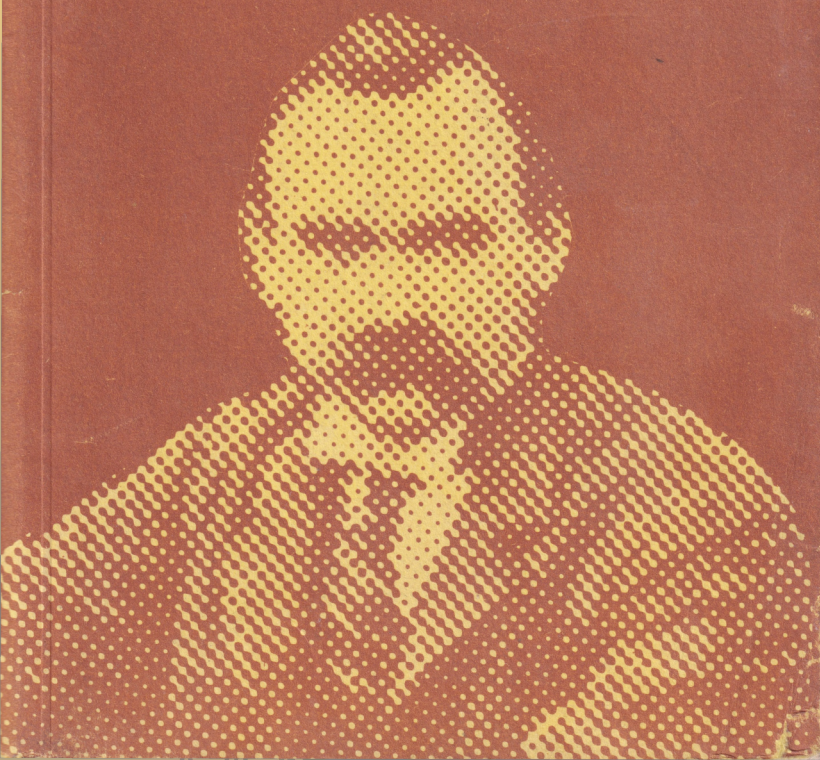


SEAN CRONIN

YOUNG CONNOLLY



Also by Sean Cronin:
The Revolutionaries
Marx and The Irish Question

Young Connolly

Sean Cronin

REPSOL

Copyright © Sean Cronin 1978
Published by Repsol Publications

ISBN 0 86064 015 9

Repsol Publications
30 Gardiner Place
Dublin 1
Ireland

Contents

Author's Note	7
Introduction: The Making of a Revolutionary	9
1. A Soldier in Ireland	15
2. Fenianism and Socialism	17
3. Seeking a New Life	25
4. Socialism in Dublin	27
5. The Irish Socialist Republican Party	29
6. Erin's Hope: the end and the means	35
7. Poor Soil for Socialism	41
8. Demonstrating against the Queen	47
9. The Workers' Republic	50
10. The Struggle against Imperialism	53
11. Building Socialism in Cork	59
12. Fighting Local Elections	67
13. Letters to the I.S.R.P.	69
14. Touring America with the S.L.P.	77
15. The Split in the I.S.R.P.	81
16. Socialism in Ireland	92
17. The Political Thought of James Connolly	97
Notes	103
Appendix	109

Author's Note

This account of the life of the young James Connolly is based on the Papers of William O'Brien, his lieutenant for many years, in the National Library of Ireland. I have also used Connolly's own writings in the *Workers' Republic*, his pamphlets *Erin's Hope* and the *New Evangel*, his *Labour in Irish History*, and the files of Daniel De Leon's *Weekly People* between 1896 and 1903, in the New York Public Library, publications division.

Among the published material I have found helpful is first C. Desmond Greaves's *The Life and Times of James Connolly* (1961), a fine work of research that does much to clarify Connolly's early years and the sources of his thought. Samuel Levenson's *James Connolly* (1973), although it leans on Greaves to a large extent, has much new material. Collections of Connolly's writings include the Desmond Ryan four-volume series published by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in the late forties and early fifties and *James Connolly Selected Political Writings* (1973), edited and introduced by Owen Dudley Edwards and Bernard Ransom. These collections are excellent.

Earlier works on Connolly include Desmond Ryan's biography, published in London in 1924, and R.M. Fox's *James Connolly the Forerunner* published by Anvil Books, Tralee, in the 1940's.

Other sources are indicated in the "Notes and References" at the back of the book.

I must thank the National Library of Ireland, the New York Public Library, the library of the New School for Social Research, New York, and the Bobst Library of New York University for cooperation and courtesy shown me in my research work.

September 20th, 1977,

Sean Cronin,
New York.

Introduction

The Making of a Revolutionary

In the years 1896 to 1903 the young James Connolly laboured to build the Irish Socialist Republican Party and publish the *Workers' Republic* in Dublin. Like millions of others, his parents were driven by poverty from their native country. Connolly believed that the root of Irish distress lay in the British conquest. Ireland was England's first colony, Friedrich Engels said. England had striven to assimilate the smaller island completely, Engels wrote in a projected history of Ireland, but had failed.

If this assimilation had been successful, its whole course would have become a matter of history. It would be subject to its judgment but could never be reversed. But if after 700 years of fighting this assimilation has *not* succeeded; if instead each new wave of invaders flooding Ireland is assimilated by the *Irish*; if, even today, the Irish are as far from being English, or West Britons, as they say, as the Poles are from being West Russians after only 100 years of oppression; if the fighting is not yet over and there is no prospect that it can be ended in any other way than by the extermination of the oppressed race — then, all the geographical pretexts in the world are not enough to prove that it is England's mission to conquer Ireland.

Engels wrote the above at the end of 1869 and during the first half of 1870. It is a mere fragment of what was to be a voluminous work. Yet it is Connolly's starting point in the sense that to undo that conquest was his life's mission. There is no understanding James Connolly outside of that fact. The conquest was economic. Like Michael Davitt, Connolly owed much to James Fintan Lalor, the solitary thinker of 1847-8. He preached Lalor's doctrine of the reconquest of Ireland in an urban setting. His final goal was a socialist society.

This last may have seemed Utopian in the Ireland of the 1890's, but not to Connolly. It was a logical development, he

insisted. "The Irish question was at bottom an economic question," he argued. The struggle for Irish freedom was *national* and *social*. Its culmination must be an Irish Socialist Republic, a democratic society controlling "the means of production, distribution and exchange... in the interests of the entire community."

Here was the Irish Revolution as Connolly saw it. He was all alone, except for his small Socialist party, when he began his agitation in the summer of 1896. Parnell's party was in factions. Ireland was a closed society. Clericalism was strong. The remnants of Fenianism met in secret. Sinn Féin was nine years in the future, Arthur Griffith and his *United Irishman* three years away. They were unproductive years to preach separatism let alone Socialism in Ireland.

We toss the word "revolution" about with abandon until it has lost its meaning. "A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies," Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University writes in his valuable work, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.^{*} He cites the French, Russian, Mexican, Chinese and Cuban revolutions as examples of what he means. They changed the societies of these countries fundamentally, not merely their governments and political systems. Connolly envisaged such a fundamental change in Ireland. Again, unless one accepts this view, one cannot fully understand the Connolly of 1896-1903.

Others talked of rebellions and insurrections and wars of independence. Connolly preached revolution. He would change the social structure of Ireland even more fundamentally than a Tone or a Lalor, the only other *revolutionary* figures, by Huntington's definition, Ireland has produced.

Connolly's first concern was separatism. He was the first to urge young Irishmen not to enlist in the British Army. He opposed the Boer War. He told the Irish to stay out of England's colonial conflicts. He supported the Gaelic League.

* Yale: 1968, p.246. Huntington is a scholar not a revolutionary. Class — the rural poor, the city poor, the industrial worker, the middle class — is the root of his thesis but he does not stress it.

He saw nationalism as a powerful anti-imperialist force. It was the faith of the poor, the tillers of the soil and the workers of the towns, who were always betrayed by their middle-class leadership — for class reasons. These were Connolly's themes from 1896 to 1903 and they are the subject of his classic, *Labour in Irish History*, the opening sections of which were written at that time.

If one accepts Huntington's analysis, Connolly in his way was building the material for revolution. Huntington maintains that "a revolution necessarily involves the alienation of many groups from the existing order." A combination of such groups produces a revolution. The middle class intelligentsia may well be revolutionary in its ideas but by itself it cannot make a revolution. For this a combination of the rural poor and the urban poor is necessary. The city is a permanent source of opposition to a political system. The countryside, if controlled by a landowning elite, is usually conservative; in such a traditional society politics is stable. The ability of a political system to survive depends on its capacity to bring the countryside into politics on its side. Should it fail it will be overthrown. Thus the role of the countryside may be highly conservative or highly revolutionary, according to Huntington.

The Ireland of the turn of the century was very much in the Huntington model. The land war was over. The landlords were bought out with a loan of £150 million pounds put up by the British government. The tenant would no longer pay rent, but he would repay this loan to the Land Commission. Indeed he would no longer be a tenant but a peasant proprietor. Politically small farmers are very conservative. The serfs of 1789 made a revolution in France; the small farmers of 1848 defeated a revolution in France. When one has a stake in the system one defends the system. But the Irish political system was foreign and the countryside did not defend it in 1918.

None of this is really new but its restatement makes sense of the Ireland of the young Connolly. The middle class intelligentsia may be said to be represented by the Sinn Féin of 1905-16. (Griffith's ideas permeated the Gaelic League and the I.R.B. and all strictly "national" organisations.) Following

the Huntington model, this intelligentsia could not make an insurrection on its own, or at least could not make a successful insurrection. The movement after 1918 was a combination of the city and the countryside led by "the middle-class intelligentsia" Huntington talks of; whether they were or were not "intellectuals", in the strict meaning of the word, is not important. At a particular point this "middle-class intelligentsia" decided to limit its goals, a decision largely acceptable to the countryside. Hence the settlement of 1921. The imperial power withdrew from the clearly "nationalist" part of Ireland. The countryside returned to its traditional ways. The government changed, the system remained. If the struggle had continued at that point, there would have been a revolutionary change. For that to happen, the revolutionary leadership of a Connolly was required. The only leader who understood this situation in 1921-22 was Liam Mellows, a close follower and student of Connolly.

The significance of Connolly's early years in Dublin, whether one accepts the Huntington thesis on revolutions or not, appears in a new light after a study of the documents of the Irish Socialist Republican Party. These were hoarded by William O'Brien, Connolly's successor as General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and are now stored in the National Library of Ireland. We have the minutes of party meetings, Connolly's letters and the letters of his friends and enemies. Connolly's sympathies were broad, but he could be quite narrow in doctrinal matters in his early years. Principle was the main thing. If the principle was right all would be well. In the end the principle was wrong and he left Ireland. Yet he was never happy outside of Ireland. His American experience and his return to Ireland in 1910 must await another work. But the decision of 1903, which on the surface seems bound up in intra-party faction but clearly ran deeper than that, was unfortunate for Ireland and the cause of freedom, if one believes in Connolly's ideas and what he meant by Irish freedom.

It would be wrong to think that Connolly had a clear-cut plan of action between 1896 and 1903. He had his programme. It was the kind of Social Democratic programme common at

the time. He had great faith in the ballot box, for short-term reforms at least. What made Ireland different, however, was its lack of national independence. He tried to resolve these two problems, national independence and Socialism. With what success the reader must judge for himself or herself.

The documents are here and they tell the story. The Irish Socialist Republican Party was quite small; its members one could say were "intellectual proletarians." They were hardly representative of working-class Dublin. The dry party minutes bring them to life again.

Connolly himself is always the chief character, there is no doubt about that. There is not one Connolly of the private letters and another of the public writings. He did not don a mask when he stood on a platform or wrote a pamphlet. We follow him from his tenement home to the National Library, from the National Library to the party club room, from the party club room to the party meeting place — the steps of the Custom House, near the Bank of Ireland, the James's Street Fountain, the Phoenix Park — from the meeting place to the *Workers' Republic*. He earned his living as "an unskilled labourer." A remarkable man, indomitable in adversity, the force of his words still ring down the years — Edinburgh accent and all!

In Dublin from 1896 to 1903 Connolly tested his theories by seeking to apply them to the actual facts of Irish life. His experiment has not received the attention it deserves. His goal, as always, was social revolution. His means were limited to the Irish Socialist Republican Party and — when there was enough money to print it — the *Workers' Republic*. The day-by-day problems Connolly and his colleagues faced and sometimes overcame are the subject of this short study.



A group of members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party photographed in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, in May 1901. At back, from left: W.J. Bradshaw, John Brannigan, J. Goff, Mark Deering, Murtha J. Lyng, Daniel O'Brien, Thomas J. Lyng and James Bishop. In front, from left: John Arnall, E.W. Stewart, Thomas Brady, James Connolly, John J. Lyng, William O'Brien and John Carolan.

1. A Soldier in Ireland

James Connolly first saw Ireland as a British soldier. It was sometime in the 1880's; he was in his teens, a private of the Royal Scots Regiment stationed on Spike Island. When the regiment was transferred to Dublin he came to know that city well and, as he later confessed, to love it.

Connolly's father was an immigrant labourer, his mother a domestic servant before her marriage. They lived in Cowgate, Edinburgh, a "little Ireland" slum, where their third son, James, was born on June 5th, 1868. Like his brothers, he went to the local Catholic primary school, St. Patrick's, and between the ages of ten and fourteen worked for a printer, a bakery and a firm manufacturing mosaic tiling. At fourteen he joined the army, to escape from his life of drudgery no doubt.

In Dublin one night, waiting for the last tram to Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), the young Connolly struck up a conversation with a small fair girl of his own age who was "in service" in the city. Her name was Lillie Reynolds. She was a Protestant from Co. Wicklow. They went out together and their usual rendezvous was Baggot Street Bridge, after which they walked "round Donnybrook."¹

At the age of twenty Connolly decided he had enough of soldiering. The regiment was going overseas and that no doubt hastened his decision. The posting would mean separation from Lillie for several years. He took off without permission and went first to Perth and then to Dundee. Lillie put up some of the money for the flight and followed him to Perth. By then he was in Dundee, in a temporary job, but without money or proper clothes. So they did not meet and Lillie went to London. "I could get plenty of work in England but you know England might be unhealthy for me, you understand," he told Lillie.

It was hard to write the letter, he added, because his digs was full of people. "It was only across the street from me a man murdered his wife and they are all discussing whether he

is mad or not. Pleasant, isn't it." The letter is dated April 7th, probably in the year 1888. "Please write soon," Connolly urged. "It is always a pleasure to me to hear from you and especially in my present condition. It is like a pleasant voice, encouraging me to greater exertion in the future..."

Connolly signed his letters "Jim", but Lillie always called him "James". They planned to marry in April 1890. There were complications. Because Lillie was a Protestant, Connolly had to get a dispensation. It was granted on condition that she agreed their children would be baptised as Catholics.

He explained to her:

Now, I know you won't like this especially as the priest will call on you to ask you. But Lillie, if your brother attended chapel for nearly a year for the sake of his sweetheart, surely you will not grudge speaking for a quarter of an hour to a priest, especially as the fulfillment of these promises rest with ourselves in the future. Though I'd like you to keep the Your brother you know had to make the same promises, though perhaps he did not let his family know...

They were to marry in Perth and Lillie had to establish legal residence there. Connolly thought the requirements stipulated a three-week stay at least. She was to leave London on April 6th, 1890, for Perth, but put it off for a week. On the same day Connolly wrote:

This is a letter of reproach, abuse and scolding. This is not a love letter written by me James Connolly to my intended wife, Lillie Reynolds, in the style and after the manner of an old husband of nine or ten years standing.

His annoyance stemmed from her change of mind about arriving in Perth. It meant upsetting their arrangements, postponing the date of the wedding and added expense. If he went to Perth for three weeks he would lose his job. She must do it. "It can't be helped."

And as I said before to you you must undertake the duty of acquainting the registrar in order to get the necessary licence without which the ceremony can't be performed. It's not me who is saying you must do this. It is the law. I have to do it in my parish and the banns

are indeed already published here, and you must do it in Perth. There need be no trouble on your part. Get Mrs. Angus or some other person to go with you and let them introduce you to the registrar, merely saying, "This young lady wishes a formal notice of marriage." And he will ask your name and address and occupation which you will give him. (Perth address of course.) Then my name and address and occupation (carter) which you will give him.

