation.[26] The legacy of the Parnellite split was viewed as a chance for Irish Labour to seize the initiative. The advent of the Irish Trades Union Congress led Leslie to take an optimistic view of the prospects for an Irish Labour Party:

Is it not time the Irish working class asked themselves the question for whose benefit it has all been? They have fought the fight, while others have gathered the fruits of such victory as there may have been. The recent Irish Trades Unions Congress declared in favour of the necessity for a working-class party in Ireland. There is shortly to be held an Irish *Labour* Congress ... Is one too sanguine in expecting that this Congress will mark the point of a new departure, and that the banner of a new Land and Labour League in which the green – and for that matter the orange – will shade off and merge into the red, will be displayed ...?[27]

The claim that Labour was the proper champion of the national cause would be a central element in Connolly's position and would be backed by continuing optimism about the development of a non-sectarian working-class party. In such a perspective, the proper ally for Irish Labour was its British equivalent; the internationalism of the Socialist movement would not detract from the identity of Irish Labour.

During his Edinburgh years Connolly approached the complexities of this question through specific strategic problems. When he became involved in correspondence with Keir Hardie on the possibility of a parliamentary candidate for Edinburgh Central, his mind naturally turned to the possibility of Irish support. Initially he hoped that Socialists could benefit from the Nationalist split and that the Parnellites would be sympathetic. He suggested that Hardie discuss the question with John Redmond.[28] But disappointment led quickly to a more hostile view of both Irish parliamentary groups – their radicalism was an accident.

Both of them are essentially middle-class parties interested in the progress of Ireland from a middle-class point of view. Their advanced attitude upon the land question is simply an accident arising out of the exigencies of the political situation and would be dropped tomorrow, if they did not realise the necessity of linking the Home Rule agitation to some cause more clearly allied to their daily wants than a mere embodiment of national sentiment of the people.

Already Connolly was suggesting a strategy for British Labour which would by-pass the Irish MPs and their local organisations. Instead,

Leslie's analysis should be applied and a link should be struck with the Irish Labour Movement. Optimistically Connolly suggested:

> There is a nucleus of a strong Labour movement in Ireland, which only needs judicious handling to flutter the doves in the Home Rule dovecote.

As will become clear, such a prognostication exaggerated both Irish Labour's strength and its willingness or ability to criticise the Parliamentary factions. Connolly's proposal was that Hardie should visit Dublin to speak under labour auspices:

> putting it in strong and straight, without reference to either (of) the two Irish parties; but rebellious anti-monarchical and outspoken on the fleecings of both landlord and capitalist, and the hypocrisy of both political parties for a finale.[29]

This proposal should be placed in context. Connolly's knowledge of Irish politics in 1894 was limited; his object at that point was to pressurise the Parnellites to support Labour candidates in Britain, despite their private inclinations. Yet already against the background of Leslie's writings there were the beginnings of Connolly's position on the relationship between the British and Irish Labour movements. Most centrally there was the implication that it was *this* relationship that should matter to Socialists. Workers and Socialists from each society should ally with one another, and not with the bourgeois politicians.

Connolly experienced the complexities of the relationship for himself during his municipal election contests in a ward with a sizable Irish population. The local branch of the Irish National League denounced his candidacy in the customary terms as serving Unionist interests. In fact, it seems likely that he secured a significant part of the Irish vote. Nevertheless the lesson seemed clear. Irish working class voters could be blinded to the facts of capitalist exploitation by the manipulative use of a national appeal. Liberal Government was still capitalist government; ethnic tensions could divide the working class:

> Perhaps they will learn how foolish it is to denounce tyranny in Ireland, and then vote for tyrants and the instruments of tyrants at their own door. Perhaps they will begin to see that the landlord who grinds his peasants on a Connemara estate and the landlord who rack-rents them in a Cowgate slum, are brethren in fact and deed. Perhaps they will realise that the Irish worker who starves in an Irish cabin and the Scotch worker who is poisoned in an Edinburgh garrett are also brothers with one hope and one destiny. Perhaps they will observe how the same Liberal Government which supplies police to Irish landlords to aid them in their work of exterminating the Irish peasantry also imports police into Scotland to aid Scottish mineowners in their work of starving the Scottish miners.[30]

But in terms of Scottish politics, the change would be slow. Connolly experienced a speedy reminder of the difficulties involved in his 1895 Parish Council contest. He experienced the hostile pressure of the Irish

organisation; his reduced vote could be ascribed in part to the candidacy of a Catholic priest.

When poverty forced Connolly to leave Edinburgh for Dublin in the Spring of 1896, he went in Socialist terms as an orthodox Social Democrat. Cogent claims about his position on the National Question are more elusive. Leslie's ideas had clearly been significant, as had his own conflicts with the Edinburgh Irish caucus. Inevitably, conscious of being an Irishman in Scotland, he had not yet made an overt commitment to nationalism. The Dublin years would see not just the elaboration and publicising of such a commitment, but the linking of this with the Social Democratic framework that was the legacy of his Edinburgh apprenticeship. It would be a vital period in the development of his thought.

Chapter 2
Dublin

Connolly arrived in Dublin to find himself amongst a working-class whose condition was noticeably worse than that of its counterpart in British urban centres. Although Dublin workers included a minority in craft-based occupations, they were primarily semi- and unskilled, often casually employed, poorly paid and living in horrendous conditions. Glasgow's housing was regarded in British terms as poor; in 1903, the proportion of Glaswegian families living in a single room was 24%. The comparable figure for Dublin was 36.6%. By any yardstick – income, housing standards, death rates per thousand – the predicament of the Dublin working-class was appalling.[1]

The organised labour movement made but a slight impact on this ocean of deprivation. Unlike Edinburgh, the leaven of New Unionism had had minimal significance. Craft unions had undergone little radicalisation, since in Dublin with its relatively stagnant economy, the traditional position of their members had come under relatively little pressure. Cautious craft unionists continued to dominate the Dublin Trades Council until well after 1900. The formation of the Irish Trades Union Congress in 1894, welcomed by John Leslie as the harbinger of a vigorous Irish labour movement tended in the early years to strengthen these cautious sectional sentiments. Thus, the new body was dominated initially by skilled localised groups, increasingly insulated from relatively progressive developments within British trade unionism.[2]

In time, this conservatism and limited influence would change, but in the late 1890s the meagre radicalism of the Dublin labour movement was reflected not just in the passivity of the ITUC but also in the lack of socialist organisations. The Edinburgh activists might have met frustrations in some of their dealings with the Trades Council, they might have seen the blunting of initially optimistic electoral ambitions, but they could look back on some successes. Edinburgh Socialists achieved some wider support in municipal elections, and more crucially they secured the backing of several trade union activists. An early attempt to develop an ILP presence in Dublin had languished; a faithful few had kept afloat the Dublin Socialist Club. Then Connolly arrived.[3]

The Dublin Socialist Club became the Irish Socialist Republican Party. In a real sense throughout its seven year life, the ISRP remained Connolly's party – in William O'Brien's recollection he 'was of course

the presiding genius of the whole business'.[4] This was despite the party's formal claim that it rejected the cult of the leader in order to introduce members to the democratic practices of a socialist society.[5] Under Connolly's guidance, the organisation followed the same political strategy as the Edinburgh Socialist movement, open air propaganda meetings, backed up from August 1898 by a newspaper – *The Workers' Republic* – and a few election contests.[6] Throughout its life, the ISRP remained small. O'Brien retrospectively assessed the average weekly turnout at meetings as twelve to fifteen, the number of enrolled members as around fifty and the number of activists as about half this figure.[7] The party remained essentially a Dublin organisation. Attempts to develop branches elsewhere failed, in part due to local problems but also due to the absence of any overall structure. The apparent lack of progress could erode the enthusiasm of members. As the Party minute book noted for 12 February 1900:

> The usual public meeting was held on Sunday 10th ... There was an improvement in the number of outsiders present, but no improvement in the attendance of members.[8]

The state of the Dublin labour movement was part of the problem. Trade union organisation was both limited and cautious and could not be utilised easily by Socialists, but beyond this both Socialist and Labour groups faced the problem posed by the National Question's dominance of Irish politics.

Connolly's early response can be found in the programme of the ISRP. He had arrived in Dublin essentially as a Social Democrat, obviously with an awareness of his Irish identity, but with no history of involvement in Nationalist politics; indeed his Edinburgh experiences had afforded abundant scope for strictures on the conservative and manipulative practices of the Nationalist caucus. Yet when an ISRP programme emerged it reflected conventional Social Democratic emphases in all significant aspects but one.[9] The SDF positon of 'legislative independence for all parts of the Empire' was replaced by complete separation from Britain, and a commitment to an Irish Socialist Republic.[10] Such an emphasis could be seen as Connolly's response to the problems facing a Socialist propagandist in Ireland, but it would become a principled commitment.

The quest for an effective combination of Socialist and Nationalist sentiments faced serious difficulties. Most obviously, the vast majority of Irish electors outside the North East continued to give their support to the Parliamentary Party, despite the divisions that followed Parnell's fall.[11] There seemed little scope for a credible challenge by Irish Labour at the parliamentary level, given the weakness of the industrial working class and the prior occupation of much of the available political space.

But in municipal politics following the democratisation of Irish local government in 1898, the outlook seemed more promising. Perhaps Nationalist organisation could not utilise the same loyalties when the prize was a seat on the local council rather than representation of the claims of a nation. Socialist and Labour politicians entered early municipal contests with optimism. Yet they soon found that national and religious sentiments could be utilised with powerful effect against labour and Socialist municipal campaigns backed by limited trade union machinery and even weaker party organisation.

If Dublin's small group of Socialists had to come to terms with the still potent organisational and rhetorical legacies of Parnell's party, there were other innovations in the Nationalist movement in the 1890s that provided both further obstacles and some opportunities. The complex developments that produced the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic Literary Revival, and the politics of Sinn Fein, at a time when the Parliamentary Party seemed impotent, and agrarian radicalism tamed, are viewed typically through their eventual political implications. But it is too simple to contrast the problems facing the Parliamentary Party in the 1890s, with these vivid developments, and thus to paint a signpost towards the collapse of old-style Home Rule nationalism. This sequence has a misleading coherence. At the time of Connolly's first political sojourn in Dublin, the new movements could not agree on a conception of Irish nationality. That the dominant one would be that of 'Irish Ireland' still lay in the future. This tangled web was nevertheless an alternative to that of the Dublin Socialists. Younger men and women disillusioned with the wranglings and sterility of the Parliamentary Party had an alternative – culturally stimulating, perhaps politically radical, most certainly national.[12] Elsewhere, Socialism often flourished in the 1890s as an alternative to discredited older organisations, but compared with a Gaelic alternative it could seem less attractive and less relevant.

Yet if Irish Socialists were handicapped by the fact that the battle between radicals and conservatives was confined largely to the Nationalist household, nevertheless the fact that radical Nationalists made converts amongst the young could have benefits for Socialists. At least the hegemony of the older conservative elements was threatened. Socialists could combine with the more radical Nationalists on campaigns where Socialist and Nationalist precepts pointed in the same direction. Some Nationalists might be led to accept the validity of some Socialist arguments, perhaps as a result of collaboration, perhaps also as a consequence of a fear that labour organisation could divide the Nationalist movement. The Nationalist journal *Shan Van Vocht* was concerned in October 1896 that:

A great proportion of the intelligent and thinking element among the artisan population is liable to drift away from sharing in the National movement proper and become absorbed in the labour party.[13]

The journal responded by taking a sympathetic view of Socialist positions on economic and social policy and gave Connolly space to expound his views. In the short run, the fear was unfounded, but in a longer perspective the complex relationship between Socialists and radical Nationalists afforded abundant scope for both tensions and points of growth. If the focus is to be limited firmly to Connolly's ISRP period however, the most basic feature is the marginality of his political organisation. Assessment of his writings must begin with that perception.

Connolly's views during his Dublin years show a decisive development from his Edinburgh period. From one perspective, his analysis can be characterised as an attempt to apply the conventional Social Democratic outlook that he had brought with him to his perception of the distinctively Irish situation. From another, these years were crucial for the development of propositions that remained relevant to Connolly's position until 1916. Much would shift, priorities would change but some claims formulated during these years remained. Yet again his position can be viewed as the remarkable achievement of a self-educated worker, adding lengthy studies in Ireland's National Library to the apprenticeship in Scottish Socialism. Most fundamentally, from 1896 onwards, distinctive Irish concerns were at the centre of his Socialist activities.

The complex significance of these preoccupations for his hitherto orthodox Social Democratic view on political change can be traced by analysing an important section of his pamphlet *Erin's Hope: The End and the Means*.[14] Characteristically, Connolly began his analysis with an immediate political problem; he argued that the conventional way of presenting the Anglo–Irish argument as centred on forms of government, was superficial, indeed erroneous. It followed that any belief in the adequacy of Home Rule as an adequate solution was fallacious. Instead the underlying conflict originated in divergent conceptions of property in land – a claim that was linked to recent anthropological work. This argument carried sharp implications for influential images of 'progress'. Connolly presented the economic liberal, 'the adherent of the present order of society'. This protagonist would view the Irish tradition of communal ownership:

as proof of the Irish incapacity for assimilating progressive ideas ... this incapacity is the real source of Ireland's misery since it has unfitted her sons for the competitive scramble for existence, and so foredoomed them to the lot of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

But then, Connolly considered a second stereotype, the belief that:

the progress of the human race through the various economic stages of communism, chattel slavery, feudalism, and wage slavery, has been but a preparation for the higher ordered society of the future.

Within such a perspective there was a temptation to view:

the Irish adherence to clan ownership at such a comparatively recent date as the Seventeenth Century as evidence of retarded economical development, and therefore a real hindrance to progress.

But Connolly proclaimed an alternative, carrying radical implications for any deterministic view of social development:

the possibility of a people by political intuition anticipating the lessons afterwards revealed to them in the sad school of experience ...

This provided scope for a Nationalist–Socialist alliance. The latter could:

join with the Irish patriot in his lavish expressions of admiration for the sagacity of his Celtic forefathers who foreshadowed in the democratic organisation of the Irish clan the more perfect organisation of the free society of the future.[15]

Already in Connolly's writings, there was a theme – Celtic Communism – which would be central to *Labour in Irish History* and which would find Scottish echoes in the collaboration between John Maclean and Erskine of Mar. Historically, it had its problems: 'the democratic organisation' of the Irish clan did not include the slaves. The more fundamental difficulty concerns the status of the argument. The writings of Marx and Engels from the mid 1870s had suggested the possibility of a potential for communist development, within the threatened – but still existing – Russian peasant communes, and its survival dependent on support from working-class revolutions in Western Europe.[16] The Irish case involved no institutional inheritance – only a historical memory with a substantial accretion of myth. Connolly subsequently acknowledged the brittle quality of the legacy:

The clans are now no more and could not be revived, even if it were desirable to do so, which is more than questionable, but the right of ownership still lives on, and should now be established in the modern Corporate embodiment of the life of the Irish nation – our public boards, municipality and independent Irish Congress when we are men enough to win one.[17]

Despite the restriction of the communal inheritance to the realm of ideas and the unanalysed but highly problematic concept of 'the Irish nation' this argument did provide the suggestion that national and socialist emancipation in Ireland must advance together. There was a hint that paralleled Marx's explicit claims on Russian prospects. The path to socialism need not be the same everywhere; the histories and the contemporary situations of societies make a difference.

This was an important and tantalising claim with radical implications

for the coherence of a conventional Marxist image of political change. Already equipped with such an orthodox position from his Edinburgh years, Connolly in the late 1890s ignored the potential for disparity. He frequently argued the epochal case that he criticised in *Erin's Hope*. Socialism was:

> the legitimate child of a long drawn-out historical evolution ... its consummation will only be finally possible when that evolutionary process has attained to a suitable degree of development ... (ie) ... when the development of capitalism in its turn renders the burden of a capitalist class unbearable and the capitalist system unworkable.[18]

This reasoning could lead him to take a strongly reductionist view of political institutions. They could be presented as 'but the reflex of the economic forms which underlie them'.[19] Decisions by governments had to be viewed as the products of underlying economic forces:

> The Cabinets who rule the destinies of nations from the various capitals of Europe are but the tools of the moneyed interest.[20]

This judgement did not exclude the claim that political forms mattered. Connolly declared that 'Socialists cannot be indifferent to monarchy'.[21] The achievement of a republican system even under capitalism would remove one significant obstacle.

These starting points, albeit with their potential tensions, provided Connolly with a basis for deflating the pretensions of middle class Nationalist politicians. They supported capitalism and thereby denied the merits of traditional Irish social organisation. Their support for the existing economic order was also anti-national. They had:

> so far compounded with the enemy, as to accept the alien social system, with its accompanying manifestations, the legal dispossession and economic dependence of the vast mass of the Irish people, as part of the natural order of society.

Accordingly, they achieved a political reputation based on an illusory prospectus:

> Their political influence they derived from their readiness at all times to do lip service to the cause of Irish nationality, which in their phraseology meant simply the transfer of the seat of government from London to Dublin ...[22]

This diagnosis was reflected and extended in an emphasis similar to that presented three years earlier by John Leslie:

> If you remove the English army tomorrow, and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic, your efforts would be in vain.
>
> England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers ...[23]

This narrowness of vision had led Irish politicians into a succession of disasters. The 'Young Ireland' movement of the 1840s had failed because it attempted to mobilise support simply on the principle of nationality. This could never be sufficient. It brought together people of divergent economic views;[24] the idea of a 'United Nation' was an illusion in a capitalist society.[25] The Home Rule policy continued to link the well-being of Ireland with the fate of the British Empire. As such most Irish people would gain nothing: only capitalists and officials benefiting from the shift of administrative functions to Dublin would be advantaged. Home Rule was characterised by Connolly as against national independence, but in favour of capitalism and of imperialism. Only the myopic conservatism of many British politicians could lend it credibility as a radical strategy.[26]

Connolly's dismissive attitude towards Home Rule politicians was not extended to more radical Nationalists. He contributed to the journal, *Shan Van Vocht* – he collaborated with Republicans such as Maud Gonne[27] in the anti-Jubilee demonstrations of June 1897 and was arrested. Attempts to give a radical content to the Wolfe Tone centenary celebrations failed however when parliamentarians came to dominate the preparations, and Connolly's group withdrew.[28] Reflecting on these experiences, Connolly could see a distinction between Home Rulers who accepted the monarchy and the British connection, and the Republicans who wished for complete political independence. Despite his strictures about political independence being insufficient, he nevertheless saw it as a vital basis for a Socialist advance. The illusions that created superficial political divisions and blurred the essential ones would be exorcised by an Irish Republic:

> the only power which would show in full light of day all the class antagonisms and lines of economic demarcation now obscured by the mists of bourgeois patriotism.[29]

Thoroughgoing Nationalists should therefore be supported:

> ... even when he is from the economic view intensely Conservative, the Irish Nationalist ... is an active agent in social regeneration, in so far as he seeks to invest with full power over its own destinies a people actually governed in the interests of a feudal aristocracy ...[30]

It was a distinction and a claim that would have decisive implications.

The relevance of a Socialist strategy for an independent Ireland could be demonstrated by highlighting the illusory character of Home Rule expectations. Connolly saw the restless search for markets as posing problems for an already industrialised society, let alone a newcomer. The search for a competitive Irish industry would be disastrous for the working class that would be created:

our one hope of keeping our feet as a manufacturing nation would depend upon our ability to work longer and harder for a lower wage than the other nations of Europe ... This is equivalent to saying that our chance of making Ireland a manufacturing country depends upon us becoming the lowest blacklegs in Europe.[31]

In his opinion, even this harsh hope would be frustrated by Chinese and Japanese competition.

If the hope of an industrial capitalist Ireland seemed both horrific and unattainable, then how about the dream of a peasant proprietorship that had done so much to fuel the radicalism of the Land League? His initial pronouncements on the agrarian issue depended on second-hand evidence, but in the Spring of 1898, he toured Kerry, then under threat of famine, equipped with a leaflet arguing that starving people had a moral right to food that overrode any lègal prohibition.[32] Prior to this experience, Connolly had already emphasised the partiality of the proprietorship demand. Not only would it legitimise the private property system by extending its base, it would also strengthen a significant social division:

The private ownership of land by the landlord class is an injustice to the whole community, but the creation of a peasant proprietary would only tend to stereotype and consecrate that injustice, since it would leave out of account the entire labouring class.[33]

The only just solution was land nationalisation. Connolly recognised that 'peasant proprietary is somewhat of a hindrance to the spread of socialist ideas'.[34]

But it could not be a long-term pillar of capitalism since a viable peasant proprietorship was ceasing to be feasible in the face of competition from cheap North American and Antipodean producers:

Every perfection of agricultural methods or machinery lowers prices; every fall in prices renders more unstable the position of the farmer, whether tenant or proprietor; and every year – nay every month – which passes sees this perfection and development of machinery going more and more rapidly on. We are left no choice but socialism or universal bankruptcy.[35]

This dichotomous choice allowed Connolly to develop a largely orthodox Social Democratic diagnosis and remedy. Production should be for use, not for profit; workers were robbed by the need to sell their labour on a competitive market; similarly, tenant farmers found rents forced upwards by competition for land. The solution was the Irish Socialist Republic. If Irish agriculture could not compete internationally, then it must cease competing and instead organise communally. Its structure should be democratic with boards of agriculture elected by those who work on the land. Similarly, industries should be administered according to co-operative precepts.[36]

This emphasis on democratic control of organisations by the workers concerned, was already an important part of Connolly's Socialist vision. He responded to increasing evidence of capitalist support for State intervention:

> Socialism properly implies above all things the cooperative control by the workers of the machinery of production; without this cooperative control the public ownership by the State is not Socialism – it is only State Capitalism.[37]

The democracy of Parliament was characterised as 'the democracy of Capitalism'. Reflecting relationships in the workplace, it implied the workers':

> continued subjection to a ruling class once his choice of the personnel of rulers is made.

The revolutionary alternative included the direct involvement of the people in law making; 'the appointment of reliable public servants under direct public control'. In Connolly's phrase, here was 'the industrial democracy of the Socialist Republic'.[38] It was a vision that contained echoes of Marx's praise of the Paris Commune,[39] and also anticipated Connolly's later syndicalism.

His portrait of the Irish Socialist future involved a suggestion that a proper balance between rural and urban society could be maintained. It was a characteristic elaboration of the frequently-voiced Socialist view that capitalist development distorted the relationship between town and country. Instead:

> Let the produce of Irish soil go first to feed the Irish people, and after a sufficient store has been retained to insure of that being accomplished, let the surplus be exchanged with other countries in return for those manufactured goods Ireland needs but does not herself produce.[40]

Such a strategy with its abandonment of unregulated Free Trade could help Ireland avoid the horrors of large-scale industrialisation.

Connolly's case saw Socialism and national independence as necessarily interrelated aspirations. Already it raised a series of difficult problems. One was obviously how far the prospects for developments within a single society could be decisive. His comments on Poland which he saw as in several respects analogous to Ireland were not optimistic, even on the narrow question of political independence:

> In view of the enormous strength of modern armaments I fear the conquest of its National Freedom by Poland is not at present practicable, except the effort at attaining it be made in conjunction with a proletarian revolt in the ruling Empires.[41]

Such a verdict inevitably raised for any Irish Socialist the question of the appropriate relationship with the British Socialist movement.

The awareness of the common interests of workers in all societies did not entail a uniform strategy for Socialism:

> The interests of labour all the world over are identical ... but it is also true that each country had better work out its own salvation on the lines most congenial to its own people.

Separate paths were justified as between England and Ireland:

> The national and racial characteristics of the English and Irish people are different, their political history and traditions are antagonistic, the economic development of the one is not on a par with the other.[41]

This claim provoked hostile reactions from some British Socialists who defined – or claimed to define – their Socialism in sharply internationalist terms. Part of Connolly's response paralleled a view expressed almost thirty years earlier by Marx regarding the British end of the relationship:

> there is between the two nations an incompatibility of temper which has been, is now and will be exploited in the interests of reaction by the possessing classes of both countries, until the Gordian Knot which binds us together is finally severed, and each nation left free to settle accounts with its own native oppressors.[42]

Connolly went on to develop two points that would have a long-term importance within his politics. In dealing with the criticism that the ISRP programme would necesitate the use of violence, his response was sharp. This was:

> not so much an argument against our propaganda as an indictment of the invincible ignorance and unconquerable national egotism of the vast mass of the British electorate, and as such concerns the English socialists more than the Irish ones.

The question of how Irish Socialists should relate to a more numerous labour movement in a centre of imperialism would be a persistent theme until – and after – Easter 1916. Moreover, British Socialists attracted by Home Rulers' attacks on British politicians and conventional prejudices, could be tempted into a naive assessment of Irish Members' radicalism. This response could be bolstered by a desire to secure the electoral support of the Irish in Britain through developing a Labour–Irish alliance. It was a temptation which Connolly warned against; Socialists should not support Home Rule politicians whose sole objective:

> is to reproduce in Ireland all the political and social manifestations which accompany capitalist supremacy in Britain.[43]

The suggestion that Socialists should ally with Socialists and no others was to have a crucial impact on Connolly's view of Socialist strategy.

The working class would play the crucial role in both the national and economic struggles in Ireland. The terminology within which Connolly

justified this claim had a considerable similarity to Marx's justification for the proletariat as the agent of universal emancipation. The working classes were:

> the only secure foundation on which a free nation can be reared ... which has borne the brunt of every political struggle and gained by none ... the only class in Ireland which has no interest to serve in perpetuating either the political or social forms of oppression – the British connection or the capitalist system.

In keeping with his Social Democratic politics, Connolly argued that prior to the decisive break with capitalism, there remained abundant scope for pursuing immediate objectives such as state-financed agricultural co-operatives, the nationalisation of Irish railways, eight hours' legislation and free meals for school children.[44] Such a growth of Socialist influence would provoke conflict with the British Government and thus Irish Socialists would achieve the position of a dominant national party.[45]

Even the growth of significant Socialist support in the Ireland of the late 1890s seemed highly optimistic, let alone the hope that such resources could be put to effective use. Yet Connolly expressed a buoyant confidence about such an expansion that was founded upon his view of historical developments:

> The power of unconquerable optimism of the Socialist Party is due to their recognition of the materialist basis of history ... they know that the needs of the workers, who are the majority, will impel them into line with the social revolutionary forces.[46]

This progressive development would not be undermined by the fact that 'the self interest (of the workers) may sometimes be base'.[47]

This optimism about the experiences of the working class helping to develop a Socialist consciousness was allied with a positive verdict on recent developments within capitalist industry. The economic system not only produced the need and desire for revolt; it also provided the conditions that could make such a revolt successful.[48] Capitalists were becoming superfluous; salaried managers were becoming crucial:

> the first step in the Socialist organisation of industry is illustrated by the last step in capitalist organisation.[49]

The suggestion that Socialists were working with the grain of contemporary developments, indicates that Connolly had hopes of a peaceful transition to Socialism based upon education and widespread support.

This was clearly his position in 1898, when he expressed a commitment to the electoral road forward, characteristic of the innocent optimism of much Second International Socialism:

> Since the abandonment of the unfortunate insurrectionism of the early Socialists whose hopes were exclusively concentrated on the eventual triumph of uprising

and barricade struggle, modern Socialism relying on the slower but surer method of the ballot box has directed the attention of its partisans towards the peaceful conquest of the forces of Government in the interests of the revolutionary ideal.[50]

This view of the transition was paralleled in the National dimension by his argument that Republicans should enter electoral politics; only through this method could the moral consent be developed for the policy of a break with Britain that in the final analysis might need armed force.[51] Nevertheless, along with his optimism about the prospects for Socialist advance, and his view that a Socialist like a Republican transition needed widespread consent, there were very exacting specifications for the use of violence. Only if a Socialist Party found itself backed by an informed majority, blocked by a minority and with all peaceful means exhausted, could it reasonably employ force to impose the majority's views.[52]

This essentially optimistic perspective with its attempt to integrate Nationalist and Socialist strands had little purchase on the realities of Irish politics in the late 1890s. Yet several of the themes and emphases remained important for Connolly to be applied in circumstances that offered more encouragement. At this point, two features can be reasonably noted. Already Connolly was writing as if the idea of an Irish national identity was unproblematic. Presumably it included all those who lived or wished to live on the island of Ireland. Yet at precisely that moment, the idea of Irish nationality was being contested sharply amongst some who rejected the Union – quite apart from those, including the Protestant working class of the North East, who remained fiercely attached to the British connection.

His 1890s writings on Socialist strategy contain one obvious lacuna; references to the role of trade unions are few. He was initially optimistic about the Socialist potential of labour candidates for the Dublin City Council, but it was a hope soon deflated by the conservatism of those elected.[53] In part, this absence could reflect the weak, cautious quality of Dublin trade unionism, but beneath this, there probably lay the orthodox Social Democrats' belief that trade unions could contribute little to the abolition of capitalism, and little to the short-term amelioration of the workers' plight. The Dublin labour movement offered little grounds for revising such a belief.

Although Connolly's perspective contained what were to prove durable elements, it was soon pressurised by political developments. Most crucially, these centred around international crisis. Connolly had developed an orthodox position on the causes of international conflict:

The influence which impels towards war to-day is the influence of capitalism. Every war is now a capitalist move for markets and it is a move capitalism must make or perish.[54]

When war between Britain and the Boer Republics seemed imminent, Connolly's opposition was unequivocal, fusing together nationalist and socialist themes. It was a war waged:

> by a mighty empire against a nation entirely incapable of replying in any effective manner, by a government of financiers upon a nation of farmers, by a nation of filibusterers upon a nation of workers, by a capitalist ring who will never see a shot fired during the war, upon a people defending their own homes and liberties ...

These emphases were shared by critics of the war within the British Socialist movement, but with one exception. British Socialists typically shrank from condemnation of the British people, preferring to concentrate their fire on a narrow group of financiers, politicians and journalists who were misleading essentially decent citizens. Connolly had no such inhibitions. The English were:

> doing their utmost to justify the low estimate in which their rulers hold them; a people who for centuries have never heard a shot fired in anger upon their shores, yet who encourage their government in its campaign of robbery and murder against an unoffending nation; a people who, secure in their own homes permit their rulers to carry devastation and death into the homes of another people, assuredly deserve little respect, no matter how loudly they may boast of their liberty-loving spirit.[55]

It was a condemnation that led Connolly to take a critical view of several British Socialists. Predictably Robert Blatchford's support of the War was castigated; he was a 'chauvinist' supplying:

> a brutal endorsement of every act of brigandage and murder in which the capitalists of England may involve their country.

He coupled this with a criticism of Hyndman's view that on Socialist grounds, Britain should not have given way to 'less-developed' Russians over Port Arthur. In this case, his argument was strongly determinist. Hyndman's preference for Britain over Russia was that of a 'political radical'. But Socialist revolution could be advanced only if Russian capitalism was allowed to grow, generating its own proletariat. For Connolly, as for Marx in the 1850s, the road to Socialism led between the iron limitations of imperialist development; a path that had to be reconciled albeit uneasily, with Connolly's concern for national self-determination:

> Drive the Russians out of Poland! By all means! Prevent his extension towards Europe! Certainly, but favour his extension and his acquisition of new markets in Asia (at the expense of England if need be), if you would see Capitalism being hurried onward to its death.[56]

Although his attachment to a deterministic perspective remained strong, the facts of imperialist war led him to take a more sceptical view of the feasibility of a peaceful evolution from capitalism to socialism.

For some British Socialists, the South African conflict bruised their essentially liberal optimism by demonstrating what they characterised as the gullibility of sections of the working class;[57] for Connolly, the lesson concerned the brittleness of rulers' attachments to liberal precepts. He still adhered to the view that it would be 'the enemies of progress' who would determine whether the transition to socialism would be peaceful. But contemporary evidence was not encouraging:

> If, then, we see a small section of the possessing class prepared to launch two nations into war, to shed oceans of blood and spend millions of treasure in order to maintain intact a SMALL PORTION of their privileges, how can we expect the entire propertied class to abstain from using the same weapons, and to submit peacefully, when called upon to YIELD UP FOR EVER ALL THEIR PRIVILEGES? ... the capitalist class is a beast of prey, and cannot be moralised, converted or conciliated but must be extirpated.[58]

Possibly Irish workers could take a significant step forward for themselves and also influence developments in the Transvaal by taking actions that would occupy the attention of a sizeable section of the British Army.

This emphasis was to reappear in Connolly's arguments from 1914 onwards; in 1899–1900, the one concrete development was the coming together in the Irish Transvaal Committee, of the ISRP, the radical Nationalists symbolised by the involvement of Maud Gonne, and the separatists involved with Arthur Griffith's recently launched newspaper – the *United Irishman*.[59] Connolly played a significant part in anti-War demonstrations, but given the balance of political forces, the Nationalists came predictably to dominate the anti-War agitation. Indeed, the conflict gave the newly reunited Parliamentary Party the chance to recover some radical credibility.

The ISRP remained weak; radical politics in Ireland were easily dominated by Nationalist arguments. Although the national–socialist connection, established within Connolly's thought during these years would remain significant in his ideas, he was about to enter onto a decade of wanderings, a renewed involvement in Scottish politics, and then a seven-year sojourn in the United States. During this period, he was continually concerned with the question of Socialism for the Irish people, whether for those who remained in Ireland, or for the first significant Irish urban working class, that he encountered in the United States. Such a concern raised questions of strategy; Connolly was about to move far not just in terms of geography, but in terms of the route to Socialism.

Chapter 3

Sectarianism

A new edition of *Erin's Hope* was published in 1902. One section had been rewritten to emphasise the necessary connection between the emancipation of the Irish working class and the liberation of Ireland. The flowering of this relationship would require an assertion of self-reliance:

> The Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself, it must, perforce, free its country ... The freedom of the working class must be the work of the working class.

This was coupled with a heightened concern about the corrosive effects of political alliances. Arrangements to achieve immediate objectives could produce damaging long-term entanglements:

> the first action of a revolutionary army must harmonise in principle with those likely to be its last and ... therefore, no revolutionists can safely invite the co-operation of men or classes, whose ideals are not theirs, and whom, therefore, they may be compelled to fight at some future critical stage of the journey to freedom.[1]

Such a precept carried implications for co-operation with radical Nationalists, or with trade unionists who were not socialists.

This note had been present in Connolly's writings for some time. As early as 1899, reflecting on his Dublin experiences, he concluded that:

> in the uncompromising spirit, the rigid intolerance, and stern exclusiveness shown by the Socialist Republican Party are to be found the only true methods whereby an effective revolutionary movement may be built up ...[2]

In part, this perhaps reflected the complex relationship with the more radical Nationalists, but it stemmed also from a shifting assessment of the politics of Dublin trade union leaders. Connolly had responded positively to the Trades Council decision to run candidates in the 1899 municipal elections.[3] Admittedly the nominees would not be Socialists but the logic of events would prove decisive:

> every working man elected to the Municipal Council of Dublin, if he be true to his class when elected, will find that every step he takes in the Council in furtherance of the interests of his class, must of necessity take the form of an application of Socialist principles.[4]

The trade unionists' pursuit of socialist palliatives would not only radicalise them; it would restructure the party system so as to reflect the

fundamental division between capital and labour. This was the argument favoured by those British Socialists who sought a political alliance with trade unionists, an ambition realised early in 1900.

Yet before conferences in Edinburgh and in London helped to establish dominant institutions for British working class politics, Connolly was criticising the Dublin Labour councillors:

> From the entry of the Labour Party into the Municipal Council to the present day, their course has been marked by dissension, squabbling and recrimination. No single important move in the interest of the worker was ever mooted, the most solemn pledges were incontinently broken, and where the workers looked for inspiration and leadership, they have received nothing but discouragement and disgust.[5]

For Connolly, the supine behaviour of the labour representatives was a betrayal of 'the splendid class spirit' demonstrated by Dublin workers at the municipal elections. His analysis included a firm belief in the inherent radicalism of the working class. The problem centered around the means by which such radical potential was diverted into 'safe' channels.

His response carried implications beyond the specificities of Dublin municipal politics, and led to criticism of the strategy followed by many British Socialists, most significantly the leadership of the ILP. Connolly opposed any weakening of Socialist commitment in order to court trade union or Radical Liberal support. Instead the proper tactic must be to proclaim the centrality of the class struggle; then workers could be won for Socialist politics.

> But where the principle is obscured or denied, the organisations of the working-class, even when professedly Socialist, only serve as decoy ducks to the politics of their masters.

One such cul-de-sac was Fabianism, a strategy which could:

> emasculate the working-class movement, by denying the philosophy of the class struggle, weakening the belief of the workers in the political self-sufficiency of their own class, and by substituting the principle of municipal capitalism, and bureaucratic State control for the principle of revolutionary reconstruction involved in Social Democracy.[6]

Clearly, by 1900 Connolly was increasingly out of sympathy with the political developments that were beginning to dominate the British Labour Movement. The option of a union of the ILP and the SDF under a Socialist banner had been defeated in favour of an alliance dominated by the trade unions. Added to this, there was the depth of Connolly's hostility to British policy in South Africa. This made no excuses for the support, passive or enthusiastic of sizeable sections of the British working class. Both his Socialism and his Nationalism were separating him from the politics of the Labour Alliance.

This distance was increased by the willingness of some British Socialists to seek electoral support from the United Irish League, a tactic given plausibility by Irish MPs' opposition to the War, and Liberal Imperialists' readiness to jettison Home Rule. In the light of Connolly's analysis in *Erin's Hope* and elsewhere, this strategy was unacceptable. By March 1901, he was attacking the *Labour Leader's* position on this as 'the veriest treason to the cause of International Socialism'.[7] Later that year, Bob Smillie secured UIL support at the North-East Lanarkshire by-election, in preference to a Liberal Imperialist. Connolly returned to the attack. Hardie's intention in seeking Irish support through the Home Rule Party machinery might be honest, but the strategy should be opposed by Socialists.[8]

Connolly's reactions to political developments within the Labour Movement seemed to reflect his longstanding identification with the basic position of the Social Democratic Federation. In August 1901, the SDF withdrew its national affiliation to the Labour Representation Committee, claiming that the latter lacked commitment to class conscious action for a socialist objective. Yet Connolly was increasingly critical of the Federation. In part, this reflected the SDF's attitude on Irish issues. The divergence between its policy and that of the ISRP has been noted already. At the Paris Congress of the Socialist International in September 1900, the SDF delegates unsuccessfully opposed the ISRP claim that Irish Socialists should be regarded as a separate national group.[9] Moreover, the Federation were happy to seek UIL support in elections; the search for votes led them down the same path as the ILP.[10]

His dissatisfaction went far deeper than the SDF's responses to Irish issues. The Federation had always had a complex political personality. Criticisms – both contemporary and retrospective – tended to focus on the idiosyncracies of H. M. Hyndman and his supporters, and ignored the fact that in some communities, the organisation had developed a significant working-class presence. Yet the SDF's achievements were limited: membership remained stagnant; electoral contests ended in disappointment.[11] Despite its secession from the LRC many within the Federation felt a need to establish connections with other groups. But some members saw such flexibility as evidence of a damaging deradicalisation.

Such critics had acquired a focus for their grievances at the Paris Congress of the Socialist International. Whatever the weaknesses of British Socialism, its place within a wider movement ensured that significant socialist controversies left their marks. The Congress fiercely debated the acceptability of French Socialists joining the Waldeck–Rousseau Government in order to defend the Third Republic against reactionaries. This raised the fundamental issue of whether

Socialists should participate in capitalist administrations in a particularly sharp form, since the Waldeck-Rousseau Cabinet included General Gallifet, active thirty years before in the butchery of the Communards. The debate was terminated with a resolution from Karl Kautsky, proclaiming the principle that Socialists should stay out of capitalist governments, but accepting that there could be exceptions. This qualification was opposed by a small section of the Congress, including the ISRP delegation of two. The Kautsky compromise was rejected also by a minority within the SDF who viewed their leader's acquiescence as evidence of the organisation's degeneration.[12]

It was hardly surprising that this SDF faction – based primarily in some of the Scottish branches – should seek a link with the ISRP. This functioned essentially through Connolly who propagandised for sympathetic SDF branches in the Summers of 1901 and 1902, thereby re-establishing his links with a section of the Scottish Socialist movement. Throughout his tours, he emphasised the need for class-conscious, explicitly Socialist propaganda.[13] On occasions, he spoke of the SDF as the body able to carry this through, but privately his doubts grew. Aberdeen had been a relative stronghold of the SDF for several years but Connolly was concerned about the branch's practice of collaborating with ILPer's, trade unionists, temperance organisations and a 'whole string of other faddists'.[14] Lancashire contained several branches unhappy about the SDF's breach with the LRC; he was sceptical about the prospects there. They were:

> so much admirers of Quelch and Hyndman that little can be done with them.[15]

Yet Salford offered more encouragement. One member agreed with his diagnosis:

> this conflict between theory and practice was ruinous and explains the little progress the SDF is making ... the impossiblists were the only logical body in the SDF.[16]

This last sentiment gradually drove Connolly and other critics to a breach with the Federation.

In August 1902, the Scottish District Council of the Federation initiated its own journal, *The Socialist*.[17] Over the next few months, its content helped to ensure a split. Early in 1903, Connolly prognosticated with partial accuracy on the likely outcome to a regular correspondent, the Falkirk schoolteacher John Carstairs Matheson:

> I think that you will all be fired at the Conference, and that the ILP and SDF will rush into each others' arms. Are you strong enough to stand alone?[18]

During these months, Connolly's world changed dramatically. In the Autumn of 1902, he toured the United States under the auspices of Daniel

De Leon's Socialist Labor Party to raise money for the ISRP, but he returned to Dublin to find the latter in the process of disintegration.[19] When the SDF expelled its Scottish critics in April 1903, Connolly played a leading role in setting up a new organisation, and presided over part of its inaugural meeting.[20] He provided the new body with a name, the Socialist Labour Party,[21] and served for three months as its organiser. He also developed an indictment of the SDF which illuminated his position on Socialist strategy.

Part of his condemnation concerned the quality of the Federation's opposition to the South African War. As with ILP and Radical propagandists, *Justice* had taken the easy and discreditable path of relying on a xenophobic stereotype; it strove:

> to divert the wrath of the advanced workers from the capitalists to the Jews ... its readers were nauseated by denunciations of 'Jewish millionaires' and 'Jewish plots', 'Jewish controlled newspapers', 'German Jews', 'Israelitish schemes', and all the stock phrases of the lowest anti-semitic papers until the paper became positively unreadable to any fair-minded man who recognised the truth, viz that the war was the child of capitalist greed and inspired by men with whom race or religion were matters of no moment.

Beyond this, he condemned the SDF for the persistent dualism between rhetoric and action. It claimed to be a separate Socialist Party but it always sought electoral backing from the ILP and pursued Radical votes; it denounced trade unionism as 'played out', but opposed any attack on labour leaders who presented trade unionism as the vital weapon for working-class improvement; it was dismissive of the Labour Alliance but it opposed criticism of LRC candidates. Once again Connolly saw this as a case of a radical rank and file betrayed by its leadership:

> There was revolutionary activity in the SDF once, but their leaders, Hyndman, Quelch, Burrows etc have led it indeed as a lightning conductor leads lightning – into the earth to dissipate its energy.[22]

One problem was raised repeatedly – the degeneration of a professedly Socialist organisation.

In the Summer of 1903, Connolly provided a sharply sectarian answer. The model for an effective Socialist Party could be found in the United States, in the strategy of De Leon's Socialist Labor Party. The link went back some years. Correspondence had begun soon after the ISRP's formation; Connolly had advised Irish voters in the USA to vote for the SLP; the latter had given financial support to the ISRP;[23] in 1898 he had written articles on the agrarian depression in the West of Ireland for the SLP's *Weekly People*.[24] He began to believe that aspects of SLP doctrine fitted the Irish and British experiences. When De Leon denounced collaboration with trade unions affiliated to the American Federation of Labor, Connolly responded sympathetically:

If those leaders are helping to keep their followers chained to the chariot wheels of capitalist parties, it is a crime to coquet with them and a virtue to fight them.[25]

As he was about to begin his SLP-sponsored American tour, he commented in August 1902 that 'our ideas upon policy and tactics generally were practically identical'.[26] The experience of seeing the SLP in action did not erode this estimate. His verdict from Bridgeport Connecticutt was:

The SLP comrades impress me very favourably; there is a good sprinkling of Irish in all the sections.[27]

When he returned across the Atlantic his enthusiasm was tinged only by a slight hint of unease about the Party's sectarianism:

... I came back stronger than ever in my belief in our position, and in the general SLP analysis of its own enemies. Of course it exaggerates sometimes.[28]

The significance of this model requires a brief assessment of the SLP's dominant figure, Daniel De Leon.

The former Columbia professor had been born into a Jewish family in Curaçao in 1852. During the 1880s, he had progressed through the radical politics of New York City – the Henry George mayoral campaign, public support for those convicted of the Haymarket killings, the Nationalist movement of Edward Bellamy, the Knights of Labor – and then late in 1890, the Socialist Labor Party. He brought with him the gifts of a scholar, of a highly effective speaker, and of a zealous convert. Within less than a year, he was editor of the *People*; he would be the Party's dominant figure until he died in 1914.[29]

For most contemporaries and many historians, De Leon epitomised the theoretically adroit but inflexible sectarian. Under his leadership splits and the appeal of more flexible alternatives reduced the SLP to an irrelevant rump. This image had dominated judgements as even one of his political opponents subsequently acknowledged:

Daniel De Leon was intensely personal. Almost immediately upon his entry in the Socialist arena he divided the movement into two antagonistic camps – his devoted admirers and followers, and his bitter critics and opponents ... (Thus) it is not easy to formulate a just and objective evaluation of his personality, and of the part he played in the history of American Socialism.[30]

De Leon's view of Socialist strategy had developed two distinctive emphases by the time that Connolly became familiar with it. Both were evident in the latter's analysis in the Summer of 1903. On the political front, De Leon's Party was:

the only genuine Socialist Party in the United States, and acting on that belief, it opposes every other party and fights them at every election.[31]

A basis for such separatism was provided by De Leon's claim that Socialist politics was founded on propositions that had the same status as those in the biological sciences:

> The laws that rule sociology run upon lines parallel with and are the exact counterparts of those that natural science has established in biology.[32]

Many contemporary Socialists made a similar biological emphasis, but much more at the level of metaphor, than of a theory that determined actions. But for De Leon, Socialist organisation must be 'as intolerant as science';[33] there must be unvarying obedience:

> Organisation must be the incarnation of principle ... obedience is the badge of the civilised man ... you will never find the revolutionist putting himself above the organisation.[34]

A disciplined organisation based on a scientific analysis could look forward with optimism; capitalist development would heighten and simplify class divisions. Socialist rectitude would reap its reward. It was a position that could appeal to the Socialist disenchanted by ILP and SDF manoeuvres.

This emphasis on the political was seen by De Leon as crucial:

> The Social Question, and all such questions, are essentially political. If you have an economic organisation alone, you have a duck flying with one wing; you must have a political organisation, or you are nowhere.[35]

Yet the SLP had to develop a response in the trade union field, and this once again was accepted by Connolly. He accepted the Party's view that 'pure and simple trade-unionism' was finished as a positive force, and that therefore the 'treacheries and sophistries' of such organisations' leaders should be consistently exposed. Moreover he embraced the Party's alternative dual unionist strategy. The SLP:

> seeks to make Socialism a guiding principle in the daily life of the workers by organising trade-unions on Socialist lines, and by refusing membership to anyone who identifies with its antagonists by accepting office in a pure and simple trade union.[36]

It was strategy pursued by the SLP through the formation of the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance.

The British SLP might appeal to Connolly as ideologically acceptable; but it offered no reliable income for him as a political organiser.[37] In September 1903, he sailed once more for the United States, as a committed supporter of De Leonite Socialism, and this time with no return envisaged. Before considering subsequent developments in Connolly's views on Socialist strategy, it is useful to locate De Leon's Party within the wider American context.

The SLP now had a rival, the Socialist Party of America, formed after

much debate, from disparate groups in 1901. It was an alternative dismissed by Connolly as an American equivalent of the SDF:

> Inconsistency and sacrifice of principle for the sake of votes mark both organisations, and 'Be all things to all men' might be the watchword of either.[38]

Yet even before unity had been achieved, this tendency had contested the 1900 Presidential election, and had secured 96,878 votes compared with 34,191 for the SLP ticket. The expectation that Socialist rigour would be electorally attractive was hardly borne out. In 1904, the contrast would be even more stark; the SPA vote more than quadrupled to 402,283; the SLP fell to 31,248. The organisation with which Connolly had identified himself was already marginal to the American Left.

A parallel claim could be made, albeit even more sharply about the SLP's Dual Unionist strategy. During his earlier American tour, he had seen the legacy of a thirty four week weavers' strike in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, conducted under ST and LA leadership. He felt that this had made a significant difference:

> A strike conducted by Socialists even when unsuccessful does not leave the workers as despairing and disheartened, as a strike conducted by non-Socialists generally does.[39]

Yet this disregarded the chronic weakness of the ST and LA.

The tactic of attacking all AFL organisations without any sensitivity towards their diverse political positions alienated even those union leaders who had some sympathy for De Leon's Socialist message. Thus the Boot and Shoe Worker's Union, like their British counterpart, developed significant Socialist sympathies during the 1890s.[40] Pressures for mechanisation could evoke responses that built on traditional co-operative sentiments within the industry; the union acquired a socialist objective; but the desire to build up a strong organisation pointed away from isolation. As one union activist claimed in 1898:

> the present form of trades unions will for a long time be with us. I consider it our duty to organise in them, get the benefits and advantages that result from large numerical strength and that cannot be had outside of the American Federation of Labour.[41]

Socialist trade unionists faced with such a prospect would be likely to transfer their loyalty from the SLP to the Socialist Party.

The activities of ST and LA affiliated organisations did not of themselves offer a radical alternative. Their industrial strategies were typically indistinguishable from those of AFL unions; what mattered was that they should engage in appropriate political propaganda. The ST and LA was emphatically not a precursor of the Industrial Workers of the World that would influence Connolly's views from 1905. Indeed, many of the affiliates were craft organisations.[42] For De Leon the issue was not

the type of worker enrolled, nor the organisational structure, but availability for Party education. It is perhaps not surprising that the ST and LA – industrially divisive but not distinctive, linked to a party with slight and declining membership and support – should wither away. Initially, more than two hundred affiliates had enrolled 30,000 members. In 1898, a dispute over intensified Party control had produced a spate of withdrawals and expulsions. In 1905, prior to its demise, it had less than 1500 members. Its claim to be an effective Socialist trade union organisation was vacuous. As Connolly became more critical of De Leon's politics, he characterised the ST and LA as 'little else than a mere ward-heeling club for the SLP'.[43]

This remark had been made in the context of a controversy with De Leon that Connolly had initiated unwittingly in the Spring of 1904. He had queried SLP attitudes on a range of topics – religion, marriage, the iron law of wages, expecting a reasoned discussion but finding himself the target of De Leonite polemic and organisational manipulation. His verdict on De Leon's utilisation of the party organisation was sharp:

> Dan played a smart trick at the Conference. Of course I could not be present; was not a delegate, and had my nose too close to the grindstone of exploitation to attend anyway. So Dan read my correspondence, paragraph by paragraph, *adding his own criticism in between*, so delegates could not discern where I ended and *my quotations* began, and lost sight of one sentence before he began to read the one that pointed its moral. As a result he had no difficulty in tearing me to pieces – and thus succeeded by this trick, worthy of a shyster lawyer – in preventing the publication of the letters, and in preventing the delegates and the party at large from having the opportunity of studying and calmly reviewing the evidence in cold print. It was a 'great victory'.

Such an experience of oligarchic control produced a general reflection on Socialist leadership, with a hint that the SLP's revolutionary zeal was not of itself a solution to the problem of de-radicalisation. The dominance of apparently revolutionary bodies by bourgeois leaders could have damaging consequences:

> Of course there is not hero-worship amongst *us*. We believe that the emancipation of the working class must be the achievement of the working class, but neither in Great Britain nor America can a working-class Socialist expect common fairness from his comrades if he enters into controversy with a trusted leader from a class above them. The howl that greets every such attempt whether directed against a Hyndman or a De Leon in America (excuse the comparison) sounds to my mere proletarian ear wonderfully alike, and everywhere is but the accents of an army, not of revolutionary fighters, but of half emancipated slaves.[44]

This experience did not destroy Connolly's faith in the political principles central to the SLP but over the next three and a half years his commitment to this instrument, and then to some of the underlying assumptions was challenged both by political events and by the mounting

evidence of the damage wrought by De Leon's methods. Late in November 1905, Connolly acknowledged the Party's current weakness but expressed optimism about the future:

> The SLP is weaker to-day both financially and politically than it has ever been; it can scarcely reckon on many votes outside its own membership; but the absolute correctness of its tactics and its analysis of the industrial situation is now being admitted by thousands of the working-class who a year ago were its bitter enemies, and a year hence may be its staunchest political supporters.

But too many within the Party were ready to ignore uncomfortable facts:

> I have nothing but contempt for the men who, now, echoing De Leon like parrots, pretend that the vote is of no importance ...[45]

The myopia indicated De Leon's continuing domination. His principles might be impeccable, but his management of the Party was disastrous:

> We are not treated as revolutionists capable of handling a revolutionary situation but as automatons whose duty it is to repeat in varying accents the words of our Director-General. Everything must filter through Dan.[46]

This style made alliances with other radical organisations very difficult, since it provoked claims that the SLP used broader movements for its own purposes. But as Connolly eventually acknowledged, elitism and suspicion were central to De Leon's politics:

> he can't trust the revolutionary working class movement unless it is in the control of his creatures.[47]

The party's isolation was inevitably heightened:

> Whilst the SLP remains in De Leon's hands it will never have a future except that of a church.[48]

Early in 1908, Connolly finally left the SLP. Before doing so, he characterised the Party without illusions:

> A Socialist party that holds no meetings except during election times, that repeats like a parrot whatever is said by one man, whose sections go for years without entering a new name upon its books, that in a number of the largest cities in the country was not able to put up a ticket after twenty years of activity ... that has a daily paper that after seven years existence has less than 2000 readers, although it is pushed from Maine to California, and bought by every one of its members ... such a party is ... a fraud and a disgrace to the revolutionary movement.[49]

Soon afterwards, he widened the indictment to incorporate not just the leadership style of De Leon but his excessive emphasis on Socialist rectitude. In so doing, Connolly abandoned the position that he had adopted in 1903. Essentially, the SLP had refused to acknowledge any positive growth in the Labour Movement; its dichotomous view had been absurd. Instead, revolutionary socialists should recognise that:

the developing consciousness of the labour movement in Britain is healthier and more potent for good than the 'clearness' of a sect which insists on cutting the umbilical string uniting it to the general movement of the working class.[50]

Valid political principles had been taken over by

a number of sectarians, narrow-minded doctrinaires, who have erected Socialism into a cult with rigid formulas which one must observe or be damned.

So Connolly reflected on his years as a De Leonite:

It is a biter lesson to learn but it is better to learn it than to persist to the end in endeavouring to make statesmanlike Socialists out of a covenanting clique.[51]

But in rejecting isolation, Connolly retained the commitment to Socialist principles that had led to De Leonism in the first place. How could such principles be realised within a broader movement? That would be the positive legacy from his American years.

Chapter 4
Syndicalism

Connolly's views on socialist strategy were influenced decisively by the emergence of the Industrial Workers of the World.[1] This body had been formed in Chicago in June 1905 as a revolutionary alternative to the American Federation of Labor. When Connolly abandoned the Socialist Labor Party, he offered the IWW as a partial solution to the problem of connecting revolutionary principles to immediate working class demands. The organisation:

> will further the clean policy that the SLP stood for far better than it could do itself.

The secret of revolutionary effectiveness lay in the basing of IWW activity in the workplace:

> it is a body of men and women at once intensely practical and uncompromisingly revolutionist; it can never degenerate into a mere sect as the SLP has done but palpitates with the daily and hourly pulsations of the class struggle, as it manifests itself in the workshop.

Equipped with such a basis, the IWW could avoid the danger of deradicalisation through control by middle-class politicians:

> when it moves onto the political field, as move it will, its campaign will indeed be the expression of the necessities of the working class, not the result of the theories of a few unselfish enthusiasts.[2]

This assessment came out of Connolly's involvement with the organisation, especially his attempts to recruit a variety of New York workers into the 'Wobblies'. His activities not only produced conflict with organisations affiliated to the AFL; they also provided one more strand in the deepening conflict with De Leon.[3]

Yet initially Connolly's enthusiasm for the IWW seemed wholly compatible with membership of the SLP. De Leon played a significant part at the founding convention of the 'Wobblies' and remained active in the organisation until his eviction in September 1908. Such an association indicated a shift in De Leon's views compared with his ST and LA period. Although he had been interested in syndicalist doctrines for some years, he now made a clear commitment to the principle of Industrial Unionism and adopted a much more positive perception of the function that such industrial organisations could fulfil within a revolutionary strategy. Purely political gains by a socialist party would

encounter a decisive obstacle in the continuing capitalist control of the means of production. This challenge could be met only by an appropriate industrial organisation. The 'vital act' was the taking and holding of industrial plants, and for this 'lock out' of the capitalists a political party was irrelevant.[4]

Moreover, De Leon's support for industrial unions was not restricted to a claim for their effectiveness against capitalist obstruction. He clearly envisaged them as anticipating the administrative structures of a socialist society:

> The mining, the railroad, the textile, the building industries ... each of these regardless of former political boundaries will be the constituencies of that new central authority ... Where the General Executive Board of the Industrial Workers of the World will sit, there will be the nation's capital.[5]

It was a theme hinted at by Connolly in some of his earlier Irish writings.

The enthusiasm evinced by De Leon even included an acceptance of the IWW's refusal to commit itself to any specific political party. Its original constitution acknowledged that agitation must be developed:

> on the political as well as on the industrial field ... without affiliation to any political party.[6]

This was significantly different from the earlier ST and LA insistence that its affiliates must accept the correctness of SLP strategy. Arguably De Leon still believed that revolutionary trade unionists would be led towards the SLP; perhaps this formulation was the best obtainable in a convention that included a significant anti-political tendency. At least his acceptance of this position suggests some amendment to the stereotype of De Leonite inflexibility.

The views of De Leon left a lasting mark on Connolly, despite the latter's eventual break with the SLP. As he moved towards more intensive involvement in the IWW Connolly became increasingly sceptical about the value of any link between the 'Wobblies' and the SLP. His initial concern had been that of a Party loyalist, lest involvement of SLP members in the new organisation lead to neglect of political work.[7] Yet, more significantly, it became clear that recruitment to the IWW seemed to bring no benefits for the SLP. He reflected on developments in a town which would become celebrated in IWW history:

> In Paterson, New Jersey where the IWW has gained thousands of members, the SLP is not one man stronger than before.[8]

Indeed, many 'Wobblies', dubious about De Leon's methods were hostile to the SLP:

> Most of us here in New York think that the election of so many SLP men to the Executive Board was a criminal mistake, as it tends to foster the suspicion that we control and 'boss' the IWW ...[9]

Such antagonism was one factor behind the withdrawal of the relatively strong Western Federation of Miners.[10] This Federation was responsible for whatever credibility the IWW had as a popular organisation. Yet as early as August 1906, before the SLP presence on the 'Wobblies' Executive became dominant, John O'Neil, editor of the *Miners' Magazine* gave a sharp warning:

> It is now apparent to us that SLPism has hooked itself to the Industrial Workers of the World, in order that it might gather sustenance to prolong the life of an invalid that is almost a corpse. The convention at Chicago must either get rid of the fanatics and disrupters or the IWW is slated for destruction.[11]

Connolly claimed to be unconcerned about the secession of the Western Federation,[12] yet this departure left the 'Wobblies' with little presence in the American working class. His increasing emphasis on Industrial Unionism as the basis for revolutionary action on both industrial and political levels must be placed in context. How credible was the early IWW when measured against Connolly's claims?

The inaugural convention was a heterogeneous gathering. SLP members who hoped that the new organisation would benefit their ailing party combined with some left-wing members of the Socialist Party of America, who had written off the AFL. The most significant of these was Eugene Debs who for a short time seemed to establish comradely relations with De Leon. In contrast to the politicians, delegates from the Western Federation of Miners and other unions had, as their priority, the creation of an effective industrial unionism. Eventually this might develop a 'political reflex', but for the moment politics could wait. Besides these ideological differences, the Chicago meeting included some would-be trade union leaders who had failed to secure a niche elsewhere. One of these, Charles Sherman, became the IWW's first and only President. His murky financial dealings and lack of radicalism generated sufficient opposition by September 1906 to depose him and to abolish the office of president. It was hardly an auspicious start.[13]

This incompetently-led organisation rapidly encountered hostility from the AFL. Support from within the Socialist Party declined as the underlying hostility to De Leon reasserted itself. Connolly portrayed the dilemma facing Eugene Debs – he is:

> in a strange fix; his instincts are all revolutionary, but he balks at swallowing De Leon and the latter's followers insist that to accept the IWW in its entirety is to accept Dan.[14]

More crucial than the disenchantment of politicians was the loss of the WFM, as official claims about membership in transport and metal manufacture had little reality. The early record of defeat in strikes was depressing yet the IWW began to apply its belief that previously unorganised workers could be brought into effective trade union organisation. As yet

claims of effectiveness were largely rhetorical, yet in those early years the IWW survived not just organisational rivalries and administrative chaos, but also the economic depression of 1907–8. That it survived as an alternative to the AFL gave radicals such as Connolly hope for the future, yet the impact of depression raised a serious problem.

The 'Wobblies' optimism was based on the expectation that revolutionary aspirations and opportunities would grow out of workers' power at the point of production. Yet Connolly acknowledged in April 1908 that:

> the only danger confronting the IWW is the almost universal bankruptcy through unemployment of its members.[15]

Obviously, this was not the only peril. Repression by Federal, State and local authorities, non-recognition and coercion by employers, hostility from the AFL, the likelihood that such pressures would intensify if the 'Wobblies' influence seemed to be increasing: all these difficulties were already visible. But beneath them, there was the fundamental point that a revolutionary strategy founded on power in the workplace required that workers should have jobs. Mass unemployment devastated IWW organisation. Locals were formed but soon disbanded; the paid organisers who might have sustained them through a difficult period were unavailable because of financial stringency. It was a vicious circle. By late 1908 all that remained was a handful of locals in the East, catering for foreign workers; a few hundred migrants in the Far West.[16]

It was amidst these difficulties that the IWW amended its position on the relationship between political and industrial action. Connolly's view on this was clear. Industrial organisation and action should be supplemented with political work, even if the thrust of the latter was propagandist:

> to repudiate political action or to shelve it indefinitely would be to lose the value of the propaganda made by the volunteer force.[17]

The direction of his ideas was highlighted in a letter to Matheson. Earlier condemnation of Keir Hardie's 'Labour Alliance' strategy had been succeeded by the view that despite all the debilitating compromises, such a coalition between political and industrial organisations furnished a significant exemplar. The vital distinction would be that in Connolly's envisaged structure the industrial component would have revolutionary consequences. The defect of the British Labour Party lay in the type of alliance involved:

> If that body was dominated by Industrial Unionists, instead of by pure and simplers, if it was elected by the Industrial Unions and controlled entirely by them, and capable *at any moment* of having its delegates recalled by the unions, and had also its mandate directly from the rank and file organised in the workshops, it would be just the party we want.[18]

The belief that the envisaged solidarity of Industrial Unionism could generate a firmly socialist commitment was a revolutionary version of the hope that Connolly had expressed a decade earlier. Then he had been optimistic about the political implications of trade union intervention in Dublin municipal politics. That earlier expectation had been betrayed rapidly by events; whether the IWW could provide a basis for an effective Socialist Party remained, in the most immediate sense, an open question.

The forces within the IWW antipathetic to any political activity were gathering strength. The Socialist Party presence had diminished and the style of De Leon and his committed supporters was likely to produce an anti-political reaction. By the Spring of 1908 as Connolly was developing his ideas on the appropriate political–industrial relationship, others were expressing strongly anti-political views. Sometimes this reflected distaste for the SLP but it could extend to the assertion that any political activity would be a worthless diversion. Frank Little, later a 'Wobbly' martyr, expressed this viewpoint:

> I do not believe that you can get the ends we are fighting for through a pure and simple political ballot party ... We can never do it as long as we depend upon going out and sticking a piece of white paper into a capitalist ballot box.[19]

For Connolly, the achievement of political power required the conquest of economic power, but this in turn could be facilitated by political propaganda; for the anti-political section, the political future could take care of itself. At the moment all energies should be committed to the IWW. Ben Williams, a 'Wobbly' with a SLP past epitomised this approach:

> The IWW is a way out of which everything else will develop. Let us 'make straight the way'.[20]

During the Winter of 1907–8, Williams had allied with Connolly against De Leon; he then became a significant figure in the moves that culminated during September 1908 in De Leon's expulsion by that year's 'Wobbly' Convention.[21]

This meeting was more homogeneously working-class than its predecessors, with a distinctive contribution coming from workers who had ridden freight trains from the West Coast. De Leon was excluded from the Convention by a vote of forty to twenty-one, and then after a confused debate the political clause was dropped from the 'Wobblies' preamble by thirty-five to thirty-two.[22] Following the 1907 Convention, Connolly had welcomed 'the squelching of the anti-political crowd',[23] but now with their apparent success, he was philosophical. He conceded that the previous position had been confusing; he considered that the change reflected majority opinion in the IWW and he did not wish the shift to be an obstacle to cooperation with 'fellow revolutionists'.[24] In retrospect the change seems not so clear cut as it might have appeared

at the time. Connolly was not alone amongst IWW members in continuing his political activities. Rather the significance of the decision was that any political loyalties should be kept outside the IWW in order to preserve industrial unity.

Connolly's firm attachment to political action necessarily raised the question of the most appropriate instrument, now that he had rejected the SLP, with no immediate prospect that the 'Wobblies' would develop a political dimension. Connolly took a more sanguine view of the Socialist Party of America, the organisation that he had rejected so emphatically five years before. In fact, he joined the Party before the Chicago decisions; the strength of his belief in political action necessitated an outlet. His adherence was accompanied by abundant reservations about the SPA's position and with a limited expectation of its likely contribution to the abolition of capitalism:

> I believe in the necessity of an uncompromising political party of Socialists, and I do not believe that the Socialist Party of which I am a member is yet such a body. But I believe that the conduct of De Leon has rendered impossible any clear cut movement in *America* except as an evolution out of the SP for agitation purposes, *and for the final revolutionary act out of the IWW.*

The factionalism of the SPA was attractive, especially to someone who had bleak memories of De Leonite discipline. Revolutionaries were under no compulsion to accept the compromising policies of the Party's Right Wing. The left were in a minority; at the 1908 Convention, an attempt to commit the Party to Industrial Unionism had been defeated by 138 votes to 48, but Connolly was optimistic that this would change:

> ... at last I made up my mind to join because I felt that it was better to be one of the revolutionary minority inside the party than a mere discontented grumbler out of political life entirely.[25]

Connolly's relationship with his new party was not always an easy one in New York City where the lines between the SPA and the SLP had been tightly drawn. Further West the division had been more blurred and it was there that from June 1909 he spent eleven relatively prosperous months as a Socialist Party organiser.[26] Such work meant that his involvement with the IWW was limited, but in May 1910 he took a significant part in a tin plate strike at New Castle Pennsylvania, where the 'Wobblies' were heavily involved.

These were his last activities in the American Labour Movement, and demonstrated his dual commitments to political activity and to Industrial Unionism. He returned to Ireland in July 1910 with a view of Socialist strategy that owed much to his American experiences. It was expressed in a series of writings produced between his departure from the SLP and his return across the Atlantic. Most significant were the later chapters

of his 1909 pamphlet *Socialism Made Easy*. These carried a title appropriate for their syndicalist message: *The Axe to the Root*.[26]

Connolly emphasised that the working class would not be united politically until it had achieved industrial unity. He was essentially optimistic about the prospect for achieving such solidarity as workers extended their sympathies from their craft, to their industry and then to their class. The AFL strategy urged political unity whilst sticking to a craft basis for trade union organisation; this was self-contradictory. Instead effective political action necessitated industrial organisation that embraced the entire working class. Within such a development, disputes between industrial unionists about the proper place of political action were irrelevant:

> Everyone who has the interests of the working class at heart should strive to realise industrial unity as the solid foundation upon which alone the political unity of the workers can be built up and directed towards a revolutionary end. To this end all those who work for industrial unionism are truly cooperating even when they care least for political activities.[27]

Beyond such formulations, Connolly attempted a more precise presentation of the relationship between industrial and political activities. On the one side, he saw industrial struggle as the key to working class emancipation:

> the fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. *The real battle is the battle being fought out every day for the power to control industry*.[28]

Despite this juxtaposition, Connolly saw political organisations as making a vital contribution towards the development of class consciousness. Industrial battles had their limitations as well as their strengths, and these had to be transcended. The most effective way was through the ballot box:

> Such action strips the working-class movement of all traces of such sectionalism as may, and indeed must, cling to strikes and lock outs, and emphasises the class character of the Labour Movement. IT IS, THEREFORE, ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE FOR THE EFFICIENT TRAINING OF THE WORKING CLASS ALONG CORRECT LINES THAT ACTION AT THE BALLOT BOX SHOULD ACCOMPANY ACTION IN THE WORKSHOP.[29]

Yet ultimately for Connolly, it was economic power that was decisive. In part this claim came out of his general view of revolutionary transformation:

> ... the proletarian revolution will in that respect most likely follow the lines of the capitalist revolutions in the past.
>
> In Cromwellian England, in Colonial America, in Revolutionary France, the real political battle did not begin until after the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class had become the dominant class in the nation. Then they sought to conquer political power in order to allow their economic power to function freely.[30]

But his judgement had a justification other than this deterministic and historically-inaccurate view. For Connolly, Industrial Unionism, understood as a response to the development of Trusts,[31] should be seen as a prefiguration of how a Socialist society should be administered. The portrait had strong similarities with that developed by De Leon shortly after the foundation of the IWW. Industrial unions would control each industry, electing supervisory staff and administering each industry according to an assessment of social needs. Such a framework would replace the old territorial form of government:

> representatives elected from these various departments of industry will meet and form the industrial administration or national government of the country.[32]

Hopefully such a view of Socialism would exorcise fear of bureaucratic authoritarianism – instead, there would be a blending of thorough democracy with 'expert supervision'. This strategy for Socialism was clearly in opposition to those who argued that Socialist objectives could be advanced through assiduous work on national and municipal bodies. In Connolly's view such activities could have a propaganda value, but they could not produce any substantive Socialist achievements:

> the political state of capitalism has no place under Socialism, therefore measures which aim to place industries in the hands or under the control of such a political state are in no sense steps towards that ideal; they are but useful measures to restrict the greed of capitalism and to familiarise workers with the conception of common ownership. This latter is indeed their chief function.[33]

Of itself, the 'Constructive Socialist' strategy backed by the SPA Right Wing and identified particularly with Victor Berger of Milwaukee was a blind alley.[34] But Industrial Unionism could provide the vital connection between trade union routines and socialist transformation:

> it invests the sordid details of the class struggle with a new and beautiful meaning.[35]

To organise a workplace under the banner of Industrial Unionism was to form a basis for a Socialist alternative – 'a fort wrenched from the control of the capitalist class'.[36] Such an organisation would prefigure what was to come – it could also serve as an alternative source of power against the capitalist state:

> On the day that the political and economic forces of labour finally break with capitalist society and proclaim the Workers' Republic these shops and factories so manned by Industrial Unionists will be taken charge of by the workers there employed and force and effectiveness thus given to that proclamation. Then and thus the new society will spring into existence ready equipped to perform all the useful functions of its predecessor.[37]

At the most general level, Connolly's critical analyses of existing Socialist and trade union organisations fit easily into debates amongst

his contemporaries in a variety of societies. Much discussion grew out of a concern that current Socialist policies were too cautious and constituted a betrayal of working-class interests. Diagnoses focused frequently on the development of extensive bureaucracies that gave those involved a commitment to continuity, and partly as a consequence of the need for appropriate managerial skills, on the growth of bourgeois leaderships within socialist parties. Such leaderships enjoyed differential resources and could insulate themselves to some degree from rank and file pressures. Essentially such processes could be seen as involving the displacement of publicly-proclaimed goals. What had once been means to the achievement of Socialism became objectives in themselves. The maintenance of an efficient organisation could have corrosive effect upon radical commitments.[38]

Connolly's analyses of the shortcomings of Labour and Socialist organisations clearly belong within this broad response. His criticisms of Hyndman and of De Leon emphasise the extent to which bourgeois leaders equipped with rhetorical and forensic skills could dominate and ultimately help to deradicalise socialist parties.[39] Even at this elementary level, problems arise. Why should it be accepted that middle-class leaders shift such bodies in a conservative direction? Such a claim often incorporates the image of an inherently radical rank and file persistently thwarted, at least within conventional organisations by a talented and more easily satisfied leadership. It is not easy to demonstrate such repeated frustration. A more plausible justification would be one based on the prefiguration principle. Connolly had emphasised the damaging effect that De Leon's dominance had had on the initiatives of SLP members. Arguably, an organisation in which elitism was so well established could be considered an inappropriate vehicle for working-class emancipation since its own procedures still embodied the submissiveness of workers to conventional middle-class definitions of competence. This claim fits closely with the emphasis made by Connolly and others on the way in which Industrial Unionism could provide a basis for the construction of a new social order. It has an immediate plausibility and serves as a sharp reminder that organisations, directed supposedly to radical transformation may embody some of the most negative features of existing society. Even so, the connection between means and ends has to be argued in specific cases not simply assumed as a general principle. It is untrue that there have been no examples of elitist, closed – even conspiratorial and violent – groups acting in ways that enjoyed subsequent popular approval. Connolly's own actions in 1916 can be characterised in such terms. The complex argument about the relationship between means and ends is affected significantly by the availability of choices. Socialists may have to face the decision of what they should do, if the freedom to develop open democratic organisations is circumscribed or prohibited by the State.

What is striking about the perspective developed by Connolly during his later American years is that it seems to assume a degree of space within capitalist society, wherein the Socialist alternative can begin to develop. Even when this space diminishes there is optimism that workers' power at the point of production will be an effective counterweight:

> in case of a Supreme Court decision rendering illegal the political activities of the socialist party, or instructing the capitalist officials to refuse to vacate their offices after a national victory by that party, the industrially organised workers would give the usurping government a Roland for its Oliver by refusing to recognise its officers, to transport or feed its troops, to transmit its messages, to print its notices, or to chronicle its doings by working in any newspaper which upheld it.[40]

It was an expectation that made optimistic claims about workers' solidarity and rulers' liberalism. Above all it made the assumption that workers could be radicalised at a time of low unemployment; otherwise the vital sanction of workplace power would be ineffective.

This optimism extended to the claims made about the feasibility of a democratic socialist society. A diagnosis that the roots of socialist degeneration lay in organisational factors could lead to Michels's conclusion that there was no hope of an effective, durable, democratic organisation. Choices could be made only between competing elites. Michels's claim for an iron law of oligarchy rests on conceptual incoherence and unsystematic and partial citing of evidence. But he does demonstrate to an extreme degree the claim made by so many of his contemporaries: that existing socialist and trade union organisations contained strong oligarchic tendencies. Optimists, observing such tendencies, had to demonstrate how they could be overcome. Thus, the young South Wales miners who wrote *The Miners' Next Step* as a positive response to this problem, developed plans for trade union organisation that could combine a vigorous, decentralised participatory democracy with the possibility of solidaristic and radical action.[41] Like Connolly, they saw such an organisation as anticipating the future structures of a socialist society. Their prospectus has never been tested against the harsh limits of experience, but at least it provides a reasonably coherent organisational proposal. In contrast, Connolly reflecting on his American experiences offered only very general formulations.[42] Socialist organisation would combine democratic procedures with the effective use of expertise. Difficulties, such as conflicts of interest between producers and consumers, were not really examined.

Connolly's optimism was only one element in any effective response to the increasingly complex and sometimes discouraging experiences of Socialists during the years of the Second International. He diagnosed a problem of deradicalisation often in narrowly organisational terms;

he asserted that it could be solved but provided little detailed guidance as to method. Some who developed similar responses went further towards the offering of organisational solutions. But these did not develop very far. August 1914 meant not just the collapse of orthodox Second International Social Democracy but also the end of a relatively brief period in which to be on the left within the Socialist movement was to share views similar to those developed by Connolly during his American years.[43] Whether the hope of a route to Socialism based largely on workplace power and Industrial Unionism wa a chimera or a viable strategy which was deflected by events at Sarajevo is in one sense an open question. But there remains the possibility of measuring Connolly's expectations about American developments against the subsequent record. Does such an exercise highlight significant weaknesses within his perspective, or can any failure of his prognostications be accounted for by contingent factors?

The raising of such a question can appear misguided. After all, it was during Connolly's sojourn across the Atlantic that the German sociologist, Werner Sombart posed his question: 'Why is there no Socialism in the United States?' The question has continued to fascinate and for many the broad contours of Sombart's answer have remained credible.[44] In fact, discussion of several of the claims advanced by him already had a lengthy history. Many nineteenth century writers had demonstrated some awareness of 'American exceptionalism'.[45] Marx and Engels, for example, had paid attention to the prospects for Socialism in this most purely capitalist society. Frequent claims had been made about the relative affluence of sections of the American working class. Sombart's aphorism: 'All Socialist utopias come to nothing on roast beef and apple pie',[46] was a more colourful expression of a commonly held view. Commentators had focused with varying degrees of sophistication on the opportunities available for social and geographical mobility. Attention had been paid to the political realm. Many American male workers had acquired formal political rights without the struggles encountered by many Europeans. The character of the American party system inhibited the development of effective third parties. In several respects, it was argued that the purity of American capitalism limited the growth of Socialist politics – the economic system operated more effectively in the absence of feudal residues, and the framework of a liberal politics had been established without the dispute being widened to cover the legitimacy of capitalism. Yet almost paradoxically some analyses of the lack of Socialist commitment within the American working class emphasised the continuing strength of ethnic loyalites, generated either in Europe or in the 'ante-bellum' South. Such a divided proletariat, it was argued, had no hope of mounting an effective Socialist challenge, yet the sources of working-class division

in this purest of capitalist societies typically included the legacy of pre-capitalist conflicts.

This last problem was one that preoccupied Connolly in his activities amongst Irish–American workers. The question of ethnic solidarities should lead to the reflection that the American situation was more complex than the common image of an increasingly bourgeois proletariat might imply. Connolly, like several of his contemporaries spent much time arguing that the material condition of American workers was not one of affluence, rather the breadline was a 'great American institution'.[47] Equally, the liberal political system was inaccessible to the vast majority of Negroes and to many immigrants and migrant workers. It is possible to excavate an alternative history of some sectors of the American working class, emphasising the centrality of poverty, exploitation and repression. More fundamentally, doubts can be raised about some assumptions on which analyses pessimistic of Socialist potential in the USA have founded their case. It is far from clear that relative affluence need have a deradicalising impact on workers; it may lead to rising and perhaps unfulfilled expectations, backed by increasing self-confidence and organisational competence. Similarly, ethnic solidarities need not produce impossible obstacles to working-class unity. Such older cultural patterns may provide the bases out of which an effective class strategy can develop.[48] Claims about the political system need careful scrutiny. Why should the ballot – however restricted in fact if not in theory – limit socialist politics? Can it not be seen as an essential prerequisite for a mass socialist party? Any assertion that the American party system inexorably squeezed out any Socialist challenge requires detailed justification. That a first-past-the-post system firmly protected incumbent parties is a claim queried by the British case. Arguably, the 'winner-take-all' characteristic of American Presidential elections counts as a crucial factor; but against this, there stands the decentralised character of American politics. This allowed for the possibility of significant Socialist growth at municipal or state level. By 1910, there seemed signs that this was happening.

This last reflection leads to perhaps the most sceptical comment. In one sense, Sombart's question was misleading. If it is understood as referring to the prospects for a significant Socialist presence in American politics, then between 1900 and 1912, the future looked in some ways encouraging.[49] In November 1904, Debs had polled 402,000 votes in the Presidential election; four years later with a more effective campaign, the Socialist vote increased by less than 20,000. This was a severe disappointment, although in 1908, the Democrats running Bryan for the third time had arguably checked the drain of voters to the Left. Yet despite this discouraging result, Socialist enthusiasm seemed to grow. Party membership increased; municipal successes offered the chance to hold

office in a few cities. In 1910 Victor Berger was elected to the Federal Congress and in the complex Presidential contest of 1912 Debs raised his vote to almost 900,000 – an all-time high of 6%. This political growth was accompanied by increasing prominence for the IWW as it sought to organise immigrant workers in Eastern textile centres and steel mills, and primary producers farther West.[50] This pinnacle of a Socialist presence in the American Labour movement seemed to several contemporaries more a springboard for future growth. Indeed some years earlier Sombart after portraying the pressures that pushed American Socialism to the margins had concluded with a curiously discordant verdict:

> all the factors that till now have prevented the development of Socialism in the United States are about to disappear or to be converted into their opposite, with the result that in the next generation Socialism in America will very probably experience the greatest possible expansion of its appeal.[51]

This expectation perhaps adds weight to the view that the measuring of Connolly's strategy against the United States experience should not be vetoed by the claim of American exceptionalism.

The core of his case lay in his hopes for the Industrial Workers of the World. Thus in advocating his strategy to Irish workers, he emphasised:

> the system of organisation ... which has enabled the Industrial Workers of the World ... to defeat the Steel Trust, the most powerful Trust in the World – to defeat it in the very hour of its victory over the old-style trade unions.[52]

This is a very sanguine characterisation of the dispute at McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania in the summer of 1909.[53] This exploded in the shops of the Pressed Steel Car Company, a firm notable for its zealous pursuit of scientific management techniques, a strategy that generated high profits and employees' hostility. As Connolly noted, the AFL-based affiliates were already ineffective in the steel industry and were anyway limited to American-born craftsmen. The dispute at McKees Rocks began with unskilled and unorganised immigrant workers, largely from Eastern Europe. Able to build on communal solidarity and fortified by some who had radical European pasts, they faced severe difficulties due to their dependence on company housing, the partiality of the State authorities and perhaps most damaging, the – at best – ambivalence and – at worst – hostility of skilled American workers. Violence followed the use of strike breakers and provided an occasion for the skilled sector to seek a settlement. This met with rejection by the unskilled men and brought in the IWW. The 'Wobblies' worked together easily with the immigrant strikers. Employment of blacklegs produced further violence, escalating into a confrontation between strikers and the authorities. Twelve people died. The violence seems to have been simply the response of embattled strikers to blacklegging and evictions, but it conjured up for

the respectable, the spectre of an alliance between revolutionary trade unionists and disaffected immigrants. Faced with this fear, employers, skilled workers and concerned citizens came together to produce a settlement. This was greeted by 'Wobblies' as a victory. Vincent St John was euphoric:

> Company beat on all points. Strikers all members of IWW and in control.[54]

This verdict was echoed by Connolly in his advocacy of 'Wobbly' strategy.