Connolly was working in Edinburgh as a carter with a firm contracting for the Corporation. He had a small home for the two of them at 22 West Port. Apparently they hoped to go to Dundee on their honeymoon. There was another complication, one Lillie was to get to know well in the years ahead. Connolly explained:

... my fellow-workmen in the job are preparing for a strike in the end of this month for a reduction in the hours of labour. As my brother and I are ringleaders in the matter it is necessary we should be on the ground. If we were not we should be looked upon as blacklegs, which the Lord forbid.

They were married at St. John's Church, Perth, on April 30th, 1890, and went to live at 22 West Port, Edinburgh. Their first child, Mona, was born in 1891, their second, Nora, the following year. Despite their difficulties it was a happy marriage.²

2. Fenianism and Socialism

All his life Connolly was a voracious reader. He frequented libraries, bought books when he could afford them. Above all he observed the world around him. And so he became a Socialist.

Writing to Lillie from Dundee in April 1888, he remarked that the town had eleven women to every man. It was a mill town and the women worked while most of the men stayed at home idle. Children went to work at six years of age, spending half their time at school and half at the mill. "In the

majority of families both husband and wife work," he told her, "the wife often getting more than the husband."

He noted that there were more Irish in Dundee, per head of population, than in any other town in Great Britain.

Connolly was then twenty years of age. One might note two things about this letter: Connolly was conscious of social conditions and of his Irish heritage. Broadly speaking, these remained the major preoccupations of his life.

When Connolly was in Ireland with the Royal Scots Regiment the country was in turmoil for social and national reasons. The Land League was leading the struggle against landlordism for the ownership of the soil of Ireland by the tillers of the soil. The Irish Parliamentary Party was leading the struggle for Home Rule. Connolly was aware of what was going on. He followed the careers of Parnell and Davitt. He read Nationalist and Land League literature, one may assume.

Although he never spoke of his army service, Connolly did mention to a comrade that he was in Cork when Myles Joyce of Maamtrasna, Connemara, was hanged for agrarian murders. Joyce knew no English and his trial was a farce. The case made an impression on Connolly. One may be sure that whatever faith he had in British law and justice died with Myles Joyce.

As a boy Connolly knew only grim poverty in the "Little Ireland" slum of Cowgate. His father was often unemployed. He himself went to work as a child. Fenianism was an important formative influence, we may be sure, for Connolly's traditional view of Irish history did not come from books. John Mitchel's *Jail Journal* was his Bible as a boy.

Connolly was first of all a union man and then a Socialist and his brother John influenced him in the two activities. For Connolly, of course, these were not really two activities but one; and so remained throughout his life.

He joined the Scottish Socialist Federation, speaking and writing for it. His brother John was secretary of the Scottish Socialist Federation. When John had to leave Edinburgh to get a job, James became secretary. He sent reports to *Justice*, the London-based weekly organ of the Social Democratic Federation. One of the reports castigated Edinburgh as a city

of "snobs, flunkeys, mashers, lawyers, students, middle-class pensioners and dividend-hunters." The S.S.F. planned to establish a branch in nearby Leith which Connolly said was "pre-eminently an industrial centre." His report continued:

The overwhelming majority of its population belong to the disinherited class, and having its due proportion of sweaters, slave-drivers, rack-renting slum landlords, shipping federation agents, and parasites of every description, might therefore have been reasonably expected to develop socialistic sentiments much more readily than the Modern Athens.

On Irish affairs Connolly was much influenced by the Scottish Socialist, John Leslie. Leslie wrote on Ireland for *Justice*. These later were published as a pamphlet called *The Present Position of the Irish Question*. Leslie's mother was Irish and he considered himself an Irishman. His hero was James Fintan Lalor, "who first pointed out the class nature of the Irish movement..." Some matters developed by Connolly in *Labour in Irish History*, that Fenianism was a movement of the towns and that farm labourers formed the shock troops of the Land League, were first discussed by Leslie.

Leslie was a leading figure in the new Independent Labour Party and urged a similar working-class movement in Ireland. Obviously Connolly took many of his ideas from Leslie, improving on them. He also took his love of verse-making from Leslie. Later the two fell out because Leslie, in Connolly's eyes, compromised his Socialist principles. By then Leslie had become a heavy drinker, a failing Connolly as a life-long teetotaler could not abide.

The Independent Labour Party was founded in 1893. Its leader was James Keir Hardie, the first worker elected to the House of Commons. The Scottish Socialist Federation was allied with the I.L.P. A letter of Connolly's to Hardie, dated February 6th, 1894, from his flat in Lothian Street, complaining that the branch had received only four days' notice of an impending meeting.

"For general meetings mean money, and we have none to squander," wrote the practical Connolly. "When no Edinburgh

delegates are present, who will choose the representatives on the Executive? Now that I have done grumbling, as per orders, I have much pleasure in wishing every success to the meeting, in spite of the gloom which our absence from the gathering must cast around you."

On May 28th, 1894, Connolly told Hardie: "I want the I.L.P. to act in conjunction with the Trades Council in promoting the return of a good Socialist and Independent Labour candidate, who must be the free choice of a large number of the electors, who can be induced to sign a requisition asking him to stand *before we even announce him as our adopted candidate*. By such means we may hope to allay the prejudices of the electors and draw many hundreds to our side who would be frightened away by any less cautious course."

(Connolly appended his title, "Secretary, Scottish Labour Party, Central Edinburgh branch, 21 South College Street, Edinburgh.")

On July 3rd, 1894, Connolly advised Hardie on Irish politics, again writing from his new flat in South College Street, which was also the party's office and meeting hall. It is the letter of one well acquainted with his subject.

As an Irishman who has always taken a keen interest in Ireland, I was well aware that neither the Parnellites nor the McCarthyites were friendly to the Labour movement. 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. If you can show them it would be to their interest politically to support us, they will do so. Now, can this not be done? I think it can be done if you would allow me to suggest to you a plan which I think would, if carried out, prove a trump card. There is a nucleus of a strong labour movement in Ireland, which only needs judicious handling to flutter

the doves in the Home Rule dovecot. Now if you were to visit Dublin and address a good meeting there, 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. If such a meeting were well billed it would be an important one. Get a resolution passed expressing the sympathy of the Irish people with the labour movement in Britain, and, as Dublin is the very heart of Parnellism, you would force the hand of Redmond and his clique. If you would arrange for the meeting to be organised solely from the Dublin side and an invitation sent to Field* to take the chair, he could scarcely refuse, and the resolution would, if rightly and judiciously used, knock the bottom out of Irish opposition to our movement. Hoping you will excuse me for these hints on what might be done, but earnestly pressing the matter for your consideration.

In October 1894, Connolly sought a seat on Edinburgh Council. He was the nominee of the Scottish Socialist Federation for St. Giles Ward. He conducted a strong campaign, talking about the need for good housing at fair rents. The Liberals traditionally drew Irish support and some charged that Connolly was helping the Unionists by splitting the vote. Connolly replied that Tories and Liberals were "two sections of one party – the party of property."

Connolly's comment appeared in the newly-founded *Edinburgh and Leith Labour Chronicle* for which he wrote a monthly article signed "R. Ascal". He explained to the Irish that "the landlord who rackrents them on a Connemara estate, and the landlord who rackrents them in a Cowgate slum, are brethren in fact and deed." In a field of four, Connolly came third with 263 votes – the Liberal won with 1,056 votes and the Tory was second with 497 votes. After the election, in the December 1894 issue of the *Labour Chronicle*, "R. Ascal" wrote a piece called "Party Politicians – Noble, Ignoble and Local": good satirical stuff, or as Connolly labelled it, "plain talk." Here's a sample:

* M.P. for South Dublin, a Parnellite sympathetic to Labour.

This is the final outcome of the municipal elections: all the old gang are returned to office, and the municipal life of Edinburgh in the ensuing year will be marked by the same scrupulous regard to economy (in wages) and efficiency (in jobbery) to which we have been so well accustomed in the past.

The Social Democrats were defeated. On the authority of the celebrated representative of culture, Mr. Francis McAweeney*, we are told they received "a crushing blow," yet a more jubilant lot of men and women it would have been impossible to find on the day after the election.

An opponent passing under the windows of their Committee Room an hour after the result of the poll was declared, on hearing the jubilant speeches and enthusiastic cheering of the Socialists, was constrained to remark to a companion, that the Social Democrats receive a defeat better than their enemies do a victory.

And he was right. Some defeats are better than victories. A defeat endured as the result of contest conducted in a fair and honourable manner is a thousand times more creditable to the defeated party than a victory gained by all the mean and unscrupulous arts of the wirepullers.

The Socialists did not send any carriages for their lady supporters; they did not have committee rooms outside the polling booth, and, waylaying unfortunate voters, rush them in, and then escort them between tall hats and frock coats, to record their votes in favour of the rights of property; they did not tell Irish Catholics that Mr. Connolly was a Freethinker, who wanted to overthrow the Church, and then tell old Scotch women of both sexes that Mr. Connolly was an Irish Papist who wanted to introduce the Scarlet Woman; they did not seek the support of the Unionists by telling of the letter of recommendation from a leading Edinburgh Unionist; and seek the support of the Home Rulers by calling to their aid every quondam Home Ruler, or leader, who could be induced to sell his name, and voice, and birthright for the ill-

* Of the Irish National League McAweeney was the one who said Connolly was "serving the Unionist interest" by running.

smelling pottage of Liberal promises.

The Social Democrats were defeated. But last year the vote polled in George Square Ward for the I.L.P. candidate was only one-thirteenth of the total poll, whereas in St. Giles, the vote for the avowed Social Democrat reached one-seventh of the total poll. A great advance, truly...

The return 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.

Until Socialism attains such a foothold in this country as shall enable the Socialists to return a majority to the public bodies which rule the country, every fresh seat captured must simply be regarded as a fresh means of spoiling the little games of the Jabezian philanthropists, financial jobbers, and political thimblerriggers, who thrive on their reputations as Liberal and Tory politicians.

If only for the value of letting the light of public opinion in on the doings of officialdom, we should never relax our efforts until every representative body has its full quota of Socialist members...

The poor paupers, the war-worn veterans who have fallen in the battle of life, who are imprisoned in those bastilles of poorhouses, may now have the closing years of their lives lightened and brightened by the action of an intelligent Social Democracy.

To every upholder of the present system the poorhouse inmates are a mere burden on the rates, or an intolerable nuisance to honest folk, who are well done for if they are fed and sheltered at all. But to the Social Democrat they are unfortunate victims of an evil social system. They are our brothers and sisters, crushed beneath the wheels of a remorseless competition. They are the effect of which the landlord and capitalist are the cause.

We have so long been accustomed to receive without question the teachings of the master class, that it is no wonder the poorhouse dole and poor-relief should be regarded amongst us as degrading to the recipient instead of to society at large. But it is on society at large, and on its supporters and apologists, the real stigma should rest.

Indeed, it would be well for the workers as a whole if they could come to look upon the poor-rates as their first means of relief instead of as their last resource.

Man, as a social animal, has a claim upon the society which gave him birth. This claim is his right to live as long as he is willing to perform his share of the labour necessary to his own maintenance and the maintenance of society at large. This claim involves, in the first place, the right of free access to the means of life; in the second place, the duty of contributing to the support of the weaker members of the community, i.e., children, the sick, infirm, and the aged.

Our Poor Law system is a grudging admission of the truth of this thesis, granted by the classes as an alternative to a troubled social upheaval. It has been surrounded since its inception with every form of insult and degradation their mean and petty minds could devise, until, today, the hideous uniform of the pauper is loathed more than the garb of the convict.

Thus, our masters have striven to debase this institution, whose existence in our midst they feel to be a standing reproach to the devil-take-the-hindmost theory, with which they wish to govern society.

To rescue our Poor Law from their hands, to relieve it from the false ideals with which its administration has been cursed, and to make its administrators in very truth guardians of the poor, this should be the aim of the workers. By so directing their efforts they may create, out of the framework of our Parish Councils, a public body, who, in solicitude for the public welfare and thoughtful provision for the weaker members of our human family, will find the same incentive to effort as the Liberal and Tory politicians find in the grosser pursuit of the glittering spoils of office.

But such a body can only arise out of that higher conception of human rights and duties which will flow from a wide and general acceptance of the principles of enlightened Social Democracy.

Connolly ran again for the Socialists at the Poor Law

elections in April 1895. His opponent was the local parish priest and Connolly lost. After his two election campaigns Connolly found himself out of work, out of pocket and with no prospects of employment in Edinburgh. He had a small family to take care of now and he thought of emigrating to South America. Or so one unverified story has it.

3. Seeking a New Life

For Connolly the cause came first. A job was necessary to pay the rent and keep the family in food. He gave up his job as a carter to fight the municipal election. In an effort to establish economic independence, he became a cobbler. His ad is worth repeating: "Socialists support one another. Connolly, 73, Buccleuch St. repairs the worn-out under-standings of the brethren at standard rates. Ladies boots 1/6d., gents 2/6d."

He became noted for his sardonic humour. When an old street cleaner for Edinburgh Corporation died, someone told Connolly, remarking what a great character the deceased was. "Yes, indeed," Connolly replied, "although a little weak around the lamp posts."³

Getting and holding a job was difficult for Socialists in the 1890's. In a letter to his friend, J. Carstairs Matheson, editor of *The Socialist* of Edinburgh, in March 1903 after resigning as organiser of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, Connolly wrote:

"As to work, I would prefer, well, Chancellor of the Exchequer would do. But I have been a proof-reader, a tile-layer (ten years ago), a 'while you wait shoemaker', a mason's labourer and a carter."

He also worked for a short time as a pedlar, probably after June 1895 when the cobbler business folded. He sold shirts, he told Bill O'Brien's brother, Dan, also a member of the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He would not deal in religious pictures, a more lucrative line. He abandoned peddling, Connolly said, because "I had never a sufficient stock to start

with, and as a consequence two days good selling left me stranded until I scraped together sufficient for another start.”⁴

For a time Connolly tried to get lecture engagements and he hired Dan Irving of the Social Democratic Federation as his agent. In the years ahead Irving booked Connolly on lecture tours of Scotland and England to pay for his organising work in Ireland. But in 1895-96 Connolly was unknown outside of Edinburgh.

John Leslie wrote a piece for *Justice* explaining his friend's plight. He called Connolly “a man among men,” adding:

I am not much given to flattery, as those who know me are aware, yet I may say that very few men have I met deserving of greater love and respect than James Connolly. I know something of Socialist propaganda and have done a little in that way myself, and I also know the movement in Edinburgh to its centre, and I say that no man has done more for the movement than Connolly, if they have done as much. Certainly nobody has dared one half what he has dared in the assertion of his principles. Of his ability I need only say, as one who has had some opportunity of judging, he is the most able propagandist in every sense of the word that Scotland has turned out. And because of it, and for his intrepidity, he is today on the verge of destitution and out of work. And we all know what this means for the unskilled workman, as Connolly is... Connolly is, I have said, an unskilled labourer, a life-long total abstainer, sound in wind and limb (Christ in Heaven! how often have I nearly burst a blood vessel as these questions were asked of myself!) married, with a young family, and as his necessities are therefore very great, so he may be had cheap.

Connolly was about twenty-seven at the time, low-sized with a strong body, slightly bow-legged, sporting a heavy black moustache. Careful of his appearance, he usually wore a collar, a tie and a hat. He spoke with a strong burr and rarely smiled. He made great demands on his own time and energy for the cause and expected others to do the same or stop calling themselves Socialists.

Connolly was an able propagandist, as Leslie claimed: a good speaker and even better writer. He was an excellent

organiser, the evidence of which lay in the growth of the Scottish Socialist Party in Edinburgh and Leith.