The judgement could not be maintained by the unskilled strikers. They soon discovered that the 'victory' was illusory. They found their situation at work no better than that which had produced the strike. When they walked out again, the company used their skilled American colleagues to break the strike. They did so in a heavily symbolic manner, walking through a picket line behind an American flag. The dispute benefited neither the unskilled workers nor the IWW. Pressed Steel learnt their lesson and played effectively on ethnic and skill divisions within the workforce. By 1912, the 'Wobbly' presence in the plant was minimal.[55]

Connolly subsequently discovered at first hand the limitations of 'Wobbly' influence in the Pennsylvania steel towns. In the Spring of 1910 he went to New Castle, to participate in a protracted and ultimately defeated tin-plate strike.[56] His presence was itself a symptom of Socialist vulnerability. He became briefly the editor of the local Socialist newspaper. The local leaders had been gaoled. Strategies based in the workplace seemed highly vulnerable to the coercive power of the State. It was hardly the balance of forces prognosticated by advocates of Industrial Unionism.

These specific events perhaps permit some general comments. On the positive side, unskilled immigrant workers at McKees Rocks were able to organise a strike. The IWW's role in this was significant but contributions were made also by the strikers' communal solidarities and by some individuals' experiences in radical European politics. Such militant organisation was vital if Connolly's – and others' – hopes of effective action by the American working class were to be realised. But the gains proved transitory; a persistent feature of 'Wobbly' activities. One crucial aspect of this decline was clearly the existence of established trade unions organising mostly skilled American born males and affiliated to the American Federation of Labor. Such organisations were both product and exacerbator of working-class divisions. They could be used by employers to reward some workers at the expense of others. In his support for the 'Wobblies' Connolly was effectively committed to a strategy of Dual Unionism. Was this an avoidable weakness in his strategy?

The craft-based trade unionism, typical of the AFL was dismissed by Connolly as offering no basis for a Socialist politics. Rather it was 'the

most dispersive and isolating force at work in the labour movement'.[57] Yet, however bleak his verdict, it was directed at the dominant pattern of American trade unionism. Part of Connolly's optimism rested on his belief that industrial developments would generate a more inclusive and revolutionary trade unionism, but his case also rested on the view that the dominance of the AFL need not be seen as inevitable. Rather it had emerged in part as the result of contingent factors.

This argument involved Connolly in making a positive assessment of the Knights of Labor as they existed at their zenith in the mid 1880s:

> a mass organisation that ... aimed to organise all toilers into one union and made no distinction of craft, *nor of industry*, and that ... cherished revolutionary aims.[58]

He acknowledged that the Knights were in one sense utopian since their organisational structure paid no heed to the contemporary preoccupation of workers with immediate craft interests. Equally he suggested that modifications to incorporate craft and industry-wide interests could have been made whilst retaining the essential character of the Knights. Such a reform needed only the contribution of an effective and creative organiser, but this absence, plus the anti-radical panic generated by the Haymarket bombings facilitated the growth of the rival AFL.[59]

Such an analysis allowed Connolly to present the Federation as a 'usurper'. Organisational failings and reactionary hysteria had:

> destroyed the growing unity of the working class for the time being.[60]

A natural line of development had been broken:

> The industrial union, as typified to-day in the Industrial Workers of the World, could have ... developed out of the Knights of Labour as logically and perfectly as the adult develops from the child. No new organisation would have been necessary and hence we may conclude that the Industrial Workers of the World is the legitimate heir of the native American labour movement, the inheritor of its principles, and the ripened fruit of its experiences.[61]

This interpretation raises complex historiographical questions. Undoubtedly the Knights contained pre-industrial ideological legacies and these can be used to argue that the natural development was from such utopianism to the more pragmatic and more effective AFL. In contrast there was Engels' contemporary judgement, absorbed by some later historians, that the Knights represented an intial move by the American working class towards a more united form of class action.[62] But acceptance of this characterisation of the Knights' complexities is insufficient to demonstrate that such radical potential stood a good chance of realisation. Later accounts have claimed that the demise of the Knights was less accidental than Connolly suggests. Already managements operated to split their employees by offering favourable treatment to craftsmen

in separate organisations. Moreover the relative permeability of political machines – at least at their lower levels – arguably diluted the political implications of militant industrial action and also provided a further basis for working-class divisions. The dispersion of the Knights' radical promise may indicate more durable constraints than any indicated in Connolly's account.

Yet it is also necessary to consider the view that socialists should be dismissive of the AFL. Several shared Connolly's opinion. Debs discounted attempts to win over the AFL. They were 'as wasteful of time as to spray a cesspool with attar of roses'.[63] In contrast, figures on the Socialist Right worked assiduously to expand their influence within the Federation, braving attacks from both Gompers and their own left wing, and arguing the Socialists must seek alliance with existing trade unions. If that meant compromising with organisations that were less progressive than Socialists would wish, then so be it. Socialist success within the AFL was always very limited.[64] In the early 1890s, the political personality of the Federation was not firmly established and Socialists had hopes that a progressive political programme might be adopted. These were squashed at the 1894 Convention and from then on in the aftermath of industrial defeats and with a rising tide of nativism, the position of the AFL on both industrial and wider political issues became conservative. When members of the newly formed Socialist Party began working in the Federation in the early 1900s, they faced a daunting prospect. Gompers and his allies were dominant, Socialists made little impact, and when faced with legal attacks, the AFL turned in 1908 not to the Socialist Party, but to the Democrats. Max Hayes, a leading Socialist at AFL Conventions, wrote disconsolately from the 1911 meeting:

> The Socialists are simply up against a blank wall, and can't get a thing through no matter what its merit may be. All argument might as well be bottled up. The machine is in absolute control ...[65]

Given the policies of the Federation, the industrial strategy championed in their various ways by Socialists such as Connolly and Debs was not simply a dual unionist one, if this is understood as the offering of revolutionary alternatives to established trade union organisations. Most unskilled recently arrived immigrants had no such choice. The AFL offered protection to skilled established American born male workers, a partiality highlighted in its support for immigration restrictions. If attention is focussed on set-piece debates and on the positions of leading AFL personalities then the view of left-wing Socialists that boring from within was a blind alley, seems justified. But such a bleak assessment of the prospects for Socialists inside the AFL did not mean that the organisation could be ignored. It may have been racist, sectionalist and unavailable, but contrary to Connolly's dismissal of it as 'an usurper on

the throne of labour',[66] it had established a reasonably firm presence amongst some of the most secure sections of the American working class.

In such circumstances, one route lay through the individual unions. The consequences of Socialist successes could be diluted or deflected within the AFL but arguably over the long haul such victories could make some difference. American unions could be won for Socialism or for political independence in the same fashion as their British counterparts. It was a strategy that Connolly explicitly rejected. He advocated a socialism based on revolutionary trade unionism and denied the political relevance of Socialist advances within old-style unions. Yet especially given the limited achievements of the IWW it is important to emphasise that Socialists achieved some advances in AFL affiliates such as the United Mine Workers and the tailoring trades unions.[67] The significance of such advances was frequently ambiguous, but certainly in British counterparts, some links between union victories for socialist activists and the political behaviour of members can be detected.

The trade union picture was more complex than Connolly suggested. His portrait of American labour developments was provocative but partial. A valid refusal to dismiss the radical facets of the Knights of Labor meant a playing down of their limitations. His explanation of AFL expansion failed to do justice to its strength in some sections of the American working class. By viewing such craft-based organisations as transitory, he absolved himself from any consideration of an appropriate strategy for Socialists within this sector. Work within AFL affiliates was often unrewarding. The immediate impact on the specific union was often unclear; any significance on the wider stage of the AFL was typically invisible. For Connolly such activities were open to the same objections as those he had made about British Labour developments. But the alternative was to ignore a bloc of trade union organisations that showed no sign of disappearing. Indeed it was the 'Wobblies' that demonstrated repeated evidence of fragility. Local organisation was often transitory, and even when it proved more durable, a preoccupation with immediate benefits meant that for most participants, the transition to a revolutionary commitment was never made. Contrary to Connolly's expectations, except for the minority, the IWW strategy did *not* 'invest the sordid details of the daily incidents of the class struggle with a new and beautiful meaning'.[68]

This persistent hiatus raises the question of the political significance of 'Wobbly' activities. One theme has emerged already in the reference to the New Castle dispute and highlights a perennial difficulty for the IWW. The central claim that workers' industrial power could offset coercive state institutions was falsified painfully for 'Wobblies' in successive industrial disputes and free-speech fights. Political authorities responded myopically to complaints about employer or vigilante violence

or engaged in repressive measures of their own. In the context of war and the Russian Revolution, coercion by the State would become much more thorough culminating in the wholesale arrest of 'Wobblies', the Show Trials of 1918, and draconian sentences. The Red Scare of 1919–20 was a final act in an illiberal onslaught that did much to destroy revolutionary trade unionism in the United States. The deported miners of Bisbee Arizona, the bodies of 'Wobbly' martyrs, the political prisoners sentenced by Judge Landis at the Chicago Trial – all were tragic reminders of the hollowness of the 'Wobblies' fundamental strategic premise.[69] In such a crisis, there was no space for such a revolutionary alternative to develop. It was a realisation that Connolly would come to terms with after his return to Ireland.

If the liberalism of the authorities could not be assumed, this signposted the need for revolutionary trade unionists to be active in the political arena. Such involvement arguably could limit the repressive activities of governments, and also help to establish connections between militant industrial activities and wider political initiatives. This was an emphasis that Connolly had made repeatedly. In his view, the 'Wobblies' should – and would – develop a political presence. Their failure to do so arguably increased their vulnerability to State repression. Could the type of link that Connolly envisaged have been made?

At one level this raises a very general issue. The problem of American Socialist weakness is sometimes approached through the lack of durable connections between industrial struggle and class-based politics. In this broad context the 'Wobblies' predicament and the failure of Connolly's expectation seem an exemplification of a recurrent phenomenon. Although this is a valid emphasis, some qualifications are appropriate. The strength of the connection elsewhere should not be exaggerated. Where it appears significant, it may owe much to other factors, especially communal ones capable of including people not directly involved through the workplace. Moreover within the United States, at the height of Socialist influence, there were locations where such connections began to develop.

Such an admonition against excessive generalisation leads to a consideration of Connolly's precise hope that, in the absence of a specifically 'Wobbly' political presence, the Socialist Party could be won for a strategy of revolutionary Industrial Unionism. Acknowledging that advocates of this position were in a minority, he hoped that the Party's tolerance of factional debate would aid a shift to the position that he expected to be validated by industrial developments.[70]

Connolly left the United States just as the argument within the Socialist Party intensified. Some on the Party's Right saw attractions in the strategy of British Labour and hoped for a 'Labour Party' that would involve a close relationship with the AFL. Such an expectation was

impracticable nationally, but added to internal wranglings. On a local level, some Socialist electoral breakthroughs most notably in Milwaukee, had depended on the support of skilled trade unionists. Even if a national deal was impossible, leaders such as Victor Berger were keen to maintain harmonious relationships with local AFL affiliates. This, plus a broader view of electoral prudence, led to increasing concern lest the Socialist Party be associated with 'Wobbly' 'anarchism' and 'violence'. Yet there were developments that seemed to favour the Left. Local Socialist organisations often worked easily with the IWW in strikes and free speech campaigns. Most notably, early in 1912, Party and revolutionary union came together in the famous Lawrence textile strike. The collaboration culminated in the strikers achieving their original demands.[71]

On this occasion, the alliance incorporated even the normally hostile Berger, but such harmony was transitory. Beneath the surface, differences of principle and tensions between personalities combined to make a denouement almost inevitable. The explosion came as the result of a speech made in New York by the 'Wobbly' and Socialist Party member, 'Big Bill' Haywood. He derided the effectiveness of political action, and argued that Socialists could not be hamstrung by considerations of legality. It was not just a clash of strategies but also of experiences within the diversity that was the United States – the organiser of miners in an often violent Far West against the assiduous municipal Socialists of Eastern cities. The latter seized their opportunity. At the Socialist Party convention in May 1912, the delegates supported by 191 votes to 90 a constitutional amendment that would expel 'any member of the party who opposes political action or advocates sabotage or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working class'. This was followed by a national referendum to recall Haywood from the Party's National Executive. It succeeded easily; Haywood received less than one-third of the votes cast. These defeats for the 'Direct Action' section were followed by a sizeable exodus; nearly 23,000 members left in 1912–13.[72]

The question remains: how inevitable was this destruction of Connolly's hopes? Contingent factors can be highlighted. Debs agreed with the Industrial Unionist critics of the AFL but opposed Haywood's rhetoric. He seemed to desire a compromise but showed an unwillingness to confront the implacable Berger with his commitment to total victory. In the absence of an effective reconciliatory group, the conflicting tendencies ripped the Party into two discordant sections. It was a polarisation to be found in varying forms in other national Labour movements in the years before 1914; within the American Party, the sheer diversity of experiences made any compromise even less likely. Victory for the Right in an open conflict was predictable – and for reasons that Connolly had himself outlined. Party decisions were dominated by cautious municipal politicians and bureaucrats. The SPA demonstrated precisely

those traits that had led Michels towards his iron law of oligarchy and syndicalists towards denunciations of established forms of labour organisation. 'Direct actionists' within the Party demonstrated by their failure that they had no effective solution to this predicament.

This analysis has an impact that is inevitably deflationary. Critiques of Socialist strategy are all too easily destructive of a thinker's value. Any claims for originality are diluted through an emphasis on the extent to which problems and responses were shared with contemporaries. More drastically, any belief that strategic arguments are valid is destroyed by measuring them against recalcitrant circumstances. What then was the value of the strategic position that Connolly took back with him to Ireland?

Clearly his hopes for the American Left were to be buried beneath the accumulated failures of Socialist politics and revolutionary trade unionism. The simple judgement that this highlights the exceptionalism of the United States is untenable. The years that Connolly spent there were notable for the relative strength of American Socialism, and any demonstration of inevitable failure requires an argument, not just an assertion.

European Socialists might join their American comrades in expressing long-term optimism, but they could find little that offered immediate encouragement. This was particularly true for those who like Connolly placed themselves on the left of the Socialist movement. Their organisations were affected by controversies similar to those that divided the American Socialist Party, and European Left-Socialists generally achieved no more success in winning control of their parties and trade unions. There were moments when Connolly, confronting the problems of Socialist propaganda, denied this. Indeed he portrayed an American working class corrupted by capitalist values, whilst its European counterpart achieved an evermore developed class consciousness:

> Whilst in Europe, the toiler has risen to a conception of the dignity and mission of his class, in America the ambition of the toiler is to be a slave driver instead of a slave ... this applies not only to the native-born American but to the working class of America as a whole, Irish as much as any other. The spirit of America is on them – the spirit of grab.[73]

Yet it was not the case that when Connolly left the United States, he quit a bastion of capitalism for a continent in which revolutionary Socialists – or indeed Socialists of any variety – were close to effective power. The American/European dichotomy is inappropriate, not just because it implies a misleading contrast, but also because it rests on an unacceptable level of generalisation. On both sides of the Atlantic, the prospects for socialist growth varied between regions and industries. Did the Irish situation offer any distinctive promise for the application of

Connolly's strategy? Inevitably the increasing emphasis on the National Question would be a major obstacle. By the time Connolly returned to Ireland, the British Liberal Government was facing a new parliamentary situation in which Irish MPs held the balance of power. The introduction of a Home Rule Bill seemed inevitable with all the consequential deepening of divisions within the Ulster working class. The complex relationship between competing definitions of nationality, the alliances generated by these, and militant class-based action would be fundamental for the remainder of Connolly's career.

If this was a powerful obstacle to the development of a revolutionary strategy, there was an important sense in which the IWW exemplar could seem relevant to the Irish situation. Whatever the claims made about revolutionary Industrial Unionism as an appropriate form of workers' organisation in the age of the Trust, the principal appeal of the 'Wobblies' was to impoverished workers, unskilled in terms of conventional definitions. Often they had an agrarian past possibly as recently arrived immigrants suffering from the elitism of native Americans. Perhaps they lived in a rural present as lumberjacks or itinerant farmworkers. Either way, they were not so much a population integrated into the routines of industrial capitalism, as people who had made the long journey from peasant traditions to American urban uncertainty, or who experienced the tightening grip of capitalist priorities in the Far West. Here was a potential constituency, previously unorganised and largely disparaged by existing unions, composed of groups who were in the process of radicalisation through the uneven and sometimes brutal impact of American capitalism. Similarly, large sections of the Irish working class were impoverished, often casually employed, unorganised and largely ignored by British trade unions. As with some of the 'Wobblies', experiences in rural Ireland could lead many to take a hostile view of government. Moreover, any potential working class radicalism did not face two obstacles that limited the impact of such strategies in the United States, and in several of the more developed European economies. Outside Belfast, conventional trade unions were weak; there was no significant parallel to the AFL which could blunt any radical challenge. Socialist political organisation was very limited, and could not claim to be a credible alternative to a militant industrial policy. The limitations of Irish industrialisation arguably helped to produce a radical potential amongst an impoverished working class; perhaps they also helped to ensure that some of the conventional obstacles to its institutional expression had a relatively slight presence. Could such a diagnosis demonstrate that in much of Ireland, there existed the experiences and the organisational space for a revolutionary policy of Industrial Unionism? This question would provide a second theme for Connolly's last years in Ireland – a question posed as the result of American experiences and now to be answered in an Irish context.

Chapter 5

Socialism and the *Gael*

When Connolly returned to Ireland, he brought not just a socialist strategy based on Industrial Unionism, but also a more thorough perception of the need to relate Socialist politics to the specific traditions and experiences of the Irish working class. Several basic claims had been developed in his earlier ISRP propaganda: the linking of socialist and national causes; the antipathy to pro-capitalist nationalists; the belief that the working class would be the agent of national emancipation; the insistence that such an achievement would be invalid, if capitalism was not ended. The continuities are important. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that two of his most reflective works: *Labour in Irish History* and *Labour, Nationality and Religion* were published in 1910. His history project had been several years in the making. Early drafts of some chapters had been published in *The Workers' Republic*. Similarly, his concern with the relationship between socialism and ethical issues was longstanding. It had surfaced in his Edinburgh years and his 1904 polemic with De Leon had included disagreements on marriage and religion. Yet these two published works were both written in America, and were influenced by his experiences with Irish American workers.

In the United States, Connolly encountered the first significant urban Irish working class.[1] Although the zenith of Irish immigration had occurred in the post-Famine years, the Irish continued to arrive in significant numbers until well after 1900. The move typically involved far more than a geographical shift. Migrants moved from a highly traditional peasant world to a sophisticated urban one. New arrivals from the West of Ireland confronted the vastness of New York City. Moreover, the 'New World' was not just one of skyscrapers and metropolitan promise and frustration: it was also one of wage-labour, often a novelty in itself. In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Irish in America not only sought to maintain many of their old communal loyalties, but also brought traditional systems of authority into their new workplaces.

Connolly had a sharp perception of the way in which European rural decay and American capitalist growth were compelling a mass transfer of people. When he saw a newly-arrived Italian peasant woman and her children changing trains at Youngstown, Ohio, the vignette generated a reflection on how often such a migration involved clear losses, but only dubious gains:

think ... of the thousands of instances in which all that martyrdom, all that travail of emigration and breaking of home ties brought no relief to the sufferers, brought them only from the companionship and human sympathy of the old world to the cruel unfeeling environment of a new world, mad for gold, of a world basing all its activities and relations upon a 'cash nexus' upon a calculation centering around the dollar.[2]

Such experiences could be seen as producing a heavy resistence to socialist arguments. Immigrants could secure support from their own communal networks. These involved cross-class alliances and could become linked to established political organisations. Such investments of energy and time were diversions from any commitment to trade union, let alone socialist activities. Their consequence – the institutionalisation of ethnic differences within political structures – limited the chance of achieving workers' solidarity when confronted by a crisis.[3]

Such claims secure abundant support from American experiences but they do not have universal validity. Some trade unions transcended ethnic divisions; linguistic, communal and class solidarities could operate in the same direction; the arrival of new groups could erode traditional expectations. Specificity is essential in looking at this issue.[4] What points can be made about Irish–American workers and their receptivity to Socialist arguments?

There exists a stereotype captured in the comment of George B McClennan, Mayor of New York City in 1907:

There are Russian Socialists and Jewish Socialists and German Socialists! But thank God! There are no Irish Socialists![5]

In part, such hostility or at best apathy has been explained through the influence of Irish Catholicism with its antipathy to projects of political and social change. The continuing relevance of such religious precepts rested on the maintenance of an ethnic identity after arrival in the United States. Indeed such precepts were ambiguous. As Connolly would argue the actual position of Catholic leaders on such controversies could be remarkably at odds with what their fundamental religious principles permitted or implied. Religious influences and interpretations should be understood therefore not as adequate explanations but in the context of political and trade union attachments.

When faced with the Presidential contest of 1908, Connolly strongly commended the Socialist Party candidate to Irish workers. This was accompanied by a dismissal of their traditional choice, the Democrats. He presented them as a party of small businessmen, declining as the Trusts squeezed this class base. The characterisation was dubious, and in 1908 the Democrats' Presidential poll rose whilst the Socialist Party showed only a slight advance. Yet Connolly also acknowledged that the Democrats retained a significant presence in many communities:

the political party of the Democracy may hang on to a sordid existence in local affairs by means of its control of graft, whilst entirely eliminated as a serious aspirant to national power.[6]

It was precisely through such local fiefdoms that Irish electors were organised for the Democrats. As the Presidential campaign developed, Connolly had to acknowledge the strength of such machines. Against the graft, the immediate benefits and the ethnic identity represented in a traditional Party attachment, he proclaimed a class solidarity that would cut across older loyalties whether based on sentiment or pragmatism:

we must let the capitalist parties know that Irish workers are not married to the Democratic party, and that if we were we would soon secure a divorce on the grounds of 'incompatibility of interests' and set up our housekeeping alone, or rather in company with all the workers of every other race and nationality who understand their class interests.[7]

It was a forlorn hope.

If older political loyalties cemented together with a communal identity proved largely resistant to Socialist arguments, this of itself could be viewed as underlining Connolly's basic case that a strong Socialist movement depended on an effective Industrial Unionism. Perhaps the role of such an economic organisation was of particular importance given the facility with which Catholic anti-Socialists could connect the Socialist cause, with what were, for Connolly, irrelevant issues:

I am wearied unto death listening to Socialist speeches, and reading Socialist literature about materialism and philosophy and ethics and sex and embryology and monogamy and physiology and morism and platonism and determinism from men to whom the more immediate question of unionism is a sealed book ...

Industrial Unionism offered an effective route through such a maze of distractions:

... it will bring the Irish into the Socialist movement through the only gateway the Socialist philosophers have left unencumbered by their speculations and the only gateway by which a political party of the working class can make its demands effective ...[8]

Once again it was a hope that ran up against a stereotype. Irish–Americans were very visible in the trade union sphere, but to a very large degree, their activities were within AFL affiliates. They could be industrially militant. Henry George commented that 'the Irish burn like chips; the English like logs'.[9] But it was all usually within strict limits. Such union officials often played a significant part in setting the style of such organisations – the preoccupation with economic issues, a high level of organisational consciousness, a desire to protect hard-won benefits against the demands of more recent arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe, and of Negroes. The image emerges of cautious, socially-conservative trade unions officials influenced perhaps by religious leaders

or by the requirements of the Democratic machines, at any rate a bulwark against Socialist growth. The Irish brought with them neither experience of socialist politics nor often of industrial employment. They were available for integration into a-political trade unionism and Democratic politics. Yet there were exceptions. The Molly Maguires in the Pennsylvania coalfields of the 1870s – radical in tactics if ambiguous in ideology – were Irish-dominated: there were prominent Irish figures in the Knights of Labor; second generation Irish trade unionists played significant roles as Socialist advocates in some trade unions, most notably the Shoeworkers.[10] Irish Americans clearly could be won for Socialism, although the prospect was generally discouraging.

Faced with these difficulties, Connolly played a leading part in forming the Irish Socialist Federation.[11] From January 1908, he edited *The Harp* to propagate his developing views on the relationship between nationalism and socialism. The ISF had a stall at the Socialist Party's 1908 Convention. Its speakers propagandised in New York City streets. Its influence was limited.[12] *The Harp* had chronic financial problems. Late in 1909, Connolly claimed that it had only 800 subscribers and was difficult to maintain.[13] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn recalled the limited response that he achieved to his propaganda:

> It was a pathetic sight to see him standing, poorly clad, at the door of Cooper Union or some other East Side hall, selling his little paper. None of the prosperous professional Irish, who shouted their admiration for him after his death lent him a helping hand at that time. Jim Connolly was anathema to them because he was a Socialist.[14]

The significance of *The Harp* lies much more in the evidence it furnishes of Connolly's ideas at the time that he was working on *Labour in Irish History*, and giving thought to the question of the relationship between Socialism and Catholicism.

One basis for Connolly's commitment to this strategy lay in his realisation that a particular image of what was involved in an Irish identity was utilised for anti-socialist purposes. There was a need for a:

> proletarian organisation to combat the evil teaching and practices of the capitalist politicians and schemers who prey upon the workers of our race in America.[15]

The effectiveness of such politicians' strategy came in part from their ability to utilise the concern about Ireland's oppression by Britain:

> The Irish are the only race in America among whom are organised associations for the express purpose of assisting capitalist parties in the old country. The United Irish League of America is a case in point. Its one end and aim is to boost the reputation of the representatives in Parliament of the Irish capitalist class, to popularise their propaganda and finance their organisations. As it claims to speak in the name of Ireland it holds the attention and wins the sympathy of the Irish in America, and working on this basis, it succeeds in delivering the Irish vote to the political parties of the American capitalist class and the Irish dollars to the Irish capitalist.[16]

The proper response for Irish Socialists required them to resist a superficial interpretation of Socialist internationalism. Such a limited view had destroyed Socialist credibility within Irish communities; a destruction made the more complete on account of the Irish feeling that they were an oppressed nationality:

> the man or woman who broke away from and kept aloof from contact with things Irish and with an Irish environment became, in the eyes of their fellow-countrymen and women, deserters from the weaker side in a fight, and therefore objects of opprobium and hatred. In the case of those who became Socialists, this was invariably the course of events; the dislike and hatred did not precede, but followed from the breaking away from Irish associations.

The proper response for Irish Socialists was not the maintenance of isolation but a demonstration:

> that Socialism made its devotees better equipped mentally and morally to combat oppression than any scheme evolved by the invertebrate Irish middle class politicians.

This involved working with other Irish organisations in the literary, educational and revolutionary fields even if these had no specifically Socialist commitment. Through the columns of *The Harp*, Connolly expressed some support for the language enthusiasts of the Gaelic Revival. Central to his project of an Irish Socialism, there stood the writing of a history of Ireland:

> we propose to make a campaign amongst our countrymen and to rely for our method mainly upon an imparting to them a correct interpretation of the facts of Irish history.[17]

During the Summer of 1908, *The Harp* began to publish some chapters of Connolly's work on Irish history; by the beginning of 1909, he offered a twofold justification of his project – Socialists could find their arguments strengthened by an awareness of the Irish past; but perhaps more crucially non-Socialists could be persuaded that the most compelling interpretation of 'all the welter and chaos of our national struggle' had a Socialist content, 'a steady social evolution'. Its course lay:

> from the *common ownership of the clan* through the forcing house of capitalist property onto the higher ground of the *common ownership of all the workers* in each free nation, in a world knowing no master.[18]

This argument provided a central thread to *Labour in Irish History*.

In one significant sense, this text belongs to a genus that has become familiar much more recently. It is an attempt to correct the limitations and the distortions of conventional historiography, to bring into the spotlight, those 'hidden from history'. Such an exercise can produce a more accurate historical account, but it can also serve as a means of legitimising a Socialist project. In part this comes from the deflationary

impact that such an exercise can have on the apologies offered by ruling groups; but also a rediscovery of the histories of radical Irish movements can offer ethical and intellectual continuities with modern Socialists. One element within Connolly's approach was expressed sharply in a *Harp* comment of September 1908:

> What would we think of the historian who would picture the life of the daughter of an Irish aristocrat of today, and then tell us that this was a picture of the life of a typical Irish girl of the twentieth century? We would laugh him to scorn. Yet that is the manner in which history is written.[19]

If one rediscovery was that of the experiences and initiatives of subordinate classes, another placed Connolly's work within the broad current of the Gaelic Revival. He related his work to the recent book by Alice Stopford Green, *The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing*. Published in 1908 and reviewed in *The Harp*,[20] this focused on the destruction of Gaelic culture following the Conquest of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was presented as a 'rupture' which rendered subsequent developments in a basic sense abnormal. The liberation of Ireland required a reconnection with the older traditions. A first step was the exorcism of more recent images of Irish history:

> the whole concept of orthodox Irish history for the last 200 years was a betrayal and abandonment of the best traditions of the Irish race.

For Connolly, the loss was not just of a national culture, but also of a communal society:

> the new Irish educated in foreign standards ... adopted as their own the feudal–capitalist system of which England was the exponent in Ireland, and urged it on the Gaelic Irish.[21]

As analysed later, this location was symptomatic of a growing difficulty for Connolly. His Socialism was attached increasingly to a divisive conception of the Irish nation.[22] In immediate terms, the context provided its quota of romanticism; Connolly was heavily idealistic about the social structure of the old Ireland based on the clan system. He simply neglected to discuss the place of slavery within that society.

More significantly, this socialist interpretation within the broad current of the Gaelic Revival analysed a variety of historical episodes and individuals to make a basic political point. The strategy of the Home Rulers and the history that they utilised in order to strengthen their case should be rejected. The argument necessitated the elucidation of fundamental assumptions that can organise and characterise the historical material. An attempt to develop a productive rather than a destructive relationship between socialist and nationalist perspectives can be found at the beginning of *Labour in Irish History*:

In the evolution of civilisation the progress of the fight for national liberty of any subject nation must, perforce, keep pace with the progress of the struggle for liberty of the most subject class in that nation ... the shifting of economic and political forces which accompanies the development of the system of capitalist society leads inevitably to the increasing conservatism of the non-working class element and to the revolutionary vigour and power of the working class.[23]

This primary proposition contains its ambiguities. In what sense '*must*' the progress of the fight for national liberty 'keep pace' with the struggle for working-class emancipation? It could be interpreted as a sociological claim derivable from Connolly's basically materialist position. As Irish capitalism develops so the economic and the political significance of the working class increases. It expands in numbers and in awareness; its perceptions are sharpened by the absence of economic ties such as those cementing other classes to some form of Union with Britain.

Such an interpretation can be measured against subsequent Irish developments. Some sections of the Irish bourgeoisie were prepared to support some degree of political separation; some important sections of the Irish working class were not. Such problems raise doubts about Connolly's assumptions which will be considered in detail later. Nevertheless his proposition is capable of a second interpretation flowing out of the ambiguity of that crucial word, 'must'.

This second characterisation is an ethical one that appears frequently in Connolly's writings. National and class emancipations must keep pace with one another since national independence, without the destruction of capitalism, would be worthless. He had expressed this view in the late 1890s; he would express it after his return to Ireland in a later pamphlet, *The Reconquest of Ireland*:

the Labour Movement of Ireland must set itself the Reconquest of Ireland as its final aim ... the reconquest involves taking possession of the entire country, all its power of wealth-production and all its natural resources, and organising these on a cooperative basis for the good of all ... this and this alone would be a reconquest.[24]

In proclaiming this ambitious role for Irish Labour, Connolly was nevertheless realistic enough to acknowledge that the likely course of events would be more tortuous. The achievement of a Home Rule Parliament could normalise political divisions along class lines. In such a situation the demythologising impact of *Labour in Irish History* would be significant.

Optimism about such a scenario was heightened by Connolly's largely orthodox historical materialism. Any understanding of Irish history must utilise a method that could penetrate beneath the superficial evidence of institutional forms and political rhetoric. Thus, in attacking the conventional Nationalist claim that the Act of Union had had a destructive effect on the Irish economy, he spelt out his methodological position:

... the socialist philosophy of history provides the key to the problem – points to the economic development as the true solution.[25]

The early forms of mechanised industry were applicable in Ireland but soon British coal supplies fatally handicapped Irish competitors:

A native Parliament might have hindered the subsequent decay, as an alien Parliament may have hastened it; but in either case, under capitalistic conditions, the process itself was as inevitable as the economic evolution of which it was one of the most significant signs.[26]

Similarly, Connolly opposed the conventional Nationalist image of the Famine. Culpability was not simply a matter of national oppression; it came from the English commitment to capitalism:

No man who accepts capitalist society and the laws thereof can logically find fault with the statesmen of England for their acts in that awful period. They stood for the rights of property and free competition, and philosophically accepted their consequences upon Ireland; the leaders of the Irish people also stood for the rights of property and refused to abandon them ...[27]

Connolly's ripostes to conventional Nationalist historiography clearly owed much to the application of conventional emphases within Second International Marxism – the concentration on economic constraints; the emphasis on capitalism as a concept that can be applied scientifically to demonstrate the shortcomings within the perceptions of both agents and commentators. Yet Connolly was also typical in his acceptance of an evolutionary perspective that owed something to claims which were not specifically Marxist. Like several of his contemporaries he was attracted by the findings of the American, Lewis Morgan, as presented in his book, *Ancient Society*. This source had a particular legitimacy for Marxists.[28] Engels in his *Origins of the Family* had relied strongly on Morgan for his discussion of Primitive Communism. In fact the type of claim advanced by Morgan typified the direction taken by several writers in the 1870s. Perceptions of historical time were extended drastically. The possibility of an evolutionary social science emerged. Engels claimed that Morgan had provided independent support for a Marxist view of history. In fact many Marxists came to amalgamate their original perceptions with elements of an evolutionary sociology. They did so without worrying too much about theoretical incompatibilities. Thus, for Connolly, the methods employed by Morgan could be utilised to clarify the remote Irish past. He had provided 'the key' for studying the American Indians. Hopefully:

the same key will yet unlock the doors which guard the secrets of our native Celtic civilisation.[29]

It would reveal that Socialist values had a venerable Irish pedigree.

A more immediate and more feasible task concerned the discrediting

of commonly held views about Irish society and politics since the late seventeenth century. One essential thrust concerned the view that much of Ireland's troubles stemmed from the Union. The way in which Connolly employed his historical method to attack conventional views about the economic consequences of the Irish Parliament's abolition, has been noted. Equally, he was concerned to devalue the significance of those Irish leaders who had been dedicated to pragmatic negotiations with Britain. His attack on O'Connell paralleled claims commonly advanced by him against the Home Rule politicians of his own day. Whatever his initial sympathies with labour demands, the 'Liberator' was gradually drawn into a more hostile relationship. As he:

> grew in strength in the country, and attracted to himself more and more of the capitalist and professional classes in Ireland, and as he became more necessary to the schemes of the Whig politicians in England, and thought these latter more necessary to his success, he ceased to play for the favour of organised labour, and gradually developed into the most bitter and unscrupulous enemy of trade unionism Ireland has yet produced ...[30]

The basing of a Nationalist strategy on the priorities of Irish capitalists; the impact of deals with London politicians – the reactionary significance was, for Connolly, obvious. O'Connell's political path was paralleled by that of the post-Parnell Parliamentary Party. Their lack of sympathy for labour's demands would become apparent in the Dublin Lock Out of 1913.

If Connolly's history had its demonology extending from Grattan through O'Connell to Redmond, it also claimed a positive Nationalist tradition. This was summarised by the dates, 1798, 1848 (with qualifications) and 1867. On one level, it could be viewed as a tradition of Physical Force Republicanism that culminated in 1916, and was always available as a counterpoint to the varied pragmatisms of the constitutionalists. But Connolly viewed this alternative strand as possessing a popular social content or at least a potential that could culminate in a viable Irish Socialist movement.

His analysis of the radical alternative generated a powerful criticism of dominant views, although at the same time it produced its quota of unresolved issues. One of his earliest involvements in Nationalist politics had been in the Wolfe Tone centenary celebrations of 1898. He expressed a consistent criticism of orthodox Nationalists. They offered an expurgated account of Tone and his associates:

> The middle-class 'patriotic' historians, orators and journalists of Ireland have ever vied with one another in enthusiastic descriptions of their military exploits on land and sea, their hairbreadth escapes and heroic martyrdom, but have resolutely suppressed or distorted their writings, songs and manifestoes.[31]

In contrast, Connolly emphasised their radical–democratic credentials: a strategy centered around an appeal to the mass of the people, a willingness

to prosecute a class war, a vigorous anti-sectarianism, an internationalist outlook. It was emphatically not the style of later constitutional Nationalists. Irish Socialists could claim to be their only valid heir.

One problematic aspect of Connolly's presentation concerns its historical adequacy. Whatever the non-sectarianism of leading figures, this was not always matched by the intentions and actions of nominal followers. The Wexford Rising of 1798 strongly Roman Catholic in membership and style, involved attacks on local Protestants, and seemed much more fuelled by local grievances than by the wider visions of the United Irishmen.[32] In the North East, where support had involved sympathy for the values of revolutionary France, this was diminishing by 1798, in part perhaps because of revived religious tensions. Any interpretation that suggested '1798' as a demonstration of the appeal of non-sectarian Republicanism carried dangers, if this promise was absorbed by later Socialists without an accompanying awareness of the strategy's difficulties.

This raises the narrower but complex issue of the significance of this episode for Connolly's overall view of Irish history. There are passages where he suggests that contingent factors prevented a radically different outcome. French intervention could have happened in the 1790s and would probably have been decisive. The lack of vigour shown by the French commander of the Bantry Bay expedition is specifically cited:

> Had he been a man equal to the occasion and landed his expedition, Ireland would almost undoubtedly have been separated from England and become mistress of her own national destinies.[33]

For hypothetical purposes, let it be assumed that these contingent factors had been different and also that the sectarian obstacle had been overcome; so had the coercive capacity of the British State a constraint to which Connolly devotes no attention. Instead there is the highly unlikely event of a Radical Republican regime in Ireland.

The significance for Socialists would be obscure. Connolly had previously devoted some attention to the argument that in the 1780s a bourgeois revolution had failed to materialise:

> Had a strong enterprising and successful Irish capitalist class been in existence in Ireland, a Parliamentary reform investing the Irish masses with the suffrage would have been won under the guns of the Volunteers without a drop of blood being shed; and with a Parliament elected under such conditions the Act of Union would have been impossible.[34]

The comment is reminiscent of Marxist judgements on the failure of liberal bourgeois revolutions in nineteenth century Germany. In each case, it remains debatable how much should be explained by compelling material factors and how much by strategic failures and successes. But Connolly does seem to suggest a very restricted material base for a

republican success in Ireland. If such a regime had been instituted, backed perhaps by French bayonets, it would have been a radical bourgeois one. Its potential from a Socialist viewpoint could be only that it indicated a sizeable stride forward towards the Socialist goal. Even this would be true only within a uniform evolutionary perspective. Recalling that Connolly had already made some comments suggesting that Irish lack of development could provide advantages for Socialists, such a radical capitalist breakthrough could be characterised as on balance damaging for Socialist fortunes.

Ultimately, Connolly's case for the United Irishmen was not entangled in this complex thicket of 'might have beens'. Rather the organisation was a relevant exemplar for Socialists:

> a plan of campaign ... on the lines of those afterwards followed so successfully by the Socialists of Europe – a revolutionary party openly declaring their revolutionary sympathies, but limiting their first demand to a popular measure such as would enfranchise the masses, upon whose support their ultimate success must rest.

But once again, the question of such a revolution's content arises. Clearly, Connolly did not see this as socialist:

> these men aimed at nothing less than a social and political revolution such as had been accomplished in France, or even greater, because the French Revolution did not enfranchise all the people ...[35]

Moreover, Connolly had made some sharp comments in the past about the tendency of Socialists to view the French case as a valid model. He had noted the 'baneful inheritance' for Socialists of that image of revolution. The need then had been to destroy the constraints of feudalism; now it was to construct institutions based on the productive achievements of capitalism. Constructive, not iconoclastic, communal not individualist, Connolly had placed the impending Socialist revolution in a very different category from that of 1789:

> We have to remember that the French Revolution was an uprising of the capitalist class, that their tactics may not be our tactics, and that their victory added another to the list of our enemies in power.[36]

Connolly was clearly successful in establishing the radical Republicanism of the United Irishmen; their significance for Socialists, even by his own tenets remained less obvious.

His analysis of the Irish contribution to the year of revolutions, 1848, is hedged with more qualifications. Once again the essential failure is presented as avoidable. He notes the few leaders who saw the need to link broader national demands to the immediate plight of the people. Their remedies were to withhold rents, to retain crops and to block roads and railways to prevent food being taken from the country. If this strategy

had been followed widely, the results would have been, in Connolly's view, dramatic:

> Had such advice been followed by the Young Irelanders as a body it would, as events showed, have been enthusiastically adopted by the people at large, in which event no force in the power of England could have saved landlordism or the British Empire in Ireland.[37]

His analysis demonstrates a characteristic concern of Connolly that a radical rank and file could always be frustrated by cautious or corrupted leaders:

> The simple fact is that the Irish workers in town and country were ready and willing to revolt, and that the English Government of the time was saved from serious danger only by the fact that Smith O'Brien and those who patterned after him, dreaded to trust the nation to the passion of the so-called lower classes.[38]

Once again the question of the feasibility and significance of such an alternative should be separated from Connolly's attempt to discover elements relevant to an Irish Socialist strategy. An option may have been unlikely; and even if achieved still limited in its social significance. Instead attention can be devoted to the analysis of individual radicals. Connolly devotes some consideration to John Mitchel citing passages that in their denunciation of the destructive impact of a Free Trade system, show strong affinities with the contemporary writings of Thomas Carlyle. As with his Scottish counterpart, Mitchel could mount scathing attacks on popular movements. He welcomed the February 1848 Revolution in France for its overthrow of:

> the enlightened pedantic political economy (what we know in Ireland as the English political economy or the famine political economy).[39]

Yet he then denounced the June insurrection of Parisian workers; a shift explained by Connolly as the product of a lack of information following his imprisonment.[40] The reponse is inadequate. Elitism and racism continually appear in Mitchel's writings along with his denunciations of capitalist individualism and British rule in Ireland. During his American exile he emerged as a supporter of slavery and of the Confederacy. He belongs within the tradition of the Romantic critique of capitalism, essentially anti-liberal and productive of both radical and reactionary implications.

Connolly's most positive analysis of any figure in the 1848 Movement came in his discussion of James Fintan Lalor. This reflected a longstanding view. One of his earliest publications during the ISRP years had been a pamphlet of Lalor's writings.[41] His interpretation led him to view Lalor as an 'Irish apostle of revolutionary Socialism'.[42] One significant basis for this assessment lay in Lalor's concern that the struggles of Irish radicals formed part of a wider conflict that incorporated popular

movements in other societies. Most crucially however, it rested on Lalor's insistence that national and economic demands must be synthesised. The claim that popular sovereignty was the foundation of nationality was tied to the critical issue of land:

> The principle I state and mean to stand upon is this, that the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland; that they, and none but they, are the land-owners and law-makers of this island; that all laws are null and void not made by them; and all titles to land invalid not conferred and confirmed by them; and that this full right of ownership may and ought to be asserted and enforced by any and all means which God has put into the power of man.[43]

The similarities with Connolly's claim that the national revolution must be also a socialist one are obvious. But there is a clear divergence over the content of desirable economic changes. Lalor's concern centered around the plight of the small agricultural tenants. Their continual reduction to the state of landless labourers was deplorable. He offered nothing to the bulk of the propertyless; instead he sought to revive a stable and viable class of tenant farmers. This was to be a central theme in radical Irish agitations but it hardly constituted a suppressed Socialist alternative.

A similar point can be made about Connolly's discussion of Fenianism. While it is easy to show that the movement's support came from urban workers, rural labourers, poor farmers plus some who had risen into the lower middle class, it does not follow that their support was based on more than a desire for national independence. Opponents might have condemned Fenianism as 'communist'; a few revolutionary socialists might have hoped that such a condemnation was valid. But such a claim reflected neuroses, unsubstantiated optimism or rhetorical exaggeration. The Fenian orthodoxy was clear:

> Irishmen begin to feel that we must regain our lost independence 'at all hazards' ... Any plan short of this for bettering the condition of Ireland commences work at the wrong end ...[44]

Besides such an assertion, Connolly's attempts to relate Fenianism to expanding working class organisation, both within Ireland and internationally, provide only suggestive but misleading signposts.[45]

Assessment of *Labour in Irish History* must begin by emphasising the qualities of a work written often under conditions of personal hardship: unemployment, poverty, the carving out of periods for research and writing from the demands of more immediate political activities. Unlike many of the popular histories produced by Connolly's Socialist contemporaries, it is of more than antiquarian interest. Issues are raised which remain central to historical debate. They emerge in a sharp if sometimes simplified fashion that demonstrates Connolly's stylistic commitment:

the teaching of social science does not mean the juggling with a vocabulary of scientific phrases and with a difficult technical terminology.[46]

Within the present analysis three significant questions emerge which connect with Connolly's subsequent political strategy.

Constitutional Nationalists with a stake in the existing order might fight to define the history of the National Question and its current significance in narrowly political terms, yet Connolly showed easily that economic and social arguments had always played a central role. For the Socialist, this offered the comfort that concern with such questions was compatible with a firm position on issues of nationality. Nevertheless, a problem arose when Connolly attempted to show that earlier figures – most notably Tone and Lalor – made claims that had substantive significance for Socialists. It might well be the case that they provided impressive examples of revolutionary commitment, and of the synthesis of economic, social and national claims. But Connolly's interpretations tended to play down the bourgeois–radical limits of the United Irishmen and to offer a partial portrait of Lalor. As a demonstration of a Socialist pedigree the argument had its difficulties. It also suggested a practical problem for Connolly's own strategy in that it could lead to an exaggerated estimate of how far this radical tradition contained a potential for socialist development.

Another related question about the potential for Irish Socialist development recurred during Connolly's analysis. His conventional historical materialism plus his evolutionary socialism would suggest that capitalist developments would need to mature in Ireland before a transition to Socialism could be feasible. Yet sometimes his argument suggests the significance of 'might have beens'. The earlier analysis of '1798' suggests that his considered alternative might have been a dubious prospect for Socialists. His treatment of the 1840s was at one point more explicit on this theme:

> Had Socialist principles been applied to Ireland in those days, not one person need have died of hunger ...[47]

Assuming this is not a fragment of utopianism, it counts as a clear suggestion that some sort of Socialist development was feasible in a predominantly rural society with a largely traditional agriculture, and only a small urban working class. Certainly in some of Connolly's earlier writings, there had been hints that societies need not move to socialism along a uniform road. The claim that capitalism was an English import, the radical facets of Irish Nationalism, the pressures that were increasing on Irish agriculture and the strategic role of Ireland vis à vis the British Empire – all or some could be used to justify a specifically Irish route. Such claims left their mark on Connolly's view of Irish history and lived uneasily alongside his expressions of support for the orthodoxies of historical materialism and evolutionary socialism.

The feasibility of an Irish path to Socialism remained as a problem to be explored through fundamental political choices that would include a search for any Socialist potential contained within the more radical variants of Irish Nationalism. Such a development included an acceptance of a particular notion of what it was to be Irish. Connolly's commitment comes through clearly in *Labour in Irish History*. Its status as a Socialist variant within Gaelic historiography, and its support for the tradition of Direct Action Republicanism show how far Connolly, despite his anti-sectarian principles, had come to accept a view of Irish nationality that was Gaelic and Catholic. This was demonstrated further by a significant silence. Catholic–Protestant tensions are examined down to the defeat of the United Irishmen which was presented with some degree of idealisation as a movement capable of bridging the sectarian divide. But after that Connolly's account became essentially an analysis of Catholic Nationalism. There was no discussion of the development of working-class Unionism in the North-East, and no suggestion that Ulster's agitations against the Gladstonian Home Rule proposals indicated a substantial difficulty for any Irish route to Socialism.

Within the Nationalist tradition as defined by Connolly, his claims about the socialist and national causes developing together faced obstacles on account of the attitudes of official Catholicism. He had experienced this hostility both in Ireland and in the United States. Any response required an acceptance of one fundamental fact. Ireland and Poland were distinctive amongst communities aspiring to national independence in pre-1914 Europe. In both cases, the Catholic Church was perceived widely as the symbol of a people's struggle against foreign domination. So neither society experienced the nineteenth century battle to settle the boundary between Church and State that was elsewhere so characteristic of Catholic Europe. Accordingly, it was difficult for either Radical–Liberal or Socialist movements to emerge, hostile or indifferent to a Church so central to the national struggle.[48]

Eventually, Connolly would claim somewhat idealistically that the oppression of Catholics had made them a significant revolutionary force in the Irish context – their emancipation would mean the emancipation of all:

> the Irish Catholic has realised instinctively that he, being the most oppressed and disfranchised, could not win any modicum of political freedom or social recognition for himself without winning it for all others in Ireland. Every upward step of the Catholic peasant has emancipated some one of the smaller Protestant sects; every successful revolt of the Catholic has given some added security even to those Protestant farmers who were most zealously defending the landlord. And out of this struggle the Catholic has perforce learned toleration.[49]

It was an optimism belied by the cultural claims of some leading advocates of 'Irish Ireland', and experienced as false by those such as

the playwright J.M. Synge whose work was felt to be at odds with the idealised stereotypes of an often puritanical nationalism.[50]

This claim was supplemented by a more pragmatic one. Connolly claimed that the Catholic experience could add something worthwhile to the Socialist cause. Tom Bell, a Scottish comrade and founder-member of the SLP, recalled his early surprise at Connolly's emphasis on his Catholic background – and also his response to Bell's questioning:

> Well, it is like this. In Ireland all the Protestants are Orangemen and howling Jingoes. If the children go to the Protestant schools, they get taught to wave the Union Jack and worship the English king. If they go to the Catholic Church they become rebels. Which would you sooner have?[51]

The optimism reflected the distinctive position of the Catholic Church as a symbol of an oppressed nationality, but it left unresolved the issue of what in Socialist terms was the consequence of such rebelliousness. Any attempt to resolve this led Connolly into a consideration of the degree of compatibility between Socialist and Catholic claims.

One frequent response was that the question did not have much importance. The SPD's Erfurt Programme of 1891 had declared that Socialist Parties should not be concerned with questions of religious belief and this had been accepted as authoritative by the Socialist International. Nevertheless, there were pressures within Socialist organisations to take a firmly anti-religious line. Sometimes these reflected the conservatism of religious organisations; sometimes they could be viewed as a manifestation of the reductionism inherent in a strongly determinist approach to beliefs. Even many Socialists who were prepared to take a tolerant view nevertheless believed that eventually religious commitments would be discarded as so many illusions. These were emphases that Connolly never made. Arguably this distinctiveness was not just attributable to his Catholic background, but also reflected the quality of his Edinburgh Socialist apprenticeship. As noted in an earlier chapter, this had included the example of former members of the Socialist League with their insistence on the centrality of a moral dimension to Socialist growth.[52]

Connolly's central argument on the question of Socialist–Catholic compatability was based on his repeated assertion that Socialism was only concerned with economic issues. All else was not an integral part of a Socialist position. This view, he articulated as early as January 1896 when criticising an Edinburgh clergyman for his attacks on Socialism as anti-marriage.[53] More significantly, he followed this with an attack on the socialist–feminist Edith Lanchester. Whilst chairing a meeting for her during a Scottish tour, he warned the audience of his difference with the speaker:

> Socialism had no connection with speculations on family life and was nowise responsible for the opinions of individual socialists on that subject.[54]

Most dramatically, his views on marriage and on religion provided a significant element in his 1904 polemic with De Leon:

> The abolition of the capitalist system will undoubtedly solve the economic side of the Woman Question, but it will solve that alone. The question of marriage, of divorce, of paternity, of the equality of woman with man are physical and sexual questions, or questions of temperamental affiliation as in marriage, and were we living in a Socialist Republic would still be hotly contested as they are today.[55]

This avoidance of any simplistic reduction of all conflicts to the economic is characteristic. The emphasis on the survival of personal dilemmas under Socialism shares something with the view of William Morris.[56] Yet, Connolly's approach can be contrasted with that of another Socialist weaned in a Catholic culture, Antonio Gramsci:

> It seems clear that the new industrialism wants monogamy; it wants the man as worker not to squander his nervous energies in the disorderly and stimulating pursuit of occasional sexual satisfaction. The exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with the timed movements of productive motions connected with the most perfected automatism.[57]

Sociologically, perhaps, the contrast can be related to the divergent places of the Catholic Church in Irish and Italian societies; conceptually, it is important to see what Connolly's approach emphasised and what it omitted. One response would be that despite his organisational work with women in the Belfast textile industry, and despite his firm support for womens' suffrage, Connolly held conventionally patriarchal views on personal relationships. These were reflected in the imagery which he characteristically used to discuss womens' virtues;[58] his position on marriage can be seen as one facet of this. Two comments seem in order. One is simply that many of his Socialist contemporaries who held much more reductionist ideas expressed views at least as patriarchal as those of Connolly. More fundamentally, any perspective that places significant weight on the influence of economic factors runs the risk of marginalising ethical debate. Connolly, whatever the inadequacies of his specific claims, at least attempted to sketch out some territory for ethical argument. In contrast, Gramsci's presentation shows a sharp sense of the way in which social institutions and practices might develop, often without deliberate social engineering, as bulwarks of a particular economic order. Such an emphasis did not prohibit the debating of moral claims, although insensitive or authoritarian adherents might act as though it did.

These considerations provide much of the intellectual background to the 1910 pamphlet, *Labour, Nationality and Religion*.[59] Connolly also utilised a claim that he had discussed earlier in *The Harp*: the Catholic bureaucracy was extremely adaptable and would accept the advent of socialism as it had done earlier radical changes.[60] Such a shift could be legitimised through a selective presentation of its previous doctrines.

The clear implication is that Connolly expected Catholicism to survive under Socialism. Much of the pamphlet was a vigorous and effective demonstration of the discrepancies between the contemporary claims of the Church and its fundamental principles. On questions such as the rights of private property, the Church acted as an apologist for the values of capitalism and in so doing abandoned its own older principles.[61] Connolly had no illusions about the traditional social function of the Catholic Church:

> Ever counselling humility, but sitting in the seats of the mighty; ever patching up the diseased and broken wrecks of an unjust social system, but blessing the system which made the wrecks and spread the disease; ever running divine discontent and pity into the ground as the lightning rod runs and dissipates lightning, instead of gathering it and directing it for social righteousness ...[62]

Yet such thorough criticism of the Church as an institution, backed by the claim that Catholic doctrines had been perverted to serve the interests of dominant classes, did not lead to a wholesale rejection of such fundamental religious claims. Indeed his argument suggested that only within a Socialist society was there hope for the realisation of such values.

Connolly was however selective about the religious precepts that would be realised. He accepted an orthodox materialist view of the Reformation and turned this against Catholic apologists for capitalism:

> ... as capitalism taught the doctrine of every man for himself and by its growing power forced such doctrines upon the ruling class it created its reflex in the religious world, and that reflex, proclaiming that individual belief was the sole necessity of salvation appears in history as the Protestant Reformation. Now the Church curses the Protestant Reformation – the child – and blesses capitalism, its parent.[63]

Prepared to explain away Protestantism in economic terms, he did not acknowledge the acceptability of such a reduction in the case of Catholicism. The demarcation of a territory wherein Socialists could debate ethical claims was important; the dimensions of the territory raised serious difficulties. On the one side, Connolly's claims had some affinity with those who criticised liberal-individualism as destructive of pre-capitalist, perhaps medieval virtues. Socialism could resurrect such values, but in an egalitarian context. But in contrast, his presentation diverged sharply from those writers – often English – who would link Socialist politics to a radical–democratic tradition that was essentially Protestant. Their Socialist legitimation looked back not to a Gaelic culture and communal ownership, but to the Seventeenth Century Radicals and their legacy expressed often in the language and practices of Old Dissent.[64]

After his return to Ireland, he employed the insights developed in his American years. He argued for a distinctively Irish Socialist movement that would relate positively to a national culture:

the phrases and catchwords which might serve to express the soul of the movement in one country may possibly stifle it in another.[65]

This commitment had produced a Socialist approach to Irish history and it had begun an analysis of how historical materialism could connect with ethical arguments. Such developments were tributes both to Connolly's creativity and to the complexity of pre-1914 Marxism. But his responses also suggested immediate problems. His conception of Irish nationality was divisive inside Ireland; outside Ireland, it could produce hostility, indifference or misunderstanding amongst Socialists. Moreover, his attempted synthesis of Socialism and Nationalism raised one fundamental difficulty: what if 'the phrases and catchwords' inhibited or even mutilated the Socialist message? When Connolly landed in Derry in July 1910, he hoped to work as organiser for the reformed Socialist Party of Ireland. He brought with him a perspective developed through the tough years in the United States; now the theory had to meet the realities of Ireland in the Age of Carson and Larkin.

Chapter 6

Unionism and the working class

Connolly's mature position on the relationship between Nationalism and Socialism in Ireland encountered a forbidding reality. Prior to 1910, the Belfast working class and popular Unionism were barely present in his writings. As the city's organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union he experienced directly Unionist opposition to Home Rule.[1] British political conflicts had forced the Irish issue to the top of the political agenda, since the re-election of a Liberal Government newly dependent on Nationalist and Labour support, ensured that a Home Rule Bill would be introduced. Destruction of the Lords' permanent veto seemed to guarantee that eventually it would become law. The only alternative seemed to involve the Government's early defeat in a general election. This was unlikely. No election need be held before the end of 1915 – and by then, a parliament would have been established in Dublin. For Connolly, this would be a limited but significant step. Although it would fall far short of Irish independence, the provision of such an assembly would help to normalise political alignments in class terms. It would mean 'the entrance of Ireland upon the normal level of civilised self-governing nations'.[2]

These liberal and socialist expectations were confronted by the escalating response of the Unionists.[3] Initially, Irish opponents of Home Rule and their British Conservative allies tended to see Ulster as the sharp end of a wedge that might hack Home Rule to pieces. But gradually the emphasis shifted to the possibility of separate treatment for the North. The popular basis of Ulster Protestant resistance became clear. Thousands signed the Ulster Covenant of September 1912. Plans were developed for a Provisional Government in the event of Home Rule becoming law; soon the Ulster Volunteer Force could count 100,000 members under the command of an experienced army officer. Ulster Unionists and British Conservatives claimed fidelity to Constitution and Empire whilst advocating Direct Action to protect them. Faced by these pressures the Asquith Government began to temporise. In March 1914 a scheme was announced for the 'temporary' exclusion of Ulster. Scornfully rejected by Unionists, it spread panic amongst Nationalists who saw the spectre of permanent partition in the wake of any Conservative victory at the polls. A few days later the Curragh Mutiny revealed the strength of Unionist sentiments in the upper echelons of the Army. Late in April,

successful gun-running at Larne and other Northern ports opened the Government to charges of at best weakness and incompetence and, at worse, partiality to Unionist claims. The Government's Irish policy was a shambles; optimistic expectations of a smooth transition to Home Rule in which all parties accepted the rules of an overtly liberal political order had been destroyed. Connolly, notwithstanding his Socialism, had shared something of this optimism. Its destruction, before the outbreak of the War, left its mark on his judgements about Socialist strategy.

His expectations were bruised further by the actions of the Protestant working class. In July 1912, Protestant workers expelled not just Roman Catholics from the shipyards, but also those who would not back militant Unionism. This included any who supported Independent Labour. Connolly's own attempts to build effective trade union organisation were hampered severely by the Home Rule furore, by his own clear position on the National Question, and by the fact that the ITGWU was an Irish and not a British organisation. Protestant sectarianism was a crippling handicap:

> Our fight is a fight not only against the bosses but against the political and religious bigotry which destroys all feeling of loyalty to a trade union ... the feeling of the city is so violently Orange and anti-Home Rule at present that our task has been a hard one all along.[4]

The formal institutions of the Belfast Labour Movement declined in their representativeness. Socialist influence grew on the Trades Council, but this both produced and was assisted by the withdrawal of trade union branches dominated by Unionists.[5] In the Spring of 1914 the Trades Council's claim to speak for Belfast's workers against Partition showed how insulated its debates had become.[6] Similarly, Connolly's view at the 1914 Irish Trades Union Congress that Partition might be stopped by industrial action demonstrated an incredible myopia about the Belfast situation:

> ... were the Labour movement able to call out the textile operatives of Belfast or even its spinners, and to keep them out until Ulster threw in her lot with Ireland, the paralysis of industry and loss of profit to Belfast capitalists would frighten the guns out of the hands of the Carsonite army without the shedding of a single drop of blood.[7]

Although Connolly did not claim that this strategy was instantly applicable he clearly saw it as worth consideration. Moreover his diagnosis suggests a repeated theme in his analysis of Ulster: that economic self-interest would dissolve sectarian loyalties. Before looking in more detail at Connolly's argument, it is important to emphasise how far removed his scenario was from the Belfast of 1914. Few textile workers were organised – those that were belonged often to a union dominated by Unionist organisers. Connolly's own union, despite its non-sectarian

position had only minimal success outside the Catholic working class. Even if it could have mobilised its members against Partition – and its organisational weakness made this doubtful – such action could be characterised as essentially Nationalist.

Eventually, at the end of July 1914, Connolly acknowledged that Protestant workers were fervent supporters of the Unionist cause:

> We here in Belfast are just in the grip of a group of reactionaries who for their base class purpose have turned the attention of all away from all questions of social regeneration and plunged us into a maelstrom of evil passions where all have lost the power of self-control. The workers of the North-East corner are abandoning themselves body and soul to the leadership of the Orange ascendancy.[8]

Gone was his earlier optimism that Unionist opposition was temporary, that the Orange ascendancy was 'in the paroxysms of its death-struggle' and that once Home Rule had been established 'the old relations of Protestant and Catholic (would) begin to melt and dissolve'.[9]

Working Class Unionism raised fundamental problems for Connolly both as a Nationalist and as a Socialist. Earlier analysis showed how he became committed to a Gaelic interpretation of Irish identity. He was aware that this carried difficulties for him as a union organiser in Belfast, but he was prepared to accept the risk. Late in 1911, he lectured to some Belfast Socialists on Irish subjects:

> it does not do me much good from the point of view of the Union in this Orange hole, but we must chance that ...[10]

Beneath this attachment to a specific and controversial characterisation of Irish identity, there was an assumption about the natural indivisibility of Ireland. Wartime controversies would produce a contrast with a nation that he viewed as an artificial construct:

> Belgium as a nation is, so to speak, but a creation of yesterday – an artificial product of the schemes of statesmen. Whereas, the frontiers of Ireland, the ineffaceable marks of the separate existence of Ireland, are as old as Europe itself, the handiwork of the Almighty, not of politicians. And as the marks of Ireland's separate nationality were not made by politicians, so they cannot be unmade by them.[11]

The assertion ignored – or was intended perhaps to foreclose – controversy over competing definitions of Irish identity: the Anglo–Irish, the cross-class Unionism of the North, Home Rulers who visualised an Irish future as part of the British Empire, Sinn Feiners and Gaelic League enthusiasts who sought an 'Irish Ireland'. The geophysical basis could be employed to argue that any characterisation of Irish identity should incorporate the varied experiences of those who inhabited the island. But any such general claim left open the issue of its feasibility. The growth of Unionist opposition to Home Rule demonstrated the limitations of

Connolly's emphasis on Gaelic tradition, but more fundamentally it raised doubts about the feasibility of any synthesis.

Northern developments also raised difficulties for Connolly the Socialist. These can be approached through his belief – shared by many of his Socialist contemporaries – that there was a normal pattern of development for working-class politics: the more advanced the capitalism, the more radical the working class. But this was clearly not so in Belfast:

> According to all Socialist theories North-East Ulster, being the most developed industrially, ought to be the quarter in which class lines of cleavage, politically and industrially, should be the most pronounced and class rebellion the most common.
>
> As a cold matter of fact, it is the happy hunting ground of the slave driver and the home of the least rebellious slaves in the industrial world.[12]

A dominant feature of Connolly's explanation was the emphasis on ruling-class manipulation. Sectarian emotions were heightened as an efficient means of preventing the formation of an economically and politically united working class. Unionist aristocrats and capitalists could be presented as one side of a manipulative ritual which was completed by the obfuscatory practices of reactionary Nationalists:

> The question of Home Government, the professional advocacy of it, and the professional opposition to it, is the greatest asset in the hands of reaction in Ireland, the never-failing decoy to lure the workers into the bogs of religious hatred and social stagnation.[13]

This presentation of Unionist/Nationalist conflict as a diversion from the 'real' class struggle suggested there were grounds for optimism. Settlement of the Home Rule controversy would kill the plausibility of such a distinction and permit the emergence of a politically unified working class. Socialist propagandists could prepare for this by informing Protestant workers of their real class interests and exposing the mythical quality and damaging consequences of cherished historical beliefs. Connolly's underlying optimism could be based on conventional Socialist grounds, but the emphasis on manipulation was also made by orthodox Nationalists who saw Protestant activities as deviant and requiring special explanation. This commonly held view would be expressed clearly by Roger Casement at his Old Bailey Trial in the Summer of 1916:

> We aimed at uniting all Irishmen in a natural and national bond of cohesion based on mutual self-respect. Our hope was a natural one, and if left to ourselves, not hard to accomplish. If external forces of disintegration would but leave us alone we were sure that Nature itself would bring us together.[14]

Occasionally Connolly suggested that the bases for working-class Unionism were more complex, and thus implied that the commitment

was likely to be more enduring than the manipulation emphasis suggested. In one comment written in the Spring of 1913, he suggested that the historical development of the Protestant community helped to explain the continuing strength of cross-class coalitions:

> ... the Protestant always saw that the kings and aristocrats of England were opposed by the people whom he most feared; and from recognising that it was but an easy step to regard his cause as identical with theirs.
>
> This is the reason – their unfortunate isolation as strangers holding a conquered land in fee for rulers alien to its people – that the so-called Scotch of Ulster have fallen away from and developed antagonism to political reform and mental freedom.[15]

Subsequently, Connolly noted that Presbyterians had once been discriminated against, alongside Catholics, but following their own emancipation, they had become part of a Protestant bloc. He subsumed this phenomenon under a general claim:

> There is no use blaming them. It is common experience in history that as each order fought its way upward into the circle of governing classes, it joined with its former tyrants in an endeavour to curb the aspirations of these orders still unfree.[16]

Hence the Catholic working class, the most oppressed of all, would be the agent of final emancipation.

This argument at least had the merit of extending beyond a simple claim of ideological manipulation and thereby indicating some of the historical roots of sectarianism. Nevertheless it also implied that this history was one in which many Protestants had subordinated their essential interests to those of their rulers. Moreover, its historical status was used by Connolly to suggest that Protestant opposition to Home Rule was anachronistic:

> there is no economic class in Ireland today whose interests as a class are bound up with the Union. The Irish landlords who had indeed something to fear from a Home Rule Parliament elected largely by tenant farmers, as would have been the case in the past, have now made their bargain under the various Land Purchase Acts, and being economically secured are now politically indifferent. Only the face of religious bigotry remains as an asset to Unionism.[17]

This dismissal licensed Connolly's derisive response to the Unionist campaign against Home Rule. Since he saw no significant economic interests at stake, he characterised the demonstrations of Unionist opposition as insignificant. The Home Rule issue had its value as a manipulatory tactic but since nothing crucial was at risk, it could eventually be abandoned as a source of political division. The Orange ascendancy was:

> a dying cause ... even although in the paroxysms of its death struggle it assumes the appearance of an energy like unto that of health.[18]

Unionist threats could be dismissed as theatrical:

> the gun today is a wooden gun and the threats today can only terrify those who see things with the eyes of children ...[19]

Yet Connolly's analysis of class interests raised serious problems. Certainly the Irish landlords were a dying class, in the process of being abandoned by their British cousins, but the vehemence of Conservative and Southern Unionist opposition to Home Rule demonstrated clearly that the abandonment was far from straightforward. More seriously there was the question of the Northern capitalists. Connolly said very little about the attitude of this class towards the Union, and only considered its relationship to Protestant workers through the persistent emphasis on manipulation. At this point, faced with such absences, it is necessary to stand back from the limitations of Connolly's analysis.

An exploration of the bases of Ulster Unionism raises complex problems which have been examined in a valuable fashion in some recent studies.[20] Connolly's assessment obviously ignored the question of how Northern capitalists perceived their interests. Typically, these were viewed as dependent on the continuing integrity of the Empire. Home Rule and its alleged consequences could damage imperial credibility. Thus a picture emerges of Belfast as part of a developed industrial capitalism, one apex in a 'golden triangle' completed by Liverpool and Glasgow. The contrast with the remainder of the Irish economy was acute, and leads back to Connolly's paradox – a developed capitalism with a working class little interested in Independent Labour, let alone Socialist, politics. Instead it was willing to accept landed or capitalist leadership and to absorb and employ sectarian arguments. Indeed, Unionist politicians could be pressurised into more sectarian paths by the demands of working-class supporters.

The impact of the paradox rests of course on the pervasiveness of a simple model of working-class radicalisation under capitalism. Disputes about the legitimacy of political institutions, divergent characterisations of national identity, incompatible religious claims – all in the last analysis should be seen as diversionary and temporary. Eventually, 'real' economic conflicts would come to dominate and would remould political alignments. Such a reductionist optimism left its mark on many Second International Socialists. Faced with recalcitrant facts they sought explanations that protected the integrity of the overall framework. In this context, Connolly's assessment of working-class Unionism was typical. From August 1914, such accommodations had far less credibility. The mobilisation of working classes behind national claims and symbols was too great a series of anomalies. Similarly the emergence of mass Fascisms and the lengthy post-1945 stabilisation of capitalism highlighted the need to abandon any such simple perspective on working-class radicalisation.

Yet Connolly's analyses of working-class Unionism are cited frequently. Much Socialist discussion of the issue has taken his claims as a valuable starting point.[21] But subsequent argument is limited by the terms of his argument and more fundamentally by a set of expectations that stand at variance with seven decades of working-class history. Rather assessments of Connolly's diagnosis should begin with the recognition that class conflict, omnipresent under capitalism, has demonstrated almost infinite varieties of extent and expression. Faced with such complexities, attempts to understand a particular development through employing an image of the 'normal' which has been attained only rarely is to court analytical sterility.

One route to a more thorough appreciation of the complexities of Protestant working-class politics in Belfast is to start with an awareness of the extent to which developments paralleled those in British industrial centres.[22] In 1885, Alexander Bowman, Secretary of the Belfast Trades Council, and essentially a Liberal stood as an Independent Labour candidate in North Belfast. It was a development familiar in several towns and cities over the next decade as respectable trade unionists encountered the limitations of bourgeois-dominated political organisations, and moved slowly and perhaps reluctantly to a more independent position. Similarly, the formation of the Independent Labour Party in January 1893 was matched by the inauguration of a Belfast ILP. The city was not exempt from the politically significant industrial experiences of the 1890s. In October 1895, many of Belfast's engineering workers became involved in a lengthy strike that was a significant milestone on the road to the Engineers' lockout of 1897–8.[23] By the middle of the decade, the previously cautious Trades Council included a minority of Socialist delegates. This history can be presented in terms applicable to far more than one city: sporadic political interventions with some claims to independence, the initiation of Socialist propaganda, an industrial dispute with radicalising potential, the winning-over of some trade-union activists to a Socialist politics. Even some of the limits to the Belfast development can be presented in a fashion that inhibits any claims to singularity. Belfast ILP propagandists encountered verbal and physical attacks – some fuelled by religious emotions – made little progress and eventually seemed to lose heart. Yet such obstacles, frustrations and disillusion were encountered often by their British counterparts. The engineering dispute left little legacy in terms of working-class radicalisation, yet the political consequences of contemporary British industrial disputes were often ambiguous. In particular, perhaps, any political legacy of the Engineers' struggles was very limited. Many craftsmen remained ready to seek benefits through conventional industrial practices rather than through new political loyalties. Similarly, the growth of a Socialist group on the Trades Council might have been slow, but it could

suggest that Belfast working-class politics were developing along lines shared with many British cities.

Such an expectation appeared to be borne out by the response to the formation of the Labour Representation Committee. In June 1903, Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald addressed the inaugural meeting of the Belfast LRC. Subsequently, preparations were made to contest North Belfast with William Walker, City Councillor and Carpenters' official as the candidate.[24] Deaths of two sitting Members meant that Walker fought the seat three times in less than two years. The margin of defeat was narrow in September 1905, and even closer in the General Election four months later.[25] In this context of growing self-confidence it was perhaps appropriate that early in 1907 the city was the venue for the Labour Party Conference, the only occasion that that body has met outside Britain.

Yet Labour's position was arguably in decline – shortly afterwards, a third contest in North Belfast saw a heavy defeat for Walker.[26] Labour never again reached the electoral heights of 1905 and 1906. It is time to turn to the question of Belfast's distinctive features. In doing so, it should be emphasised that a decline in electoral popularity from the level of 1906 was not unique to Belfast Labour. In Britain, the losses were recouped; in Belfast they were not. Precision about why and how Belfast was different is essential.

Attention has been drawn earlier to the limited political legacy of the 1895 engineering dispute. Employment in the shipyards subsequently expanded through to 1914 with brief interruptions for the depressions of 1904–5 and 1908–9. In this environment traditional craft unionism could operate effectively. Shipyard workers did not need help from the Trades Council, nor were they led to query existing economic and political arrangements. Similarly effective craft practices existed in some British centres at that time. The typical consequences were a vigorous sectionalism, the inhibition of any wider consciousness and the maintenance of traditional political loyalties. Within the Belfast context, the effectiveness of craft organisations in the economically vital shipyards provided conditions conducive to sectarian growth.[27] One legacy of such trade practices was the domination of skilled trades by Protestants.[28] Effective job control typically served to demarcate in terms of skill, industry and respectability and provided that the craftsmen's world remained stable, it served as a bulwark against radical politics. In Belfast it also helped to demarcate in terms of religion. The qualities often presented as characteristic of the skilled worker could be presented as the monopoly of one religious community.

Economic and trade union developments provided a basis for sectarianism, but assessment of its complexities requires an examination of the relevant ideologies. Typically, emphasis has been placed on the role of

Orange culture with its celebrations of Protestant virtues and supremacy. Working-class political organisations frequently bear the marks of the ideological preoccupations of their formative periods. Initial moves towards political action by the Belfast Trades Council were swamped by the first explosion of opposition to Home Rule in 1886. Some leading figures on the Trades Council were prominent in the Orange Order. Such connections should be placed in the context of the growing involvement of Conservative leaders in this hitherto largely working-class body. The strengthening of one more weapon against Home Rule involved cross-class alliances under landed and bourgeois leadership. The negative implications for the development of an effective working class politics are obvious. The Orange phenomenon can be viewed as an exceptionally effective strategy for integrating an industrial working class into a capitalist society. The argument slides back towards Connolly's claim about manipulation.[29]

The question – how can workers be integrated into a capitalist system – provides a productive basis for investigating much working-class politics. Even the most efficient solutions can carry complex consequences. Orange ideology was not simply a manipulative device that could be employed or suspended at the behest of Unionist leaders. Rather some of its manifestations could be unwelcome. Orange enthusiasm could lead to conflict between Protestant workers and the authorities. Its language could serve as a currency for expressing grievances internal to the Protestant community and in doing so, class antagonism could be articulated.

This possibility was demonstrated at a by-election in South Belfast during 1902.[30] The official Unionist machine nominated a Fellow of All Souls'. He was opposed by an Orange shipyard worker Tom Sloan, claiming to stand as a representative of the Protestant working class. Such workers were characterised as exponents of a vigorous unblemished Protestantism, in contrast to Unionist MPs who were effete, readily absorbed into the Conservative's parliamentary majority and thus were poor defenders of Protestant interests. Sloan won, provoking the question in Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*, 'Is Belfast Awakening?'[31] This optimism built on Sloan's proletarian roots and expressed labour sympathies; it ignored his sectarianism. As an MP he was sympathetic to labour demands, but his support remained within a sectarian framework. When the Independent Orange Order developed in the aftermath of Sloan's victory, this could not be characterised as a revolt of Protestant proletarians against the domination of Orange affairs by landlords and capitalists, but was much more a localised response to the disciplining of working class zealots. Orange radicalism could be blocked easily if Unionist leaders took a tougher line against the Balfour Government's alleged partiality towards Nationalist and clerical demands. When

Unionist MPs did precisely this in 1904–5, the disruptive impact of the critics was contained. The Orange community was far from monolithic; its relationships could not be appreciated through a concentration on the manipulatory aspects. There was some scope for the articulation of grievances that blended class and sectarian loyalties. Yet such conflicts remained almost wholly within a Protestant framework and provided no basis for a belief that Orange radicalism could help to produce a working-class consciousness that could transcend religious divisions. The Orange component was both more complex and more resistant than Connolly's analysis suggested.

At least, his discussion of the Protestant working class considered, albeit inadequately, the Orange dimension. More seriously, he paid practically no attention to a second ideological component with wider and graver implications for a revolutionary socialist.[32] This was expressed in the perspective of the Belfast LRC during its peak years of 1903–7. Leading trade unionists in the city viewed British developments as offering appropriate standards. They argued that Belfast wage levels should be comparable with those of British industrial cities and not those of less developed Irish centres. They affiliated their own LRC to the British counterpart. Such comparisons and initiatives were essentially Unionist, as the Trades Council's newspaper, the *Belfast Labour Chronicle* made clear:

> we stand forth to-day for independence, the most hopeful and virile party in British politics.[33]

The difficulty in combining Unionist and Labour allegiances soon became clear. Walker in his first North Belfast campaign not only acknowledged his personal opposition to Home Rule, but under pressure from the Belfast Protestant Association responded positively to a sectarian questionnaire.[34] His tactics produced protests from British Labour leaders. In theory they had no agreed position on Home Rule, but most significant members of the organisation remained true to their Liberal origins and supported the policy.[35] Here was a fundamental problem for Protestant trade unionists wishing to argue a Labour case in Belfast. For the moment Walker could claim that British Labour tended to favour Home Rule since reactionary Ulster MPs had been consistent opponents of progressive labour reforms.[36] Such a rationalisation was a brittle basis for a Labour Unionism. As the Home Rule issue became more urgent and the pressures for Protestant solidarity intensified so the viability of such a Labour presence diminished within the Protestant community.

The problem is not grasped adequately however, if it is characterised as a situation in which Walker and his associates combined Unionist and Labour commitments with the former being the stronger and in a crisis proving to be decisive. Rather the Labour Unionist position claimed to

be a genuinely Progressive politics. The underlying justification shared some features with other Labour and Socialist arguments including that of Connolly. Traditional sources of conflict would give way to a preoccupation with economic and social questions,[37] but for Belfast Labour leaders, this prognostication could be employed to stigmatise many priorities of Nationalist Ireland as reactionary and undeserving of Socialist sympathy. Home Rule was a regressive proposal; so was the recent enthusiasm for the revival of the Irish language. The argument was basically the same:

> anything which tends to divide the people into separate and opposing factors is evil, and all which tends to unification is useful and desirable.[38]

The harmful consequences of Home Rule would flow in part from the consequential growth of clerical influence:

> there is no victory in changing lay for clerical tyranny in any country.[39]

The stagnation of much of the Irish economy had led to Nationalist trade unionists favouring Protection to support inefficient industries:

> The Irish trade unionists outside Belfast are protectionists of the most extreme type. Mere tinkering with tariffs is not enough for them. They want men and goods from other countries kept out of this country at all costs. The dislike of men and things English is astonishing and ought to be a revelation to those good people who believe the nationalist party to be a wing of the party of progress.[40]

This identification of Protectionism with backwardness and reaction was common in British Labour circles before 1914. In contrast the Belfast Labour leadership appeared to proclaim that outward-looking optimism that would be destroyed so thoroughly in August 1914:

> Class ties are stronger than those of race and the workers of all lands and climes have a common class interest.[41]

But an elaboration of this sentiment injected a complexity:

> Nationalism is dead or dying and Imperialism is the transition stage to international union of the proletariat all the world over..[42]

At one level this reflected the insensitive and crude Progressivism of much Second International thinking. Modernisation in large units was a prerequisite for Socialist development. Industrial workers were a progressive force; peasants were not. Thus the interests of Belfast workers could be safeguarded only within the United Kingdom where they could be forwarded by an expanding labour movement; under Home Rule they would be swamped by backward rural elements under clerical influence. Thus this 'progressive' labour position shared much with other Unionist diagnoses that explained Northern growth and Southern backwardness in terms of the interaction between individual character and religious

belief.[43] Moreover, the claimed dichotomy between nationalism and internationalism was superficial. This Labour Unionism aimed at a better deal for workers within the context of a democratised United Kingdom and a flourishing British Empire.