A letter came from Dublin in response to Leslie's appeal, signed by Robert Dorman and Adolphus Shields, two well known Irish Socialists. Dorman belonged to the newly-established branch of the Independent Labour Party in Dublin; he usually addressed open-air Socialist meetings at the Custom House. Shields was an official of the Dublin branch of the British-based Gas Workers and General Labourers, a militant and progressive union. In 1891 it had attempted to organise an Irish Trade Union Congress and issued a call for a convention in Dublin, which the craft unions ignored. (Shields was father of actors Barry FitzGerald and Arthur "Boss" Shields, both members of the Irish Citizen Army in the 1916 Rising.)

Dorman and Shields wrote their letter to Connolly from the European Hall, Bolton Street — where the College of Technology now stands — and offered him a pound a week to organise the Socialists of Dublin. The letter arrived as he was talking of emigrating to Chile.

Connolly was delighted with the offer and accepted immediately. This was the kind of mission he had hoped Keir Hardie would undertake two years earlier. He arrived in Dublin in May of 1896, shortly before his twenty-eighth birthday, and set to work planning a Socialist party.

4. Socialism in Dublin

Jim Connell, author of "The Red Flag", told a meeting in Dublin that there were more Socialists in the city when he left in 1875 than in 1912. According to William O'Brien, the labour leader, Socialism was preached in Dublin from Fenian times. This was appropriate enough since Joseph Patrick McDonnell, Irish representative on the General Council of the International Working Men's Association (First International), was a Fenian. The International had branches in Dublin and Cork. McDonnell went to America in the early 1870's. He became editor of the *Labour Standard*, organ of the Working

Men's Party of America, which in 1877 changed its name to the Socialist Labour Party. McDonnell died in 1902, but took no part in the labour movement after the 1870's.

There was an Irish Socialist Union in 1890-91 which met at 87 Marlborough Street – in the same room where the Irish Socialist Republican Party held its first private meeting in 1896. In 1890 Michael Davitt founded the Irish Democratic Labour Federation. It demanded free education, reduced hours of labour, houses for workers, labour political representatives and universal suffrage. The Parnell split put an end to it.

In 1893 Tom and Murtagh Lyng visited Liverpool and returned with Socialist pamphlets and papers. Tom was twenty, Murtagh twenty-four years of age. The result of their visit was the Dublin branch of the Independent Labour Party. The I.L.P. made little headway. It had only one notable speaker, Dorman. It changed its name to the Dublin Socialist Society; but there was no improvement. "Things became worse in fact," a note in O'Brien's Papers states. The remark probably was made by one of the Lyng brothers.

In 1894 the Irish Trade Union Congress was formed, modelled on the British T.U.C. It catered for craft workers only. Indeed for a time it considered the British body its parent. Of the 30,000 workers it claimed to represent, more than 15,000 were in Belfast and the balance in the South of Ireland. Political issues were barred from discussion at its meetings. Nevertheless, as the historian of the Irish labour movement, Arthur Mitchell, notes (*Labour in Irish Politics, 1890-1930*), "a labour political consciousness gradually emerged."⁵

Of the non-labour forces at work in Dublin perhaps the most important was the Gaelic League. It sprang from a lecture by Dr. Douglas Hyde in November 1892 called "The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland", and was founded the following July. The Gaelic League was in fact an ideology as much as a cultural movement. It inspired Yeats and the literary revivalists. It inspired William Rooney,⁶ friend of Arthur Griffith. Later it would inspire P.H. Pearse. And it inspired Connolly.

Dublin was where these new ideas were germinating. Indeed

they had no support outside Dublin. The post-Parnell factions of the Irish Parliamentary Party spoke for Nationalist Ireland, through the Catholic Church largely; and the Unionist Party and the Orange Order spoke for Protestant Ulster. Most Irish industrialists were Protestant, in the South as well as in the North, although in Dublin there were Catholic entrepreneurs like William Martin Murphy of Bantry challenging their hegemony. Murphy, a pioneer capitalist, had business interests in England, Africa and South America as well as Ireland. He was also a power politically in Nationalist Ireland through his fellow-townsmen, Tim Healy. Home Rule was expected as a matter of course. But Home Rule threatened big business in Belfast, as Eric Strauss notes,⁷ and for this reason alone had no hope of passage.

The struggle for the land was over. Landlordism was defeated, peasant proprietorship took its place. Not immediately, of course, but that was the trend. Davitt's solution, national ownership, found no support in Ireland. With the disappearance of the landlords and their agents, parish clergy, shopkeepers and medium-sized farmers became the dominant forces in rural Ireland.

Outside Belfast there was hardly a proletariat in the Marxian sense of the term. The industrial working class in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick was small. The unskilled workers consisted of general labourers engaged in casual work in the towns and farm labourers in the countryside. All were badly paid, badly housed and overworked. They had no one to speak for them.

This was more or less the situation when Connolly arrived in Dublin in May of 1896.

5. The Irish Socialist Republican Party

"The Irish Socialist Republican Party was founded in Dublin in 1896," Connolly wrote in the *Workers' Republic* of March 1903. "Six working men assisted at its birth. The founders were poor, like the remainder of their class, and had

arrayed against them all those things that are supposed to be essential to success..."

The party was founded in Pierce Ryan's public house, 50 Thomas Street, on the afternoon of May 29th, and eight men "assisted at its birth", not six. We have Tom Lyng's word for it. He was one of the founders and took the names.

The initial meeting was to be at Watson's Boot Shop, near Ryan's, where Robert Dorman worked. However, a director showed up to take stock and they adjourned to a snug in Ryan's. Five of the eight drank lemonade.

Tom Lyng gave William O'Brien the names of the founders: Connolly, Dorman, Tom and Murtagh Lyng, John Moore, Patrick Cushman, Alex Kennedy and Peter Kavanagh. There was a ninth man named Whelan, whose first name Lyng could not recall, "a nondescript who just faded away." There was also a friend of Whelan's present, but no one could remember his first or last name. To add to the confusion O'Brien in a note added: "He (Lyng) was unable to say what two of the above were not present." He seemed sure there were only eight men in Ryan's snug that day.

The meeting named Connolly party organiser, at a pound a week, and Tom Lyng secretary. Initial membership cost sixpence; weekly dues a penny a person. The party was launched officially at a public meeting on June 7th.

Connolly explained later that the I.S.R.P. was founded on the proposition "that the two currents of revolutionary thought in Ireland, the Socialist and the national, were not antagonistic but complementary, and that the Irish Socialist was in reality the best patriot, but in order to convince the Irish people of that fact he must first learn to look inward upon Ireland for his justification, rest his arguments upon the facts of Irish history, and be a champion against the subjection of Ireland and all that it implies." He came to the nub of the matter:

That the Irish question was at bottom an economic question, and that the economic struggle must first be able to function nationally before it could function internationally, and as Socialists were opposed to all oppression, so should they ever be foremost in the daily battle against

all its manifestations, social and political. As the embodiment of this teaching, the party adopted the watchword, *Irish Socialist Republic*, and by deduction therefrom, the aforementioned name of their organisation.

This policy received its formal endorsement by the International Socialist movement when at the International Socialist Congress at Paris in 1900 the delegates of the I.S.R.P. were formally seated as the delegates of a nation separate from England.

It is no exaggeration to say that this organisation and its policy completely revolutionised advanced politics in Ireland. When it was first initiated the word "republic" was looked upon as a word to be only whispered among intimates; the Socialists boldly advised the driving from public life of all who would not openly accept it. The thought of revolution was the exclusive possession of a few remnants of the secret societies of a past generation, and was never mentioned by them except with heads closely together and eyes fearfully glancing around; the Socialists broke through this ridiculous secrecy, and in hundreds of speeches in the most public places of the metropolis, as well as in scores of thousands of pieces of literature scattered through the country, announced their purpose to muster all the forces of labour for a revolutionary reconstruction of society and the incidental destruction of the British Empire...⁸

This is taking us a little ahead of our story but it is worth pointing out that there is not a word of exaggeration in what Connolly says above about the week-by-week work of the Irish Socialist Republican Party between 1896 and 1903. Its successes were few but its posthumous influence was considerable. Connolly hoped to build Socialism in Ireland on a Fenian base.

The official launching of the party at the Custom House on June 7th was under the chairmanship of Alexander Blane, former Parnellite M.P. for South Armagh. Connolly moved the motion to establish the Irish Socialist Republican Party; Dorman seconded. The meeting was advertised in the then Parnellite paper the *Irish Daily Independent*, not yet owned by

William Martin Murphy, the *Evening Herald* and the *Evening Telegraph*. Later Blane wrote regretting his "inability to subscribe" to the party, according to the minutes, which also record that the club room at 67 Middle Abbey Street was "in the same house as P. Brown, tailor," and cost 4/6 a week rent. The party moved to 6 Liffey Street where the United Irishmen published their *Press* in the 1790's, Connolly said.

The membership card was deep emerald green, with two pages for dues stamps. The last page bore the motto of the French revolutionary, Desmoulins, "The great appear great to us because we are on our knees. Let us rise." This appeared on the masthead of the *Edinburgh and Leith Labour Chronicle* and Connolly would use it in his *Workers' Republic*.

The first communication Connolly sent as organiser was a postcard, dated June 20th, 1896, regarding dues. He gave his home address, 75 Charlemont Street, over the message to Peter Kavanagh, that T.J. Lyng, financial secretary, "will call upon all members once a week, from Sunday next, and collect said subscriptions which in all future communications will be termed dues." There is a note at the end: "Club room, 67 Middle Abbey Street, open in future every night in the week."

According to its manifesto the I.S.R.P.'s objective was "establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic based upon the public ownership by the Irish people of the land and instruments of production, distribution and exchange."

Agriculture would be administered as a public function, under boards of management elected by the farming community. "All other forms of labour necessary to the well-being of the community to be conducted on the same principles."

The party hoped to organise the forces of democracy in Ireland around a ten-point programme, including nationalisation of the railways and canals, free education, graduated income tax, a 48-hour work week, "gradual extension of the principle of public ownership and supply to all the necessities of life," and universal suffrage.

Connolly held that the most effective way to organise the revolutionary forces in Ireland to build the Socialist Republic was through "the conquest by the Social Democracy of political power in parliament, and on all public bodies in

Ireland."

The party manifesto, drafted and read by Connolly, was "passed by a few lying on the grass in Stephen's Green," Tom Lyng told William O'Brien, who joined the I.S.R.P. much later. This manifesto, according to a report in *Reynold's Newspaper* of October 4th, 1896, declared in part:

Every Irish movement of the last 200 years has either been agrarian and social, and in the hunt after some temporary abatement of agricultural distress have been juggled into forgetfulness of the vital principles which lie at the base of the claim for National Independence, or else they have been national and under the guidance of middle-class and aristocratic leaders who either did not understand the economic basis of oppression, and so neglected the strongest weapon in their armoury, or, understanding it, were selfish enough to see in the national movement little else than a means whereby, if successful, they might intercept and divert into the pockets of the Irish middle class a greater share of that plunder of the Irish worker which at present flows across the Channel. The failure of our so-called "leaders" to grasp the grave significance of this two-fold character of the "Irish question" is the real explanation of that paralysis which at constantly-recurring periods falls like a blight upon Irish politics. The party which would aspire to lead the Irish people from bondage to freedom must then recognise both aspects of the long-continued struggle of the Irish nation. Such a party is the newly-formed Irish Socialist Republican Party.

These principles were incorporated in the platform of the party which noted that class ownership of land and the means of production, distribution and exchange was unjust and "the fundamental basis of all oppression, national, political and social."

It also said, "that the subjection of one nation to another, as of Ireland to the authority of the British Crown, is a barrier to the free political and economic development of the subjected nation, and can only serve the interests of the exploiting classes of both nations."

An Irish Socialist Republic would guarantee the national

and economic freedom of the Irish people and convert "the means of production, distribution and exchange into the common property of society, to be held and controlled by a democratic state in the interests of the entire community." ⁹

The new party drew some attention from other Socialist parties. Marx's daughter, Eleanor, sent a message of support. Daniel De Leon, editor of *The People*, New York, organ of the Socialist Labour Party of North America, then a growing force in the politics of the United States — in the northern bit cities at any rate — published all material sent him about the new party. In Ireland the I.S.R.P. was ignored.

However, it began to hold public meetings almost immediately. These were at James's Street Fountain on Tuesdays, at 8p.m., and in the Phoenix Park on Sundays. From September 1896, meetings were held by the Bank of Ireland at Foster Place and the old Custom House stand was maintained.

The meetings drew substantial crowds, especially in the Phoenix Park. A great deal of Socialist literature was sold. The stock included *Socialism and the Worker* by F.A. Sorge, *Wage-Labour and Capital* by Karl Marx, *Trade Unionism, Co-Operation and Socialism* by the editor of *Justice*, H. Quelch, *The Socialist Catechism* by J.L. Joynes, *The Present Position of the Irish Question* by John Leslie.

There was little Irish material and one of the first decisions of the party, on Connolly's recommendation, was to publish two essays by James Fintan Lalor, "The Rights of Ireland" and "The Faith of a Felon", as an I.S.R.P. pamphlet. This appeared in the autumn of 1896 with an introduction by Connolly. The sale was pushed at meetings. A copy went to Alice Milligan's *Shan Van Vocht*, in Belfast, and received a good review. As a result, Connolly started to write for Miss Milligan's monthly and his articles attracted attention in Republican circles.

Connolly and Dorman were the chief speakers at meetings. Tom Lyng was chairman. After a time they all became fairly well known in Dublin. Once when Connolly and Lyng went to Cole's Lane to buy a table, a little girl cried out: "Oh, Mother, look at Mr. Chairman," pointing at Lyng. It was a kind of fame.

Dorman left after about a year to take a job in Limerick and tried but failed to establish a branch of the I.S.R.P. in that city. Apart from his Socialism, Dorman was an evangelical Protestant. Neither his Socialism nor his evangelism was likely to win many converts in the Limerick of the 1890's — or later. He lived in Derry and Belfast and continued his preaching of the two creeds up to the 1930's when he died.

6. Erin's Hope the end and the means

Connolly had inexhaustible energy. He wrote, preached and organised almost effortlessly, it seemed. He tried to reach the remnants of Fenianism by writing for the only Republican journal then in existence, Alice Milligan's *Shan Van Vocht*. Connolly's "Can Irish Republicans be Politicians?" was published in the November 1896 issue, "Socialism and Nationalism" in January 1897, and "Patriotism and Labour" in August 1897. He also wrote a series of articles for Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader* of Glasgow during the autumn and winter of 1896, on the theme that the Irish Question was both social and national.

In the first *Shan Van Vocht* piece Connolly rejected secret conspiracy as the right road to revolution. "A revolution can only succeed in any country when it has the moral sanction of the people," Connolly wrote. He thought the way to prepare for revolution was through "a political party seeking to give public expression to the republican ideal."

The second article debunked the Irish tendency to be bound by tradition. "Now traditions may, and frequently do, provide materials for a glorious martyrdom, but can never be strong enough to ride the storm of a successful revolution," Connolly declared.

He proceeded to puncture some other illusions:

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, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs...

Nationalism without Socialism – without a reorganisation of society on the basis of a broader and more developed form of that common property which underlay the social structure of Ancient Erin – is only national recreancy...

As a Socialist I am prepared to do all one man can do to achieve for our motherland her rightful heritage – independence; but if you ask me to abate one jot or tittle of the claims of social justice, in order to conciliate the privileged classes, then I must decline.

In the third *Shan Van Vocht* article Connolly said the Irish Socialist Republican Party was “resolved upon national independence as the indispensable ground-work of industrial emancipation,” but would have nothing to do with a leadership that derived its social charter from oppression. Connolly said his revolutionary party would take its seats in Parliament and pursue a revolutionary policy. An “editorial note” disagreed with this view, “whilst in full sympathy with Mr. Connolly’s views on the labour and social questions.” No conscientious Republican could take the oath of allegiance, the editorial note pointed out, citing John Mitchel and John O’Leary in support of its contention that this was an “unalterable” rebel principle. The note ended with the sentence: “We would like to have this question debated.”

Connolly reached out to the “pure Republicans” because Home Rule was a middle class measure. Its ideal was “an Irish society composed of employers making fortunes and workers grinding out their lives for a weekly wage.” He wanted a co-operative society of free citizens: “a Socialist society – a Workers’ Republic.”

This may be the first time Connolly used the term “Workers’ Republic.” He thought enough of it to make it the name of his weekly newspaper a year later. He never spelled out clearly what he meant by it, though the definition is

clear enough here: a Socialist society.

Alice Milligan, an Ulster Protestant, was sympathetic to Connolly and his theories. Her brother Ernest went to Dublin to argue Socialism with Connolly, who told him that "economic causes have moulded history." Young Milligan returned to Belfast completely converted and set up a branch of the Irish Socialist Republican Party which attracted some students, among them Robert Lynd, and continued for a time as the "Belfast Socialist Society."¹⁰

Erin's Hope – the End and the Means, published as a pamphlet by the I.S.R.P., in March of 1897, consisted of Connolly's articles in the *Labour Leader*. The *Shan Van Vocht* piece of November 1896 formed the introduction. It carried this quotation from John Kells Ingram's *History of Political Economy* as an epigraph: "It is indeed certain that industrial society will not permanently survive without a systematic organisation. The mere conflict of private interests will never produce a well-ordered commonwealth of labour."

Ingram of course was the author of the Young Ireland poem, "Who Fears to Speak of Ninety-Eight?" (Or to give it its proper title, "The Memory of the Dead"). By the 1890's he was considered a conservative Unionist. A professor at Trinity College, Ingram it appears was quite sympathetic to the Irish Socialist Republican Party and donated books to start a small Socialist library.

Erin's Hope – the End and the Means went through several editions in Ireland and America. It was Connolly's first published work and he was very proud of it. He was not blind to its shortcomings, however. An English Socialist journal reviewed an American edition and blamed Connolly for dealing only with "the political organisation of the workers and not their economic," which was "too bad from an I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) member". To which Connolly replied: "Our reviewer forgets that the book was first printed in 1897. We confess to have learnt something since."

In the *Labour Leader* articles Connolly castigated Home Rule as "a glaring absurdity." He set forth his own solution, calling it "a rough draft of a scheme of reform by means of

which the ground may be prepared for that revolutionary change in the structure of society which can alone establish an approximation to an ideally just social system." He added:

The agriculture of Ireland can no longer compete with the scientifically equipped farmers of America, therefore the only hope that now remains is to abandon competition altogether as a rule of life, to organise agriculture as a public service under the control of boards of management elected by the agricultural population (no longer composed of farmers and labourers, but of free citizens with equal responsibility and equal honour), and responsible to them and the nation at large, and with all the mechanical and scientific aids to agriculture the entire nation can place at their disposal. 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. Thus we will abolish at one stroke the dread of foreign competition and render perfectly needless any attempt to create an industrial hell in Ireland under the specious pretext of "developing our resources."

Here Connolly challenges the Home Rulers who talked of building industry in Ireland to compete with Great Britain. He had the Socialist abhorrence of establishing new Manchesters all over the globe. He believed that in a Socialist world there would be free trade: Ireland could exchange its surplus agriculture for manufactured goods and all would be well.

Apply to manufacture the same social principle, let the co-operative organisation of the workers replace the war of classes under capitalism and transform the capitalist himself from an irresponsible hunter after profit into a public servant, fulfilling a public function and under public control. Recognise the right of all to an equal opportunity to develop to their fullest capacity all the powers and capabilities inherent in them by guaranteeing to all our countrymen and women, the weak as well as the strong, the simple as well as the cunning, the honest equally with the unscrupulous, the fullest, freest, and most abundant human

life intelligently organised society can confer upon any of its members.

"But," you will say, "this means a Socialist Republic; this is subversive of all the institutions upon which the British Empire is founded — this cannot be realised without national independence." Well, I trust no one will accuse me of a desire to fan into flame the dying embers of national hatred when I state as my deliberate and conscientious conviction that the Irish democracy ought to strive consistently after the separation of their country from the yoke that links her destinies with those of the British Crown. The interests of labour all the world over are identical, it is true, but it is also true that each country had better work out its own salvation on the lines most congenial to its own people.

I believe that here Connolly stated something original to Marxist thinking of his time: that there are different national roads to Socialism. And in these articles, and in *Erin's Hope*, one begins to sense what the British economic historian and Marxist, Eric Hobsbawm, had in mind when he wrote: "The really interesting and original contributions to Marxist theory in these islands came from men like William Morris and James Connolly."¹¹

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, and, finally, although they have been in the closest contact for seven hundred years yet the Celtic Irishman is today as much of an insoluble* problem to even the most friendly English as on the day when the two countries were first joined in unholy wedlock. No Irish revolutionist worth his salt would refuse to lend a hand to the Social Democracy of England in the effort to uproot the social system of which the British Empire is the crown and apex, and in like manner no English Social Democrat fails to recognise clearly that the crash which would betoken the fall of the ruling classes in

* The word used in the original text is "insoluble".

Ireland would sound the tocsin for the revolt of the disinherited in England...

When, in addition to the foregoing reforms, we have demanded the abolition of our hateful poor-house system, and the imposition of a heavy and steeply graduated income tax on all incomes over £400 a year, in order to provide comfortable pensions for the aged, the infirm, and widows and orphans, we will have aroused a new spirit in the people; we will have based our revolutionary movement upon a correct appreciation of the needs of the hour, as well as upon the vital principles of economic justice and uncompromising nationality; we will, as the true revolutionist should ever do, have called into action on our side the entire sum of all the forces and factors of social and political discontent. By the use of the revolutionary ballot we will have made the very air of Ireland as laden with "treason", as fully charged with the spirit of revolt, as it is today with the cant of compromise and the mortal sin of flunkeyism; and thus we will have laid a substantial groundwork for more effective action in the future, while to those whom we must remove in our onward march the pledge of our faith in the Social Revolution will convey the assurance that if we crush their profit-making enterprises today, yet when the sun dawns upon our freedom, if they have served their fellow creatures loyally in the hour of strife, they and their children and their children's children will be guaranteed against want and privation for all time by the safest guarantee man ever received, the guarantee backed by all the gratitude, the loyal hearts, the brains and industry of the Irish people, under the Irish Socialist Republic.¹²

It remains to say that *Erin's Hope* displays much of the idealism of the pioneer Socialists and their faith, following the example of German Social Democracy, in what they called "the revolutionary ballot" to effect the changes in society considered both just and necessary.

7. Poor Soil for Socialism

When James Connolly came to Dublin in 1896 to found the Irish Socialist Republican Party, labour was a growing force in British politics. In 1892 Keir Hardie was elected to parliament. In 1893 he founded the Independent Labour Party. The Social Democratic Federation, led by H.M. Hyndman, was noisily preaching Marxism to the British working class. It had about 20,000 members and would not join the I.L.P. which it considered reformist and insufficiently socialist.

Socialist ideas had a stronger grip in Europe. Germany was the ultimate hope of those who believed in the proletarian revolution. Nearly 25 per cent of the German electorate supported the Social Democratic Party and its 44 seats in the Reichstag after the 1893 election did not represent its real strength. Unlike the I.L.P., the S.D.P. was a Marxist party. It sought to build a new society on Socialist lines, not merely represent the working class in parliament. As the leading party of the Second International, it was the model for all other socialist parties.

Some notable names of the Second International were Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel and Karl Kautsky of Germany; Victor Adler and Otto Bauer of Austria; Jean Jaures and Jules Guesde of France; Georgii Plekhanov and his young disciples, V.I. Lenin and Yurii Martov, of Russia; Emil Vandervelde of Belgium; Rosa Luxemburg of Poland; Daniel De Leon of the United States.

Ireland was poor soil for Socialism; it was anathema to the Catholic Church. Even an enlightened cleric like Father Thomas A. Finlay, S.J., an advocate of the co-operative movement, thought Socialism had "much in common with slavery." Outside of Belfast there was barely the beginning of an industrial working class, as noted earlier. The Belfast worker, Protestant of course, hardly considered he belonged to the same species as his Catholic counterpart in Dublin. Belfast had shipbuilding, engineering and textile industries.

What had Dublin? Guinness's Brewery and not much more. Belfast had small kitchen houses for its workers and rents were lower. Dublin had tall tenements, high rents and squalor. A male factory worker in Dublin earned twelve shillings for a 50-to-56 hour week; a female worker got exactly half that amount. Compared with Dublin, Belfast was "an elysium for the working man", as a Lord Mayor of that city told the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1898.¹³

Even a Connolly with all his talents could make little headway in the Ireland of the late 1890's. Clerical control of social and political life was tight. A Michael Davitt despite his great prestige could do little about this. Davitt thought clerical control could not be broken till Home Rule was won. Yet Home Rule was not independence. John Redmond, leader of the Parnellite minority faction, told a Cambridge University student audience in 1895 that "separation from England is impossible and undesirable if possible," and no one in Nationalist Ireland contradicted him.

The core of Connolly's Socialism was separatism. The I.S.R.P. denounced the Redmondite view. It "boldly advised the driving from public life of all who would not accept" an Irish Republic, as Connolly remarked in his introduction to the U.S. edition of *Erin's Hope*. It proclaimed its purpose "to muster all the forces of labour for a revolutionary reconstruction of society and the incidental destruction of the British Empire." Connolly early on rejected the traditional I.R.B. view that "political action was impossible for republicans," asserting on the contrary that "a revolution can only succeed in any country when it has the moral sanction of the people." And in the same article, he anticipated the policy of Sinn Féin — both the Griffith original and the post-1916 kind — when he wrote:

Were a political party formed in Ireland to educate the people in sound national ideas by pledging every candidate to openly repudiate the authority of the Crown, and work for the realization of republican principles, it would achieve a much needed transformation in Irish politics.¹⁴

William O'Brien's papers contain a list of the early members of the I.S.R.P., for 1896 and 1897 apparently.

O'Brien, a tailor from Co. Cork, was the youngest of three brothers; all joined the I.S.R.P. Unlike his brothers, William was too young for the 1896-7 class and is not on the list. Connolly liked him because he had a cool head in a crisis. O'Brien invited Connolly back to Ireland in 1910 to organise the Socialist Party of Ireland, successor to the I.S.R.P., and remained his loyal lieutenant to 1916 and his "heir" as General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

O'Brien's list includes his brothers Thomas J. and Daniel; Alf Stone, Mark Deering, Peter Marmion, Michael Rafferty, E.W. Stewart, Patrick Dunne, Fred Ryan, Thomas Power, John Flood, - Darward, - Heppard, Arthur Kavanagh, - Hughes, - McCann, W.J. Bradshaw, Peter Ryan, Tom Brady, William McLoughlin, John Cardan, John Holloway, John Mulray, Harry McDonagh, Peter Dolan, John Flynn, John Byrne, Peter Keating, John Brannigan, John Shiels, William McCartney, John Shanley, - Mulvey, - Fitzpatrick, Laurence Strange. Including the eight founders that makes a total of 43 members — hardly enough to create a revolution. There were no women members.

Laurence Strange subsequently became Mayor of Waterford. Valentine McEntee, a Dublin carpenter, is not on the list although at one time a member of the party. He emigrated to London, was a founder with Con Lehane, of the Cork branch of the I.S.R.P., of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1904; became a Labour Party M.P. and "father of the House of Commons." He ended his political career as Lord McEntee of Walthamstow.

O'Brien's papers have a copy of the minutes for 1896 and half of 1897. Sparsely written, they indicate what the I.S.R.P. was trying to do to change politics in Dublin. The methods used were meetings, pamphlets and selling Socialist literature. Progress, it is clear, was so slow it was hardly noticeable at times.

At the first meeting, Robert Dorman "presented the party with a new portable stool for propaganda purposes." An attempt to rename the I.S.R.P. the "Christian Socialist Republican Party" got no support. A discussion class was

held one night a week on Marx's *Wage-Labour and Capital*. Here are other excerpts:

July 23rd — "Several comrades volunteered to have meeting room windows cleaned." At the following meeting, "windows still uncleaned."

August 6th — Decided to publish Fintan Lalor essays "Rights of Ireland" and "Faith of a Felon" as I.S.R.P. pamphlet. The secretary (Connolly) instructed to get money to pay for printing from a sympathiser "as loan to be repaid as soon as possible."

September 3rd — Re. pamphlet: "Doyle and Cahill both too dear and neither would promise to put imprint on." Gave order to Graham of Temple Lane at 3/6 a page. Also decided to ask Keir Hardie's permission to issue as pamphlet Connolly articles, "as yet unpublished," for *Labour Leader*.

September 10th — Caretaker of Mechanics Institute refused to let hall for Sunday meeting. Hardie agrees to pamphlet plan and suggests printing it in *Labour Leader* office. Decided to do printing in Dublin.

September 23rd — The committee of the Mechanics Institute refused hall for Sunday meetings. Alice Milligan, editor of *Shan Van Voch*, wrote "most encouragingly of the prospect of an understanding between real nationalist movement and the Socialists."

Quarterly audit showed party had income of £7. 12. 2, expenditure of £7. 9. 9½, leaving surplus of 2/5½. Income from literature, £3. 1. 2; collections, £1. 11. 10½; dues, £1. 0. 3; donations, £1. 1. 0; loan 17/10½. Expenditures for advertising (£1. 0. 10), rent (£2. 19. 0), literature (£1. 15. 7), secretary's expenses (£1. 5. 8½), and loan (8/8). The party's total indebtedness was £3. 4. 1½. The auditors recommended the books be checked monthly "and thus make easier the quarterly audit."

It was also decided to hold meetings in Foster Place, near the Bank of Ireland.

October 8th — Letter from Dr. Edward Aveling of London, husband of Karl Marx's youngest daughter, Eleanor Aveling was "approved and admitted to membership."

(Eleanor Marx had campaigned for Fenian prisoners and supported Michael Davitt and the Land League. She called Ireland "the convicted nation.")

November 12th — Letter from Rev. Richard Lyttle, Moneyrea, Co. Down, "enclosing pamphlet by himself on land nationalisation and expressing agreement in main with our principles."

November 19th — Decided to raise funds to print Connolly pamphlet. Sold "good quantity of literature" at Manchester Martyrs commemoration "and also at end of lecture by John Daly*in Rotunda."

December 10th — "Letter from Miss Maud Gonne acknowledging pamphlet and expressing great interest in party and desiring interview with secretary. Letter from T.W. Rolleston acknowledging pamphlet and card, but expressing belief that Ireland could only be governed by a strong monarchy. Miss Alice Milligan agreed to lecture."

December 17th — "Letter from some person calling himself an old soldier asking for help." Also "it was resolved that the Chairman on Sunday should announce that in future interrupters will be ejected."

December 27th — Note from Connolly: "Mr. Hastings lectured on Sunday in opposition. Very good meeting. Good heckling and amusing proceedings generally."

December 31st — "Letter from Socialist Labour Party of America sending greetings to comrades in Ireland and enclosing £1. 0. 7 for 100 cards of membership and quantity of manifestoes and pamphlets." E.W. Stewart to lecture on "Socialism and Liberty."

January 7th, 1897 — "Letter received from Miss Gonne expressing her entire accord with the Republican and Socialist ideal of the party, but desiring an interview with the secretary before publicly identifying herself with us. Secretary was instructed to take such steps as were in his power to place Miss Gonne in possession of whatever information she desired.

"Secretary drew attention to proposed celebration of the rebellion of '98 and the formation of a committee for Fenian prisoner with Tom Clarke and Mayor of Limerick.

the purpose."

January 21st — "It was unanimously resolved that the I.S.R.P. join in the proposed celebration of the '98 rebellion. Secretary was instructed to write the Secretary, Young Ireland Society, applying for permission to send delegates accordingly.

Connolly, who had addressed public meeting on "Irish Revolutionary Ideals," reported that "there was no opposition and consequently the discussion fell very flat."

January 28th — Rev. Richard Lyttle wrote "expressing his sense of the value of the work performed by the I.S.R.P. but declaring he was unable to join owing to his connection with another political party."

The Socialist Labour Party in America proposed setting up "a body of Irishmen who are also socialists in that country."

February 11th — "Young Ireland Society wrote for names to whom invitations should be sent to act on '98 committee. Connolly, Stewart, Power and Daniel O'Brien appointed."

February 18th — "Decide to celebrate Commune of Paris on March 18th. Secretary gave notice next meeting (would) discuss starting of a paper. Secretary instructed to call on *Labour Leader* re. money due party when he is in Glasgow."