In 1911, Connolly entered into an ill-tempered and discursive polemic with William Walker on whether Irish Labour should develop its own party or should work through the British Labour Movement.[44] Amongst the recriminations Connolly sought to expose the hollowness of Walker's claim that he was the true internationalist. Rather such a claim failed to disguise the underlying dependence on British imperialism:

> the conception of Internationalism accepted by our Comrades of the ILP in Belfast required for its spread the flash of the sword of militarism and the roar of a British eighty-ton gun.[45]

This indictment was not relevant simply to Walker and his Belfast colleagues. It applied also to several representatives of British Labour who combined such democratic and social imperialism with support for Home Rule. Arthur Henderson once gained applause from a Belfast audience for a concise presentation of this Labour perspective:

> They could not have a sound empire without a sound heart, and they could only have that by having in the heart of the empire a people that were contented and prosperous.[46]

Once again, analysis of the Protestant working class uncovers elements that were not unique to Belfast. In that specific context, the combination of effective craft unionism, democratic and social imperialism, and militant Protestantism led in the context of Home Rule crisis to developments that eroded the optimism of both liberals and socialist. But the underlying problem for a revolutionary socialist such as Connolly obviously went beyond the distinctiveness of Orange rhetoric and a working-class split along sectarian lines. The analysis of Labour Unionism demonstrates a working-class movement attached materially and ideologically to an imperialist state. It was a problem whose ramifications extended far beyond Ulster. The question soon to be posed by Lenin begins to emerge. The peculiarities of Ulster merge into the general question of the deradicalisation of Labour and Socialist organisations.

Connolly's American experiences had led him to propose Industrial Unionism as a response to the problem of organisational conservatism. His continuing commitment to this strategy after 1910 remained largely in isolation from his analysis of working-class Unionism except insofar as he suggested militant industrial action as a force that could disperse sectarian illusions. It took the events of the Dublin Lock Out and the outbreak of War to lead him towards a more radical and inclusive consideration of these issues. Only in his polemic with Walker is there

some sort of hint that complex questions of Socialist strategy could be encapsulated in what could appear to be just a Nationalist–Unionist argument. The controversy should be placed in the context of an Irish Labour Movement whose factional alignments were experiencing a transformation. The old division between Belfast Labour leaders with their 'progressive' doctrines and more socially conservative trade unionists from the South had ensured normally the dominance of 'advanced' Belfast. But as Northern self-confidence waned, a new strategic option emerged in the form of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union – inclusive organisation, militant action, its symbol the fiery rhetoric of Jim Larkin. Now it was plausible if simplistic to link working-class Nationalism and syndicalism in contrast to the discreet reformism of Belfast Labour Unionism.

Such was the choice that might appear to confront Irish Socialists in the Summer of 1911. Yet one significant counterfactual argument must be considered. Larkin's industrial debut in Ireland had been made in the Belfast dock and transport disputes of 1907.[47] As an official of the British-based National Union of Dock Labourers he mobilised workers with little tradition of trade union organisation, in militant action. 'Belfast 1907' in its tactics, its violence, its ethos of workers' revolt provided a foretaste of what was to happen across sizeable sections of British industry from 1910 onwards. In terms of the city's politics the disputes have been interpreted as a glimpse of the feasibility of united working class political action. Larkin was a Home Ruler; he spoke alongside Unionist trade union officials. The strikers were supported by the Independent Orange Order and eventually by the political leader of Catholic West Belfast, Joe Devlin. Eventually workers' solidarity gave way to more traditional confrontation beween police and Nationalists, but some commentators have seen this fragile and transient unity as a vital lost opportunity. Thus Emmet Larkin, having noted the union of the I.O.O. the Nationalists and the local LRC, comments how:

> This ... did not survive the ending of the labour troubles. This breakup of an alliance so pregnant with possibilities was the real tragedy and lesson of Belfast in 1907.[48]

This verdict should be regarded with scepticism. Previous analysis has noted how the effective operation of craft unionism limited the possibilities for political radicalisation amongst skilled workers and provided scope for sectarian developments. The events of 1907, relevant only to semi- and unskilled workers would not change this situation. Moreover the dispute offered no challenge to the views of those such as Walker with their synthesis of 'Progressive' social views and opposition to Home Rule. Indeed, the eventual erosion of workers' unity could strengthen their assessment that Home Rule was a divisive and

anachronistic irrelevance. Most fundamentally, the counterfactual case depends heavily on the claim that industrial solidarity and militancy were likely to promote political harmony of a labour or socialist kind. In fact a tough response to the intransigence of the employers was compatible with any position on the National Question. Involvement in a strike did not solve such divisions but pigeon-holed them. Once the disputes had ended then they reappeared.[49]

Connolly's Belfast years saw the destruction of any hopes of an effective non-sectarian working class political movement within the city. Whilst it is difficult to believe that the complexity of local politics ever permitted much space for such a development, it is important to remember that in several respects the politics of working-class Belfast were not unique. The pattern of trade union development and the support given by prominent Labour leaders to social imperialism had their British equivalents. The difference came in that within the Belfast context, the limited attempts to build a labour presence withered in the face of the Home Rule crisis. Confronted with such a discouraging prospect, Connolly faced the possibility that the underdeveloped South might offer a better prospect for revolutionary socialists. This implied a more complex assessment of the potential for working class radicalism than that implied by the 'normal' model of working class development. Yet the impact of the Home Rule crisis had not just been to destroy whatever Socialist potential remained within the Protestant working class. Orange reaction provoked its Nationalist counterpart – and for the Labour Movement this could be even more dangerous:

> Labour is ever encouraged to revolt against the Orange sweaters of the North, but nothing must be done to encourage any such revolt against the Nationalist sweaters of the South ... The revolt of Labour when it can be manipulated as an asset of the Home Rule movement is all right, but the revolt of Labour against the slum landlords, grabbers and sweating employers who control that movement is a very naughty, unpatriotic, anti-Irish, irreligious, blasphemous, immoral, factionist, traitorous, cloven-hoof sort of iniquity that ought to be suppressed.[50]

Connolly's attempt to synthesise the claims of Nationality and Socialism was not just threatened by the actions of the Protestant working class. Further south, his position would be tested by the Dublin Lock Out of 1913.

Chapter 7

Lock Out

During the Autumn of 1913, Sir George Askwith, Chief Labour Adviser at the Board of Trade travelled to Dublin in an attempt to resolve a dispute that had locked out 25,000 of the city's workers. He was no stranger to seemingly intractable industrial conflicts. His autobiography presents him struggling in those immediate pre-war years with the complexities of the first national strikes on the railways and in the mines, and with the vehement resentments of workers in a bewildering variety of more localised disputes. Sometimes, Askwith played some part in the achievement of a settlement; in Dublin he failed. The locked-out workers and their dependents, perhaps 100,000 people in all, struggled on through the remainder of the year before gradually returning to work in the early months of 1914. In its longevity and in its demonstrations of class-based hostility, the Dublin Lock Out is prominent, even in the industrial climate of 1910–14. Askwith's characterisation of its distinctiveness went beyond an appreciation of the worker's determination:

> It was a very different disturbance ... If the disputes in the ports and inland cities of Great Britain had been chiefly based upon economic causes, the serious riots in Dublin, although founded on poverty, low wages and bad conditions included determination to establish the transport workers' union as the 'one big union' in Ireland, and to put into practice the doctrines of syndicalism.[1]

This verdict raises the question of how far 'Dublin 1913' should be seen as an attempt to apply Connolly's doctrine of Industrial Unionism with its anticipated radical potential.

The grievances that fuelled the anger of the locked-out workers and their families were long-standing. Attention has been paid already to the appalling experiences of large numbers of the Dublin working class: low wages, irregular work, obscene housing, high death rates. An effective collective resistance had begun only with the arrival of James Larkin's Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Its significant impact on Dublin began in 1911 and attention soon focused on its determined use of the 'sympathetic strike'.[2] Connolly saw the tactic as a recognition of the indivisibility of working-class interests, but in Dublin its popularity was a consequence of the city's employment structure:

> ... it was not mere cold reasoning that gave it birth in Dublin. In that city it was born out of desperate necessity .. what is known as general or unskilled labour

bears a greater proportion to the whole body of workers than elsewhere. And hence the workers are a more movable, fluctuating body, are more often as individuals, engaged in totally dissimilar industries than in the English cities, where skilled trades absorb so great a proportion and keep them so long in the one class of industry.[3]

The union achieved some success and its membership increased. In 1911, its affiliation to the ITUC was for 4,000 members; a year later this had risen to 8,000 and by 1913 to 14,000.[4] The expansion of the Transport Workers' significantly changed the style of Irish Trade Unionism and in Dublin it established a significant presence amongst the unskilled workers.

Yet the growth of the ITGWU must be kept in proportion. Its rising membership was encouraging, but hardly demonstrated a hegemony over the Irish working class. Its increasing prominence within the ITUC owed something to factional manoeuvring.[5] On the Dublin Trades Council, its delegates needed the support of radical Nationalists.[6] Outside the principal centres of population it counted for little and in Belfast its prospects were cramped by its reputation as a Nationalist Union. Whatever distinctive qualities it injected into Irish industrial life came essentially from its Dublin activities. Yet the union was not an organisation brought to beleaguered Dubliners from outside. Its priorities, its strategy and its culture were informed by the experiences and demands of many of the city's workers.

Perceptions of its distinctiveness were moulded inevitably by the personality of James Larkin. Even many sympathetic to the struggles of the Dublin workers expressed their reservations about his lack of tact. His style posed obstacles for both conventional trade unionists and middle class sympathisers. A *New Statesman* portrait in the dispute's early days epitomised this distancing:

He is one of those born revolutionaries who know not diplomacy, but who believe that the Kingdom of Heaven must be taken by violence today and tomorrow and the day after ... His utopia, we feel, would be a world where a general strike was going on all the time. Big and black and fierce, he is a Syndicalist of the street corners ... He calls to the surface the very depth of unrest. His theory seems to be that a city should never be allowed a moment's peace so long as there remains a single poor man whose wrongs have not been righted. His genius ... is inflamatory. He preaches turmoil.[7]

Reservations about Larkin were not restricted to the unpredictable consequences of his fiery radicalism. Connolly's revolutionary credentials were unassailable, yet he had severe misgivings about Larkin's autocratic tendencies:

I begin to fear that our friend Jim has arrived at his highest elevation, and that he will pull us all down with him in his fall ... He must rule or will not work, and in the present stage of the Labour Movement he has us at his mercy.

And he knows it, and is using his power unscrupulously I regret to say ... I am sick of all this playing to one man ...[8]

The revolt of the Dublin workers was based on harsh material factors, yet discussion of the dispute, its origins and possible solutions centred around Larkin's volcanic personality.

Such a dominant image is significant, it helped to mould the responses of contemporaries, but it was a caricature. Larkin, like A.J. Cook and Arthur Scargill, spoke for workers in revolt, not just against employers, but also against cautious trade union officials. He envisaged the union, not simply as an industrial instrument, but as the basis for the flowering of a socialist culture.

But by the Summer of 1913, industrial conflict in Dublin had become symbolised in the clash of two individuals. William Martin Murphy was the dominant figure in the city's business community. A living refutation of the Unionist claim that the Nationalist tradition did not produce efficient entrepreneurs, his austere style was a universe removed from Larkin's rumbustious agitation. His business interests were diverse: railway contractor, hotel and department store owner, proprietor of the *Irish Independent*, a director of the city's United Tramway Company. A firm disciplinarian, he might acknowledge the existence of old-style conservative trade unions, but his antipathy towards the Transport Workers' was total. In particular, the doctrine of the 'sympathetic strike' challenged Murphy's perception of managerial prerogatives. Larkin's weekly the *Irish Worker* lampooned Murphy as the quintessential ruthless capitalist: the latter was determined to resist the union's incursions into his businesses.[9]

Throughout August 1913 the tension increased as Larkin's attempts to organise workers in the *Independent* and the tramway company were met by Murphy's dismissals of union members. In response, the doctrine of sympathetic action was employed against a leading wholesaler who refused to boycott Murphy's newspapers. Eventually, on 26 August, the organised section of the tramwaymen struck for better wages, shorter hours and an end to the most onerous management practices. The dispute had begun.

Some respectable trade union leaders were concerned about the risk of violent confrontation and over the weekend of 30–31 August this occurred in a dramatic form. Police, already overworked and underpaid, took out their frustrations against pickets and uninvolved bystanders. Connolly and another trade unionist, William Partridge were arrested on incitement charges; Larkin, sought by the police, appeared dramatically in disguise at a banned meeting in Sackville Street. The result was further police violence against a crowd composed of the committed and the curious. Subsequently, the police encountered angry demonstrations

in some working-class districts, truncheons were used vigorously, houses entered, furniture smashed, the occupants assaulted. The weekend's riots produced two deaths. They also transformed the dispute into something much more fundamental.[10]

The police action raised questions of civil liberties. A Liberal MP observing the violence in Sackville Street saw no provocation. Rather, he had witnessed 'the most brutal constabulary in the world ... the police baton and kick men prostrate on the ground'.[11] The British TUC already in session at Manchester, heard an emissary from Dublin and passed a resolution condemning the police. Keir Hardie travelled to Dublin, attended the funeral of one of the victims and spoke at a mass meeting. A combination of liberal principles and trade union solidarity was forging a vital yet ultimately ambiguous link between the British and Irish labour movements.[12]

The weekend's fury helped to ensure in Dublin that any hope of conciliation was destroyed. Trade union officials of all persuasions had to acknowledge that any chance of an easy settlement was dead. The police action heightened the determination of strikers and intensified class consciousness on both sides. Working-class neighbourhoods responded predictably to their weekend's experiences; 'respectable' Dublin found its voice in the leader-columns of most of the City's press where middle-class neuroses about 'mob' violence were given uninhibited expression.[13] Most crucially, many of Dublin's employers, encouraged by Murphy, concluded that here was a valuable opportunity to destroy Larkin's union. Employees were presented with a stark choice – the union, or a job.

Connolly was involved in the dispute throughout. He travelled to Dublin following the tramwaymen's walk out and was arrested rapidly on a charge of incitement. Sentenced to three months, he went on hunger strike and was soon released. During Larkin's subsequent absences – either in jail or on British speaking tours – he led the embattled union. He played a significant and judicious part in the attempts to gain more support from British unions. When the dispute was over, he pondered its significance for his view of socialist strategy.[14]

One useful starting point is a consideration of the degree to which the ITGWU could be seen as embodying distinctive strategic principles and objectives. Did it come anywhere near to Connolly's ideal of Industrial Unionism, vital to the overthrow of capitalism and the inauguration of a Socialist Commonwealth? If it had any distinctive qualities should these be explained in terms of its specifically Irish – or perhaps Dublin – environment?[15] Attention has been drawn to the need not to exaggerate the union's influence by 1913. If the analysis is extended from a consideration of the degree of support to an estimation of its significance, then once again caution is needed. Certainly, there were radical facets: the

syndicalist proclivities of leaders, Larkin's based on emotion, Connolly's on theoretical argument and American experience, the tactical use of the sympathetic strike, the commitment of the membership, once impoverished and unorganised, and now growing in self-confidence. Yet the union's programme was conventional enough. The objective might be a Socialist society but the more immediate goals – a legal Eight Hour Day, work for the unemployed, pensions at sixty, adult suffrage, nationalisation of transport and land – would not have raised eyebrows in the most respectable British trade union circles. They even included Compulsory Arbitration Courts – an enthusiasm of Larkin that found little support amongst his British counterparts.[16]

Moreover, throughout the dispute, Connolly combined industrial and political toughness with a readiness to negotiate. But the 'all or nothing' style of many Dublin employers helped to promote the view that this was a clash of irreconcilable interests. They thereby gave credence to their own claim that the union's leaders were thoroughgoing revolutionaries. Certainly Connolly drew political conclusions from the dispute, but neither he nor Larkin saw the conflict as a decisive step towards an easily attainable political objective. In fact, Connolly, in one article, saw the formation of a Conciliation Board as a solution to the immediate issue. The result would be a much more ordered system of industrial relations:

> let the Union proceed to organise all the workers possible, place all disputes as to wages before the Board, and only resort to a strike when agreement cannot be reached by the Board ... strikes would be rare.

A more co-operative system of bargaining would provide one basis for a wider transformation:

> Thus we will develop a social conscience, and lay the foundation for an orderly transformation of society ... into a more perfect and juster (sic) social order.[17]

This outlook contrasted sharply with the views of some radical contemporaries within the British trade union movement. Those responsible for *The Miners' Next Step* indicted the South Wales' Miners' Federation's attachment to conciliation. It had helped to depress real wages, it had lent credence to the coalowners' arguments; it had facilitated the rise of trade union oligarchs.[18] More generally, the syndicalist sentiments of the young Welsh radicals had much in common with Connolly's views but on this issue the discrepancy highlights the degree to which Connolly remained attached to an evolutionary view of Socialist growth. The Lock Out was certainly not seen by him as signposting a feasible short-cut to political power.

One plausible interpretation of the dispute would be that Dublin was experiencing a significant growth of 'New Unionism' almost a quarter of a century after this had occurred in several British centres, and Irish

industrialists and publicists were reacting with a hostility similar to that once demonstrated by their British counterparts. Yet in Britain, those 'New Unions' that had survived had become accepted elements within the industrial scene. Was it not reasonable to believe that Ireland would develop along similarly reformist lines? The British 'New Unions' like the ITGWU had often been founded and led by Socialists. They thus acquired a Socialist commitment but this was not complemented readily by a Socialist rank and file. Their membership could be attracted by immediate material benefits without consenting to the union's official political stance.[19] Was it not likely that a similar anti-climax awaited Larkin and Connolly?

Against this expectation, arguments can be adduced suggesting that the Transport Workers' need not become domesticated in the same fashion. Possibly in Nationalist Ireland the growth of militant trade unionism could be viewed as a threat to the economic order since industrial workers, along with many others, were predisposed to question the legitimacy of the British State. Once an industrial dispute raised questions of public order then such scepticism could be significant. But such a political argument meets with complex cross-currents. The Government enquiry into the police produced a conclusion calculated to boost the profits of whitewash manufacturers. The view that the police generally acted 'with conspicuous courage and patience' could be viewed as one more example of British insensitivity.[20] But the police concerned were Irishmen and were supported by a wide spectrum of 'decent' and visible Irish opinion. Nationalist traditions of hostility to the British State might affect Labour's style, but so might Nationalist reluctance to support a specifically class-based radicalism.

Perhaps a putative distinctiveness can be investigated more profitably through an emphasis on the under-development of much of the Irish economy, thereby providing a radical answer to Connolly's Belfast paradox. Arguably, many Dublin workers were integrated only marginally into the dominant institutions and mores of urban capitalism. They had entered a satiated labour market, propelled there by rural deprivation, often carrying memories of agrarian exploitation and possibly the belief that 'Direct Action' was an appropriate response to economic grievances. Unskilled, poorly paid, appallingly housed, they perhaps provided a potentially radical basis for Larkin's union. Once again, this characterisation raises the general issue of appropriate bases for working class radicalism. In some ways Dublin with its largely unskilled, underemployed, impoverished and traditionally unorganised working class was different from most British urban centres. The contrast perhaps indicates the extent to which such workers needed a separate Irish organisation. Within a broader British union, their distinctive needs could be all too readily marginalised. More elusively there arises the question of whether

such needs were likely to lead to a more radical industrial or political strategy. Did the divergence secrete a revolutionary opportunity or did it offer only the possibility of an aggressive trade unionism?

This raises a fundamental question: what political initiatives were available to this working class? In Britain, 'New Unionism', at least at the levels of officials, activists and programmes had made a substantial contribution to the emergence of the Labour Party. Arguably the scope for a comparable Irish development was restricted. At the 1912 ITUC Connolly had successfully moved a resolution for the formation of an Irish Labour Party but progress was extremely slow.[21] Connolly argued that Larkin evinced no enthusiasm for the project, but perhaps there was a more substantial difficulty than the mercurial quality of Larkin's interests.[22] The growth of the British LRC down to 1906 can be attributed in part to the political opportunities provided by an often old-fashioned and ineffective Liberalism. In contrast the Parliamentary Party and its constituency machinery still dominated the Nationalist political scene. Despite the problems posed for its strategy by Unionist mobilisation in the North, and by Liberal pusillanimity in London, it seemed likely to do so until Home Rule had been achieved. If the early prospects for a strong Labour Party along British lines were so unpromising, then it could seem that working-class interests would be served better by a campaign of aggressive industrial action.[23]

Yet Connolly had never accepted such a concentration of working class energies into the industrial arena. Throughout his 'Wobbly' period, and later he argued for a dual strategy of industrial organisation and political education. Hopefully, the consequences would be revolutionary, but his desire to avoid sectarian isolation had led to his involvement in the formation of the Irish Labour Party. For him in the Dublin of 1913, growing self-confidence and unity in the industrial sphere would be combined with a developing class solidarity at the ballot box. Supportive evidence that this happened as the result of the Lock Out is very limited. Labour already had a modest presence in the Dublin City Council: six members out of eighty in 1912 rising to eight the following year.[24] Any expectation that the Lock Out would produce a significant working class shift to Labour voting proved to be mistaken. In the elections of January 1914 only one Labour candidate was successful. Connolly still viewed such an electoral confrontation as the model for future growth. It:

> can in the future alone make labour politics a reality. It was the fight on the industrial battlefield being transferred and fought out by the same contestants on the political battlefield.[25]

Consolation could be sought in the overall vote; excuses could be found in the alleged malpractices of opponents; but one contributor to the Trades Council's post-mortem was more pessimistic:

there must be something wrong in the labour movement when only one of the Candidates was returned.[26]

These results can be employed to argue that the militancy of the Lock Out was extremely limited in its political consequences, and that the Irish Labour Movement contained no more radical potential than its British equivalent. Yet by the time the municipal contests were held, the Lock Out was crumbling. These contests did not offer a test of the claim that Dublin workers would move from militant and effective industrial solidarity to a more class-based politics. Rather, if there had been a dramatic shift to Labour in January 1914, this would have been much more a desperate search for a political alternative to a failing industrial strategy and far removed from Connolly's hope for a working class growing in unity and effectiveness on both fronts. The Dublin Lock Out reinforced the harsh experiences of Connolly's American years and worked against the optimistic style of his basic theorising.

The collapse of the Dublin workers' resistance cannot be separated from the complexities of Anglo–Irish trade union relationships. This essential connection led Connolly to ponder some central issues of socialist strategy. Many British trade union officials had grave reservations about Larkin's tactics and style. Even when the British TUC responded immediately to the reports of the Dublin riots, the mover of the resolution, James Sexton, offered his support in a back-handed fashion. Clearly unhappy about the ITGWU's aggressive tactics, he consoled his audience with a topical comparison:

however black Larkin or Connolly may be, it was white compared with the black of Sir Edward Carson.[27]

In Sexton's case, the animosity could be seen as personal since he and Larkin had quarrelled over the ITGWU's secession from the National Union of Dock Labourers. More fundamentally however, it quickly became clear that several trade union officials opposed any involvement of their organisations in sympathetic action for the Dublin workers. They were prepared to give financial support and to provide negotiators to facilitate a settlement, but for many officials, that was where support should end. For Larkin it could not be enough:

although money was a very useful thing, it had never won a strike.[28]

The reluctance of many British leaders must be placed in the context of their own preoccupations since 1910. Often they had experienced tough battles with advocates of militant rank and file action inside their own unions. Now the Dublin dispute seemed likely to increase such pressures with Larkin as the hero of such radicals. Quite apart from the Irish dimension, the late months of 1913 saw a rash of railway disputes, often generated by unhappiness at the consequences of the 1911 National

Settlement.[29] In this climate, officials such as Jimmy Thomas and J.E. Williams of the NUR looked with hostility on demands that railwaymen should 'black' Dublin traffic. The pressures increased as some railwaymen took matters into their own hands, and were suspended; the consequence was predictably a walk out by their colleagues. In mid-September there were stoppages in Liverpool and Birmingham; at the beginning of December there was a much more extensive strike in South Wales, following the dismissal of two Llanelli drivers.[30] Although several NUR branches supported sympathetic action, the disputes were settled by national officials; in the South Wales case the settlement did not include the reinstatement of the two drivers. A more crucial intervention came from Havelock Wilson the maverick anti-Socialist Seamen's leader, when he ordered his members to resume work as the Dublin port strike faltered.[31]

Given such actions, it was predictable that someone of Larkin's temperament would denounce such leaders. By mid-October he was denouncing some officials for their 'flagrant treachery ... industrial and political blackguardism'.[32] Connolly's response was more measured; he welcomed the involvement of British officials as negotiators but only so long as they acted as allies. He was uneasy about their apparent susceptibility to 'the blarney of soft-spoken Dublin employers'.[33] A sympathetic journalist noted the contrasting combination of 'lucid Connolly and red-hot Larkin';[34] when the TUC finally met on 9 December to consider the dispute, Larkin's rhetorical prelude helped to turn the meeting into a shambles. Thomas and Havelock Wilson personalised the dispute; Larkin repaid their attacks with interest. Connolly attempted to rescue something from the wreckage, but requests for sympathetic action secured little support.[35]

A reasoned case against such requests came from the Miners' President, Bob Smillie. Such a strategy could not be employed on demand:

> The next step they took for a national stoppage would have to be seriously thought out, as the fight once undertaken would have to be fought and won. The rank and file must be consulted before they took that step ... He had no mandate from the miners to support a national strike.[36]

Smillie suggested that if members were ballotted, they would possibly reject sympathetic action, and this would be the final blow to the Dublin worker's cause. For him, the Triple Alliance with its ambiguous promise of workers' power still lay in the future.

Enthusiasm for the Dublin cause came not just from some rank and file trade unionists but also from many Socialists within the ILP and the BSP. Yet even within the political side of the Labour Movement, the ITGWU's strategy had its critics. Philip Snowden used the columns of the Conservative *Morning Post* to attack 'wild and revolutionary

appeals'. Ramsay MacDonald employed those of the Liberal *Daily News* to denounce the union's key strategy:

> The sympathetic strike is poor fighting. It demoralises Trade Unionism, weakens collective action and produces reactionary prejudice in the public mind.[37]

The contrast with Connolly's principled defence was sharp; for the latter such action:

> means the practice of what Christians have been preaching without practising for the past 2,000 years.[38]

The attacks of Snowden and MacDonald are dismissed too lightly if they are seen as early demonstrations of the priorities that would lead them out of the Labour Party eighteen years later. Rather, the view that they articulated in 1913 was characteristic of one strand in ILP thought. Socialism would come through sagacious political action based on communal consent, not through emotional sectional responses that were essentially oppositional and destructive.

The difficulties of Dublin workers in securing more support within the British Labour Movement were not limited to the unsympathetic priorities of cautious trade union leaders and respectable ILP MPs. Crucially, trade union leaders showed themselves able to limit and terminate unofficial action and to withstand pressures for a change in policy. National officials settled such disputes through negotiations with employers and then pressurised those involved into acceptance; branch resolutions in favour of sympathetic action were uncoordinated and ineffective. The vital Special TUC was insulated carefully against too much radicalism. A resolution on 'personal attacks' preceded a debate on the question of support for Dublin. The swapping of insults came before any discussion of the principle of 'sympathetic action'. Connolly's immediate reaction was that a disastrous ordering of the agenda had produced a damaging result:

> the men who drew up the agenda for the Conference, and who put a lengthy discussion of personalities before the question of helping Dublin had given the whole Labour Movement a set-back.[39]

Whether this ordering was achieved innocently is debatable. What is not open to question is that the critics of the ITGWU had no need to employ a loaded agenda to secure an acceptable outcome. The composition of the Congress ensured that. The meeting had been deferred for three weeks, ostensibly to permit consultation with the rank and file. This did not happen. Smillie acknowledged that the MFGB had not discussed the question of support for Dublin. Delegations were typically selected from within a tight circle. Whatever radical sentiments on this issue existed amongst union members would not percolate through to many of the

delegates.[40] In common with other syndicalists, Connolly had discussed frequently the need for the accountability of trade union officials. The events of 9 December 1913 showed that this aspiration remained far from realisation.

Even the quality of some of the Transport Workers' support was ambiguous. Some leading advocates of 'Direct Action' were unreliable. Thus Tillett, closely associated with the *Daily Herald*'s strong demands for sympathetic action, moved the resolution opposing attacks on trade union leaders at the special TUC.[41] More significantly the sympathetic action that did develop on the railways requires more precise analysis than a simple claim that this demonstrated rank and file support for the Dublin workers. The context was one where groups of railwaymen were stopping work for a variety of reasons. The South Wales dispute occurred in sympathy with the sacking of two drivers who had refused to handle Dublin traffic; but their colleagues struck to reverse the dismissals, not specifically over the Irish question. Moreover many South Wales footplate staff were aggrieved over the Eight Hours Question and a strike over this had been deferred just a few days before.[42] The Irish dimension provided just one strand in a skein of grievances and principles. Similarly the earlier stoppages in Liverpool and Birmingham grew out of the suspensions of just a few, and once again in the latter case, there were reports of disquiet at bonus payments in some of the goods yards.[43] Even the *Daily Herald*, always keen to discover cases of solidaristic class action, suggested that more traditional loyalties could have been significant:

> in those districts where there are railwaymen bound by religious and political ties to the Irish transport workers, there is evidence of a determination to refuse to handle blackleg goods emanating from Dublin.[44]

Such bases for rank and file action were too ambiguous or too limited to be effective counterweights to the determination of national officials. Connolly and Larkin spent much time trying to mobilise British support; ultimately they failed. The outcome left its mark in Connolly's subsequent writings.

His journalism during the dispute was produced for propaganda purposes in Ireland and in Britain and was largely factual and agitational in content. As the extent of the workers' isolation became evident, he made two observations of wider significance. The financial support, the food ships, the sympathetic strikes, the vast and enthusiastic crowds that had attended his and Larkin's meetings – all enabled him to maintain his faith in the essential radicalism of the working-class:

> To the idea of working class unity, to the seed of industrial solidarity, Dublin was the great event that enabled it to seize the mind of the masses, the germination force that gave power to the seed to fructify and cover these islands.

I say in all solemnity and seriousness that in its attitude towards Dublin the Working-Class Movement of Great Britain reached its highest point of moral grandeur – attained for a moment to a realisation of that sublime unity towards which the best in us must continually aspire.[45]

Clearly, this idealised the rank and file response, although the degree of support was impressive. It contrasted with the actions of many British trade union officials:

We asked for the isolation of the capitalists of Dublin, and for answer the Leaders of the British labour movement proceeded calmly to isolate the working classes of Dublin.[46]

This dichotomy between radical rank and file and reformist leaders had been central to his earlier syndicalist writings. Now he utilised these recent experiences to assess and adapt his views on trade union organisation and strategy. Whilst the fragmentation of traditional craft organisations clearly militated against effective class action and pointed towards the development of Industrial Unionism, Connolly accepted that events demonstrated the need for further refinement of this conception.[47] In Britain there had been a number of trade union amalgamations inspired to some degree by the ideal of Industrial Unionism. Yet subsequent performance did not demonstrate the radicalism that some protagonists of the ideal anticipated. Connolly might have focussed attention on the National Union of Railwaymen and its leaders' negative role in the Dublin dispute. He devoted more space however to a discussion of the Transport Workers' Federation. Its leading figure Robert Williams had been much more sympathetic towards the ITGWU, and had been barred from the Special Congress on a technicality.[48] Yet, Connolly claimed that despite Williams' radicalism, the development of the Federation had reduced the industrial effectiveness of the workers concerned. Although the organisation dated from September 1910, Connolly credibly saw the successful port stoppages of the following summer as victories for militant local action:

It was its very sporadic nature, its swiftness and unexpectedness that won.

But subsequently such initiatives had been cramped. Amalgamations had been carried out 'in the main by officials absolutely destitute of revolutionary spirit', a reasonable verdict on the place of such officials as Havelock Wilson and James Sexton within the TWF. Only the outward form altered:

Into the new bottles of industrial organisation is being poured the old, cold wine of Craft Unionism.

The old sectional unions at least allowed for close links between officials and rank and file. Now in the new complex organisations there was scope for procrastination and the shifting of responsibilities:

> The local official can conscientiously order the local member to remain at work with the scab, or to handle tainted goods, 'pending action by the General Executives' ... the chances are a million to one that the body of workers in distress will be starved into subjection, bankrupted, or disrupted, before the leviathan organisation will allow their brothers on the spot to lift a finger or drop a tool in their aid.[49]

Such an assessment was a response to the arguments of Bob Smillie against immediate sympathetic action. The procrastination approach was employed also by Jimmy Thomas who advised his members to wait for one 'great united effort'.[50]

Connolly's analysis growing out of his frustrations as a leader of the beleaguered Dublin workers highlighted a significant problem about decision making and democratic accountability within large complex trade unions. Whether it provided an adequate explanation of say, the failure of London port workers in 1912 compared with their successes twelve months earlier is doubtful. Although the TWF appeared more in control of the later dispute, the appearance was perhaps misleading. The 1912 dispute grew out of rank and file actions which led the officials to call a port-wide stoppage. The problem arose when the Federation failed to secure effective support from its members in other centres. The London workers were defeated more by lack of sympathetic action elsewhere than by the caution of their leaders. It was an explanation that did not fit Connolly's characterisation of radical rank and file and reformist leaders.[51]

His initial remedy was to emphasise the continuing value of the local strike even if this might destabilise the organisation. For him, the alternative risked eroding working class militancy through inaction, an outcome that should be avoided. He suggested that some of the perils could be circumvented through selecting responsive leaders and retaining them only so long as they remained close to their members.[52] This was naive. It ignored the organisational complexities of large unions that Connolly himself had outlined and also the powerful oligarchic tendencies that had helped to blunt the Dublin workers' appeal within Britain. Moreover he soon acknowledged that with the development of Industrial Unionism, a thorough adherence to democratic precepts could undermine industrial effectiveness. Recalling that capitalist Cabinets declared war and informed parliament afterwards, Connolly asked rhetorically:

> Can we not evolve a system of organisation which will leave to the unions the full local administration, but invest in a Cabinet the power to call out the members of any union when such action is desirable, and explain their reasons for it afterwards?[53]

The desire to combine accountability with industrial effectivenes was characteristic of his syndicalist contemporaries. The authors of *The*

Miners' Next Step had recently proclaimed the ideal: 'Decentralisation for Negotiating ... Centralisation for Fighting'. Its elusiveness and its importance would be revealed in the complex history of sympathetic action through to the failures of 1921 and 1926.

The Lock Out not only led Connolly to reconsider the adequacy of Industrial Unionism as a revolutionary strategy; it also helped to shift his perception of relationships between British and Irish workers. His distinction between sympathetic rank and file and unsympathetic leaders has already been examined within his syndicalist framework. Inevitably with his commitment on the National Question, consideration of the relationship between the two Labour Movements raised the question of the relationship between their respective nations. During the Lock Out, Connolly argued against any simple identification of England as the oppressor. Government should be distinguished from the working class and moreover he suggested a more complex relationship:

> We are told that the English people contributed their help to our enslavement. It is true. It is also true that the Irish people duly contributed soldiers to crush every democratic movement of the English people.[54]

This verdict was offered with Connolly still optimistic about the growth of rebellion amongst both working classes. Wtih the isolation and defeat of Dublin's workers, this judgement became much more difficult. The actions of British trade union officials could revive old animosities. Connolly abandoned platitudes for May Day 1914. He told the predominantly Scottish readership of *Forward*:

> I cannot this May Day felicitate you or the working class of the world in general on the spread of working class solidarity. Instead of it I see much mouthing of phrases, much sordid betrayal of our holiest hopes.[55]

Alienation had been deepened by the reopening of a longstanding dispute between Connolly and the British Labour Party. As the crisis over the Home Rule Bill intensified, the Nationalist MPs began to look for compromises, and British Labour MPs faithful to their traditional policy went along with this. Connolly opposed this response, partly on substantive grounds – any hint of Partition should be opposed – and also because it ignored the claims of Irish Labour organisations.[56] British Labour's continuing connection with the Parliamentary Party could be viewed charitably as evincing a wish to settle the Home Rule controversy and move on to more important business.[57] Yet it could be utilised also to demonstrate the relatively conservative quality of the British Labour Party. Such a conclusion would strengthen the case for Irish Labour to go its own way; it could suggest also that British shortcomings were based on more than leaders' conservatism and organisational constraints. Rather the continuing British domination of Ireland could affect the

outlook of the British working class. The ground was being prepared for Connolly's response to August 1914, a development accompanied by and probably affected by shifting attitudes to a range of Nationalist organisations and individuals.

The polarisation of classes during the Lock Out destroyed any illusion that Ireland was a harmonious community in which class conflict had no place. Connolly had invested much time in attempts to synthesise national and socialist commitments. The events of 1913 underwrote his earlier rejections of some forms of Nationalist politics, but they also provided new starting points for thoughts on this complex relationship – and ultimately for action.

His longstanding criticism of the Parliamentary Party appeared to be corroborated firmly by its lack of response to the dispute. He had ridiculed Nationalist MPs consistently as a clique of socially-reactionary politicians who engaged in radical rhetoric simply in order to deceive progressives in both Ireland and Britain. Connolly's verdict was predictable:

> The semi-radical phrases with which the middle-class Home Rule Press and politicians so often duped the public (and sometimes themselves) were seen to have no radical feeling behind them. Sham battle-cries of a sham struggle, they were hurriedly put out of sight the moment the war-cries of a real conflict rose upon the air.[58]

The claim that such Nationalists were pro-capitalist and anti-worker could be supported by pointing to Murphy, once an Irish MP, still a self-proclaimed Home Ruler, but the epitome of the tough, anti-trade union employer. The judgement could be amplified by noting the almost universal lack of comment on the dispute from the Nationalist MPs.[59] Preoccupied with Home Rule, they saw the Lock Out as an unwelcome and destructive diversion. Connolly's dismissal of the Parliamentarians would have been strengthened still further, had he known of the privately-expressed views of John Dillon. When confronting rural exploitation, Dillon had revealed himself as one of the more socially aware of his political generation, but faced with the anger of Dublin workers, his sensitivity failed him. Aware of Murphy's inflexibility, he nevertheless attacked Larkin in unrestrained terms and largely ignored the economic basis of urban discontent:

> Larkin is a malignant enemy and an impossible man. He seems to be a wild international syndicalist and anarchist and for a long time he has been doing his best to burst up the party and the national movement.[60]

He saw the confrontation as wrecking the social cohesion of Dublin at precisely the moment when Home Rule seemed available. In part, Dillon's hostility to Larkin could be regarded as a reflection of the prejudices and ignorance of a middle-class politician deeply knowledgeable about rural society, but uninformed about and probably fearful of

urban unrest. Nationalist images of Ireland often left little room for the harsh realities of city life. Larkinism also challenged the political near-monopoly of the Parliamentary Party. Most obviously it did so through the insistence that Labour had distinctive political interests that necessitated a separate organisation, although as yet the Irish Labour Party offered the most minimal electoral threat. More fundamentally the Transport Workers' use of sympathetic action was backed by Connolly's frequent claim that this was none other than the old Land League tactic of the boycott employed in an industrial setting. This could strike a chord with those Nationalists who sought inspiration in the old physical force tradition and dismissed the Parliamentary Party as unambitious and ineffective.

In their opposition to aggressive trade unionism, the MPs could rely on resources much more extensive than those available through what was already perhaps a decaying political machine. Larkin's union was confronted by 'respectable' Dublin opinion, most significantly perhaps by several representatives of the Catholic Church.[61] This became most apparent late in October when the ITGWU acting in concert with some British sympathisers decided to send some children of the locked-out workers for holidays in Britain. The result was a hysterical onslaught from several Catholic organisations, that this would endanger the children's faith. Boats and railway stations were picketed by zealous priests and their supporters. Some arrests were made on charges of abduction. For Connolly this typified the misuse of religious sentiments that he had attacked in *Labour, Nationality and Religion*. Yet the emotions engendered proved powerful. The scheme was largely blocked. When some Dublin employers brought in English strike breakers, his bitterness towards those who manipulated religious and thereby national sentiments was deep. They assessed the English connection as good or bad, depending on their class interests:

> A crime to deport Dublin children in order to feed, clothe, and house them better than they ever were before. All the newspapers are against it. It is not a crime to import English scabs to take the bread out of the mouths of Dublin men, women and children and to reduce them to slavery. The newspapers are over-joyed at it ...[62]

Connolly's response had a parallel with his treatment of Orange politics. He hoped that a demonstration of partiality and myopia would be sufficient antidote. Yet Connolly in accepting a definition of Irish nationality that emphasised its Gaelic roots, faced a difficulty with Catholic and other propagandists who presented Socialism as English and therefore anti-national. Sometimes the language was grotesque, but the challenge was a crucial one for those wishing to construct an Irish Socialist movement. This aspiration could be denounced as the most damaging instalment of a process of national and religious demoralisation:

the immoral literature, the smutty postcards, the lewd plays, and the suggestive songs were bad, yet they were merely puffs from the foul breath of a paganised society. The full sewerage from the 'cloaca maxima' of Anglicanisation is now discharged upon us. The black devil of Socialism, hoof and horns, is amongst us.[63]

This identification of Socialism and labour agitation with damaging foreign influences was to be found also in the writings of Arthur Griffith, the dominant figure of Sinn Fein.[64] At this point though, the relationship between Socialism and conceptions of Nationality becomes much more complex.