March 3rd — Secretary reported on '98 committee meeting in City Hall. Decided Connolly article in *Shan Van Vocht* "should be used as preface to our new pamphlet." Lyng to get local name in Naas "with view to meeting there."

March 14th — Alice Milligan agreed to lecture, asks "to fix a subject." On secretary's motion "decided no gambling in society's rooms." To issue pamphlet or leaflet on Queen's jubilee...

March 18th — "Agreed Miss Milligan to lecture April 5th in Costigan's Hotel, O'Connell Street. Resolved to keep refreshments and retail them to members."

March 25th — Decide to write Dublin Trades Council asking if Labour Day celebration planned and informing council I.S.R.P. intends to have meeting on that day. "Decided to invite Miss Gonne to speak."

April 1st — Dublin Trades Council secretary “wrote that owing to small support given in previous years to Labour Day celebration it is improbable will hold one this year.”

April 15th — “Letter from C. O’Lyhane, Cork, asking for particulars and speaking favourably of our organisation. Some members were advised to call upon the Cork correspondent with a view to forming a branch. Letter from Laurence Strange, Waterford, speaking in a very hopeless manner of the prospects of Socialism in Waterford, and declining to help in holding a meeting.”

April 22nd — Lyng reported on his visit to Cork. “Formed branch there and left 60 pamphlets.” Also “decided party should be represented at Labour Day meeting in Drogheda.”

April 29th — “Letter from Cork desiring a fortnight’s consideration before finally joining.” Formed ‘98 club on suggestion of centenary committee. Connolly to draft manifesto on diamond jubilee.

May 6th — Approve jubilee manifesto. To print 10,000 copies...

May 27th — “O’Lyhane writes will call a meeting to consider establishing a branch in Cork.”

June 17th — “Letter of resignation from Mr. Dorman. Accepted.” To have black flags, coffin, wagonette, banner for jubilee demonstration. Miss Gonne doing lettering for black flags. Anti-jubilee meeting, Monday 21st. “Miss Gonne to attend and address meeting.”

June 21st — “Anti-Jubilee meeting. an immense --”

Minutes end with unfinished sentence.¹⁵ No doubt missing word is “success”.

8.

Demonstrating against the Queen

“The Socialists of Dublin conceived of and organised the Great Jubilee Protest of 1897, which startled the world and shattered all the elaborate efforts of the British Government to

represent Ireland as 'loyal,'" Connolly wrote later.¹⁶ His ally in this battle was Maud Gonne, the most beautiful woman in Ireland, friend of the poet Yeats. She edited a little journal for the Irish colony in Paris, *L'Irlande Libre*, for which Connolly wrote an article, "Socialism and Irish Nationalism," the theme of which was "the need of separating Ireland from England and of making it absolutely independent."

For the anti-jubilee demonstrations, Maud Gonne made a black flag with white inscriptions giving the number of Famine dead, homes deliberately destroyed, people jailed during Victoria's 60-year reign. Connolly made the same points in a manifesto:

During this glorious reign Ireland has seen 1,225,000 of her children die of famine; starved to death whilst the produce of her soil and of their labour was eaten up by a vulture aristocracy — enforcing their rents by the bayonets of a hired assassin army in the pay of the "best of English Queens"; the eviction of 3,668,000; a multitude greater than that of the entire population of Switzerland; and the reluctant emigration of 4,186,000 of our kindred, a greater host than the entire people of Greece.

There were marches on Monday night, June 21st, 1897, jubilee eve, and on jubilee night itself. De Leon's *People* carried a report of the stirring events on July 18th. The story, datelined, "Dublin, July 2," said in part:

For Monday, 21st June, the eve of jubilee day, we organised an anti-jubilee meeting, to be held in College Green, under the walls of the old Parliament House, and right in the midst of the illuminations, etc., prepared by the loyal flunkys. One of our speakers on this occasion was the well-known editor of *L'Irlande Libre*, Miss Maud Gonne, the most popular woman in all Nationalist Ireland, lately described by the *Irish Republic* (New York) as "Ireland's Joan of Arc."

The announcement that this popular lady had chosen the Socialist platform to speak from set all the political wire-pullers by the ears, and in their chagrin every effort was made to prevent the success of the meeting. But in vain. The meeting was held. Comrade Connolly was in the

chair, and a resolution, pledging those present to carry on the fight for a real Republican freedom was moved by Comrade Stewart, seconded by Mr. Shelly, of the Dublin Trades Council, supported by Miss Gonne and carried with acclamation by an audience of five or six thousand. Then a procession was formed to escort our fair speaker through the street, with a black flag (symbolic of our jubilee feelings) at our head.

Some students tried to grab the flag, but "the proletariat drove the bourgeoisie home in disorder" and the procession marched to the I.S.R.P. club rooms in Abbey Street. Connolly addressed the crowd from the window, ending "a good night's work with three ringing cheers for the Socialist Republic."

On jubilee night the streets were jammed. The marchers were charged by baton-wielding police in Rutland Square. "Over 200 cases were treated at the hospitals from broken heads and other wounds," the report stated, "and a number of men and boys received sentences of imprisonment for their participation in the 'riots' and one old woman who got in the way of the baton charge has since succumbed to her injuries."

The Dublin press suppressed all mention of the Irish Socialist Republican Party's role in the marches, the report said. The Home Rule parties did not participate from first to last. The Nationalist newspapers did not condemn the brutality of the police. Socialism had brought its message to Ireland, said the report, "a message that is now awakening a grander and more confident hope in the breasts of many men and women wearied of the sordid intrigues and personal jealousies with which middle class leaders have disgraced our political life."

Connolly was arrested. "Two thousand pounds worth of plate glass in every shop with jubilee decorations was smashed that night," Maud Gonne relates in her autobiography *A Servant of the Queen*.

9. The Workers' Republic

Connolly needed a newspaper to promote his ideas. The Irish Socialist Republican Party decided in the spring of 1897 to publish a weekly but lacked the means to do so. Connolly contributed to Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*, Alice Milligan's *Shan Van Vocht*, Maud Gonne's *L'Irlande Libre*, and even offered an article, "British Rule in India", to the *Limerick Leader*, while hoping for the day when the Socialists of Ireland would speak with their own voice.

The first issue of the *Workers' Republic* appeared August 13th, 1898, two days before the Wolfe Tone memorial foundation stone was laid in Dublin. The timing was deliberate. Connolly was an active member of the '98 Centenary Committee. Home Rulers took it over. Their only concession to separatism was to permit John O'Leary's "noble head" to dignify their meetings as chairman.

The leading article in the first issue of the *Workers' Republic* commented on this calculated insult to the father of Irish Republicanism, Theobald Wolfe Tone:

He was crucified in life, now he is idolised in death, and the men who push forward most arrogantly to burn incense at the altar of his fame are drawn from the very class who, were he alive today, would hasten to repudiate him as a dangerous malcontent... Our Home Ruler leaders will find that the glory of Wolfe Tone's memory will serve, not to cover, but to accentuate the darkness of their shame.

Wolfe Tone was abreast of the revolutionary thought of his day, as are the Socialist Republicans of our day. He saw clearly, as we see clearly, that a dominion as long rooted in any country as British dominion in Ireland can only be dislodged by a revolutionary impulse in line with the development of the entire epoch...

From its beginning the *Workers' Republic* lacked the finances to keep going. It drained the resources of the I.S.R.P., not a difficult task at the best of times, and forced Connolly

to tour Scotland, England and America to save it from death. There were not enough readers in Ireland to permit it to pay its way, a statement Connolly would reject contemptuously.

Connolly went to Scotland in the summer of 1898 to raise funds for the new weekly. Keir Hardie advanced him £50. Connolly had three subscription sheets and on July 16th, less than a month before the first issue was to appear, he wrote T.J. Lyng from Edinburgh —

and I am confident each of them will bring in a few shillings at least. I have also been assured of a good many who will take the paper regularly and also get it into the newsagents. I can now promise definitely that we will have a song from (John) Leslie in the first issue. I heard the first of it last night. I hope you are not forgetting about the trade unions. I am afraid you made a mistake when you resolved not to advertise this week, as a number of our readers will, I hope, be in Great Britain (and Ireland) and it is desirable to set them talking as soon as possible. What about advertising in *Justice* and the *Labour Leader*. If Graham is fixing his charge per column as moderately as you tell me I think you had better definitely decide on making paper as big as *Justice*. You could then decide the number of columns each would take. Let Stewart make up his mind what space he will require for No. 1, and act accordingly, only don't indulge too much in long articles. The article on the Tramway men is just the kind of thing wanted. Same to Bradshaw, only as I am dealing with that press banquet, and incidentally with the politicians in the article on Wolfe Tone, for which I hope T.J. O'Brien has copied out what I asked him, it would be desirable to avoid repetition. I would like Bradshaw to look up all the most reactionary sayings of the politicians, and all the most democratic sayings of the '48 and '98 men, and prepare them for a two-column setting forth side by side under a two column heading, saying —

Protests of Irish Patriotism (?)

Ask Stewart to drop a note to Dr. Watt and ask him to contribute some notes on an article on the subject of Socialism. About coming back I will, I am sure, be able to

get a good many people, of our own people that is, interested in the paper...

Connolly was cheered by the response to the new paper in Scotland. He spoke at Sunday meetings in Leith and the Meadows, collecting 10/3 and 19/5 at each place, which he called "a record."

Murtagh Lyng asked Connolly what pay he expected as editor. Connolly replied that it was "too personal" a question for him "to attempt an answer," adding — "Follow your own mind on the matter." He did point out that while in Scotland he would draw no wages. Actually Connolly learned early on that in financial matters the Dublin Socialists were unreliable. He rarely got his pound a week organiser's pay, although the party came up with various unsuccessful schemes to raise the money.

The *Workers' Republic* was described by its promoters as "a literary champion of Irish Democracy," advocating "the abolition of landlordism, wage-slavery, the co-operative organisation of industry under Irish representative governing bodies."

It defined a Socialist Republic as "the application to agriculture and industry, to the farm, the field, the workshop, of the democratic principle, of the Republican ideal." The paper sold for one penny. It consisted of eight small pages. The type was set by P.T. Daly, a leading I.R.B. man and later a prominent trade unionist.

Initially it ran for only eleven weeks. Then it suspended publication till May of 1899. It reappeared for a further 30 issues, produced on a hand press by "voluntary labour." When some members of the Dublin Typographical Association complained that the *Workers' Republic* was being produced by "blacklegs," a furious Connolly appeared in person at one of their meetings to ask: "When we shave, do we blackleg on barbers?" The matter was not raised again.

Time ran out for the second series of the *Workers' Republic* on February 10th, 1900. Reissued on May 12th of the same year, it became a fortnightly with twelve small pages on October 27th, 1900, and an eight-page monthly the following February. It disappeared for a time, reappeared with four

regular-size pages in July 1902; the following month it had eight small pages again. Henceforth it tried to meet a monthly deadline. Connolly, who went to America to raise funds to keep it alive, discovered on his return that the money was used to pay bar debts — a matter that led to a split in the party and Connolly's withdrawal from active work.

In May of 1903 the *Workers' Republic* finally expired. According to William O'Brien, 85 issues in all appeared.

The failure of the *Workers' Republic* bothered Connolly and probably accounted for his decision to leave Ireland. He wanted a strong weekly to propagate Socialism and he always believed there was room for such a journal in Dublin.

10.

The Struggle against Imperialism

Maud Gonne and Connolly conducted two campaigns together in 1898: the first against the renewed threat of famine in the West of Ireland and the second in support of the Boers.

A partial failure of the potato crop led to reports of deaths from starvation in Mayo, Kerry and Donegal. Maud Gonne says she learned about this when she returned from a lecture tour of America. She sought the advice of Arthur Griffith and Connolly. She went to Connolly, she said, "because he was the bravest man I knew."

"Connolly was perturbed about the famine," Maud Gonne wrote. "He had terrible reports from Kerry. The people must be roused to save themselves and not die as in 1847."

They drafted a leaflet, "The Rights of Life and the Rights of Property," sprinkled with quotations from the Popes and Church Fathers, to back their statement that "no human law can stand between starving people and their right to food including the right to take that food whenever they find it, openly or secretly, with or without the owner's permission."

Maud Gonne paid for the printing and gave Connolly £25 to go to Kerry and report on conditions there. She herself went to Mayo, distributed the leaflets and enlisted local clergy and other important persons in her fight for famine relief.

Connolly described his Kerry experiences in De Leon's *People*.

The leaflet was reproduced in the *Workers' Republic* of September 17th, 1898, over Maud Gonne's name. A note in O'Brien's Papers says it was actually written by Connolly.

Between 1870 and 1900 the Great Powers partitioned Africa among themselves. Britain got the lion's share. France did well too. Germany grabbed Southwest Africa, Tanganyika and part of Kenya. King Leopold of the Belgians claimed the vast Congo as his personal estate.

The English journalist and economist, J.A. Hobson, in a book aptly titled *Imperialism*, explained the phenomenon as "excessive capital in search of investment." (There was too much production, not enough consumption and more capital existed in Britain "than can find remunerative investment," according to Hobson.) He put it all in a famous sentence: "It is this economic condition of affairs that forms the taproot of Imperialism."¹⁷

Combined with the above was the drive for raw materials. Adventurers flocked to the gold and diamond mines of Southern Africa. These mines were in the territories of the small Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, populated by descendants of Dutch Calvinists and French Huguenots. The Premier of the British Cape Colony was another adventurer and imperial crusader named Cecil Rhodes who had his eye on the Transvaal because of its riches. By various provocations he managed to start a war and the Orange Free State came to the aid of its sister republic. And so began the Boer War.

Nationalist Ireland sympathised with the Boers, naturally enough. Even the parliamentary parties were outraged by the war. Michael Davitt withdrew in anger from parliament and with William Redmond joined the pro-Boer Transvaal Committee to protest against the march of British imperialism.

Many Socialists were in two minds about the Boer War; but not Connolly. From the beginning he saw it as an imperialist adventure. Some Socialists argued that imperialism would lead to industrialisation of backward countries, the formation of a proletariat and conditions for the creation of Socialism. To overthrow capitalism or to replace it with

Socialism, one must have capitalism first, according to the logic of this argument. Connolly would have none of this. In the *Workers' Republic* of November 4th, 1899, he answered those English Socialists, led by Robert Blatchford, editor of *The Clarion*, and H.M. Hyndman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation, who saw British Imperialism as a progressive force. Connolly wrote:

We are, we repeat, disturbed in our mind upon the subject because we ourselves do not at all sympathise with this pro-British policy, but, on the contrary, would welcome the humiliation of the British arms in any one of the conflicts in which it is at present engaged, or with which it has been lately menaced. This we freely avow, but the question then arises: Is this hostility to the British Empire due to the fact of our national and racial subjection by that Power and does it exist in spite of our Socialism, or is it consistent with the doctrine we hold as adherents of the Marxist propaganda, and believers in the Marxist economics?

Blatchford, in Connolly's view, was a chauvinist. But Hyndman could not be dismissed so easily. Connolly wrote:

Scientific revolutionary Socialism teaches us that Socialism can only be realised when Capitalism has reached its zenith of development; that consequently the advance of nations industrially undeveloped into the capitalist stage of industry is a thing highly to be desired, since such advance will breed a revolutionary proletariat in such countries and force forward there the political freedom necessary for the speedy success of the Socialist movement; and finally, that as colonial expansion and the conquest of new markets are necessary for the prolongation of the life of Capitalism, the prevention of colonial expansion and the loss of markets to countries capitalistically developed, such as England, precipitates economic crises there, and so gives an impulse to revolutionary thought and helps to shorten the period required to develop backward countries and thus prepare the economic conditions needed for our triumph...

Connolly had a genius for going to the heart of a problem

and his answer to the Blatchfords and the Hyndmans is typical. Colonialism, he is saying, reinvigorates Capitalism. Every market lost, every sphere of influence denied "shortens the life of Capitalism." Then he added: "As Socialists we base our political policy on the class struggle of the workers, because we know that the self-interest of the workers lies our way."

Nationalist Ireland's sympathy for the Boers had only one basis really: anti-British Imperialism. The Boers were Calvinists, strict in Biblical observance and racist in their relations with the native Africans. They knew little about Ireland and for religious and other reasons were hardly sympathetic to Irish Nationalist beliefs. Nevertheless, a number of Irishmen went to South Africa under Major John MacBride, a member of the I.R.B., and fought with the Boers.

A far larger number of Irishmen went to South Africa with the British Army, not for the diamonds of Kimberley or to expand the Empire but for a shilling a day all found. Many of them found graves in the *veldt*.

Connolly's Socialist Republicans were the first group in Dublin to take a stand against the Boer War. A meeting in College Green drew two thousand, Connolly said, and a resolution called on the Irish in the Transvaal "to take up arms against the armies of the British government." They also began an anti-enlistment campaign, which could hardly be called a success: but it was a beginning all the same.

A Transvaal Committee meeting scheduled for Beresford Place was banned by Dublin Castle. The parliamentarians on the Committee obeyed the order; Maud Gonne, Connolly, Griffith and John O'Leary ignored it. They hired a horse and dray cart for the meeting. When their driver was arrested Connolly seized the reins and drove through the police cordon at Beresford Place. John O'Leary, as chairman, read the protest resolution.

Connolly, in control of the mobile platform, moved to College Green where another brief meeting was held. That apostle of imperialism, Joseph Chamberlain, was in Trinity College receiving an honorary degree at the time. This enhanced the anti-imperialist protest in the eyes of its

sponsors. Driving down Dame Street from Trinity, Connolly whispered to Maud Gonne: "There are only two sentries at the gates of Dublin Castle. Shall I drive in and seize the Castle?"

"There are soldiers inside," Maud Gonne replied. "It will mean shooting and the people are unarmed."

Connolly turned the horse into Parliament Street and drove across Essex Bridge. In her autobiography Maud Gonne writes: "Though at that time Connolly was little known outside the labour movement, I had absolute confidence in him, but the people with whom I was working hardly knew him and distrusted all Socialists."

Maud Gonne at this time visited the Connolly home and gave W.B. Yeats "a pathetic account of his tenement," according to Joseph Hone, the poet's biographer. By 1898 the Connollys had four daughters: Mona, Nora, Aideen and Ina. The children ranged in ages from seven years down. During their years in Dublin the Connollys lived at 75 Charlemont Street, 71 Queen Street and 54 Pimlico, according to William O'Brien's notes. Connolly himself developed a strong dislike for Dublin's slums.

Life for the family of an "unskilled labourer" in the Dublin of the late 1890's could be very rough indeed. Sometimes the Connollys were close to destitution. The party could not support its organiser and Connolly found it difficult to get even casual work. He was an organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers for a week or so, under Peter Marmion of the I.S.R.P., and a proofreader on the *Sunday World* at 12/6 a week, O'Brien noted. He supplemented these earnings, and the party treasury, by annual visits to Socialist clubs in Scotland and England, lecturing for a fee, raising money and subs for the *Workers' Republic*. At times the struggle was too much and Connolly was sometimes near despair, as the following letter, dated March 11th, 1899, to Daniel O'Brien, indicates:

You will be surprised at receiving a letter from yours truly; you will be astounded at the contents thereof. As you are, perhaps, aware I got a job with the corporation, navvying, but found myself unable for it. At least I worked

Thursday, was not able to go out on Friday, tried again on Saturday (today) but was not allowed to start.

So I have now reached the end of my financial tether and having been on short commons so long, am unable to perform such work when I get it. My reason for writing to you is to tell you that as the organiser (?) business is a failure — 7/- per week — and as I don't like to be drawing money from a few comrades — some of whom can ill afford it, perhaps, I am wishful, as a last resort before shaking the dust of Ireland from my feet, to try again my luck at the pedlar's pack. The reason I abandoned that line before was that I had never a sufficient stock to start with, and as a consequence two days' good selling left me stranded until I scraped together sufficient for another start.

Therefore I have mustered up all my audacity to ask you if you could find it possible to get me the sum of £2.0.0. on loan for the purpose and I will absolutely promise to repay it — at least much sooner than you received the £5.0.0. from Miss Gonne. It lowers me in my opinion to ask this, but it would tear my heart-strings out to leave Ireland now after all my toil and privation — and unless I succeed in this instance the welfare, nay the mere necessity of feeding my family will leave me no alternative.

I will not be at the meeting tomorrow, and would be obliged if you could give me an answer at my house, or club room, tonight.

Shortly after its formation the party came up with a novel scheme to pay Connolly his subsistence wage. A letter dated July 2nd, 1896, from T.J. Lyng to members, told of a plan "for the cooperative sale and distribution of tea among Dublin Socialists and their sympathisers, with a view to utilising the profits for the support of an organiser." The tea, in quarter, half and pound packets, would cost 1/6, 1/8 and 2/- a pound. The scheme never got off the ground.

The I.S.R.P. had difficulty paying bills of any kind. When it hired a hall owned by James Hutchinson, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, there was a pound due and no way of paying it. The party sent E.W. Stewart, one of its officers, to "reason"

with the Lord Mayor.

"I must say I admire your party," said Hutchinson. "You practice what you preach. You pay nobody."

Connolly might well agree with him!

11. Building Socialism in Cork

For the seven years of its existence the Irish Socialist Republican Party was confined to Dublin. A number of attempts to establish branches in other centres, notably in Belfast and Cork, failed. The Belfast effort, in 1898, petered out without result. Two attempts to set up a branch in Cork amounted to nothing in the end because of apathy or fear among the members and finally condemnation by the Bishop.

James Connolly was aware that a one-branch party was rather odd. Before leaving for New York on a lecture tour in 1902 he wrote from Glasgow to Michael Rafferty, the party secretary: "It would give me greater standing to speak for you in America if we had a few groups or agencies outside of Dublin." He suggested holding a meeting in Belfast and urged that "a nice letter" be sent to Con O'Lyhane in London "asking him to reconsider his decision about staying away from Cork, and to go back there again." It seemed that without O'Lyhane little could be done in Cork.

O'Lyhane fled from Cork in 1902 after the Bishop, Dr. O'Callaghan, denounced the I.S.R.P. in a letter read in all churches. The Bishop condemned the public preaching of Socialism. O'Lyhane was fired from his job and no other employer would hire him. When he left for London, Connolly somewhat hastily accused him of deserting his post. It caused bad blood between the two for years. O'Lyhane told a Cork comrade that "Catholic Connolly" would not permit the I.S.R.P. to carry the fight to the Bishop.¹⁹ Connolly had another concern. "We must get a foothold in Cork again at all costs," he said.

Con O'Lyhane or Lehané — he used the first form in his Cork political work and the second in London — cut a dashing

figure; brawny, dark-haired, handsome, he seemed supremely confident of his own abilities. William O'Brien thought him one of the best Socialist propagandists in Britain. It is possible that Connolly underestimated Lehane's difficulties in Cork, for he wrote Rafferty:

Cork appears to be terribly chicken hearted, and their oracular statement of the impossibility of carrying on the propaganda, not only in Cork, but in Ireland as a whole is calculated to make one sick. I think it would be a good idea for you to write to them and tell what you know of the conditions under which the propaganda was carried on by us in Dublin before it was possible to "arrange with Connolly." If they have any shame at all it ought to make them blush.²⁰

Connolly was a hard taskmaster and he rejected all excuses for inactivity. He did not disguise his thoughts in diplomatic language. There were no frills to his oratory or writing. He said what was on his mind without circumlocution. He rarely underestimated difficulties in the way of any line of work, but he would not be balked or defeated by them.

In Glasgow raising funds for the *Workers' Republic*, in July 1898, he wrote to one of the Lyngs: "I hope the boys will keep up to scratch and not let the meetings drop off. They have now a good opportunity of showing the Dublin people that Socialism does not depend upon any individual and I believe that when the people see that they will have more confidence than they otherwise would have in our party."

On February 14th, 1899, Connolly spoke in Cork on "Labour and the Irish Revolution" before what the *Cork Constitution* called a "fairly large" audience. He urged an end to "middle class leadership" of the Irish national movement. Organised Irish workers would "shatter for ever the system which condemned the people to misery," he declared.

As the I.S.R.P. minutes indicate, the Cork branch began in April, 1897, after Lehane wrote seeking particulars. T.J. Lyng set up a branch, he thought, but Lehane later asked for "a fortnight's consideration" before putting it on a "permanent" basis. It withered and died within two years.

Lehane's letters are always amusing. In one, for example, he explains why he called himself Carroll O'Lyhane when signing some communication or other. "This is merely a *nom de guerre*. The name they affixed to me on my entrance into this world (which auspicious event occurred at Coachford, Co. Cork — so it is recorded — on 21 November 1877) was Cornelius Lyhane." In Cork he was Con Lyhane, "sometimes Con O'Lyhane (the latter in Gaelic circles, where a supreme act of patriotism consists in prefixing an O' to a hitherto anglicised surname). Carroll was my mother's maiden name."

One problem with Cork, he told his Dublin comrades on September 11th, 1898, was that "our local press is a disgrace — all West British." He attended meetings of many organisations and injected Socialist ideas when there was the opportunity. He was overjoyed to learn that the Cork branch of the C.Y.M.S. was debating Socialism. He founded the Wolfe Tone Literary Society as a '98 centenary club. He was the delegate of the shop assistants union on the Cork Trades Council but had difficulty attending meetings because he was studying chemistry and physics at the Christian Brothers College at night. "I have determined not to be a clerk much longer if I can help it," he explained. He also read Marx on political economy.

In August, 1899, Lehane held a meeting to revive the Cork branch. "But it was not a success," he told Dublin. The *Workers' Republic* was not selling because there were no sellers. "I am at present alone in my efforts — sorry to say the enthusiasm of our men has 'fizzled off.' He discontinued his notes for the *Workers' Republic* until such time as Cork had "a reading membership." He hoped "the cause is making progress in Dublin."²¹

On November 18th, 1899, Lehane told E.W. Stewart, in charge of circulation, that "not a single copy of the last two bundles (of the *Workers' Republic*) had been disposed of and to discontinue the order. He also told him the parcels were insufficiently stamped and the man who received them had to pay fourpence to the postman. On February 3rd, 1900, he announced: "The branch is defunct — if it is to be resuscitated it will need men of a different calibre from that

which composed the former one. The conviction is slowly dawning on me that we (I especially) have done more harm than good to the movement in Cork."

On March 6th, 1900, he wrote to Connolly:

As regards the Cork comrades — very few did stick to the faith — in fact I think that nine-tenths of the members had no faith to stick to — hence I don't blame them. One member, Henry Patrick Hogan is, so far as I can see, the only one besides myself who has weathered the storm, and the surprising feature of it was that he was the youngest member we had...

Anyhow I have not lost hope — on the contrary I feel myself being grounded more and more firmly on the basic principles of Socialism, and I am confident that in a short time we will have another branch in Cork, built on a more stable foundation than the first.

A year later (March 27th, 1901) Lehané announced to Connolly: "We have again floated the Cork branch, this time, I hope, never to fall again." He was so filled with enthusiasm that next day he wrote again to Connolly to ask: "How does the party stand in Dublin at the present moment — has the I.S.R.P. come to stay? How many good members have you?"

The new branch got off to a good start. The membership was tougher. W.J. Gallagher had a B.A. degree and because of that Lehané said he was inclined to put him down at first as an "academic reformer"; he turned out to be "the best Socialist in Cork". Gallagher delivered a paper on Socialism to the C.Y.M.S., which Connolly wanted to publish. "My paper is an ill-digested plagiarism of Marx," replied Gallagher modestly, "and I should be ashamed to see it published and read by Socialists who could see its hollowness." Connolly published it nevertheless.

The branch started to hold public meetings; Lehané was demanding more *Workers' Republics* and pamphlets. He was also vice president of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks and a delegate to the Irish Trade Union Congress — while still in his early twenties. He wrote on August 2nd, 1901, that Gallagher was studying medicine, and Horgan "will be a full fledged B.A.

next year, so I tell you the Cork crowd will be heard of yet."

In the August 2nd letter Lehané announced that he had been thrown out of the Trades Council for being too extreme. But he was not downhearted. "We are clearing the decks for action... the Socialist Party were never on a better footing in Cork. Vive la Republique Socialiste." On September 10th, 1901, Lehané told Dublin:

We held our first open air meeting last Sunday evening here; it was very successful. We had a most orderly and attentive audience of about 400 workingmen, and got frequent applause. I sold 36 *Workers' Republic* in ten minutes, and would have disposed of as many more were they at hand... We have been fired out of our rooms.

Gallagher's pamphlet on Socialism was selling well. On September 13th, Lehané ordered four dozen more copies — "13 to the dozen remember." The three dozen of a few days earlier were almost all gone. On September 25th, Lehané wrote:

The R.C. Bishop has fulminated against us, and the *Cork Examiner* has devoted its leading article on last Monday's issue to our propaganda...

Please get out the next issue as soon as you can, and send on 20 dozen copies to go on with...

If we can successfully steer our bark (sic) over the present wave of clerical opposition our party is made in Cork.

Next day Lehané wrote to Dublin for five dozen copies of *Erin's Hope*, Connolly's 1897 pamphlet, and five dozen of *The New Evangel*, a new collection of Connolly's articles for the *Workers' Republic*. The opening lines of a poem by the Cork-born journalist Joseph Brennan, in the *Irish Tribune* of July 1848, on the eve of the rebellion, gave Connolly the title of his pamphlet:

There is a New Evangel

At this moment preached in France,
And the priests of its great doctrines

Despise the tyrants' glance:

Oh! that holy gospel echoes

From distant sea to sea!

It teaches Men are Brothers,
It teaches all are free.

It seemed an appropriate text for the beleaguered I.S.R.P. in Cork. "I want some literature for next Sunday's meeting, as we are cleared out of almost everything," Lehané demanded. Later he added: "We have just got notice to quit from our second room; hard lines but we will not be in a hurry to move this time, as we are not quite ready to erect a marquet in the Park yet."

On October 9th, he wrote to one of the Lyngs: "The clerics are getting at our members individually — so that there is a movement on foot to break us up, and at last meeting there was a great falling off in attendance — and subscriptions. However we expect we will be able to tide over these little difficulties."

On November 4th, he wrote: "Things are not sailing smoothly with us here at present... Owing to clerical influence many of our members have been frightened away."

They continued the Sunday meetings, however, and Lehané reported average attendance of about 200. Then he was fired from his job and boycotted by the employers of Cork. His next letter to the I.S.R.P., from Finsbury Park, London, was dated February 14th, 1902. It was to Connolly, in response to the latter's letter to Cork charging Lehané with desertion:

You may be justified in your attitude in as much as I don't think the propaganda will be carried on in Cork, but hold myself free to work for the cause in any place I choose, and think myself quite entitled to change my place of residence whenever I like. I am not a bit angry over what you say about my being a "deserter", as I think I understand your motives...

Connolly's "motives", it would seem, were that he wanted the Cork branch to preach Socialism but to avoid a clash with the Church. Lehané may have felt justified in thinking this an impossible task under the circumstances. Of course for Connolly nothing was "impossible."

Lehané joined the Social Democratic Federation in London and became a leader of its left wing. His bitterness against Connolly intensified. J. Carstairs Matheson, Connolly's

Scottish friend, wrote to Connolly for an explanation of this enmity and in March, 1903, when the fortunes of the I.S.R.P. were low indeed, he received this reply:

When the Bishop of Cork issued his thunders from the altar against us O'Lyhane left and went to England. He had got sacked and boycotted. In a letter I wrote to Cork about the matter I said that in my opinion O'Lyhane was a deserter, and that the Cork men as a whole were behaving in a cowardly fashion. Also that for a man to say he was boycotted because when sacked out of one job he did not find a capitalist at the corner of the street waiting to give him another job was absurd. And that Fenians, Land Leaguers and Parnellites had been attacked by the clergy and they did not run away. O'Lyhane wrote to me saying that he had a perfect right to change his residence when he pleased. I answered that he had, but when a man at the head of a regiment made up his mind to "change his residence" at the moment the enemy attacked he was usually called a very ugly name. So you need not wonder at that man's enmity...