Griffith was identified particularly with the position that the route forward for Ireland was through self-sufficiency, not just in economic terms but also intellectually. He was an effective propagandist and during his American years Connolly had discussed Sinn Fein's doctrines.[65] He welcomed the emphasis on self-reliance reflecting that the working class needed this in order to achieve its emancipation. Yet he totally rejected Griffith's economic outlook. This was based on the Protectionist doctrines of the German economist Friedrich List and proclaimed the need for an Irish manufacturing sector. The implication was that the initial investment would only be attracted if wages were relatively low. Connolly's Socialist response was dismissive – the prospectus:

appeals only to those who measure a nation's prosperity by the volume of wealth produced in a country, instead of by that distribution of wealth amongst the inhabitants ... (it) rests upon a capitalist conception of progress.[66]

It seems predictable that Griffith should ignore the strongly Irish emphasis of Larkin's Union and attack its leader as an English agitator,[67] and its tactics and Socialist objective as an alien and damaging import. Yet simply to focus on this aspect of Griffith's response is to ignore the complexity of the Sinn Fein position.

The organisation was small and largely dominated by Griffith but other members felt more positively towards the locked-out workers. This helped to lead Griffith to a considered presentation of his views on the labour question. In contrast to the 'Know-Nothing' response of almost all of the Parliamentary Party, Griffith at least acknowledged that the plight of the Dublin workers was appalling. He struck a note reminiscent of Connolly in his claim that:

Irish Labour deserves well of the Irish nation for it was more faithful to it in the past than Irish Capital.

Equally, his denunciation of liberal economics recalled some attacks by Socialists, as well as that of the 1848 polemicist John Mitchel:

my affirmations and beliefs are fundamentally at variance with the blessed system of Free Trade and Open Competition.

Like Mitchel he presented this economic system as quintessentially English. Moreover, he went on to make a point heavy with implications for the future of the British Left. This economic order was supported by the 'English' Labour Party:

> who, while clamouring against Capital maintain in being the most iniquitous abuse of the power of Capital the modern world records.[68]

But he viewed the relationship between capital and labour as essentially harmonious. Antagonisms were produced by the competitive economy, and could be removed, given Protection and State intervention. The character of Griffith's proposed system remains elusive; should it be seen simply as an anticipation of a managed capitalism, or more sharply as carrying quasi-fascist overtones? Certainly, it was anti-liberal and at least for Griffith, it ruled out any solution that was socialist and class-based. This rejection was vital, yet it is equally important to emphasise the degree to which the growth of new Nationalist groups, offering alternatives to the Parliamentary Party raised novel questions for Connolly.[69]

The Lock Out clearly put Griffith under pressure to clarify his views, not simply because of disagreement within his own organisation, but also because some other Dublin intellectuals took a more positive attitude towards the locked-out workers. Their motivations were diverse. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, socialist, pacifist, feminist, supported the workers throughout and found himself roughly handled by Catholic demonstrators during the confrontations over the 'deported' children.[70] This issue brought W. B. Yeats into the columns of the *Irish Worker* with an indictment paralleling Connolly's condemnations of the abuse of religious enthusiasm for political purposes:

> I charge the Dublin Nationalist newspapers with deliberately arousing religious passion to break up the organisation of the working man ...[71]

Arguably for Yeats, the issue was more general than this industrial conflict. He had been a member of that beleaguered group that had defended the plays of J. M. Synge against the powerful vulgarities of Murphy-style nationalism.

A more sustained commitment to the workers' cause came from Yeats's old college friend, the Co-operator, journalist and creative thinker George Russell ('AE'). He exploded into the argument with his 'Open Letter' published in the *Irish Times* on 8 October 1913. The issue was presented as one of autocracy versus democracy. In the past, some Dublin capitalists had backed popular agitations that had destroyed landlordism. It had been obvious for a long time, that as a class the city's capitalists were incompetent philistines with less to recommend them than the landed elite they had helped remove. Now their collective action had focussed public attention on their failings. Even a victory would prove hollow:

You may succeed in your policy and ensure your own damnation by your victory. The men whose manhood you have broken will loathe you, and will be always brooding and scheming to strike a fresh blow ... You are sounding the death-knell of autocracy in industry ...[72]

This response led 'AE' to a *Daily Herald* Rally in the Albert Hall where he denounced the Parliamentary Party and proclaimed an intellectual's support for the Dublin workers:

I am a literary man, a lover of ideas, but I have found few people in my life who would sacrifice anything for a principle ... For all their tattered garments, I recognise in these obscure men a majesty of spirit. It is in these men in the towns and in these men in the cabins in the country that the hope of Ireland lies.[73]

This sentiment was one emphasised by Connolly ever since the start of his Dublin propaganda in 1896. Perhaps appropriately at this meeting they spoke from the same platform.[74]

This intransigence of the employers and the obvious hardship of a large section of the Dublin working class mobilised many of those who made pre-1914 Dublin such an intellectually vital place. It could appear as a simple matter of proclaiming a common humanity against hard-faced employers and compliant authorities. As 'AE' emphasised in Swiftian vein:

James Larkin deserved to go to jail. He was preventing a socialogical (sic) experiment of great importance to Ireland from being carried out. We have never accurately determined how little human beings can live on, and how little air space is necessary for families ...[75]

This humanitarian response brought out a further figure on the side of the workers, one who would form eventually the most significant relationship with Connolly.

Patrick Pearse, mystic and poet, Head of St Enda's School, was in 1913, essentially a cultural Nationalist. Increasingly close to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, it was natural that he should speak at the inaugural public meeting of the Irish Volunteers on 25 November.[76] Yet by then Pearse's compassion had been stirred by the sufferings of the locked-out workers. The previous month he too had written sardonically about a possible experiment:

I would like to put some of our well-fed citizens in the shoes of our hungry citizens ... I would ask those who know that a man can live and thrive, can house, feed, clothe and educate a large family on a pound a week to try the experiment themselves ... I am quite certain that they will enjoy their poverty and their hunger ... they will write books on 'How to be Happy though Hungry'; when their children cry for more food they will smile; when the landlord calls for the rent they will embrace him; when their house falls upon them they will thank God; when policemen smash in their skulls they will kiss the chastening baton ... in the alternative they may come to see that there is something to be said for the hungry man's hazy idea that there is something wrong somewhere.[77]

As yet, Pearse could offer little as a remedy. He was 'old-fashioned enough to be both a Catholic and a Nationalist'.[78] Yet whatever his hope of national harmony the harsh reality of 'Dublin 1913' rendered neutrality impossible. Sympathy for the workers did not lead however to support for any Socialist proposals – like Griffith he regarded foreign domination as the core of the problem; an end to British rule was therefore the 'sine qua non' of any solution. He offered little that was precise on the Irish way forward, claiming only that Ireland once free could support four times its present population.[79] This dream of Gaelic self-sufficiency clearly involved a significant extension of State activity, although this could not be characterised as distinctively Socialist. For the moment, Pearse's response to the plight of the Dublin workers was little more than the instinctive sympathy of an outraged humanitarian.

Eventually Pearse and Connolly would influence each other far more; the Socialist would awaken the Nationalist to some of the sufferings of the Irish working class; the Nationalist would help to persuade the Socialist to participate in a rising that lacked a specifically socialist content. Although their names would become indissolubly linked through the events of 1916, it would be a profound mistake to focus on the 1913 Lock Out as the episode that initiated the collaboration of Pearse and Connolly. The conflict carried a variety of implications for Connolly; not the least significant is the revelation of a variety of Nationalist viewpoints expressing a complex assortment of responses to the emergence of a militant Labour movement – the xenophobic name-calling of Griffith fitting uncomfortably amongst the variety of Sinn Fein responses, not least the more considered statement of his own position; Yeats's anti-philistine sentiment; 'AE's co-operative commitment; his and Pearse's humanitarian passion; Sheehy-Skeffington's Socialist idealism. These were not the sum. Thomas MacDonagh spoke out against the brutality of the Dublin police; so did Countess Markiewicz.[80] Padraic Colum, appalled at the insensitivity of the employers suggested that the dispute was popularising alternative methods of production:

> Socialism and cooperation used to be ideas that were quite remote from us. Now they have become actual, and every day that the industrial struggle continues they will become more actual. Usual methods of production and distribution are being hampered, and we are becoming interested in alternative methods.[81]

Together these responses recall the vivacity of Dublin's intellectual life at this critical moment as capital and labour confronted one another, and the Home Rule Bill plodded over the parliamentary obstacle course. This vivacity by-passed the politicking of the Parliamentary Party, an organisation whose historic task seemed on the verge of fulfilment and whose rituals seemed increasingly passé to some radicals. Here was a series of challenges for a Socialist such as Connolly – points of growth

for a reconciliation between Socialist and Nationalist ideals but also the risk that a seductive variant on a Nationalist theme could deaden a Socialist commitment. If 'Dublin 1913' reveals the variegated geography of radical Ireland, it also leaves a significant problem. Why did the crucial alliance become that between Pearse and Connolly? To answer this is to move forward from the complex legacy of the Lock Out to the challenges of wartime. But in so doing it is essential to note one institutional legacy of 1913. When the struggle was at its most intense, on 13 November, with pickets under pressure from police, Connolly addressed a Dublin meeting:

> I am going to talk sedition. The next time we are out for a march I want to be accompanied by four battalions of trained men with their corporals and sergeants. Why should we not drill and train men as they are doing in Ulster?[82]

Here was the proposal for an Irish Citizen Army: after many vicissitudes it would provide a link through to Easter 1916.

Chapter 8
The choice

The events of August 1914 came for Connolly as the culmination of a melancholy sequence. The shadow of Partition threatened the development of class politics in Ireland, the effectiveness of Carson's tactics and the weak reaction of the Government suggested a growing illiberality that threatened hopes of Socialist development, the Lock Out had demonstrated that if trade unionism were to serve as a vital element in a Socialist advance, then organisational problems must be solved. Both the Home Rule crisis and the arguments over sympathetic action during the Lock Out showed that understanding between Irish and British Labour Movements was far from perfect. Then came the War.

The collapse of all hopes of Socialist Internationalism in August 1914 was, for Connolly, both decisive and traumatic. In all belligerent countries, the vast majority of Socialists and trade unionists supported their respective national governments. The patriotic road was taken in Britain, not just by the more cautious and self-consciously respectable Labour leaders, but by several who had proclaimed a more radical commitment. Ben Tillett, the ambiguous ally of the locked-out Dubliners, and C. B. Stanton the radical Miners' Agent from Aberdare moved from violent declarations of class war to unrestrained jingoism.[1] Only their vehemence of expression was constant. In contrast some who had characterised pre-war industrial militancy as divisive and destructive, condemned the duplicity of pre-war diplomacy and the escalating authoritarianism of the wartime state. Thus, MacDonald and Snowden who had attacked Syndicalism as a corrosive alternative to constructive Socialism distanced themselves from the patriotic wing of the Labour Movement.[2] For a Socialist such as Connolly who continued to express an unqualified opposition to the War, old expectations were transformed. Bleak images were dominant. Most Labour MPs backed the British war-effort. More seriously for the hopes of Second International Socialism, the German Social Democrats, the party that had dominated international Socialist debates for a quarter of a century, came in from the cold and supported the Imperial Government. Perhaps the former Socialist, John Burns, almost isolated in his resignation from the Liberal Government provided an appropriate epitaph for a generation of Socialist hopes: 'National blood is thicker than Socialist water'.[3]

The dichotomy might be appropriate for Britain, France and Germany.

Within Ireland, there were obvious complexities. These centred in part around the question 'which nation' but even amongst those who saw themselves as Irish Nationalists, the challenge of 'August 1914' was divisive. The Parliamentary Party, for so long one of Connolly's principal targets came out firmly in support of the War. For many of them, the prospects of the Irish nation were bound up with those of the British Empire. Inevitably, this decision produced scathing comments from Connolly, but the implications went much wider.[4]

The controversies surrounding the Lock Out had highlighted a gulf between the conventional political world of the MPs and the priorities and style of several of the younger creative Nationalists. For several years the Parliamentary Party had coped easily with its critics. Those within the apparently ritualistic Fenian tradition seemed few and ineffective; whatever potential Sinn Fein had once had seemed by 1913 to have been largely spent. But the Home Rule crisis could pose a more fundamental threat to the paramountcy of the Parliamentary Party. The Irish Volunteers founded in November 1913, could propel any Nationalist response to Unionist intransigence, far beyond the rule-governed civilities of parliamentary politics. Intemperate action could upset the strategy of the MPs as their moment of triumph approached. Not surprisingly, Redmond and his allies worked assiduously to expand their influence within the Volunteers. By June 1914, it seemed that the organisation could be constrained by the priorities of the Parliamentarians.[5]

Whether such a limitation would have survived a continuing deadlock over Home Rule is questionable; what soon became apparent was that it could not survive the outbreak of war. Redmond's immediate pledging of the Volunteers to the defence of Ireland and his support for the War were divisive enough, but he was soon encouraging the Volunteers to go 'wherever the firing-line extends, in defence of right, of freedom and of religion in this war'.[6] When he appeared alongside Asquith at a mass recruiting meeting in Dublin's Mansion House in late September, the Volunteers were already in the process of splitting. The numerical dimensions of the split seemed heavily in Redmond's favour. One estimate suggests that he retained the support of 150,000 Volunteers; 16,500 of these had enlisted by November 1914 and 30,000 by the following Autumn. In contrast, only between two- and three-thousand followed Eoin MacNeill behind a policy of refusing to support the War in the absence of Irish self-government.[7]

Although a numerical comparison provides some sense of proportion, it does not indicate the whole truth. During the early stages of the War the authority of Redmond and the Parliamentary Party remained strong over the wider Nationalist population. The critics' priorities and condemnations did not seem to be shared widely. The Irish recruiting figures were perhaps the sharpest testimony to their isolation. Nevertheless the

Parliamentarians' position involved significant weaknesses. A lengthy war could erode its credibility as the demand for recruits continued and the threat of conscription emerged. Tensions would be heightened as a political crisis produced the death of the Liberal Government and the formation of a Coalition in which Liberal Home Rulers sat alongside Carson and Bonar Law. Commitment to the War led Redmond and his colleagues into concessions and compromises that demanded tortuous reconciliation with the sentiments of their Irish supporters.[8]

Against such uncertainty and vacillation, the anti-Redmond Volunteers seemed to represent something definite. Relatively few, they appeared committed against Partition and for 'Home Rule Now' as a precondition for any involvement of Irishmen in a British war. But, as Easter 1916 would reveal, fundamental divergences lay beneath this facade. Some represented by MacNeil and Bulmer Hobson viewed the Volunteer's role in essentially defensive terms. Their armed strength could force concessions from the British Government; violence should be used only if an attempt was made to disarm the Volunteers. In contrast, Pearse, MacDermott, Plunkett, MacDonagh and Ceannt, all active within the organisation, would provide much of the nucleus for the Easter Rising.[9] The relationship between such Nationalists and the radical wing of the Labour movement was complex. Certainly it could be argued that at least these tendencies were united by their distaste for the Parliamentary Party's manoeuvrings and priorities, and more positively the Lock Out had produced some hints of agreement on specific issues. But the dispute had deepened hostility between members of Larkin's union and middle-class Nationalists. This had surfaced at the inaugural meeting of the Volunteers when Labour activists had heckled one of the speakers.[10] At one level the Irish Citizen Army could be characterised as a manifestation of this sense of a separate identity but with the end of the Lock Out, its role as a workers' defence force was redundant. Eventually in October 1914, the ICA came under Connolly's control. It was a very small organisation but under his leadership it became a group with an insurrectionary commitment.[11] Faced with the destruction of Socialist internationalism and Redmondite support for Britain's war, Connolly attempted to synthesise the priorities of revolutionary Socialists and radical Nationalists.

His immediate response emphasised the destructive impact of the conflict on Socialist expectations. He sketched features of pre-war Socialist growth – rising electoral support, an expanding press, a strong trade unionism, the growth of anti-militarist sentiments – in a fashion characteristic of Second International Socialists. But:

> now like the proverbial bolt from the blue, war is upon us, and war between the most important, because the most socialist, nations of the earth. And we are helpless!!

He hoped vainly for some act of revolt by Continental workers. Any such response, he viewed as morally justified:

> no general uprising of the forces of Labour in Europe could possibly carry with it, or entail a greater slaughter of socialists than will their participation as soldiers in the campaigns of the armies of their respective countries ...

Such a revolt could be significant even if unsuccessful. At least, Socialist credibility would be preserved:

> Even an unsuccessful attempt at social revolution by force of arms following the paralysis of the economic life of militarism, would be less disastrous to the socialist cause than the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers in the cause.[12]

Such an inspirational justification of a Socialist revolt foreshadowed that provided in a Nationalist context in 1916.

Such Socialist hopes were unfulfilled of course. Connolly felt his isolation keenly: 'I may be only a voice crying in the wilderness, a crank amongst a community of the wise'.[13] Soon he ceased to contribute regularly to *Forward* and by the end of 1914, the *Irish Worker* had been suppressed. Attempts to have a replacement – the *Worker* – printed in Glasgow were thwarted rapidly by the authorities.[14] Only in May 1915, did he succeed in bringing out the Dublin-based *Workers' Republic*. By then, he had already offered a diagnosis of the Socialist debacle to the American readership of the *International Socialist Review*. Proper Socialist organisation, in his opinion, could have prevented the War. Although many of the belligerent nations had sizeable Socialist Parties backed by significant votes, these were divorced from any effective industrial presence. For Connolly, effectiveness required of course, revolutionary trade unionism organised after the principles of the IWW:

> The Socialist voters having cast their ballots were helpless as voters until the next election; as workers they were indeed in control of the forces of production and distribution; and by exercising that control over the transport service could have made the war impossible. But the idea of thus coordinating their two spheres of activity had not gained sufficient lodgement to be effective in the emergency.[15]

Thus, Socialist claims to be internationalist were simply rhetorical.

The Socialist collapse of 1914 did highlight the extent to which earlier rhetoric had made a naive assumption about effective coordination between political and industrial organisations. Obviously, Connolly's analysis ignored many factors. Like many within his Socialist generation, he tended to ignore the degree to which reactionary ideologies had permeated Labour movements; when he did focus on ideological aspects, he tended to respond in an optimistic and mechanistic fashion. Even within the organisational field, his focus on this particular absence

begged the question of whether such a revolutionary industrial organisation was feasible. Earlier discussion has indicated how limited such developments had been within the United States, and how sceptical Connolly had been about the organisational forms adopted by British industrial unions. But his negative and justified reactions to such trade union developments offered little comfort to any hope of an effective partnership between militant trade unionism and a Socialist political organisation.

Once the War seemed established as a way of life, then Connolly had little hope of working-class revolt in the belligerent nations. Nevertheless, he emphasised any hostile reaction by workers against employers' and politicians' pressures. Such battles typically centered around living standards and working conditions but they were also influenced by the expansion of State involvement in industry. Thus he welcomed the successful strike of South Wales miners in July 1915. Although this was concerned with wages and devoid of political intentions, for Connolly it nevertheless had political significance:

> had the Government succeeded in terrorising them, we might all have bidden a long farewell to our industrial liberties. Successful in Wales, the capitalist class that runs these islands would have been ruthless in Ireland.[16]

The miners' success was due in part to the indispensability of their work. They were able to make significant economic gains under wartime state control. Much more protracted and less successful battles developed in the munitions industries where workers faced an alliance of employers and the state. In Connolly's view the liberal decencies were under attack:

> All trade union rights are assailed, all trade-union liberties are denied, the working class is everywhere menaced by an unscrupulous master-class in alliance with a military power in the hands of men who have grown up in hatred of democracy, and with a contempt for the class from which private soldiers are drawn.[17]

The power of the State backed by the plea that the War required special concessions from labour gave engineering employers the opportunity to pursue changes that they had long desired. As yet, wartime demands would disguise their full significance, but once these abated Connolly predicted a bleak future for once-proud artisans:

> The end of the War will find the British worker utterly demoralised by the advent of new conditions in the workshop. The apprenticeship system smashed, the Division or Dilution of Labour everywhere introduced, women and girls thoroughly expert in the work of performing certain processes hitherto part of the work of men, new machines installed ... All the old safeguards will be broken down.[18]

This assessment with its underpinnings of sectionalism and sexism shared much with those made by Clydeside Socialist contemporaries. Like some of them Connolly hoped that this challenge would lead to a

less sectional trade unionism but in the British context he viewed such a possibility with scepticism. Trade union officials had conceded too much and demobilisation would lead to mass unemployment. The combination would place post-war trade unionism in a very vulnerable position. The gloomy prognostication oversimplified subsequent British development. Initially in the brief post-war boom the Labour challenge would be deflected by adroit Government tactics, but Connolly offered a relevant if exaggerated anticipation of developments in long-established British industries, once the boom had collapsed. Unlike many trade union leaders, he expected nothing from any collaboration between labour organisations and the Wartime State.

If his alternative was to protect and extend centres of working-class power, he has no illusions about the difficulties. He saw these as compounded in the British context. At this point, his concern with the development of a Socialist resistance to the War came into contact with his preoccupations as an Irish Nationalist. Already critical of the response by some British Labour leaders to the Dublin Lock Out, his tone hardened appreciably after August 1914. Despite his sympathy for the South Wales and Clydeside workers, he reacted vehemently to the Bristol TUC of September 1915. The patriotic wing of the Labour Movement had a field day, and Lloyd George, speaking as Minister of Munitions, campaigned for trade union co-operation in the war effort. Connolly saw no socialist potential in this gathering:

> 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.[19]

Thus, analysing of the bases for an effective opposition to the War led to a consideration of the relationship between Britain and Ireland. If the working class in the metropolitan centre was hopelessly corrupted, how about the possibility of a revolt in Ireland?

Despite his view that the challenge of the War necessitated a decisive and thorough response from Socialists, Connolly remained assiduous in his conduct of routine union business. As 'de facto' leader of the ITGWU, following Larkin's journey to the United States late in 1914, he negotiated wage settlements and attempted to rectify the financial weakness of the union.[20] Politically, he attempted to give more substance to the formal commitment to an Irish Labour Party. As yet, such an initiative lacked any effective institutional form and faced fundamental problems in mobilising rank and file support. This deficiency was demonstrated clearly in June 1915, when a by-election occurred in Dublin's College Green constituency. The Dublin Trades Council decided to run its

President, Thomas Farren against the Redmondite nominee. The latter was attacked as both anti-working class, and a weak Nationalist but the criticisms developed in the brief Labour campaign were limited.[21] In no sense was there a presentation of an anti-war case, nor were there any arguments supporting Republican Nationalism. Farren's poll was a small one; his opponent triumphed easily on a low turnout. Connolly's post-mortem acknowledged the ideological and organisational weaknesses of Labour, even in such an urban working-class constituency:

> It is an object lesson in the value of organisation ... The Labour candidate did not win because the electors were not sufficiently imbued with labour principles to rally to his aid ...[22]

Subsequently, he developed a much more far-reaching and pessimistic analysis of the degree to which Irish workers had been corrupted in both Socialist and Nationalist terms by the British connection. He had argued consistently that this relationship had absorbed the loyalties of Irish landlords and capitalists. Typically, he had maintained that the working class had not been so deluded. This statement of faith had always been myopic about the strength of working-class Unionism; faced with the impact of Government propaganda Connolly was forced to revise his previous estimate of the Nationalist working class:

> the evil influence upon large sections of the Irish Working Class of the bribes and promises of the enemy cannot be denied.[23]

Only 'the militant Labour Leaders' were exempt from the entangling web of the British connection. He saw the root of the corruption as economic. Recruitment figures were raised by the attraction of regular wages and separation allowances. Characteristically for a Socialist trained in the Marxism of the Second International, there was only a slight emphasis on the ideological roots of support for the British war effort. Yet whatever the inadequacies of Connolly's analysis, as a thorough examination of the deradicalisation of labour movements in wartime, the implication was clear. In Britain, the institutions of the Labour Movement were dominated by supporters of the War, but at least they provided space for some action by anti-war elements or by those unhappy about particular industrial policies. Some actions by trade unionists could carry political implications, although typically their significance was ambiguous. But in Ireland unionisation was weaker and outside Belfast its industrial bases did not include sectors of military significance. Within the political sector Labour's presence was slight. The Irish Labour Movement did not offer even the few narrow footholds available to British anti-war Socialists as bases for any attempt to radicalise a largely unsympathetic population. Any attempt at an effective intervention in Ireland had to employ other resources, whatever the implications for Socialist orthodoxy and priorities.

Any understanding of how Connolly viewed such an intervention should begin with an awareness that, faced with the devastation of Socialist hopes, he believed that Ireland could make a distinctive and significant contribution to the destruction of capitalism:

> Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord.[24]

This expectation rested on a claim that the British Empire played a central role within world capitalism. Ireland's special relationship with Britain would allow any Irish radical movement to play an effective part in the weakening of both the Empire and the wider economic system. The claim was a Socialist–Nationalist counterpart to one of the fears that had fuelled British opposition to Home Rule. Early in 1916, Connolly elaborated on this theme. Ireland, in a wartime situation, could be a weak link in the chain of British Imperialism:

> We shall continue in season and out of season, to teach that the 'far flung battle line' of England is weakest at the point nearest its heart, that Ireland is in that position of tactical advantage, that a defeat of England in India, Egypt, the Balkans or Flanders would not be so dangerous to the British Empire as any conflict of armed forces in Ireland ... That a strong man may deal lusty blows with his fists against a host of surrounding foes and conquer, but will succumb if a child sticks a pin in his heart.[25]

Although at one level Connolly's Socialism led him to identify capitalist rivalries as the fundamental cause of the War, he also wished to claim that the British contribution to the disaster was especially significant. A longstanding industrial dominance was under threat:

> ... since Germany could not be beaten in fair competition industrially, it must be beaten unfairly in organising a military and naval conspiracy against her.[26]

The British working class had been deluded by their rulers' imperialist pretensions:

> Enslaved socially at home, the British people have been taught that what little political liberty they do enjoy can only be bought at the price of the national destruction of every people rising into social or economic rivalry with the British master class.

Perhaps a change in consciousness needed the sufferings of war:

> – if it requires war to free the minds of the British working class from that debasing superstition, then war we shall have.[27]

The argument could be seen as a courageous encounter with what was, for a revolutionary Socialist, a harsh prospect. The response could be characterised as a combination of revolutionary defeatism, and a claim that a colonised society could help to emancipate the working class of the metropolitan power.

This portrait only offers a partial understanding of Connolly's position on the Anglo–German conflict. Soon after the War began, Sir Matthew Nathan took up his appointment in Dublin as Under-Secretary. He gave himself a rapid course in Irish political opinions. The fruits were listed in a notebook. They included a list of radicals accompanied by succinct appraisals. Against Connolly's name, Nathan added the comment, 'Socialist and pro-German'.[28] This should not be dismissed as the simplistic prejudice of an inadequately informed administrator. Although Connolly decorated Liberty Hall – the Transport Workers' headquarters – with the slogan, 'Neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland', much of his early wartime propaganda gave credibility to the characterisation.

Admittedly his first treatment of a German theme – a tribute to Karl Liebknecht following an unfounded rumour of his death – was impeccably internationalist,[29] but this was succeeded by arguments presenting the War as a British conspiracy against Germany. These were supported by an image of industrial harmony that would have gratified German industrialists:

> Basing its industrial effort upon an educated working class, it accomplished in the workshop results that this half-educated working class of England could only wonder at. That English working-class trained to a slavish subservience to rule-of-thumb methods, and under-managers wedded to traditional processes saw themselves gradually outclassed by a new rival in whose service were enrolled the most learned scientists cooperating with the most educated workers in mastering each new problem as it arose, and unhampered by old traditions, old processes, or old equipments.

He also presented a sentiment that had played its part in ensuring Social Democratic support for the German Government. British policy would help to produce:

> the spectacle of the savage Cossacks ravishing the daughters of a race at the head of Christian civilisation.[30]

Whilst such positive presentations of the German position were most apparent in his writings during late 1914, even in March 1916, he presented a comparison that bore no relationship to the realities of German imperialism:

> The German Empire is a homogeneous Empire of self-governing peoples; the British Empire is a heterogeneous collection in which a very small number of self-governing communities connive at the subjugation, by force, of a vast number of despotically-ruled subject populations.[31]

The simplifications, the distortions and the omissions within Connolly's characterisations of Germany are obvious. Thus he often ignored the significance of autocratic elements within both the political and the industrial systems. Perhaps most fundamentally, given his view of

socialist strategy, he failed to consider the barriers to trade union growth and the divisions within the trade union movement.

The motivations for such passages can be only surmised. Arguably there was an element of reaction against the tone of British propaganda: the attacks on 'militarism' as if it were a peculiarly German trait, and the insistence that liberal Britain was well suited to be the friend of small nationalities.[32] In seeking perhaps to puncture such claims, Connolly unnecessarily painted a relatively positive portrait of the German alternative. Such tactical responses were perhaps complemented by more substantive claims. Arguably the illiberality of German political institutions mattered less, given that recent events seemed to have exposed British liberal pretensions as a hollow sham. Perhaps the evolutionary perspective that Connolly had espoused over so many years left its marks. His portrait of German industry suggested that it was a more advanced form of capitalism than its British counterpart and therefore provided a better basis for Socialist growth. This led to the crucial point that Germany had the most mature Socialist movement:

> the best educated working class in the world, the greatest number of labour papers ... the greatest number of Socialist votes in proportion to the entire population. All this was an index to the high level of intelligence of the German working class as well as to their strong industrial and political position.[33]

It required only Connolly's characteristic equation of working-class interests with those of the nation for him to claim that such developments provided 'an infallible index to the high civilisation of the whole German nation'. He maintained this perspective in the face of evidence that most members of the SPD supported the War, and despite the awareness that he would participate in an essentially nationalist revolt that would stand out against the tenets of this evolutionary perspective.

Obviously Connolly's appraisal of Germany was influenced also by his Nationalist priorities. Yet the old dictum that Britain's enemy was Ireland's ally left untouched the problem of how far Imperial Germany could be a sympathetic supporter. The parallels drawn at least implicitly in Nationalist arguments – between Germany and Republican France in the 1790s – failed to answer fundamental questions. Presumably status as an enemy of Britain did not entail a commitment to the claims of small nationalities. But the problem was not subject to critical discussion – and the Proclamation of Easter 1916 duly made reference to 'gallant allies in Europe'.[34]

Connolly's pro-German arguments clearly owed much to Nationalist sentiments. They offered one indice of the degree to which his choices were influenced by such priorities. Nevertheless, he came to the military collaboration of April 1916 through a complex route. As early as September 1914 he had worked with some revolutionary Nationalists in a short-lived Irish Neutrality League.[35]

Connolly seems to have been unaware of the existence of a Republican conspiracy. Instead he invested his hopes in the small ICA, and by the Summer of 1915 the *Workers' Republic* contained articles on street fighting.[36] Any possibility of a significant revolt depended on the achievement of some arrangement between the Citizen Army and the revolutionary Nationalists operating inside the Volunteers' organisation. Gradually, suspicion gave way to understanding. The ICA and the Volunteers marched together in August 1915 at the set-piece funeral of O'Donovan Rossa.[37] Connolly's articles focussed increasingly on national themes. They eulogised the pantheon of Irish heroes – Tone, Emmet, Davis, Lalor, Mitchel, and the Fenians – that had long been espoused by Connolly and which was subscribed to by the revolutionary Nationalists.[38]

Connolly employed examples from this tradition to argue the case for audacity. Past revolts had lacked this quality:

> In 1848, as later, the real revolutionary sentiment was in the hearts of the people, but for the most part they who undertook to give it articulate expression were wanting in the essential ability to translate sentiment into action. They would have been good historians of a revolutionary movement, but were unable to take that leap in the dark which all men must take who plunge into insurrection.[39]

The justification for such actions should not be sought solely – or even principally – in their likelihood of success. He commended the example of the Manchester Martyrs because they had acted despite a discouraging situation:

> Let us remember that by every test by which parties in Ireland today measure political wisdom, or personal prudence, the act of these men ought to be condemned.[40]

But such an act helped to maintain the credibility of Nationalist politics. Such an inspiration was imperative in the context of Redmondite perfidy. Connolly's insistence on the need for some demonstration of Nationalist resolve left open the possibility that the Citizen Army would act alone if circumstances seemed to rule out other options. By late 1915, the threat of conscription suggested that unilateral action might occur. Connolly voiced impatience with revolutionary rhetoric:

> we are not revolutionists. Not by a thousand miles ... We strictly confine ourselves to killing John Bull with our mouths.[41]

Pessimism alternated with moments of optimism. In December 1915, he welcomed a growing identity between 'the forces of real nationalism and labour'.[42] But a month later urgency was again the keynote:

> The time for Ireland's battle is NOW.
> The place for Ireland's battle is HERE.[43]

This insistence led to Connolly's introduction to the IRB's Military Council. After a long discussion he agreed to desist from independent action, and instead to participate in the Rising planned for Easter 1916. As he elliptically informed readers of the *Workers' Republic*:

> The issue is clear and we have done our best to clear it ... (for) that fruitful blessed day of days, we are ready. Will it find you ready too?[44]

Chapter 9

Might-have-beens

1916, that critical year for Irish Nationalism was arguably decisive for Irish Socialism. One assessment of Connolly's decision to participate in the Rising would be that he thereby committed himself, and significantly through his participation, the small Irish Socialist movement, to support an insurrection that could have no socialist legacy. Thus, instead of socialist involvement transforming Irish Nationalism, it was Irish Socialism that found itself absorbed and marginalised. This negative verdict has been pronounced by, amongst others, Eric Hobsbawm:

> So far from transforming it, the Marxist element in Irish nationalism has produced little more than another nationalist saint and martyr, and a social-revolutionary tinge on the radical fringes of the IRA ... in its own Marxist terms, the Connolly–Marxist–Nationalist policy must be regarded as a failure.[1]

This bleak assessment fits a conventional interpretation of 1916 and its legacy: the post-Rising reprisals; the identification of the rebels with Sinn Fein; the latter's supersession of the Parliamentary Party, the War of Independence and the Civil War. The cumulative political legacy with alignments determined by postures adopted between 1916 and 1923 included the political marginality of Labour. Since the twenties Irish Socialists have confronted the consequences of an incomplete national revolution and of a social revolution that did not happen. The interpretation is at least a salutary warning for those who view uncritically Connolly's legacy as a viable synthesis of socialist and nationalist ideas.

Such thoughts are significant, but they do not provide an adequate response. If one comment of Lenin warns against a simplistic focusing of Socialist hopes on Nationalist movements, this must be supplemented by his verdict on the Easter Rising:

> Whoever calls *such* an uprising a 'putsch' is either a hardened reactionary or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of picturing a social revolution as a living thing.
>
> For to imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of politically non-conscious proletarian masses against landlord, church, monarchical, national and other oppression – to imagine that means *repudiating social revolution* ...
>
> Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution really is.[2]

As with Connolly, there is an insistence that revolts of oppressed peoples be placed in the context of Great Power rivalries. There is a hint that the revolutionary merits of any action should not be identified with its immediate consequences. A revolt may be inspired by ambiguous motives and generate diverse consequences; but internationally its revolutionary impact may be significant. This argument is close to Connolly's metaphor of a boy with a pin. Above all Lenin's argument insists that realistic standards should be employed in any assessment of revolutionary opportunities.

One response to these general reflections would be that by 1916, Connolly had ceased effectively to be a Socialist, and therefore analysis of a Socialist's decision to participate in the Rising is beside the point. This interpretation was presented forcefully by Sean O'Casey:

> Jim Connolly had stepped from the narrow byway of Irish Socialism onto the broad and crowded highway of Irish Nationalism ... The high creed of Irish Nationalism became his daily rosary, while the higher creed of international humanity that had so long bubbled from his eloquent lips was silent forever, and Irish Labour lost a leader.[3]

The verdict was supported by passages within Connolly's wartime writings. He condemned Irish MPs' support for the War not from the standpoint of Socialist principle but from that of national tradition:

> Ireland was attacked by every poisonous agency ever brought to bear upon the mind and soul of the people. Her religion, her love of nationality, her strict sexual morality, her natural affection for the weak, her sympathy for suffering and distress – every high and noble instinct implanted in her by ages of suffering was appealed to that her children might deny the past of their country.[4]

Following his commitment to action at Easter, he proclaimed the need to preserve national identity, even if this task recruited only a small minority:

> It is not the will of the majority which ultimately prevails; that which ultimately prevails is the ideal of the noblest of each generation ...[5]

Under the pressures of war, the Irish working class seemed to have been deposed by Cathleen ni Houlihan; the hope that choices be made democratically was superseded by the judgement of the principled few.

Such emphases do not give the complete story. Connolly faced with the near-disintegration of effective socialist politics placed a heightened emphasis on Nationalist themes, but the historical exemplars that he employed had long been present in his writings. He continued to emphasise the centrality of socialist and labour questions. Thus, in January 1916, he acknowledged that the failure to develop the One Big Union in Ireland had damaged the prospects for the kind of national emancipation that he wished to see:

> Had we been able to carry out all our plans, as such an Irish organisation of Labour alone could carry them out, we could at a word have created all the conditions necessary to the striking of a successful blow, whenever the military arm of Ireland wished to move.[6]

Although Connolly still emphasised that working class and national interests should not be separated, his appraisal of trade union weaknesses showed how far the situation fell short of his ideal. Yet he saw action as essential.

With this diagnosis and this priority, collaboration with people who were neither socialist nor working class was inevitable. Some Nationalists had expressed support late in 1913 for the locked-out Dublin workers. Arguably Connolly subsequently had some influence on Pearse. The latter's late writings reveal not only that the two men agreed on the basic components of the Nationalist tradition, but that Pearse's concern with social questions did not die with the conclusion of the Lock Out. Although he remained sceptical about class-based politics, he acknowledged in his final pamphlet that private property should not be a fetish. It should be held 'subject to the national sanction'.[7] The facts of a specific case could license its limitation or even its abolition. Moreover, Pearse emphasised that without popular consent, a Government of capitalists had no legitimacy. Indeed such a qualification for office should not be attractive:

> the people, if wise, will not choose the makers and administrators of their laws on such arbitrary and fantastic grounds as the possession of capital, or the possession of redheads, or the having been born on a Tuesday ...[8]

The point should not be exaggerated. Pearse did not enter the General Post Office on Easter Monday 1916 as a Socialist; but equally Connolly did not simply abandon his longstanding Socialism for an uncomplicated Nationalism.

Behind the issue of ideological compromises, there stands the question: what did Connolly hope to achieve through an insurrection? Pearse's commitment to the idea of a blood-sacrifice as a remedy for Irish passivity is well known. One of his most outspoken comments in this vein would be employed by O'Casey in his anti-Rising masterpiece, *The Plough and the Stars*. The heroism of the European War and the consequential sacrifices should be welcomed:

> it is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefield. Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country.[9]

The sentiment was shared by some of Pearse's closest collaborators, most notably Joseph Plunkett, but Connolly reacted vehemently:

No, we do not think that the old heart of the earth needs to be warmed with the red wine of millions of lives. We think anyone who does is a blithering idiot. We are sick of such teaching and the world is sick of such teaching.[10]

The rejection was at one with many of Connolly's earlier writings which had demonstrated both awareness and abhorrence of the impact of modern military technology. When he initially argued for insurrection to halt the war, he claimed that this would reduce casualties.[11] Yet he was not exempt from the sacrificial religious imagery employed by some radical Nationalists. His analysis of the corruption of the Irish working class by the British connection led to a proposal that must have won Pearse's approval:

no agency less potent than the red-tide of war on Irish soil will ever be able to enable the Irish race to recover its self-respect or establish its national dignity in the face of a world horrified and scandalised by what must seem to them our national apostasy.

The argument focused on the recovery of credibility rather than on any substantive outcome. It fitted in with Connolly's repeated claim that the Irish in the wartime crisis had to keep faith with their most vital Nationalist traditions. The argument was buttressed by redemptionist imagery:

Without the slightest trace of irreverence, but in all due humility and awe, we recognise that of us as of mankind before Calvary, it may truly be said 'Without the Shedding of Blood there is no Redemption'.[12]

Such a passage indicated the degree to which a Socialist operating within a Catholic Nationalist culture could absorb dominant imagery, especially at a critical moment.

Such passages should not be taken as conclusive evidence that Connolly capitulated to a redemptionist mysticism. Characterisation of the Rising is a complex matter. The most credible analysis would appear to be one which focuses on the symbolic aspects with the ceremonial proclamation of the Republic, ensuring that an idealised tradition of thorough opposition to British rule remained unbroken.[13] Too much attention should not be given to the strategic planning and the prelude of orders and counterorders that produced such a tangle of misunderstandings. A heavy concentration on such incidents as the voyage of the 'Aud' and the conflicts within the Volunteers tends to imply that with better fortune, the rebels could have made a military showing that would of itself, have transformed the situation. That military matters could have gone better is obvious; that the outcome could have been radically different seems implausible. An emphasis on the Rising as a symbolic event does not mean that justifications must be sought in the realm of mysticism. Attention has been paid already to one argument for insurrection: 'the child and the pin' argument. Its potency did not depend on

metaphysical claims about blood sacrifice. Rather it is a specific example of a more general contention that an insurrection's value lay not in the immediate victory of those involved but in the radicalising impact of their action. Yeats' poem *The Rose Tree* can be seen as a presentation of the blood-sacrifice doctrine, but it also made a pragmatic political case. The paralysis that resulted from Redmondite domination could be ended by an act of heroism:

> 'O words are lightly spoken'
> said Pearse to Connolly.
> 'Maybe a breath of politic words
> Has withered our Rose Tree;
> Or maybe but a wind that blows
> Across the bitter sea.'
>
> 'It needs but to be watered,'
> James Connolly replied,
> 'To make the green come out again
> And spread on every side,
> And shake the blossom from the bud
> To be the garden's pride.'
>
> 'But where can we draw water,'
> said Pearse to Connolly.
> 'When all the wells are parched away?
> O plain as plain can be
> There's nothing but our own red blood
> Can make a right Rose Tree.'[14]

Connolly had used more austere language to make the same point late in 1914.