When dissidents of the Social Democratic Federation broke away, in June, 1904, to found the Socialist Party of Great Britain, Lehane was one of their leaders. He became the new party's General Secretary and editor of its journal, *Socialist Standard*. In an intra-party squabble, three years later, he was in the minority again and was expelled. Apparently he never returned to Cork.

His anger at Connolly boiled over often. In a letter to his Cork friend, William D. Horgan, two years after the affair, he said Connolly was "a man looked up to by all the members — a man who was supposed to be above the paltry tricks of, at any rate, a fifth-rate capitalist politician." He attacked Connolly for publicly acknowledging the moral support of the *United Irishman* — Arthur Griffith's paper — in the 1903 municipal elections. He said Connolly "had not the pluck" to put secular education on the I.S.R.P. programme; in fact it was point eight of the party's ten-point policy statement. The Lehane tirade denounced Connolly for ducking a religious confrontation:

Again, when 'Dr.' O'Callaghan tried to rouse the city of Cork against our little band, what did Catholic Connolly do? He said "Oh! I'm a Catholic too! Socialism has nothing to do with religion – and we are very sorry your Lordship is against us." What would Quelch (editor of *Justice*) have said? Why, even Blatchford (editor of *Clarion*) hit out in the *Clarion* but Connolly could not see his way to defend the Party against clericalism in the *Workers' Republic*.

The quarrel with Connolly was patched up years later. When Lehane left London for America in May 1914, Connolly was a member of the honorary committee for his farewell dinner in Pinoli's Restaurant, Wardour Street. The committee included such names as Jim Larkin and his sister Delia, William O'Brien, John W. Dulanty and P.S. O'Hegarty: Socialists, Nationalists and fellow-Corkonians.

The Socialists in America welcomed Lehane as a great labour leader. He travelled through the country writing and lecturing. He wrote an account of the Ludlow, Colorado, massacre for the *Clarion*, describing how Rockefeller guards set fire to miners' shacks during a big strike, burning to death 20 women and children. He worked with Larkin and asserted confidently that the first Socialist republic would be declared in Dublin. He opposed the war, was arrested by federal agents on a vague charge in the summer of 1918 and held for nearly six months without trial. Apparently he could have won his freedom by "framing" Dr. Pat McCartan, the I.R.B. envoy in America; he refused. He died in Bellevue Hospital, New York, on New Year's Eve, 1919, a few days after being released from prison. The cause of death was pneumonia. It was during the great flu epidemic. He was only 41 years of age.

Frank Harris, then editing *Pearson's*, wrote an appreciation of Lehane in the February, 1919, issue of the magazine, describing him as "a great big powerful Irishman, five feet eleven inches in height, as broad as the wall of a house, fifty inches around the chest and 230 pounds in weight, without an ounce of fat. A good fellow through and through, with hearty popular sympathies and an abounding optimistic belief in man's goodness and the virtue of the worker."

Lehane's "little band" made out all right — or some of them did — as William O'Brien told Connolly in December 1907. Connolly, then in New York, was anxious for news of his old comrades. O'Brien wrote:

The men of the Cork branch I.S.R.P. are pretty well scattered. Horgan is a professor in Ballinasloe. Gallagher is an M.A. and passed an examination for the Research Department of the Indian Government in the Malay Peninsula. Tobin is in one of the South American republics. Cody is editor of the *Cork Trades and Labour Journal*...

12. Fighting Local Elections

The Socialist Republicans were "the first to contest elections upon a platform openly declaring for a revolution, and they were the first to point out all the immense amelioration of the conditions of life in Ireland, which could be realised without waiting for Home Rule," Connolly once claimed.²²

Under the Local Government Act of 1898 democratic voting was extended to county and rural district councils. In the local elections of January 1899, the first under the Act, the I.S.R.P. put forward E.W. Stewart, one of its best speakers, for North Dock Ward. His opponent was Tim Harrington, a leading Home Ruler. Stewart's candidature was ignored by the press and he was roundly defeated.

However, labour-sponsored candidates scored remarkable successes in Limerick, Dundalk, Waterford and Castlebar as well as in Belfast.

Labour failed to live up to its promise and in September 1899 Connolly was charging that the working-class movement was being used "as a cover for the intrigues of a clique." He had in mind the Labour Lord Mayor of Dublin. In January 1900 Labour candidates did poorly in Dublin. The I.S.R.P. ran Tom Lyng for the North Dock but with as little success as the previous year.

The truth was that in Nationalist Ireland only Home Rule

candidates had any hope of electoral success. The Parnell split was healed in February 1900; the new party united under John Redmond who continued in that position until his death in 1918.

In 1901 Connolly was elected to the Dublin Trades Council — the founder and first president of which was the Marxist Fenian J.P. McDonnell — by the United Labourers' Union. The United Labourers nominated him for the Wood Quay Ward in November 1901 and the I.S.R.P. nominated Stewart for the North City Ward aldermanic seat. In the January 1902 election, Connolly received 431 votes against 1,424 for the Home Ruler McCall. Connolly was denounced from the pulpit and otherwise vilified so in the circumstances it was not a bad result. Another I.S.R.P. man, McLoughlin, drew 371 votes against his opponent's 530 votes in the North City Ward and Stewart polled 267 votes against the winner's 751 votes. All in all not a bad showing for the I.S.R.P.

The I.S.R.P. was gaining ground on the Dublin Trades Council. Connolly, Stewart and McLoughlin were members and P.T. Daly, representative of the printers, was their ally. In September 1902, Stewart was elected President of the Council.

Connolly spent the winter of 1902 touring America and did no campaigning for the local elections of January 1903. Again he contested the Wood Quay Ward. In his election address he noted that his defeat the previous year was the result of "slander and bribery." An enslaved working class had only one remedy: the Socialist Republic. This meant: "a system of society in which the land and all houses, railways, factories, canals, workshops, and everything necessary for work shall be owned and operated as common property much as the land of Ireland was owned by the clans of Ireland before England introduced the capitalist system amongst us at the point of the sword."

He explained that every political party was the party of a class: the Unionists represented the landlords and the big capitalists generally; the United Irish League, "the agriculturists, the house jobbers, slum landlords, and drink sellers." The Home Rulers denounced the eviction of farmers, "but an Irish employer can lock out and attempt to starve thousands

of true Irishmen..." The workers had no organisation. They must "organise for political action on Socialist lines." He urged them to break the power of the drink-sellers: "they are positively the meanest and most degraded section that ever attempted to rule a city."²³

Connolly again was endorsed by the United Labourers. He was defeated by a larger margin than in the previous year, drawing only 243 votes. Arthur Griffith, in the *United Irishman*, supported Connolly; but that did not help him either. (Griffith called Connolly able and honest but said nothing about his programme, which was fair enough.) At this point the I.S.R.P. was disintegrating for reasons that we shall examine later.

These disputes, on top of his personal problems and lack of electoral progress, undoubtedly soured Connolly. He left for America nine months later, a bitter, disillusioned man.

13. Letters to the I.S.R.P.

"I have often envied the fine, manly, titanic brutality that you and Yates used to display towards critics," J. Carstairs Matheson wrote his friend James Connolly in June of 1904. Connolly was then in America. George Yates was a Dublin Socialist working in Scotland. At the time, Connolly was deep in a controversy with Daniel De Leon, leader of the Socialist Labour Party, on such questions as marriage, religion and wages. "As for me I am a poor crushed worm," said Matheson.²⁴

Connolly's letters reveal a man who did not suffer fools gladly, or supposed savants for that matter. This attitude did not make him a lovable figure to some fellow-Socialists in Ireland and America. Connolly's letters to the I.S.R.P. took them to task for inefficiency, delay in acknowledging subscriptions for the *Workers' Republic* — indeed for sometimes ignoring subscriptions altogether. He also verbally chastised them for their cavalier attitude to producing the paper when he was out of Dublin. There were words of encouragement

quite often as well.

An undated letter from Connolly to the secretary of the I.S.R.P. from Falkirk, probably in 1901, opened: "I have been awaiting the arrival of literature all week and am somewhat astonished that none has yet arrived... I am afraid there will be no use in sending on any now, but you may if you like to take the trouble. *Erin's Hope* might sell."

He urged that W.H. Bradshaw, business manager of the *Workers' Republic*, when next in Belfast "call on a few people whose address we got in 1898, and see if anything can be done."

Connolly ended a June 11th, 1902, letter thus: "I hear that Tom Lyng and Arnall are the only ones really taking part in the open air propaganda. This is a damned disgrace." He was writing from Salford.

From Accrington on August 26th, 1901: "I have received a letter from Faulkner of Pendleton in which he complains that he wrote to you informing you of the establishment of a branch there, and giving an order for certain literature; that you did not send a quarter of the literature ordered, not even a note acknowledging the branch or congratulating its members in any way... I would advise you to send on all the pamphlets and things he ordered and *in addition* six dozen *W.R.*'s of this issue, which by the way is an excellent one. What was the reason of the delay in getting it out?"

From Wigan on September 17th, 1901: "I am glad to hear that you are doing so well with meetings, and getting so many new members. There were so many evil prophets saying that the movement would go slump if I left Dublin that your progress since I left has been doubly gratifying to me — proving that the I.S.R.P. was well able to stand on its own feet, and that its growth depended upon correct principles and not on anyone's personality. If all those who can work for Socialism in Ireland would work I might content myself in exile and never would be missed, which would be a greater tribute to my work of the past five years than if my presence was indispensable."

From Wigan on September 19th, 1901: "Send six dozen papers, etc., to Frank Critchley, 142 Cholmely Road, Reading,

Berks... You might also drop a note to one of your London correspondents -- I think there is one named Friedburg who wrote while I was in Dublin some very commendatory phrases about our work in Ireland -- asking him if he could get his branch to arrange a lecture, or lectures, for me on the Irish Question, as they call it, while I am in their district..."

From London on October 14th, 1901: "I have succeeded in selling most of the literature you have forwarded, but do not yet know the exact amount until I hear from the secretary, Friedburg. I will bring the money home with me; I will be in Dublin with the Holyhead boat reaching the North Wall about 8p.m. on Monday next, I expect... The meetings here are awful. (Valentine) McIntee assures me that the smallest meeting we ever had in Foster Place would be considered a 'demonstration' here. Certainly my meetings have been the smallest I have had in England. They said that my meetings were big meetings, but a large proportion of the crowd were Irish and Scotch comrades from other branches in London, who came up to see me personally..."

"A comrade who was over with you a few weeks ago was enthralled the members by telling them how our fellows were working up to 12 o'clock at night printing the *Workers' Republic*, and every night of the week. He spoke about the police raid, and I gave them to understand in an offhanded sort of way that police raids were part of our routine business, and that if we had not one at least once a month we felt as if there was a gap in our life.

"I will drop you a card in a few days telling you what literature to send to Swansea. I am sending over a pamphlet for you to incorporate a part of in this next month's *W.R.* Set up the parts marked between crosses. I will send over the remaining copy soon. I intend it to be a pamphlet on the question of Millerandism and trade unionism and to deal entirely with the questions in dispute in England."

Alexandre Millerand was a leading French socialist; his action in joining the government, as a Socialist, split the Second International. Friedburg, a left winger, was shortly afterwards expelled from the Social Democratic Federation; "and the Scotch branches are in hot rebellion over it,

believing that it is only a feeler, and that if it is allowed to go unchallenged their turn will come also," Connolly reported to Dublin.

From Leith on April 15th, 1902, Connolly wrote: "I am going to Glasgow next week. You may send on some *W.R.*'s if they are ready... I am curious to know if you are getting much literature sold, and if so, what kind. It is a pity you did not let me know sooner your intentions relative to continuing the paper. I was under the impression that the paper was dropped, until I got your letter relative to the Scotch affair. This misconception has put me in a quandary.

"I have been thinking that it would do some good, perhaps, if the party was to send a circular to all those subscribers to the *W.R.* in Ireland, outside of Dublin, asking them if they would consent to form a 'reading circle' in their immediate neighbourhood for the study of our literature, with a view to forming branches in the future... We must make some efforts to extend, and organise, our influence down the country.

"Has the ad in the *United Irishman* had any effects?

"Glad to hear there is a chance of Cork waking up. Any further word from America?"

From Glasgow on April 21st, 1902: "I am enclosing two postal orders for 5/-, one for yourself and one a contribution from John Leslie, in Edinburgh. Leslie you know has turned kangaroo, and there was some bitter talk to him from me when we met over the letter he sent through you asking me could I give him information as to who wrote that letter in the *People* that Quelch made all the row about. I asked him did he think I was an informer? A few days later he brought up the 5/- donation, I suppose to show he meant no harm..."

A "kangaroo" was a reformist as opposed to what the "kangaroos" called "the impossibilists" of the left. Leslie, Connolly's mentor in his young Socialist days in Edinburgh, was mellowing. (He was also drinking himself to death, according to a Matheson letter to Connolly of January 5th, 1904.)

In April, 1902, Connolly learned that the De Leonite Socialist Labour Party had agreed to his tour of America. "It

makes me nervous," he wrote. In his next letter, undated, to the I.S.R.P., Connolly urged that some effort be made to build up branches outside of Dublin. "You see I am asking you to do a lot of things, but you will understand that this American tour will subject me to a lot of criticism and awkward questions as to the number of branches in our party, etc., and you must help me out of the difficulty if you would profit accordingly."

From Govan on May 29th, Connolly discussed his fare to America which he thought might be repaid by a collection at the end of his meetings in that country. He could stay away until November; but if he was to run again in the local elections of January 1903 he would have to be home by December. The *Workers' Republic* never seemed to come out in time which also bothered him. He harped on this constantly in his letters and also apologised to readers for the delays. For example, after the 1902 local elections he revealed his feelings in the March number of the *Workers' Republic*:

The elections are now over, and we are here again late as usual.

To be late is the one luxury now left to us. In all other things it is freely alleged that we are before our time, but in the matter of prompt publication we are generally a long way after our time.

But there seemed no way to get the *Workers' Republic* out on time. From Kirkcaldy on May 2nd, Connolly wrote: "I am rather afraid that the delay in getting out the *W.R.* will result in losing all our orders from English branches, or at least a great part of them." He pleaded again for branches, "even if they are only on paper."

From Edinburgh on May 9th, Connolly wrote a long private letter to William O'Brien on many matters including the suit of clothes the I.S.R.P. gave him as a gift the previous November. "The whole circumstances of the suit, though I may say, made them the dearest I have ever worn, although I have paid no cash. That a suit begun in November should not be completed until April and that I had to approach the parties concerned so often and vainly until I felt like a beggar — all this combined to so humiliate me and outrage my self-

respect that it at one time nearly, indeed actually, made me resolve never to go back to Dublin again. But having once put my hand to the plow I cannot turn back, and as a matter of fact the movement in Ireland, and Ireland itself, is so twined up in my very existence that I could not abandon it even if I would."

The I.S.R.P. purchased a press. Connolly could get no word on whether it was working or not. From Salford on July 12th he wrote to one of the Lyngs: "I think it is absolutely disgraceful that you have not sent me an acknowledgement of the receipt of the 12/6 I sent on Monday. Further I think I am entitled to hear how the machine is working. I am leaving here tomorrow..."

From Accrington on July 14th, Connolly wrote: "I am sorry to have to report that the *W.R.'s* have not yet arrived here, and seeing that they were ready before I came away from Dublin this neglect to send them here is inexcusable... I leave here on Wednesday, and as I am going to a new set of branches you may send me on six dozen *W.R.'s* if you have them to spare, but if you think you can dispose of them in Dublin better keep them there."

At this time the I.S.R.P. was under contract to print Matheson's *Socialist* on its new machine. The copy needed editing which created problems. With Connolly out of Dublin, the problems were greater. He told the I.S.R.P. secretary in the same letter (July 14th) that the *Socialist* "looks all right but it is a pity you put Matheson's signature at the bottom of every article." This was the first issue of the *Socialist*; Connolly, who must have seen page proofs, hoped "the comrades will make every effort" to get it out. "If Murt or Cardan would do the making up and locking in, and leave the setting to the Kid it would immensely expedite matters" Connolly suggested. Then on the American visit:

I notice that there is no mention of Michigan among the states to be visited... But of course this is only a sketch of proposed trip. The statement that they have hired Cooper Union which as you know is the biggest hall in New York, causes a cold chill of nervousness to creep down my spine column.