> If the British Government once more throws off the mask of constitutionalism and launches its weapons of repression against those who dare to differ from it, if once more it sets in motion its jails, its courts martial, its scaffolds, then the last tie that binds these men to the official Home Rule gang will snap.[15]

The analysis was prescient as a prognostication of the Rising's ability to generate the symbolism for a new mass Nationalist movement. The implications for Socialism were another matter, but Connolly's underlying optimism did not seem to desert him. Writing at the end of January 1916 to the Glasgow Socialist, Arthur MacManus, he claimed that Government repression of civil liberties and the brooding threat of conscription had implications that went beyond the specifically Nationalist:

> the outstanding fact ... which stood out in the Government's policy of persecution was the potentialities of Social Revolution which their action developed.[16]

Such optimism appears to have informed his arguments with those Volunteers opposed to an early insurrection. Bulmer Hobson, outside of and opposed to the conspiracy recalled one exchange with Connolly in a Dublin restaurant:

His conversation was full of cliches derived from the earlier days of the Socialist movement in Europe. He told me that the working class was always revolutionary, that Ireland was a powder magazine, and that what was necessary was for someone to apply the match. I replied that if he must talk in metaphors, Ireland was a wet bog and that the match would fall into a puddle.[17]

Connolly's fundamental assumptions remained those that had moulded his activities as a Socialist. The innate radicalism of the working class was stifled and betrayed by cautious Labour leaders whose dominance was facilitated by undemocratic organisations. The radicalism could be realised through democratic structures and bold initiatives. In 1916, organisational footholds were sparse. All that remained were bold initiatives.

At this point, two voices demand attention: one Socialist, the other Nationalist. The former belonged to Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, perhaps the Rising's most tragic victim. Feminist, pacifist and vegetarian, he did not participate in the insurrection. Instead, he attempted to organise groups to prevent looting. This did not reflect any attachment to private property, but rather a desire to protect the rebels from dismissal as a pillaging mob. Seized as a hostage by British troops and shot on the instructions of Captain Bowen-Colthurst, his murder became one of the earliest causes of post-Rising antagonism to the British Government.[18] His unique role in Irish politics was portrayed eloquently by the poet, James Stephens:

the most absurdly courageous man I have ever met with or heard of. He has been in every trouble that has touched Ireland these ten years back, and he has always been in on the generous side, therefore and naturally on the side that was unpopular and weak ...

Like Connolly he paraded his principles to an often unresponsive city undeterred by threats and bearing no malice against any violent response:

he accepted blows and indignities and ridicule with the pathetic candour of a child who is disguised as a man, and whose disguise cannot come off.[19]

Sheehy-Skeffington's pacifism seemed far removed from Connolly's ultimate response; yet they shared much. It was not just that they had a common attachment to Socialism. Sheehy-Skeffington also had a firm commitment to the Nationalist cause. Indeed in January 1916, Connolly praised him for his support for an elusive synthesis:

He had shown ... that it was possible to be an advocate of advanced social reform, and at the same time to be intensely national.[20]

Significantly, it was to Sheehy-Skeffington that Connolly turned for a literary executor prior to Easter 1916. He could ensure that the Socialist message would not be condemned to trivialisation or distortion.[21] It was a crowning irony that one of the Rising's most barbarous episodes destroyed any such hope.

This substantial area of agreement renders more urgent the question of why Sheehy-Skeffington dissented fundamentally from any proposal for an armed insurrection. One simple answer would be his pacificism, but he was too reasoned a thinker to be content with such a terse rejection. A more thorough explanation can be found in 'An Open Letter to Thomas MacDonagh'.[22] The recipient had been a teaching colleague; by May 1915 he was committed clearly to the more militant section of the Volunteers. Significantly, Sheehy-Skeffington emphasised their common ground, as well as their differences. He too had been attracted by the Volunteers, once they had shaken off 'the Redmondite incubus'; but crucially, he rejected the organisation's militarisation. Certainly a vigorous Volunteer movement could heighten Irish people's self-respect, but this promise was flawed fatally by the emphasis on military credibility. Those who were less scrupulous about the use of violence would come to dominate:

> True, Ireland's militarism can never be on so great a scale as that of Germany or England; but it may be equally fatal to the best interests of Ireland. European militarism has drenched Europe in blood; Irish militarism may only crimson the fields of Ireland. For us that would be disaster enough.[23]

His accusation was not just that military methods would pervert the organisation, its ideals and the society whose interests it claimed to advance. He further argued that such a method for achieving political change was anachronistic. This claim involved a very modern emphasis. One limitation on Volunteer membership was significant:

> women are left out ... Consider carefully why: and when you have found and clearly expressed the reason why women cannot be asked to enrol in this movement, you will be close to the reactionary element in the movement itself.[24]

Instead he envisaged an organisation of men and women committed to national objectives, but only through reasoned argument; ready to be martyrs but not prepared to kill. For Sheehy-Skeffington this offered:

> the only way out of the tangle ... the only way in which we, the oppressed and exploited, can reconcile our hatred of the oligarchies and our hatred of organised bloodshed.[25]

Addressed to Thomas MacDonagh, the argument could have been addressed even more pertinently to Connolly who shared many of Sheehy-Skeffington's fundamental principles.

Its bleak prognostications acquired significant support from subsequent events. Dedication to military objectives marginalised social priorities. The exclusion of women from the Volunteers reinforced the traditional stereotypes of Irish society. Over time the drive for national independence through a combination of military and political methods produced an insensitivity towards violence that culminated in the

barbarities of the Civil War. Yet it would be unreasonable to condemn Connolly as lacking sensitivity towards the brutal consequences of any military action. Rather, he considered the options of accepting the continuing mass slaughter of the War, or of acting in a fashion that would produce its own casualties, but which might shorten the larger conflict. For him such a choice might justify insurrection, especially if it also might loosen the grip of capitalism. The issue is fundamental and complex. One question is how much credibility should be attached to Sheehy-Skeffington's alternative.

Socialists who adopted this position could be found in several European societies. Thus many members of the British ILP condemned the War, expressed pacifist principles and resisted conscription often at great personal cost, including in several cases death in prison. Connolly admired such Socialists but their divergence from his position in 1916 was often acute. The ILP's official newspaper, the *Labour Leader*, condemned the Rising as 'a crime'. The use of violence was decisive:

> We are opposed to armed force whether it be under the control of the Government or under the control of a labour organisation.[26]

Such a condemnation raises the problem of the pacifist position's viability. It furnished moving examples of individual heroism, but it was unclear whether anything else was on offer as an immediate strategy. Its advocates hoped that such actions could help the construction of a Socialist movement that could be a significant force once the War had ended. This contrasted sharply with the claim made by Connolly, Maclean and Lenin that the War provided both the need and the opportunity for a revolutionary breakthrough. Those who looked forward to Socialist growth, once the War had ended, were often unable to make a distinctive impact after 1918. By then, the political world had been revolutionised, not least because of interventions by Socialists who saw the War as opportunity rather than obstacle. Such evidence does not of itself destroy the credibility of the pacifist option. The Socialist interventions did not have the consequences anticipated by their proponents; indeed those who advocated Socialist-pacifism, whether in Ireland or elsewhere could maintain that such violent and early interventions blighted hopes of significant socialist growth. Yet pacifists rarely made specific recommendations about how such growth could be achieved. Sheehy-Skeffington's precise claims on this point were obscure. To a Socialist such as Connolly, oppressed by the illiberality of the State and by the need to halt mass slaughter, but believing that wartime chaos offered some scope for radical change, Sheehy-Skeffington's principled option had little immediate relevance.

The second significant voice was informed by very different preoccupations. Eoin MacNeill was neither Socialist nor pacifist.[27] A Gaelic

scholar and head of the Volunteers, he offered thorough opposition to the strategy of armed insurrection and played a significant part in ensuring that most Volunteers did not participate. His political reputation suffered as a result. He has been dismissed too readily as a cloistered academic swamped by the demands of revolutionary nationalism. In fact the truth was very different. In February 1916 he offered a detailed moral and strategic critique of the insurrectionary option.[28] Unlike Sheehy-Skeffington's case, this was a response by someone who acknowledged the validity of military action.

His argument began with a moral claim that military initiatives could be justified only if these were backed by a good prospect of success. Moreover, this should be immediate, and not some vague long-term possibility. Otherwise, those responsible for an insurrection would be responsible for any deaths. The decisive assessment of likely consequences should be based on a thorough scrutiny of the evidence, not on individual intuition nor 'a priori' maxims. A reliance on premonition meant an abandonment of reason in favour of individual psychology as the vital determinant. Maxims if applied uncritically could be treacherous guides. Thus MacNeill submitted several such formulae, employed by Revolutionary Nationalists to a sceptical investigation. Whether the War offered a crucial opportunity to advance Irish interests was a a matter for reasoned judgement, not one of faith. The claim that Irish Nationalists had acted too slowly in past crises was historically false. Even if it were valid, this need offer no guidance for the present. The incantation that Ireland should take the initiative was at one level empty. It was also misleading. Any initiative in Ireland lay with the British forces; Hallowed formulae were dealt with dismissively:

> I do not care and will not care a rap for maxims or formulae or catchwords or feelings or forebodings, or for the reproaches either of our own time or later times. Organisation, preparation, calculation are the necessary preliminaries to any decision ...[29]

MacNeill acknowledged that a sacrificial strategy could be acceptable but only given the imminent destruction of Irish nationality. He did not see this condition as near to fulfilment. Essentially his assessment was relatively optimistic. Those who favoured a grand gesture:

> are really impelled by a sense of feebleness or despondency or fatalism or by an instinct of satisfying their own emotions or escaping from a difficult and complex or trying situation.[30]

Indeed, a revolt would make matters worse. It would provide a credible justification for repression of the Volunteers. His preferred alternative began from the claim that if Irish rights could be secured without military conflict, then this would be preferable. He acknowledged that this would be a difficult strategy for a force undergoing military training.

Nevertheless he considered that the Volunteers had established themselves as a significant element in Irish politics and were invulnerable to government repression unless an insurrectionary adventure provided an excuse. The wise strategy was to increase the Volunteers' strength. Military action should come only if an attempt was made to disarm the organisation.

This tactic offered the hope of securing mass support. MacNeill insisted against some of the poets that:

> our country is not a poetical abstraction ... There is no such person as Caitlin Ni Uallachain or Roisin Dubh or the Sean bhean Bhoct who is calling upon us to serve her. What we call our country is the Irish nation, which is a concrete and visible reality.[31]

He claimed that radicals were often blind to the need to win support, not just because they dealt in poetic abstractions but more mundanely because they generalised from their own emotions to those of the wider population. This could produce a disastrous miscalculation:

> ... the only possible basis for successful revolutionary action is deep and widespread popular discontent. We have only to look around us in the streets to realise that no such condition exists in Ireland. A few of us, a small proportion, who think about the evils of English government in Ireland are always discontented. We should be downright fools if we were to measure many others by the standards of our own thoughts.[32]

This thorough and reasoned response to the insurrectionary case grew immediately out of MacNeill's justifiable anxiety about the intentions of some of his colleagues within the Volunteers. Equally, its principal thrusts were directed at the repeated demands for early action made by Connolly.[33] A strength of the argument lies in the thorough emphasis on the need to justify actions through a reasoned presentation of the evidence. If this criticism is applied to Connolly's advocacy of military action, certainly it is the case that he emphasised such propositions as 'Ireland has always struck too late'. Yet it would be misleading to suggest that in his case such claims were simply acts of faith. Typically, they were based on historical arguments, often controversial and sometimes implausible, but as such Connolly's maxims were not open usually to MacNeill's most fundamental objection.[34] Equally, despite his growing support for traditional Nationalist sentiments, Connolly could be accused only rarely of personifying 'Ireland' in a fashion that ignored or distorted the sentiments of the country's inhabitants. Throughout his career he polemicised against Nationalists who dealt in such mystifications. One such comment from the period when he had committed himself to an insurrection makes the point:

> We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalists; not the sleek

and oily lawyer; not the prostitute pressman – the hired liars of the enemy ... Not these but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.[35]

Greater complexities are raised by the moral position taken by MacNeill. The assertion that military means should be employed normally only if there is a reasonable prospect of success led to two difficulties. The first centres around the fact that despite the Easter Rising's military defeat, it could be regarded in a longer perspective as relatively successful in Nationalist as opposed to Socialist terms.

Yet the path from the reprisals through to the War of Independence and the formation of the Free State was complex. Easter 1916 did not lead directly to the guerrilla campaign of 1919–21. During the intervening three years, the tactical options were complex, and the military campaign that emerged eventually was fundamentally different from the symbolic set piece of 1916.[36] That the rebels gambled on some such chain of events is clear; that it was a reasonable gamble was much less obvious. The emphasis on what was a reasonable choice raises the second issue, that of available options. Repeatedly, Connolly argued that the costs of passivity were likely to be devastating; an increasingly illiberal State would not permit the development of a credible opposition and the prospects for labour and nationalist organisations would be grim. Against this assessment, MacNeill argued for the development of support and influence; constraints were not that tight.[37]

Assessment of this alternative is complicated by the fact of the Rising. This radically affected subsequent developments and thus these offer an inadequate guide to the validity of MacNeill's strategy in a hypothetical situation where no insurrection had taken place. But one sombre fact provides a backcloth to any consideration. Political organisations that have concentrated on building up their forces in anticipation of a supreme opportunity when these could be employed decisively have rarely been able to consummate their strategy. Two decades later, the shattered organisations of German and Austrian Socialists would offer bleak monuments to the problem of ascertaining the opportune moment. The cultivation of organisational maturity could become all too easily a goal in itself.

One justification relevant for Connolly but not for MacNeill concerned the likely impact of a Rising upon international Socialist opinion. The actual impact was minimal. Only Lenin took a favourable view of its possible significance:

A blow delivered against the British imperialist bourgeoisie in Ireland has a hundred times more political significance than a blow of equal weight would have in Asia or Africa ... The dialectics of history are such that small nations powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialsm, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which facilitate the entry into the arena of

the *real* power against imperialism, namely the socialist proletariat ... The misfortune of the Irish is that they rose prematurely, when the European revolt of the proletariat had not yet matured.[38]

How far sections of the European working class could be characterised as revolutionary during the immediately succeeding years is a difficult and debatable question. What is not contentious is that from the Autumn of 1917, events in Russia transformed the tempo of Socialist politics. Revolution was on the political agenda. The transformation has a significant implication for Irish political developments.

If an Irish Rising had occurred not in April 1916 but in the Spring or Summer of 1918, then the context would have been dramatically different.[39] Ireland faced the threat of conscription, the Parliamentary Party withdrew from Westminster to campaign against its introduction, the MPs did so in collaboration with Sinn Fein and Labour organisations. Resistance to the Government's proposal had clerical support. The most dramatic evidence of labour involvement was an effective general strike on 23 April. Throughout the Summer, the Government engaged in widespread and radicalising repression. Coercive legislation was employed; several Sinn Fein leaders were arrested amidst allegations of a German plot; Sinn Fein, the Volunteers and the Gaelic League were all suppressed as 'dangerous associations'. Arguably, a military rising in this context would have had substantial popular support; the context would have meant that several of the criteria stressed by MacNeill in his memorandum would have been satisfied.

Certainly the international implications could have been very different from the indifference and misunderstanding that had greeted the 1916 initiative. War weariness was corroding the will to fight of soldiers on both Western and Italian Fronts. It had done so already in the East. A significant revolt in Ireland would have required the transfer of British troops and any consequential repression might have provoked an angry response from Irish soldiers within the British Army. This is a tantalising 'might have been'. Possibly a 'premature' rising in 1916 stripped the boy's pin of much of its power.

A putative Irish revolt in 1918 would have had its Socialist facets. Indeed what is striking about actual Irish developments after 1916 is the extent to which images derived from the Russian Revolution left their mark on the rhetoric and the expectations of Irish labour. Its distinctive voice was not muffled immediately by the tricolour. One legacy of 1916 was the weakening of deferential routines in the countryside. Labour organisations expanded dramatically and even the cautious post-Rising leadership felt this radical tide and made concessions. The ITGWU grew significantly in rural and small town Ireland.[40] Many of its activists were determined not to be absorbed by Sinn Fein. Whilst the latter sought to emulate the hegemony of the Parliamentary Party, labour activists

prized their independence; not least because of Sinn Fein's willingness to consort with conservative Nationalists. Ironically this concern for independence was heightened by returning soldiers, keen like their counterparts elsewhere to secure economic improvements, but with little incentive to join Sinn Fein. Thus Nationalist Ireland shared in the post-1917 radicalisation of labour that characterised much of Europe. It shared also in the subsequent containment and defeat of labour hopes.

The Irish experience of this declension was shaped inevitably by the national struggle. Labour's optimism was crushed between two millstones. On the one side, the beleaguered British administration was unwilling or unable to distinguish between Nationalist and labour agitations; on the other, Sinn Feinn tended to use the developing alternative administrative structures to impose the priorities of landlords, employers and farmers.

Perhaps it was predictable that as the conflict with the British forces became more ruthless, Labour activists came to co-operate with Nationalists whom they opposed on economic questions. During a battle for political independence, the National Question was likely to have a heavy impact on immediate political allegiances. But such pressures did not result in the automatic suppression of a class dimension within Irish politics. Socialists and trade union leaders often made a distinction between a temporary alliance with conservative elements on the National Question and the underlying divergence on economic issues. Following the inauguration of the Free State, class tensions could still find expression in prolonged industrial battles. Thus in 1922 and 1923 the Transport Workers fought with some initial success, but later unavailingly against a concerted attempt to cut farmworkers' wages in County Waterford.[41]

Already one Irish Labour voice had attacked any hope that the nationalist struggle could generate a socialist revolution. In March 1922, a correspondent to the newspaper *Voice of Labour* had dismissed as 'romantic' any expectation of an IRA–worker alliance. The 'realism' was founded on a pessimistic view of the bases for economic radicalism. Both pro- and anti-Treaty factions of the IRA were dominated by farmers and shopkeepers whose outlooks were confined to narrowly capitalist priorities. Even the rural landless labourers were motivated only by land-hunger. Such industrial workers as there were within the Free State would accept the Treaty and attempt to use the resulting institutions to their advantage. But their endeavours would be cramped by unavoidable constraints. The British connection was still decisive; Ireland's economy depended on essential imports. There seemed no chance of any revolutionary breakthrough across the water. So long as this was the case, any radical Irish initiative would face the threat of British intervention. Such speculation was unrealistic anyway, since the Irish Labour movement was in no sense revolutionary. As the analysis concluded:

There are no Lenins, Trotskys, Krassins, Radeks or Litvinoffs in the Irish Labour movement.[42]

The writer was probably Thomas Johnson; the argument was explicitly against the expectations of some British Communists.[43] It certainly reflected Johnson's own cautious style. More broadly it provided a deflating argument against anyone inclined to take a simplistic view of Nationalist mobilisation as a springboard for socialist growth. Indeed, a sceptic might have added that some observers exaggerated the degree to which there had been mass involvement in the War of Independence as opposed to mass acceptance of many of its consequences.[44]

Nevertheless, Socialist pessimism in 1922 involved considerations that extended beyond specifically Irish features. Working-class initiatives had been defeated throughout much of Europe. Recession had blunted workers' power; the political authority of capital had been re-established; the Soviet Union had been isolated. The future of Socialism within Nationalist Ireland could not be separated from this wider development. Moreover, the *Voice of Labour* argument focussed specifically on the bleak prospects for revolutionary socialists. It failed to deal, except implicitly, with the scope for a moderate Labour Party in Ireland. This tendency remained weak under the Free State. The evidence suggests that Labour's decision to stand aside in the 1918 General Election in order to permit a clear vote on the National issue was not decisive. Rather, after 1918 the Party lost out over a lengthy period. Moments of relative success were subordinated to what in retrospect were decisive setbacks. The continuing centrality of unfinished National business was clearly significant; but so too were industrial defeats which stripped political Labour of an important trade union resource.[45]

A harshly realistic analysis of 1916 and of its actual historical consequences is necessary. For Socialists, the outcome was depressing; a verdict that needs to be placed against naive claims that Connolly in theory and in practice offered a viable synthesis of nationalist and socialist politics. No such synthesis ever existed to be deflected from a triumph by contingent circumstances. Equally, it would be misleading to characterise Connolly's actions as one vital contribution to the marginalisation of Labour and Socialist politics after the formation of the Free State. The fate of Irish Labour with all its distinctive features cannot be separated from the more general defeat of European Labour. On both the narrower and broader stages there are intriguing and complex 'might have beens'. Connolly's action in 1916 and the debate over the consequences should not be the subject of an historical idealisation, nor of an understandable but misleading presentation as socialist apostasy. Rather it was a choice made in what seemed to a long-standing Socialist, an increasingly bleak situation. As such, it raised for Socialists the

perennial question of the baffling interplay between creative initiative, and firm, perhaps, dimly perceived constraints. Pearse had believed that faith could combat the problem. His poem 'The Fool' gave this answer to those who counseled prudence and realism:

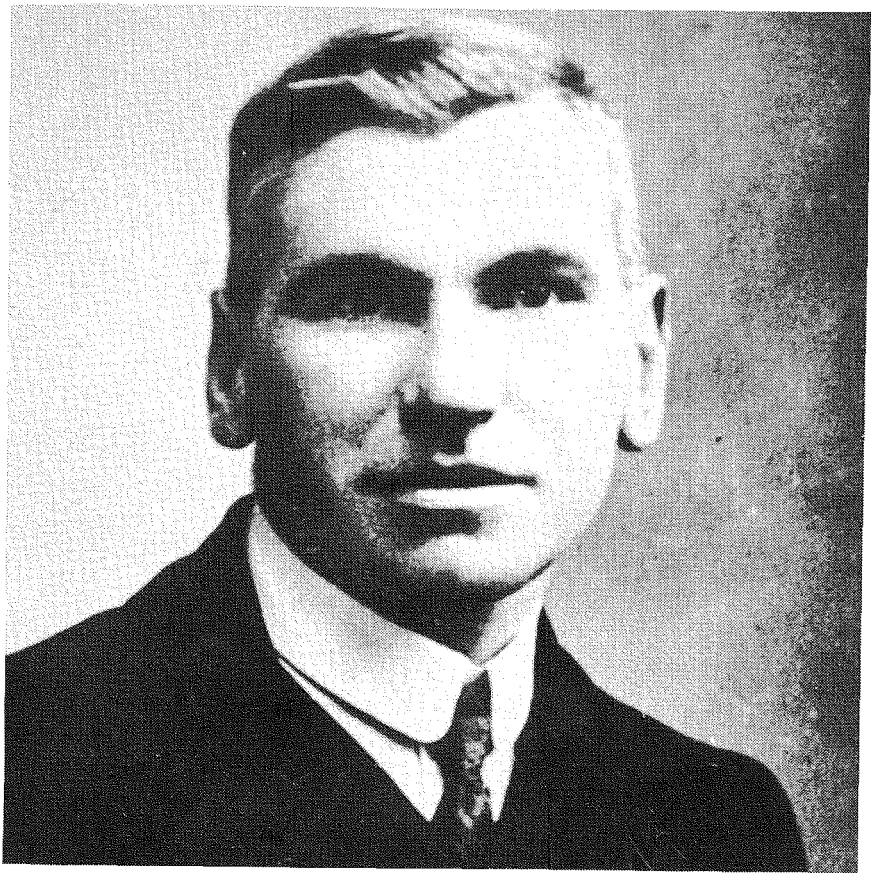
> O Wise men, riddle me this: what if the dream come true?
> What if the dream come true? and if millions unborn shall dwell
> In the house that I shaped in my heart, the noble house of my thought?[46]

Such millions have not lived in Pearse's dream of a Gaelic Ireland; nor have they lived in a realisation of the ideals that inspired the Bolsheviks. Yet both actions demonstrate not simply the unpredictable consequences of radical political initiatives; they also show a willingness to strike out against the tyranny of normality. Their complex legacies have shaped respectively the subsequent histories of Ireland and of the Socialist Movement. The Irish Socialist Movement has been shaped by both. The problems of the twenties and of later were obviously connected closely to the developments that had led from GPO to the Free State. Less apparent, but still significant, there were the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution – the rising tide of radical expectations, its containment – and then ebb. This was a European phenomenon manifest in a divergent form in each society. In Free State Ireland, it was affected radically by the prevalence of the National Struggle and by the relative weakness of Labour, both industrially and politically.

1916 and 1917 were vital but they have all too easily become prisms through which we are presented with distorted images of the past. Thus any recovery of Connolly's politics requires an act of historical imagination.

Part II

John Maclean



23 This theme is analysed in Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1984), Chapter 4.

PART I

The red and the green

1 See particularly the most thorough published biography, C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1976); also the profile by Desmond Ryan, *James Connolly* (Labour Publishing Company, London, 1924), and the sketch by him in J.W. Boyle (ed.), *Leaders and Workers* (Mercier Press, Cork, 1978), pp. 67–75. A more conceptual work is provided by Bernard Ransom in *Connolly's Marxism* (Pluto Press, London, 1980), with its theme of the Hibernicisation of Marxism.

2 For two contrasting analyses of the broader problems, see Michael Farrell, *The Orange State* (Pluto Press, London, 1976); Belinda Probert, *Beyond Orange and Green* (Academy Press, Dublin, 1978).

3 Originally in his *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* – first published in 1919; see also his *Drums Under the Windows* (Macmillan, London, 1946), p. 315 on Connolly – 'His fine eyes saw red no longer, but stared into the sky for a green dawn'.

4 See for example, Austen Morgan, 'Socialism in Ireland – Red, Green and Orange' in Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie, *Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class* (Ind Links, London, 1980); John Newsinger, 'James Connolly and The Easter Rising', *Science and Society*, Summer 1983, Vol. 47, pp. 152–177.

Chapter 1: Edinburgh

1 For material, see Bernard Ransom, 'James Connolly and the Scottish Left' (unpublished Edinburgh PhD, 1975), hereafter Ransom *Thesis*, Chapter 1; C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1976), Chapters 3 and 4; Ruth Dudley Edwards, *James Connolly* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1981), Chapter 1.

2 The occupational structure is discussed in R.Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976), pp. 19–26.

3 *Justice*, 12 August 1893.

4 See Gray, *op cit*, especially pp. 169–81; see also especially for the impact of the rail strike John Gilray, 'Early Days of the Socialist Movement in Edinburgh', *NLS. Acc. 4965*, hereafter Gilray, *MS*.

5 See Jim Smyth, 'Socialism in Scotland; the Beginnings' in *Radical Scotland*, No. 7, Feb/March 1984; also Gilray, *MS*.

6 For this theme see Ransom, *Thesis*, pp. 29–30.

7 For records of these developments see Scottish Labour Party, Edinburgh Central Branch Minutes, *NLS. Acc. 3828 (Microfilm)*; and Independent Labour Party, Edinburgh Central Branch Minutes, Edinburgh Public Library.

8 *Justice*, 12 August 1893.

9 *Edinburgh Labour Chronicle*, 5 November 1894.

10 *Ibid*, 1 December 1894.

11 *Ibid*.

12 *Ibid*, 5 November 1894.

13 See *ibid*, 15 October 1894.

14 *Ibid*, 1 December 1894.
15 *Ibid*.
16 *Ibid*.
17 See for example the exchanges at the Mid-Lanark By-Election of April 1894 as cited in David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888–1906* (University Press, Manchester, 1983), pp. 154–6.
18 Cited in Gray, *op cit*, pp. 98–9; original source Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Q. 19273.
19 *Ibid*, p. 178.
20 For background, see Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 38–9; 50.
21 John Leslie, *The Irish Question* (Reprint, Cork Workers' Club, 1974), p. 3.
22 *Ibid*, pp. 4–5.
23 *Ibid*, pp. 5–6, including an attack on John Mitchel for his anti-Socialism.
24 *Ibid*, p. 8.
25 *Ibid*, p. 9.
26 *Ibid*, p. 23. In contrast, note at pp. 24–5 the attacks on Davitt, then intervening on behalf of Liberal candidates, including the case of Mid-Lanark.
27 *Ibid*, p. 13 – note on p. 14 the claim that only through Socialism can Ireland become a manufacturing nation without brutal exploitation.
28 Connolly to Hardie, 8 and 19 June 1894. Copies in William O'Brien Papers *NLI*, MS 13933. Originals of this correspondence in *ILP Archive*, 1894. See also Edinburgh Central ILP Minute Book for 1894 for relevant discussions.
29 Connolly to Hardie 3 July 1894 – copy in O'Brien Papers, MS 13933.
30 *Edinburgh Labour Chronicle*, 5 November 1894.

Chapter 2: Dublin

1 See D Keogh, *The Rise of the Irish Working Class: The Dublin Trade Union Movement and Labour Leadership 1890–1914* (Appletree Press, Belfast, 1982), Chapter 1.
2 *Ibid*, Chapter 2.
3 For Connolly's Dublin years, see Greaves, *op cit*, Chapters 5–8; R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, Chapter 2.
4 William O'Brien, *Forth the Banners Go* (Three Candles, Dublin, 1969), p. 4.
5 *Workers' Republic* (hereafter *WR*), 7 October 1899.
6 O'Brien, *op cit*, pp. 30–5 for election details.
7 *Ibid* p. 5.
8 *ISRP Minute Book*, 12 February 1900, William O'Brien Collection, National Library of Ireland, MS 16265.
9 For details see Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 75–7.
10 For the SDF view see *Justice*, 14 May 1892.
11 For the Irish Party in the 1890s, see F. S. L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party 1890–1910* (Faber and Faber, London, 1951).
12 For these developments, see F. S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890–1939* (University Press, Oxford, 1982), Chapters 3 and 4.
13 *Shan Van Vocht*, October 1896.
14 The text of the original pamphlet can be found in three articles – 'Ireland for the Irish' in *Labour Leader*, 10, 17 and 24 October 1896. The pamphlet went through successive editions in which some amendments were made in the direction of a more exclusivist Socialism. To avoid confusion, all references here are from the *Labour Leader* articles.

15 *Labour Leader*, 10 October 1896.
16 For discussions of this, see Teodor Shanin, 'Marx, and the Peasant Commune' and Haruki Wada, 'Marx and Revolutionary Russia', both in *History Workshop Journal* (12), 1981.
17 *WR*, 23 September 1899.
18 *WR*, 1 July 1899.
19 *Shan Van Vocht*, January 1897.
20 *WR*, 20 August 1898.
21 *Ibid*, 12 May 1900.
22 *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1900.
23 *Shan Van Vocht*, 1 January 1897.
24 *Labour Leader*, 26 March 1898 (unsigned review of Gavan-Duffy's, *My Life in Two Hemispheres*).
25 *WR*, 5 August 1899.
26 *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1896.
27 See Nancy Cardozo, *Maud Gonne* (Gollancz, London, 1979), pp. 126–30; also W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (Macmillan, London, 1955), p. 366.
28 Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 97–100; R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, p. 26.
29 *WR*, 3 September 1898, reprinted from *L'Irlande Libre*.
30 *Ibid*.
31 *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1896.
32 See Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 101–5; R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, p. 25; for Maud Gonne's part, Cardozo, *op cit*, pp. 145–52.
33 *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1896.
34 *WR*, 27 August 1898.
35 *Ibid*, 24 September 1898.
36 *Labour Leader*, 24 October 1896.
37 *WR*, 10 June 1899.
38 *Ibid*, 22 September 1900.
39 See K. Marx, 'The Civil War in France', in *The First International and After* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974), especially pp. 206–12.
40 *Labour Leader*, 24 October 1896.
41 *Ibid*.
42 *Labour Leader*, 22 January 1898; for Marx's emphasis on Anglo–Irish differences as a key element in capitalist domination see his letter to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870, cited in Marx and Engels *Ireland and the Irish Question*.
43 *Labour Leader*, 22 January 1898.
44 *Ibid*, 24 October 1896.
45 *WR*, 2 September 1899.
46 *Ibid*, 12 August 1899.
47 *Ibid*, 4 November 1899.
48 *Ibid*, 1 July 1899.
49 *Ibid*, 15 December 1900.
50 *Ibid*, 3 September 1898.
51 *Shan Van Vocht*, November 1896.
52 See *WR*, 22 July 1899.
53 *Ibid*, 27 August 1898 for hope; and 16 September 1899, for criticism.
54 *Ibid*, 20 August 1898.
55 *Ibid*, 19 August 1899.
56 *Ibid*, 4 November 1899. For Marx, see 'The British Rule in India' in *Surveys from Exile* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977), pp. 301–6).
57 On theme of British Socialists and the South African War, see D. Howell, *op cit*, Chapters 15 and 16 passim.

58 *WR*, 19 August 1899.
59 See Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 113–25; R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, pp. 31–5; Cardozo, *op cit*, Chapters 19–22; for Griffith, see R. P. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Fein* (Anvil Books, Dublin, 1974).

Chapter 3: Sectarianism

1 James Connolly, *Erin's Hope – The End and the Means* (Sphinx Publications, Dublin, nd. but probably 1936) – both quotations from p. 15 of this edition.
2 *WR*, 5 August 1899.
3 For details see W. O'Brien, *op cit*, pp. 30–1; also D. Keogh, *op cit*.
4 *WR*, 27 August 1898.
5 *Ibid*, 16 September 1899.
6 *Justice*, 31 March 1900; these comments were in response to an article by Bruce Glasier in *Clarion*, 17 March 1900, describing his Irish tour under Fabian Society auspices.
7 *WR*, March 1901.
8 *Ibid*, October 1901.
9 See R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, p. 36; W. O'Brien, *op cit*, p. 27.
10 For example, the complexities surrounding Quelch's contest at Dewsbury early in 1902. See Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 139–40.
11 On the SDF see C. Tsuzuki, *H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (Heinemann and Oxford University Press, London, 1961); Henry Collins, 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation' in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History 1886–1923* (Macmillan, London, 1971), pp. 47–69.
12 On this see Raymond Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (Croom Helm, London, 1977), pp. 9–10.
13 On these campaigns see *Justice*, 22 and 29 June, 13 and 27 July, 21 September, 5, 12 and 19 October 1901; 17 May, 12 and 19 July, 9 and 30 August 1902.
14 James Connolly to J. C. Matheson, 14 March 1902, William O'Brien Papers (NLI), MS 13906.
15 *Ibid*, 14 July 1902, *loc cit*.
16 Quoting Sutton of Salford, *ibid*.
17 On these developments, see Challinor, *op cit*, chapter 1; Ransom, *Thesis*, pp. 94–141 passim.
18 Connolly to Matheson, 21 March 1903, William O'Brien Papers, MS 13906.
19 See Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 146–159; Dudley-Edwards, *op cit*, pp. 43–6.
20 See *The Socialist*, July 1903 for report of inaugural conference. Delegates attended from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leith.
21 On this see Tom Bell, *Pioneering Days* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1941), pp. 40–1.
22 *The Socialist*, June 1903.
23 See letter from Connolly to the American, SLP, 31 March 1899, quoted in C. Tsuzuki, 'The Impossibilist Revolt in Britain', *International Review of Social History* (1), 1956, p. 377.
24 Greaves, *op cit*, pp. 104–5.
25 *WR*, 10 February 1900.
26 *Ibid*, August 1902.
27 Letter from Bridgeport Conn. 23 September 1902, W. O'Brien Papers, MS 13906.

28 Connolly to Matheson, February 1903, *loc cit.*
29 See particularly on De Leon, L. G. Seretan, *Daniel De Leon: The Odyssey of an American Marxist* (Harvard UP, Cambridge, Mass. 1979).
30 Morris Hillquit 'Loose Leaves from a Busy Life', (NY, 1934), p. 34, cited in L. G. Seretan, 'The Personal Style and Political Methods of Daniel De Leon: A Reconsideration', *Labor History*, Spring 1973, p. 163–201.
31 *The Socialist*, June 1903.
32 Daniel De Leon, *Reform or Revolution* (SLP Press, Edinburgh 1906), p. 8.
33 *Ibid*, p. 9.
34 *Ibid*, pp. 14–15.
35 *Ibid*, p. 26.
36 *The Socialist*, June 1903.
37 For the Party's weakness, see Challinor, *op cit*, p. 28.
38 *The Socialist*, June 1903.
39 Connolly to Thomas Lyng from Providence, RI, 29 September 1902, *William O'Brien Papers*, MS 13912(ii).
40 See John Laslett, 'De Leonite Socialism and the Irish Shoe Workers of New England', in his *Labor and the Left* (Basic Books N.Y. 1970).
41 Silverman of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, 24 April 1898, in debate with De Leonites cited *ibid*, p. 69.
42 On this point see Seretan, *Daniel De Leon: The Odyssey of an American Marxist*, pp. 157ff.
43 *Weekly People*, 9 April 1904 reprinted in *The Connolly–De Leon Controversy on Wages, Marriage and the Church* (The Cork Workers' Club, Cork, nd.).
44 Connolly to Matheson, July 1904, *W. O'Brien Papers*, MS 13906.
45 *Ibid*, 19 November 1905 (from Newark), *loc cit.*
46 *Ibid*, 10 June 1906, *loc cit.* See also his letter of 28 January 1907 to Secretary, Irish Socialist Party, *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13940.
47 Connolly to Matheson, 27 September 1907, *W. O'Brien Papers*, MS 13906.
48 *Ibid*, 6 April 1907, *loc cit.*
49 *Ibid*, 30 January 1908, *loc cit.*
50 *Ibid*, 7 May 1908, *loc cit.*
51 *Ibid*, 10 June 1909, *loc cit.*

Chapter 4: Syndicalism

1 For the IWW see Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All* (Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1969); Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. IV, The Industrial Workers of the World* (International Publishers, New York, 1965). Material on Connolly's involvement in the organisation can be found in Carl Reeve and Ann Barton Reeve, *James Connolly and the United States* (Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1978), Chapters 9–15.
2 Connolly to Matheson, 1 March 1908, *William O'Brien Papers*, MS 13906.
3 For this, Reeve and Barton Reeve, *op cit*, Chapters 9–11 and also material on Connolly's involvement in the New York IWW can be found in the *Industrial Unionist Bulletin* (reprinted by Greenwood, Westport Conn, 1970) – under the heading 'Notes From New York'.
4 See Seretan *op cit*, pp. 175ff; Dubofsky, *op cit*, part 2, passim.
5 Daniel De Leon's address at Minneapolis, 10 July 1905, published as *The Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World* (later as 'Principles of Industrial Unionism'), pp. 24–5.

6 See Dubofsky, *op cit*, pp. 83–4.
7 As suggested in Connolly to Matheson, 19 November 1905, *loc cit*.
8 *Ibid*, c April 1907.
9 *Ibid*, 27 September 1907.
10 For WFM, see the appropriate chapter in John H. M. Laslett, *Labor and the Left*; also Dubofsky, *op cit*, esp. Chapters 3 and 4.
11 Cited in Dubofsky, *op cit*, p. 109.
12 See his letter to Matheson, 27 September 1907, *loc cit*.
13 For the inaugural convention and the IWW's first year, see Dubofsky, *op cit*, pp. 71–115; for the background to Debs's early involvement see Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs; Citizen and Socialist* (University of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 200–12.
14 Connolly to Matheson, c April 1907, *loc cit*.
15 *Ibid*, 8 October 1908.
16 Dubofsky, *op cit*, pp. 131–2; p. 141.
17 Connolly to Matheson, April 1908, *loc cit*.
18 *Ibid*, 7 May 1908, *loc cit*.
19 Original statement in Western Federation of Miners, Proceedings of the 1907 Convention and cited in Dubofsky, *op cit*, p. 135.
20 From Industrial Unionist Bulletin, April 1908, cited in Dubofsky, *op cit*, p. 136; Connolly saw himself largely in agreement with Williams – except for the latter's underestimating 'the necessity of fully utilising the political structure of capitalism as a propagandist basis' – see his letter to Matheson, 8 April 1908, *loc cit*.
21 See Reeve and Barton Reeve, *op cit*, pp. 123–32.
22 Dubofsky, *op cit*, pp. 136–41.
23 Connolly to Matheson, 27 September 1907, *loc cit*.
24 *Ibid*, 27 September 1908, *loc cit* (written during the Chicago Convention). Connolly's presence at the 1908 Convention, although not as a voting delegate can be traced in *Industrial Unionist Bulletin*, 10, 24 October, 7 November 1908.
25 *Ibid*. Connolly's political development can be traced in *The Harp*, January, May and June 1908. See also the recollections of John Lyng, *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13929.
26 The cover design for the original was drawn by Ralph Chaplin – see his *Wobbly: the Rough and Tumble Story of an American Radical* (University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 150 'The Cover I drew was full of runic decorations, shamrocks and an Irish harp'.
The other relevant writings are 'Ballots, Bullets or –', *International Socialist Review*, October 1909; 'A New Labour Policy', *The Harp*, January 1910; 'Industrialism and the Trade Unions', *International Socialist Review*, February 1910.
27 *Socialism Made Easy* (The Plough Book Service Dublin, 1971), p. 38.
28 *Ibid*, p. 44.
29 *Ibid*, p. 45.
30 *Ibid*, p. 47.
31 *Ibid*, p. 38.
32 *Ibid*, p. 39.
33 *Ibid*, p. 40.
34 For this strategy see Sally M. Miller, *Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism 1910–20* (Greenwood Press, Westport Conn, 1973).
35 Connolly, *Socialism Made Easy*, p. 40.
36 *Ibid*.

37 *Ibid*, p. 41.

38 For the way in which such experiences could lead to pessimistic conclusion, see David Beetham, 'From Socialism to Fascism: The Relation between Theory and Practice in the work of Robert Michels, *Political Studies*, 1977, pp. 3–24, 161–81.

39 For a characteristic example see Connolly to Matheson April 1908, *loc cit* – 'Our loathing for De Leon did not turn us to anti-ballotism but did set our mind to work to discover the method by which the working class could control its own political party, and put the non-working class elements where they belong'.

40 'Ballots, Bullets or –', *International Socialist Review* October 1909, reprinted in Ryan (ed.), *The Workers' Republic*, p. 67. See also *Labour, Nationality and Religion* (New Book Publications, Dublin, 1972), p. 55.

41 *The Miners' Next Step Being a Suggested Scheme for the Reorganisation of the Federation Issued by the Unofficial Reform Committee* (1912), see especially 'Ch IV Constitution', and 'Ch V Policy'.

42 Eg. *Socialism Made Easy*, pp. 39–40 or *Labour, Nationality and Religion*, pp. 43–4.

43 For a discussion of this theme see E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Bolshevism and the Anarchists' in his *Revolutionaries* (Quartet, London, 1977), pp. 57–70.

44 For the first complete English translation see Werner Sombart, *Why is there No Socialism in the United States?* (trans. P. M. Hocking and C. T. Husbands), (Macmillan, London, 1976); for recent discussions of the topic, see Jerome Karabel, 'The Failure of American Socialism Reconsidered', *Socialist Register 1979*, Mike Davis, 'Why the US Working Class is Different', *New Left Review*, 123, September–October 1980, pp. 3–44; Eric Foner, 'Why is There No Socialism in the United States?', *History Workshop Journal* (17), Spring 1984, pp. 57–80.

45 For an example of the longevity of some of these discussions see the quotation from E. L. Godkin dated 1867 in Eric Foner, *op cit*, p. 58.

46 Sombart, *op cit*, p. 106.

47 See for example, *The Harp*, May 1908.

48 For a discussion of the variable impacts of ethnic and communal ties on the development of class solidarities see John T. Cumbler, *Working Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities, 1880–1930* (Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn, 1979).

49 For material on this see Salvatore, *op cit*; David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America: A History* (Macmillan, N.Y. 1955). Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897–1912* (Greenwood Press, New York, 1968). H. Wayne Morgan, *Eugene V Debs Socialist For President* (University Press Syracuse, 1962).

50 For these years in the IWW, see Dubofsky, *op cit*, Chapters 8–11.

51 Sombart, *op cit*, p. 119.

52 'A New Labour Policy', *The Harp*, January 1910 reprinted in Ryan, ed., *The Workers' Republic*, p. 73.

53 Philip Foner, *op cit*, pp. 281–95 paints a positive portrait of the IWW's impact at McKees Rocks; Dubofsky, *op cit* draws attention to a wider range of factors and is less sanguine about the IWW's achievements – see pp. 198–209. For Connolly's initial pessimism about impact of craft–union sectionalism see *The Harp* August 1909.

54 Cited in Dubofsky, *op cit*, p. 206.

55 *Ibid*, p. 209 notes that an attempt to reorganise the IWW local showed only 20 signatories of members.

56 Reeve and Barton Reeve, *op cit*, Chapter 17 chronicles Connolly's involvement. Dubofsky refers to dispute in one sentence on p. 208. Philip Foner, *op cit*,

discusses it at pp. 299–303 with particular reference to early months of the dispute.

57 In 'Industrialism and the Trade Unions', *International Socialist Review*, February 1910, reprinted in Ryan (ed.), *The Workers' Republic*, p. 85. See also *Socialism Made Easy*, pp. 33–6, and *Industrial Unionist Bulletin*, 28 December 1907.

58 'Industrialism and the Trade Unions' at p. 78 in Ryan volume.

59 *Ibid* – the argument is developed at pp. 78–80 in *op cit*.

60 *Ibid* at p. 80 in *op cit*.

61 *Ibid* at pp. 80–81 in *op cit*.

62 For a discussion of the historiographical debates surrounding the Knights see Davis *op cit*, pp. 26–29 especially p. 28 and the accompanying footnote 41.

63 Chicago Socialist 23 December 1905 cited in H. W. Morgan *op cit*, p. 87.

64 On its vicissitudes see William M. Dick, *Labor and Socialism In America: The Gompers Era* (Kennitat Press, Port Washington, NY, 1972), esp Chapters 2, 3 and 5; Marc Karson, *American Labor Unions and Politics 1900–1918* (Southern Illinois UP, Carbondale, Ill, 1958), Chapters 2, 3 and 6. Lasswell, *op cit*.

65 Cited in Dick, *op cit*, p. 129.

66 'Industrialism and the Trade Unions', p. 81 in Ryan collection.

67 See Laswell, *op cit*, and also analysis in Dick, *op cit*, pp. 67–80.

68 *Socialism Made Easy*, p. 40.

69 For material on repression see Dubofsky, *op cit*, pp. 191–5 for San Diego free speech fight, 1912; Chapters 15–17 for the War and its aftermath; also William Preson Jr, *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals 1903–1933* (Harvard UP, Cambridge, 1963).

70 For this optimism see his letter to Matheson, 27 September 1908, *loc cit*.

71 For these developments viewed from various positions see Salvatore, *op cit*, pp. 242–58; Miller, *op cit*, Chapters 3 and 6, and Kipnis, *op cit*, especially Chapters 17 and 18.

72 The sources cited in FN71 all give analyses of the split: they disagree on whether any link should be made between the exodus of members and the victory of the Right. Compare Miller at pp. 109–10 and Kipnis at p. 418.

73 *The Harp*, February 1908.

Chapter 5: Socialism and the 'Gael'

1 See David Doyle, 'The Irish and American Labour 1880–1920', *Saothar* I, 1975, pp. 42–53.

2 *The Harp*, January 1909.

3 For emphases on the divisive impact of ethnic loyalties on socialist perspectives, see Karabel, 'The Failure of American Socialism Reconsidered', and Davis, 'Why the US Working Class is Different'.

4 As exemplified in Cumbler, *Working Class Community in Industrial America*.

5 Cited in Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *I Speak My Own Piece* (Masses and Mainstream, New York, 1955), p. 65.

6 *The Harp*, May 1908.

7 *Ibid*, September 1908.

8 *Ibid*, May 1909.

9 Cited as in Doyle, *op cit*, p. 46.

10 See the chapter on the Shoe Workers in J. Laslett, *Labor and the Left*. For the stereotype, Marc Karson, *American Labor Unions and Politics 1900–1918*, Chapters 9 and 10.

11 See Flynn, *op cit*, pp. 65–6.

12 Connolly claimed that De Leon's hostility had some significance. See his letter to William O'Brien, 13 April 1907, *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13908.

13 See his letters to O'Brien, 13 November and 6 December 1909, *loc cit*.

14 Flynn, *op cit*, p. 66.

15 Circular dated January 1907 following foundation of Irish Socialist Federation in *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13908.

16 See copy of a piece by Connolly for *Weekly People*, 2 March 1907 in *loc cit*, MS 13928.

17 *The Harp*, January 1908.

18 *Ibid*, January 1909.

19 *Ibid*, September 1908.

20 *Ibid*, August 1909. See Connolly's comment in the Foreword to *Labour in Irish History* (hereafter LIH) that Alice Stopford Green's book was 'the only contribution to Irish history we know of which conforms to the methods of modern historical science', *LIH*, p. 1. Edition used here (Three Candles, Dublin, nd.), published as part of *Labour in Ireland*.

21 *LIH*, p. 1.

22 For his emphasis that the loss of a communal social system went along with the loss of the language see *ibid*, pp. 2, 4–5.

23 *Ibid*, p. 8.

24 *The Reconquest of Ireland* (New Book Publications, Dublin, 1972), Foreword.

25 *Ibid*, p. 40.

26 *Ibid*, p. 41.

27 *Ibid*, p. 129–30.

28 See Raphael Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians', *New Left Review*, (120), 1980, pp. 34–7; 58–9.

29 *LIH*, pp. 7–8.

30 *Ibid*, pp. 120–1.

31 *Ibid*, p. 80.

32 See J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland* (Faber, London, 1966), Chapter 13; T. Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1969).

33 *LIH*, p. 60.

34 *Ibid*, p. 46.

35 *Ibid*, pp. 79–80.

36 *The Socialist*, August 1903.

37 *LIH*, p. 132.

38 *Ibid*, p. 139.

39 Mitchel, cited in *LIH*, p. 141.

40 John Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (Gill, Dublin, nd.), p. 78, including the comment 'Socialists are something worse than wild beasts'.

41 For a much more complete publication of his writings, see James Fintan Lalor, *Collected Writings* (Talbot Press, Dublin, 1947).

42 *LIH*, p. 148.

43 Cited in F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (Fontana, London, 1968), pp. 111–12; Thomas Luby, *Irish People*, 19 December 1863, the original source.

44 Cited in T. W. Moody, 'The Fenian Movement in Irish History' in his edited collection *The Fenian Movement* (Mercier Press, Dublin and Cork, 1978), p. 105.

45 *LIH*, pp. 159–64.
46 *The Harp*, January 1909.
47 *LIH*, p. 135.
48 For the comparison see Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 86–7. See also Emmet Larkin 'Church, State and Nation in Modern Ireland', *American Historical Review*, 1975, pp. 1244–76.
49 *Forward*, 9 May 1913.
50 For a discussion of this aspect see F. S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*, Chapter 3.
51 Tom Bell, *Pioneering Days*, p. 51.
52 For discussions of this aspect of Connolly's thought see Ransom, *Connolly's Marxism*, Chapter 4; Owen Dudley Edwards, *The Mind of An Activist: James Connolly* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1971).
53 *Labour Leader*, 18 January 1896.
54 *Ibid*, 15 February 1896.
55 *The People*, 9 April 1904, reprinted in *The Connolly–De Leon Controversy*.
56 See Chapter 9 of *News From Nowhere*.
57 Americanism and Fordism in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1973), pp. 304–5.
58 See for example Chapter 6 of *The Reconquest of Ireland*.
59 For the growing anti-socialism of the Catholic Church in Ireland pre-1914, see Emmet Larkin, 'Socialism and Catholicism in Ireland', *Church History*, 1964, pp. 462–83.
60 *The Harp*, September 1908.
61 *Labour Nationality and Religion*, Chapter 2.
62 *Ibid*, pp. 50–60.
63 *Ibid*, p. 58.
64 See Samuel, *op cit*.
65 *Forward*, 2 August 1913.

Chapter 6: Unionism and the working class

1 See R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, pp. 86–102; C. Desmond Greaves, *op cit*, Chapter 15; Austen Morgan, 'Politics, the Labour Movement and the Working Class in Belfast, 1905–1923', Queens University Belfast PhD, 1978, (hereafter Morgan *Thesis*), Chapter 8; Henry Patterson, *Class Conflict and Sectarianism: The Protestant Working Class and The Belfast Labour Movement, 1868–1920* (Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1980), Chapter 4.
2 *Forward*, 3 May 1913.
3 See ATQ Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule 1912–14* (Faber, London, 1967).
4 Connolly to William O'Brien, 29 July 1913, *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13908.
5 See Patterson, *op cit*, pp. 80–4.
6 See *ibid*, p. 82.
7 *Irish Worker*, 6 June 1914.
8 *Forward*, 25 July 1914.
9 *Ibid*, 23 August 1913; 3 May 1913.
10 Connolly to O'Brien, 7 December 1911, *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13908.
11 *Workers' Republic*, 12 February 1916.
12 *Forward*, 2 August 1913.
13 *Ibid*, 13 March 1911.

14 Cited in Appendix 1 of Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (Coronet Books, London, 1974), p. 426.
15 *Forward*, 3 May 1913.
16 *Ibid*, 2 August 1913.
17 *Ibid*, 27 May 1911.
18 *Ibid*, 23 August 1913.
19 *Ibid*, 5 July 1913.
20 See the sources by Patterson and Morgan already cited; see also Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism* (University Press, Manchester, 1975); Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *The State in Northern Ireland 1921–72* (University Press, Manchester, 1979); Belinda Probert, *Beyond Orange and Green*; Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, Chapter 5; also some of the publications of the British and Irish Communist Organisation proposing the 'Two Nations' thesis such as *Connolly and Partition* (1972); See also Chapter 5 of Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*.
21 For a critical discussion of this tendency see the Introduction to Patterson, *Class Conflict and Sectarianism*.
22 These developments are considered in the early chapters of Patterson's book.
23 On the place of the Belfast dispute, see David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888–1906*, p. 87.
24 For a discussion of Walker, to supplement the treatment in Patteson *op cit*, and in Morgan *Thesis*, see J. W. Boyle, 'William Walker', in his (ed.), *Leaders and Workers* (Mercier Press, Cork, 1978), pp. 57–65.
25 September 1905, Dixon Unionist 4,440 Walker LRC 3,966 Maj 474 January 1906 Dixon Unionist 4,907 Walker LRC 4,616 Maj 291.
26 This time, the vote was Clarke, Unionist 6,021, Walker 4,194, Maj 1,827.
27 On this theme, see Patterson, *op cit*, pp. 40–1.
28 On sectarianism and occupations see *ibid*, pp. xiii–xv; also the comment in Morgan, *thesis*, pp. 32–3.
29 Probert, *op cit*, Chapter 1 places a very strong emphasis on this element; for a vigorous characterisation of this culture see Geoff Bell, *The Protestants of Ulster* (Pluto, London, 1976).
30 These developments are discussed in Patterson, *op cit*, especially pp. 43–6, and in his 'Independent Orangeism and Class Conflict in Edwardian Belfast', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Vol. 80, Section C, No. 4 (1980), pp. 1–27. For detailed analysis of Sloan's campaign and of the IOO, see J. W. Boyle, 'The Belfast Protestant Association and the Independent Orange Order', *Irish Historical Studies*, XIII (1962–63), pp. 117–52.
31 *Labour Leader*, 30 August 1902.
32 See Patterson's criticism of Probert's failure to consider this component in *Saothar*, No. 5 (1979), pp. 50–55; also his discussion of the theme in *Class Consciousness and Sectarianism*, pp. 46–51.
33 *Belfast Labour Chronicle*, November 1904.
34 See Boyle, 'William Walker', pp. 61–2. He said 'Protestantism means protesting against superstition, hence true protestantism is synonymous with labour'.
35 See, for example, Pete Curran's letter in *Belfast Labour Chronicle*, 23 September 1905.
36 As argued by Walker and reported in *Irish News*, 23 August 1905, cited in Patterson, *Class Conflict and Sectarianism*, pp. 56–57.
37 As predicted in the leader article, *Belfast Labour Chronicle*, November 1904.

38 *Ibid*, 14 October 1905. This is in the context of a leader on the Irish language.
39 *Ibid*, 7 October 1905.
40 *Ibid*, July 1905.
41 *Ibid*.
42 *Ibid*, 7 October 1905.
43 Some contemporary examples are discussed in Patterson, 'Independent Orangeism and Class Conflict in Edwardian Belfast'.
44 The occasion was a debate at the 1911 Irish TUC on this question when for the last time the Belfast Labour Unionists were successful, *ITUC Report of Proceedings* 1911, pp. 39–42. The polemic is in *Forward*, 27 May, 10 June, 1 July 1911 (Connolly's contributions); 3 June, 17 June and 8 July 1911 (Walker's contributions). All have been reprinted as *The Connolly–Walker Controversy – On Socialist Unity in Ireland* (The Cork Workers' Club, nd.).
45 *Forward*, 27 May 1911.
46 At a meeting to support Walker's proposed candidacy reported in *Belfast Labour Chronicle*, May 1905.
47 The Belfast disputes of 1907 are discussed in Patterson, *Class Conflict and Sectarianism*, pp. 66–72; his 'James Larkin and the Belfast Dockers' and Carters' Strike of 1907', *Saothar* 4, pp. 8–14; John McHugh, 'The Belfast Labour Dispute and Riots of 1907', *North West Group for the Study of Labour History. Bulletin*, No. 4, 92–129; Emmet Larkin, *James Larkin* (Routledge, London, 1965), pp. 26–40; Morgan, *Thesis*, Chapter 3.
48 Larkin, *op cit*, p. 27.
49 Indeed, Emmet Larkin despite the earlier quotation seems to accept this: 'In the long run Larkin achieved little of a tangible nature in Belfast, not because he was something less than what he should have been, but because his enemies were too powerful and circumstances too adverse', *ibid*, p. 40.
50 *Forward*, 7 June 1913.

Chapter 7: Lock Out

1 Lord Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (John Murray, London 1920), p. 259.
2 On the development of the ITGWU in Dublin see C. Desmond Greaves, *The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union: The Formative Years, 1909–1923* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1982); Emmet Larkin, *James Larkin*; D. Keogh, *The Rise of the Irish Working Class*, especially Chapters 6 and 7; C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, Chapter 17; for a view from the employers' side, see Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin* (Longmans, London, 1914). See also the Essays in Review by Emmet O'Connor, 'An Age of Agitation, *Saothar* (9), 1983, pp. 64–70, and by John Newsinger in *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* (49), Autumn 1984, pp. 69–71.
3 James Connolly, *The Reconquest of Ireland*, p. 30.
4 See Larkin, *op cit*, p. 109.
5 *Ibid*, pp. 74–6.
6 Keogh, *op cit*, pp. 154–5.
7 New Statesman, 6 September 1913 – a piece headed 'Anarchism in Dublin'.
8 Connolly to William O'Brien, 13 September 1912, *O'Brien Papers*, MS 13908.

9 For a study of this conflict see Dermot Keogh, 'William Martin Murphy and the Origins of the 1913 Lock Out', *Saothar* (4), 1978, pp. 15–34.

10 For the escalation of the confrontation see *ibid*, also Larkin *op cit*.

11 The MP was Handel Booth reported in *Manchester Guardian*, 1 September 1913.

12 For a discussion of this relationship see Bill Moran, '1913, Jim Larkin and the British Labour Movement', *Saothar* (4), pp. 35–49.

13 For examples, see Keogh, 'William Martin Murphy', pp. 30–1.

14 For detail on Connolly's role, see Greaves, *op cit*, Chapter 17.

15 For presentations of this type of thesis see Moran, *op cit*, especially pp. 46–8; E. Strauss, *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (Methuen, London, 1951), pp. 223–8.

16 For the programme, see Larkin, *op cit*, pp. 61–3; and then pp. 95–6 for a consideration of the attachment to compulsory arbitration.

17 *Irish Review*, October 1913, p. 391.

18 *The Miners' Next Step*, Chapter 1.

19 For the political legacy of the British experience, see David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, Chapter 6.

20 See 'Report of the Dublin Disturbances Commission', Command 7569, p. 13 in *Parliamentary Papers* (1914), Vol. XVIII.

21 ITUC, 1912, *Report*, pp. 12–19 for resolution and debate.

22 For Larkin's loss of interest see R. Dudley Edwards, *James Connolly*, pp. 96–7.

23 The basis for the projected Irish Labour Party restricted itself to 'labour representation'. Socialism was not mentioned. See ITUC *Report*, 1912, p. 12.

24 See Larkin, *op cit*, pp. 100–106, for background.

25 *Forward*, 31 January 1914.

26 *Dublin Trades Council Minutes*, 26 January 1914.

27 *British Trades Union Congress Report*, 1913, p. 67.

28 *British TUC, Minutes of Parliamentary Committee*, 19 November 1913.

29 These developments were chronicled in the *Daily Herald*.

30 For reports see *Daily Herald*, 16–22 September 1913; 3–9 December 1913.

31 For Connolly's response to this episode, see *ibid*, 6 December 1913.

32 *Ibid*, 13 October 1913, reporting Larkin's speech at Birmingham.

33 Interview, *ibid*, 31 October 1913.

34 *Ibid*, 17 November 1913.

35 Reports can be found in *Daily Herald*, and *Manchester Guardian*, both for 10 December 1913; also *Labour Leader*, 11 December 1913. The decisive vote was on an amendment moved by Jack Jones of the Gasworkers favouring the 'blacking' of Dublin goods. This was defeated by 2,280,000 to 203,000.

36 *Daily Herald*, 10 December 1913.

37 Cited with critical comments in *ibid*, 23 September 1913; see also Snowden's statements of his position, and Hardie's criticisms in *Labour Leader*, 25 September, 2, 9 and 23 October 1913. Note also Philip Snowden, *Socialism and Syndicalism* (Collins, London, nd).

38 Speech at Manchester cited *Daily Herald*, 17 November 1913.

39 *Daily Herald*, 12 December 1913.

40 See piece from Labour Press Agency in *ibid*, 27 November 1913.

41 For a discussion of Tillett's motivation, see Jonathan Schneer, *Ben Tillett* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1983), pp. 166–72.

42 See *Manchester Guardian*, 24 November and 3 December 1913.

43 *Ibid*, 18 September 1913.

44 *Daily Herald*, 17 September 1913.
45 *Forward*, February 1914.
46 *Ibid.*
47 For affirmations of his continuing faith in Industrial Unionism, see *ibid*, 21 February, 14 March 1914.
48 See for example, *Daily Herald*, 3 November 1913 for an attack by Williams on NUR officials' opposition to 'sympathetic strikes', *ibid*, 13 December 1913 on his barring from the Special Congress.
49 This and immediately preceding quotations from 'Old Wine in New Bottles', *New Age*, 30 April 1914.
50 Speech at Victoria Park, East London, reported in *Manchester Guardian*, 15 September 1913.
51 For a discussion of these disputes see Schneer, *Ben Tillett*, pp. 150–163.
52 *New Age*, 30 April 1914.
53 *Forward*, 23 May 1914.
54 *Irish Worker*, 29 November 1913.
55 *Forward*, 2 May 1914.
56 See for example, *ibid*, 18 April 1914.
57 A case put in *ibid*, 11 April 1914.
58 *The Reconquest of Ireland*, p. 61.
59 One exception was Stephen Gwynn, see *Daily Herald*, 21 November 1913.
60 Dillon to T. P. O'Connor, 15 October 1913, cited in F. S. L. Lyons, *John Dillon* (Routledge, London, 1968), p. 335.
61 See generally Emmet Larkin, 'Socialism and Catholicism in Ireland', *Church History*, 1964.
62 *Daily Herald*, 7 November 1913.
63 Catholic Bulletin, November 1913 cited in P. J. O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question* (Batsford, London, 1971), pp. 269–70.
64 For Griffith and Sinn Fein, see Richard P. David, *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Fein*.
65 See *The Harp*, April 1908, and *Irish Nation*, 23 January 1909.
66 *Ibid.*
67 See Davis, *op cit*, for examples of this response.
68 This and the preceding quotes from Griffith's article, 'Sinn Fein and the Labour Question', *Sinn Fein*, 25 October 1913.
69 Moreover a leader article in *Sinn Fein*, 27 September 1913 had referred to Connolly as 'the man in the Leadership of the Transport Union with a head on his shoulders'. Note also *Irish Worker*, 13 December 1913, praising Griffith's attitude to police treatment of strikers.
70 For one response by Sheehy-Skeffington to the issue of the children, see *Daily Herald*, 28 October 1913.
71 *Irish Worker*, 1 November 1913.
72 *Irish Times*, 8 October 1913.
73 *Daily Herald*, 3 November 1913.
74 Connolly subsequently used Russell's work on Co-operation – see Chapter 8 of *The Reconquest of Ireland*.
75 *Irish Worker*, 1 November 1913.
76 For his career until then see Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (Faber, London, 1979).
77 'From a Hermitage October 1913', in Padraic H. Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches* (Talbot Press, Dublin, 1962), pp. 173–4.
78 *Ibid*, p. 176.

79 *Ibid*, p. 180.

80 For MacDonagh, see his evidence to the Commission on the Dublin Disturbances, Command 7269, *Parliamentary Papers* (1914), Vol. XVIII; for Markiewicz, see her involvement in Larkin's appearance in O'Connell Street, 31 August 1913 – see Larkin, *op cit.*

81 *Irish Worker*, 15 November 1913.

82 At a meeting on 13 November 1913, cited in W. O'Brien, *Forth the Banners Go*, p. 120.

Chapter 8: The choice

1 For Tillett in wartime, see J. Schneer, *Ben Tillett*, Chapter 9; for Stanton see the entry in Joyce Bellamy and John Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, Volume 1 (Macmillan, London, 1972), pp. 311–12. An illuminating discussion covering both figures' pre-1914 styles is Peter Stead, 'The Language of Edwardian Politics', in D. Smith, *A People and a Proletariat*, pp. 148–65.

2 The ambiguities of MacDonald's position are explored in David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (Cape, London, 1977), Chapters 9–10. There is no adequate biography of Snowden but see Colin Cross, *Philip Snowden* (Barrie and Rockliff, London, 1966).

3 Original sources, Burns Diary 29th October 1914, cited in K. D. Brown, *John Burns* (Royal Historical Society, London, 1977), p. 187.

4 For examples of Connolly's response to the policy of the Parliamentary Party, see *Irish Worker*, 8 August and 12 September 1914.

5 For the Volunteers, see F. X. Martin (ed.), *the Irish Volunteers 1913–1915: Recollections and Documents* (James Duffy, Dublin, 1963); Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill Scholar and Man of Action, 1867–1945* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980), Chapters 7–10; for the Redmondite response see Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (Harrop, London, 1932). Key aspects are discussed in Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance Since 1848* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983), Chapter 5.

6 From Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge, 20 September 1914, cited in Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers*, p. 148. Part IX of the same volume gives material on the response of the Irish Volunteers to Redmond's activities.

7 For estimates see Tierney, *op cit*, p. 154 citing Bulmer Hobson's calculations as his source.

8 The problems confronting the Parliamentary Party are examined in Gwyn, *op cit*, Chapters 10–12.

9 For discussions of these divergences, see Tierney, *op cit*, Chapters 11, 13–15; Townshend, *op cit*, Chapter 6; R. Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse*, Chapter 6.

10 This was Alderman Lawrence Kettle – see the brief reference in Martin (ed.), *op cit*, p. 29. On the disturbance, see also R. M. Fox, *The History of the Irish Citizen Army* (James Duffy, Dublin, 1944), p. 9.

11 For the ICA, see material in *William O'Brien Papers*, MS 15673. Also, Fox *op cit*; Sean O'Casey. *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* (Reprint, Journeyman Press, London, 1980); the discrepancies in this account are discussed in C. Desmond Greaves, *Sean O'Casey: Politics and Art* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1979), Chapter 6. Note also the analysis in Townshend, *op cit*, pp. 283–5 and in F. X. Martin, '1916: Myth, Fact and Mystery', *Studia Hibernica*, 1967, pp. 76–79.

12 *Forward*, 15 August 1914.
13 *Ibid*, 22 August 1914.
14 For these developments, see Ransom, *Thesis*, p.311; also Tom Bell, *Pioneering Days*, pp.49–50.
15 *International Socialist Review*, March 1915.
16 *Workers' Republic*, 24 July 1915.
17 *Ibid*, 21 August 1915.
18 *Ibid*, 8 April 1916.
19 *Ibid*, 18 September 1915.
20 *Ibid*, 29 May 1915 for a statement by Connolly of the union's current position.
21 See *ibid*, 12 June 1915 for the decision to contest. There is a reprint of Farren's manifesto in Ryan (ed.), *The Workers' Republic*, pp.181–2.
22 *Workers' Republic*, 19 June 1915.
23 *Ibid*, 5 February 1916.
24 *Irish Worker*, 8 August 1914.
25 *Workers' Republic*, 22 January 1916.
26 *Irish Worker*, 29 August 1914.
27 *Ibid*, 31 October 1914.
28 Cited in Leon O'Broin, *Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising: The Story of Sir Matthew Nathan* (Helican, Dublin, 1966), p.23. Original source gives as Nathan MS 462, 11 November 1914 (Bodleian Library).
29 *Forward*, 22 August 1914.
30 *Irish Worker*, 29 August 1914.
31 *Workers' Republic*, 18 March 1916.
32 For Connolly's response to this claim, see *Irish Worker*, 12 September 1914; also *ibid*, 8 August 1914 for claim that military support for a German army in Ireland would be justified because of its damaging consequences for the British Empire.
33 *Workers' Republic*, 8 August 1916.
34 Full text in R. Dudley Edwards, pp.280–1; prefaced by the claim that it was 'mainly *Pearse's* work' (p.279).
35 See *ibid*, pp.217–18, which includes the recollection of William O'Brien that at a conference on 9 September 1914, 'Connolly advocated making definite arrangements for organising an insurrection, and ... getting in touch with Germany, with a view to military support'.
36 These looked at lessons of earlier European insurrections – see *Workers' Republic*, 24 July 1915 for a summary.
37 The preparations for the funeral are discussed in R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, pp.235–8; the speech at the graveside by Pearse is in his *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp.133–7 and is prefaced by 'a character study', pp.127–32. These can be compared with Connolly's praise of Rossa in *Workers' Republic*, 7 August 1915. For the authorities' attitude to the funeral demonstration, see O'Broin, *op cit*, pp.52–3.
38 This strand is very prominent in *Workers' Republic* during the last months of 1915 – see for example, his emphasis on Mitchel in issue of 13 November.
39 *Ibid*, 13 November 1915.
40 *Ibid*, 20 November 1915.
41 *Ibid*, 13 November 1915.
42 *Ibid*, 18 December 1915.
43 *Ibid*, 22 January 1916.
44 *Ibid*, 29 January 1916.

Chapter 9: Might-have-beens

1 Eric Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on "The Break-Up of Britain"', *New Left Review* (105), 1977.
2 *Lenin on Ireland* (New Books, Dublin, 1974), pp. 32–3 – originally written in July 1916 and published October 1916.
3 Sean O'Casey, *The History of the Irish Citizen Army*, p. 52.
4 *Workers' Republic*, 7 August 1915.
5 *Ibid*, 18 March 1916.
6 *Ibid*, 22 January 1916.
7 Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 340.
8 *Ibid*, p. 341. For a discussion of this last pamphlet of Pearse see R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, pp. 257–261. It is worth noting the contemporary verdict of James Stephens in his *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Maunsel, Dublin, 1916), pp. 96–7: 'The Reputation of all the leaders of the insurrection, not excepting Connolly, is that they were intensely patriotic Irishmen, and also, but this time with the exception of Connolly, that they were not particularly interested in the problems of labour.'
9 'Peace and the Gael' in Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp. 213–218, passage cited is at p. 216.
10 *Workers' Republic*, 25 December 1915.
11 *Forward*, 22 August 1914.
12 *Workers' Republic*, 5 February 1916.
13 For the problem of interpretation see F. X. Martin, 'The 1916 Rising – a Coup d'Etat or a "Bloody Protest"?', *Studia Hibernica*, 1968, pp. 106–37, also Townshend, *op cit*, Chapter 6.
14 'The Rose Tree' – text taken from Roger McHugh (ed.), *Dublin 1916* (Arlington, London, 1976), p. 332.
15 *Irish Work*, 19 December 1914. (This was an abortive attempt to replace the banned *Irish Worker*.)
16 Letter published in *The Socialist*, 17 April 1919.
17 Cited in R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, p. 250 – original source Bulmer Hobson, MSS (NLI).
18 See Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, 'A Pacifist Dies', in McHugh (ed.), *op cit*, pp. 276–88. See also the piece by his son Owen Sheehy-Skeffington in O. Dudley Edwards and F. Pyle (ed.), *1916: The Easter Rising* (MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1968), pp. 135–48, and Roger McHugh, 'Thomas Kettle and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington' in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland* (Routledge, London, 1960), pp. 124–39.
19 Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin*, pp. 50–1.
20 Cited by Owen Sheehy-Skeffington in Edwards and Pyle, *op cit*, p. 144.
21 A point made by Owen Dudley Edwards in his *The Mind of an Activist*, Chapter 4, 'The Lost Heir'.
22 Reprinted in Dudley Edwards and Pyle, *op cit*, pp. 149–52; originally printed in the *Irish Citizen*, May 1915.
23 *Ibid*, p. 150.
24 *Ibid*, p. 151.
25 *Ibid*, p. 152.
26 *Labour Leader*, 27 April 1916 – the same paper on 11 May 1916 referred to the rebellion as 'a crime'.
27 Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill* is a thorough biography.

28 See F. X. Martin, 'Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. XII, 1960–61, pp. 226–71. This includes an Introduction and very detailed footnotes. Two memoranda are reproduced. The crucial one for the present analysis is Memorandum 1 at pp. 234–40; footnotes pp. 240–5. (The second memorandum dealt with MacNeill's role in the events leading up to the Rising.) Both documents were found in the Hobson Papers.

29 *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. XII, p. 236.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid*, p. 239.

32 *Ibid*, p. 240.

33 See for example his celebration of the Manchester Martyrs, *Workers' Republic*, 20 November 1915.

34 Thus he saw this failure as characteristic of most leaders in 1848 – see for example, *Workers' Republic*, 13 November 1848 – a view that depended on a belief that the leaders consistently betrayed a more militant rank and file. This view was reiterated after he had committed himself to the Rising. See *ibid*, 11 March 1916.

35 *Ibid*, 8 April 1916.

36 A point made by Townshend, *op cit*, especially pp. 313–21.

37 This point is made in MacNeill's Memorandum of February 1916, *IHS*, Vol. XII, pp. 239–40.

38 *Lenin on Ireland*, pp. 33–4.

39 For some discussion see Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'The Embers of Easter: 1916–1966' in Edwards and Pyle, *op cit*, especially pp. 225–28. The changing political situation in one county, Clare, is discussed in David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913–1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1977).

40 See *ibid*, especially Chapter 7. For one trade union involvement in the War of Independence see C. Townshend, 'The Irish Railway Strike of 1920; Industrial Action and Civil Resistance in the Struggle for Independence', *Irish Historical Studies* (XXI), 1979, pp. 265–82. An earlier general survey is Patrick Lynch, 'The Social Revolution That Never Was', in Desmond Williams (ed.), *The Irish Struggle, 1916–1926* (Routledge, London, 1966), pp. 41–54.

41 On this paticular confrontation see Emmet O'Connor, 'Agrarian Unrest and the Labour Movement in County Waterford, 1917–1923', *Saothar* (6), 1980, pp. 40–58.

42 This argument was set down on 10 March 1922. It is reproduced in J. Anthony Gaughan, *Thomas Johnson* (Kingdom Books, Dublin, 1980), pp. 192–3, footnote 5. The original source was *Voice of Labour*, 18 March 1922; the context, an argument with British Communists about the feasibility of revolution in Ireland.

43 The original publication had been signed 'J'.

44 Townshend, *op cit*, pp. 338–39 considers how far there was widespread participation and reaches a relatively sceptical conclusion.

45 For discussions on this scheme see Brian Farrell, 'Labour and the Irish Political Party System: A Suggested Approach to Analysis', *Economic and Social Review*, 1970, pp. 477–502; and Peter Mair, 'Labour and the Irish Party System Revisited: Party Competition in the 1920s', *Economic and Social Review*, 1977, pp. 59–70.

46 Text in R. Dudley Edwards, *op cit*, pp. 261–2.

PART II

A disputed legacy

1 For a brief account of Maclean's career see the entry in William Knox (ed.), *Scottish Labour Leaders 1918–39: A Biographical Dictionary* (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 179–92.

2 See W. Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyce* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1936); also his *Last Memoirs* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1966); Tom Bell, *John Maclean: Fighter for Freedom* (Communist Party Scottish Committee, Glasgow, 1944). For an earlier study from a different political tradition – anti-parliamentary communism – see Guy Alfred, *John Maclean: Martyr of the Class Struggle* (Strickland Press, Glasgow, 1932).

3 See for example Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, Chapter 9.

4 For MacDiarmid's views, see the discussion of Maclean on his *The Company I've Kept* (Hutchinson, London, 1966); his reference to him in his introduction to P. Berresford Ellis and S. MacA-Ghabhainn, *The Scottish Insurrection of 1820* (Gollancz, London, 1970), and his two poems. 'John Maclean (1879–1923)' and 'Krassivy, Krassivy.' in his *Complete Poems 1920–76* (Martin, Brian and O'Keefe, London, 1978).

5 For an account informed by this emphasis see John Broom, *John Maclean* (Macdonald, Loanhead, 1973); the biography by Maclean's daughter Nan Milton, *John Maclean* (Pluto, London, 1973), shares similar concerns.

6 The best example of this genre is perhaps Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900–21* (Weidenfeld, London, 1969).

7 For this judgement see Iain McLean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1983) especially Ch. 12 – and for a counter-claim the review of this book by Sean Damer, in *History Workshop Journal*, No. 18, Autumn 1984, pp. 199–203.

8 For a selection see Nan Milton (ed.), *In the Rapids of Revolution* (Alison and Busby, London, 1978).

Chapter 1: A model Social Democrat

1 For an account of his early Socialist career see Milton, *John Maclean*, Chapters 2–7.

2 For an analysis of the relative impacts of Socialist and Labour organisations in pre-1914 Glasgow see Joyce Smith, 'Commonsense and Working-class Consciousness: Some Aspects of the Glasgow and Liverpool Labour Movements in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1980), especially pp. 301–38, and 409–44, hereafter Smith *Thesis*. Some of her principal points are summarised in her 'Labour Traditions in Glasgow and Liverpool', *History Workshop Journal* (No. 17), Spring 1984, pp. 32–56.

3 See his argument with Tom Johnston in the columes of *Forward* in the Summer of 1910. Extracts are in N. Milton (ed.), *In the Rapids of Revolution*, pp. 37–42.

4 Thus, he supported Tom Gibb in the South Lanark by-election late in 1913. See for example *Justice*, 1, 8 and 22 November 1913. Note also the post-mortem *ibid* 20 December 1913.

5 See *Forward*, 6 August 1910 – 'had it not been for the NAC of the ILP the socialist forces would have been fused prior to the birth of the LRC and the present political chaos of the workers undoubtedly avoided.'

6 *Justice*, 9 December 1911.
7 Under the pseudonym 'Gael' and the title 'Scottish Notes'.
8 *Justice*, 24 February 1912.
9 *Ibid*, 3 May 1913.
10 See for example his claim that the Miners' strike ballot early in 1912 offered an excellent opportunity to make a Socialist case, *ibid*, 27 February 1912.
11 *Ibid*, 4 January 1913.
12 *Ibid*, 4 October 1913.
13 *Ibid*, 15 April 1913.
14 *Ibid*, 11 January 1913.
15 For analysis of the BSP's position, see Smith, *Thesis*, pp. 420–6; also H. McShane and Joan Smith, *No Mean Fighter* (Pluto, London, 1978), Chapters 3–5.
16 For an analysis of the general weakness of the BSP see Dylan Morris, 'The Origins of the British Socialist Party', *North West Group for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin*, No. 8, 1982–3, pp. 29–42.
17 See for example his attempt at the 1914 BSP Conference to put *Justice* under Party control.
18 For a discussion of Scottish politics see Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885–1910* (Macmillan, London, 1967), Ch. 16.
19 On this see *Justice*, 31 May 1913.
20 For his view of Smillie and the miners, see *ibid*, 20 July 1912; for his appraisal of Scottish railway workers' organisation, *ibid*, 23 November 1912; 25 May 1913; for criticisms of STUC, *ibid*, 4 May 1912; 10 May 1913; for a general assessment of Scottish trade unionism, *ibid*, 4 May 1913.
21 On the Scottish economy pre-1914, see Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* (Edward Arnold, London, 1981), Chapter 1; Tony Dickson (ed.), *Scottish Capitalism: Class, State and Nation from before the Union to the Present* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1980), Chapter 6.
22 For this emphasis see Smith *Thesis*, pp. 136–7; for her emphasis on Glasgow's skilled base and the political consequences, pp. 138–75.
23 For the housing issue see Joseph Melling, *Rent Strikes: Peoples' Struggle for Housing in West Scotland, 1890–1916* (Polygon, Edinburgh, 1983).
24 For an early example, see his letters to the Pollokshaws News, 25 March and 8 April 1904 cited in Milton (ed.), *In the Rapids of Revolution*, p. 50; later contributions can be found in *Justice* 15–29 March; 11 October 1913.
25 *Ibid*, 24 August 1907. See also the later attack on Carson and Orange politics, *ibid* 21 June 1913.
26 *Ibid*, 29 July 1911. For a stimulating analysis of some issues raised by this dispute that emphasises its distinctive qualities, see Dai Smith, *Wales, Wales!*, Chapter 4.
27 *Justice*, 27 July 1912.
28 These and preceding quotations all from *ibid* (his Gael column, *Justice*, 27 July 1912).
29 For background see James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1977); also his 'The Gaelic Connection: Highlands, Ireland and Nationalism, 1873–1922', *Scottish Historical Review*, 1975, pp. 178–204.
30 See Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*.
31 A point emphasised by Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, especially at pp. 147–8.
32 See D. W. Crowley, 'The Crofters' Party 1885–92', *Scottish Historical Review*, 1956, pp. 110–26.

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b. Maclean

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