On July 21st from Nelson: "Glad to hear the *Socialist* will be out so soon... Tell Kid to lift the front page article of the *Socialist* into *Workers' Republic*. Enclosed find Home Thrusts (a regular *Workers' Republic* page one comment by Connolly), and an article for inside both papers." There followed instructions on where to send copies in Scotland. "Make every effort to compensate for the delay there has been. What about that photo of my phiz. Did Arnall finish it and can I not get a copy? Has the organising committee done anything? I mean about the country branches?" There was a postscript. "I think you had better drop accidentally across Griffith, and have a chat with him about me going to America, before you advertise in *U.I.* (United Irishman)"

The photograph of Connolly was for the American tour. An engraving and a biography of Connolly were sent to De Leon's *Weekly People*. Written apparently by Murtagh Lyng and Mark Deering, it spoke of Connolly's education, character, "constant reasoning and analysing", as well as knowledge of history in flattering though not exaggerated terms. Connolly's comment, in a letter from Hyde, England, on August 7th — he must have seen a copy of the Dublin release for it was not published till September 16th — was mock sarcastic:

I am very much afraid that the American trip will be a failure. This conviction has been borne in upon me ever since I saw the engraving in the *Weekly People*. No sensible person would listen to or come to see a person who looked like that picture. I must say that Arnall has had his revenge and a dark and awful one at that. I have often been asked to get an engraving taken of my phiz by English branches who go in for that sort of decoration, but I have always refused. But now that such an awful travesty of my features has appeared I am half inclined to get a good photo taken and etched for printing purposes in order to retrieve my character for manly bearing. What do you think? Would it serve any useful purpose. I mean other than ministering to my personal vanity?

The fiend who wrote that preposterous biography and created a new birthplace and a new year of birth for me, will, I hope suffer in this life all the tortures of the damned.

"May life's unblessed cup for him be filled with miseries to the brim."

The Yahoo.

Back in Dublin, Connolly wrote Matheson on August 22nd cautioning him and Yates not to make corrections on proofs "other than of typographical errors arising out of misreading of manuscript or punctuation." This is an old bogey of printers which Connolly as a printer and an editor well understood. He told Matheson he was leaving for America on August 30th from Derry. They were still short of the full fare and needed the two pounds owed by the *Socialist*, "or the fat will be in the fire."

The agreement between Connolly and Matheson to print the *Socialist* on the *Workers' Republic* press led to many problems over copy and bills. When Matheson made a joking remark on the disadvantages of the arrangement from his point of view he received a sharp rebuke from Connolly in a letter dated August 28th, 1902, two days before he left Derry for New York. Connolly wrote:

But if this serves to convince you of the impolicy of jesting in financial matters at the expense of people upon whom you have conferred a pecuniary obligation it will do us both a service...

I have always been proud of the friendship of the impossiblist crowd, and of the confidence they put in me, and that pride has been based upon my knowledge of how single-heartedly they were working for our common cause. And for you personally, Matheson, I have felt a little more than the love of comrades. If I had not, if your opinion had been indifferent to me I would not have felt so keenly what I fancied was your implied suggestion of dishonesty. Of course you may say that it was not suggested to me specifically but to our party, and then only jocularly. But that is just my peculiarity, that I am not able to draw the dividing line between myself and the party. But, let us drop it!

Matheson and Connolly remained good friends over the years despite the former's touchiness on matters of finance, doctrine and tactics. Matheson, a university-educated Scots-

man of working-class background, admired Connolly in spite of his (Connolly's) "confounded disagreeable integrity and incorruptibility." He thought Connolly "a horrible glutton for dignity." Because of his constant and indeed losing battle with poverty, Connolly was indeed over-sensitive on money matters. He scrupulously insisted that money raised for a particular purpose — for example, the *Workers' Republic* — should not be used for any other cause.

"All is outlay in connection with the *Socialist* whilst we are paying off the machine," Connolly told Matheson, "and we are also individually pawning our future to raise the wherewithal for the American tour."

He apologised for using the word "bourgeois" about Matheson's complaint; a word that rankled Matheson's feelings because of his working-class origin. Non-workers, in Connolly's view, were not to be fully trusted: their class background would assert itself at critical times.

"When Celt meets Celt words, like blows, are sometimes exchanged in very reckless fashion," Connolly said. He ended the letter with a farewell in Irish and signed the letter with the Irish form of his name.

14.

Touring America with the S.L.P.

Karl Marx in *Capital* used England as his model for "the capitalist mode of production, and the conditions of production and exchange corresponding to that mode."²⁵ By the end of the 19th century the United States had taken England's place as the world's leading capitalist state: economic power was concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, free competition declined, the great trusts were gobbling up small firms.

These features, Marx said, characterised the transition from capitalism to Socialism. In America one feature was missing: there was no political organisation of the working class. There were many bitter strikes, the craft unions were well organised and had a sense of class struggle, but there was no labour party representing the working class.

In the 1890's the closest approximation to such a party was the S.L.P. — the Socialist Labour Party of America. Its leader was Daniel De Leon, a former lecturer in international law and Latin-American history at Columbia University, New York. Of Sephardic Jewish origin, De Leon was born in the Dutch West Indies and educated in Germany, Holland and the United States. When he discovered Marx, De Leon decided that the transition from capitalism to Socialism would occur in America; he set about preparing for the revolution which he felt could be achieved through the ballot box — a common belief among Socialists at the time. He joined the S.L.P., quickly became editor of its weekly organ, *The People*, and then leader of the party. Despite his erudition, or perhaps because of it, De Leon was a narrow dogmatist who believed completely in his own infallibility. (His followers called him "the Pope.") Independent-minded lieutenants were purged. In 1899 the party split, the majority in fact opposing De Leon. But he remained a hero to the international left, including Connolly for a time, because he managed to castigate his opponents as "reformers" (or "kangaroos," in the jargon of the day). And no doubt many of them were reformers.

De Leon never understood the working class, Big Bill Haywood of the I.W.W. charged. And he was right. In 1900, De Leon started a daily *People* and kept the weekly going as well. This was a crushing work load for a small party that was getting smaller with each passing year. His opponents got together, despite their many differences, and formed the Socialist Party of America which for the next decade grew in strength. Its candidate for the U.S. presidency, Eugene V. Debs, gained votes with each election, and it was confidently expected that one day he would become President of the United States.

These were years of great ferment in America, a country whose foreign policy at the turn of the century was expansionist and imperialist. The employers had matters very much their own way. The American Federation of Labour under Samuel Gompers kept the trade union movement "respectable" by staying out of politics. For someone viewing American affairs from Europe the only hope for revolutionary Socialism was

Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labour Party. And that is how Connolly looked at the matter in 1902.

Connolly's American tour began in Cooper Union at Third Avenue and Astor Place on the east side of New York. Lincoln among other notables had spoken there. The Socialist Labour Party's *Weekly People* made Connolly's speech and welcome the lead story in its issue of September 20th, 1902. There was a double-column engraving of Connolly — the one he disliked — over decks of headlines down the page: "UNRIVALIED RECEPTION/James Connolly, the Irish Agitator, Given a Rousing Welcome/ New York's Proletariat Turns Out to Greet the Representative of the Irish Socialist Republican Party and Welcome Him to American Shores."

All seats were occupied and there was little standing room. Perhaps not all came to hear Connolly; it was an election year and De Leon was the S.L.P.'s candidate for governor of New York. De Leon made a long election speech before Connolly got a chance to talk.

The *Weekly People* reporter called Connolly a "sturdy Irish proletarian" who was "visibly affected by the enthusiastic reception accorded him." He delivered his speech with "vigour and calmness." The speech was reported in full. Connolly made the point that Ireland was ruled by another country, that no important economic changes could be effected until that situation ended, and that in consequence the first aim of the I.S.R.P. was "to secure independent government for Ireland."

Did they understand him? Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the "rebel girl" of the Wobblies later on, called Connolly "a scholar and an excellent writer (whose) speech was marred for American audiences by his thick, North of Ireland accent..."²⁶

The Cooper Union audience gave Connolly "tumultuous applause," according to the *Weekly People*, "cheered at the top of their voices, rising in their seats and throwing their hats in the air."

William O'Brien lists Connolly letters from the following cities during that 1902 tour: Bridgeport, Conn., September 23rd; Providence, Rhode Island, September 29th; Boston, October 3rd; Springfield, Mass., October 9th; Rochester, N.Y.,

October 16th; Louisville, Kentucky, October 22nd; East St. Louis, Ill., October 29th; St. Paul, Minn., November 3rd; Pueblo, Colorado, November 28th; Delta, Colorado, same date; Springfield, Ill., December 9th.

He was also in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles, as well Detroit, Cleveland, Duluth, Minnesota and Minneapolis.

An attempt to disrupt Connolly's meeting in Faneuil Hall, Boston, failed. He had long experience of dealing with such and when his opponents walked out he told them they were running away from the truth. Summing up his American experiences in Salt Lake City, Utah, he wrote in the *Weekly People* of November 22nd: "I have to thank the comrades for the aid they have given me in securing subscriptions to the *Workers' Republic*. I got most subscriptions in Boston, Mass., and Duluth, Minn., and least in New York City and Minneapolis, Minn." He was not enchanted by America; he thought the Irish should stay at home and work for Ireland instead of emigrating to earn a few extra dollars.²⁷

Connolly made no attempt to pander to his hosts. In one speech he described De Leon as a "somewhat chirpy old gentleman". The leader of the S.L.P. was fifty years of age at the time. The party branch in Troy, N.Y., where Connolly had relatives, wanted him to speak three days in a row. He refused. In Minneapolis someone objected to an item in the *Workers' Republic*. Connolly replied that the paper was published for the Irish working class, not to suit American politics. His sharp reply resulted in only three subs for the paper in Minneapolis. But he did raise a lot of money for the *Workers' Republic* during his tour which he forwarded to Dublin.

His overall impression of America, he told his final meeting in New York, was "the absolute disregard for law" that prevailed. This existed among trade unions as well as big business. He also thought America behind England in the class struggle. So much for De Leon's theories!

15. The Split in the I.S.R.P.

On his return from America on Christmas Day 1902 Connolly learned that the *Workers' Republic* had been skipping issues and was without funds and that the party was almost dead. What had happened the money sent from America for the *Workers' Republic*?

Early in November Connolly had written Daniel O'Brien complaining about delays in getting out the paper. A letter from Tom Lyng, dated October 16th, had informed him the *Workers' Republic* would be out "in a few days" — nearly three weeks after its deadline. A furious Connolly wrote O'Brien:

I want to know the meaning of the delay. Here am I... canvassing hard for subscriptions and in order to get them telling everybody that the paper will appear more regularly in the future than in the past, and you people at home have not the common manliness to try and stand by my word by getting out the paper as promised. You may think it all a joke, but I think that you all ought to be damned well ashamed of yourselves. Is it so hard a job for you to get together enough matter to fill a paper once a month — such a terrible strain on your nerves! I am ashamed, heartily ashamed of the whole gang of you. If some of you do not think the cause of the Socialist Republic worth working for, why in Heaven's name do you not get out of the party? We would be better starting again with half a dozen men as before than be cumbered by the presence of a crowd who are only socialists because it gives them the reputation for originality. I was always opposed to the idea of expelling men unless for breach of principle, but I am inclined now to believe that such leniency was criminal and that it would do us good were we to expel some more men for making promises to the party and not keeping them in time to be of service.

A split in the small party was inevitable after that scolding.

On January 21st, 1903, shortly after returning from America, Connolly wrote to Matheson offering to go to Scotland on a propaganda tour for a couple of weeks, "before I get settled down to work — and slow starvation — again in Ireland." He added: "We could lay our plans for the future."

Apparently the I.S.R.P. delayed the January issue of the *Socialist* and in February Connolly wrote to Matheson apologising for misleading him on this. "I saw one issue of the *Workers' Republic* marked *January* and I imagined the January *Socialist* had been delivered. It was only last week I learned that the January *Workers' Republic* had been obtained by dropping the December issue. The *Socialist* will be delivered at the end of the week (D.V.)."

There was more bad news. Writing from Nelson, Lancashire, the previous summer to the I.S.R.P. secretary, Connolly had cautioned: "I do hope you are doing something to master that disgraceful conduct in the club room on Sunday." To raise funds for the treasury the party had set up a bar in the club room which had degenerated into a Sunday shebeen. Instead of making money the bar faced a heavy deficit. Mismanagement was to blame. The money Connolly sent from America was used to cover the bar debt although it was raised for the *Workers' Republic*. Connolly was outraged. At a meeting on February 18th, 1903, his motion to pay the printing bill and rent lost. Their hand press could be seized for non-payment and that would mean the end of the paper. Connolly resigned, his seven years' work in ruins.

The opposition to Connolly was led by E.W. Stewart, party secretary. From his home at 54 Pimlico Connolly sent Stewart the following letter:

Although my resignation from the party was accepted at your last business meeting with an alacrity which contrasted strangely with the great hesitation shown a few weeks ago at striking a few undesirables off the rolls, and therefore any further explanation may seem superfluous, yet as one who has been a member from the inception I feel it to be a duty to myself at least to set down some of the reasons for my action. When I recall the fact that this party in Dublin has been built up on sacrifices — the

sacrifices by many members of their time and energy and spare cash, and by myself by the time and energy and the sacrifice of the commonest necessities of life to myself and family for nearly five years, then I think I will be exonerated from the charge of egotism in taking this extreme step to arrest the attention of the members before they ruin what has cost so much to build.

The members will not, I know, believe me to be animated by any considerations for the "rights of property" but as a man who has some knowledge of the world and of its Socialist movements I know that there must be a certain code of honour observed towards those who have business dealings with us, or else our very existence will become impossible. I despair of any party controlled by men who will not recognise the market value, even, of a modicum of honour and honesty in its business relations. As a man upon whom fell the task of procuring your present premises I know that such action would result in making us outlaws in the city and render the task of renting any premises an impossible one... I wonder would the movers and supporters of the motion that we pay no rent practice on his own household, towards their own landlords the same rules they seek to apply to the party premises. By no means; they would be too careful of their individual reputation. But the integrity of the party's name and reputation were and are as dear to me as those of my household, and therefore my refusal to countenance in the one case what I would not dream of in the other.

I was informed from Dublin while in America that all our debts were paid; I return to find none of them paid, and that I had been lied to. I was refused permission to pay the Labour News Company of New York on the understanding it would be paid from Dublin — it was never paid. Pirie was not paid, the rent was not paid. We are now in straits because of the loss of £4 from the *Socialist*, but I sent home sufficient to pay all the expenses of the paper including salary and postage for twelve months. Except the small sum worked off by supplying the *Socialist* free I practically begged all the money for the machine myself,

in my various trips through Scotland and from Sr. Caroline. And why in heaven the members could not clear the party of debt under such happy circumstances is inexplicable on any other hypothesis than that the mania for what I may call "besting" has seized upon them to such an extent that they are no longer able to think clearly. They best the paper manufacturer, they best the Labour News Company, they best the landlord, and, to cap the climax, in their capacity as customers of the bar they best themselves who are proprietors of the bar.

In case you think that a formal surrender of the property in the machine although nominally vested in me would be of use to you I will willingly give it. But I do not think it necessary, for although I strove to urge the members to do their duty by talking of claiming the machine I of course never meant it. If the members thought I did they have read my character in a manner I think my record hardly justifies.

In conclusion allow me to say that while I am as ready as anyone to laugh at dodging creditors when we have no money, I yet think that the policy of refusing payment when we have money should not be tolerated, and as my old comrades seem to have entered upon that policy with set deliberation, I withdraw to allow those who believe in that policy to pursue it. As the vote accepting my resignation implied that the members would rather see me out of the party than pay a week's rent when sixteen weeks were due, I take it as a civil hint that the members having got out of me all they expected, would now rather have my room than my company. Therefore I quit.

Connolly added a postscript: "As it is only just that being no longer a member, I should not be held responsible for the peculiar policy of the party, I will esteem it a favour should you insert a notice of my resignation in the *Workers' Republic*. It would be well if such notices appeared in your paper before their appearance elsewhere."

Connolly's letter, written sometime in February, carries no date. Stewart replied in conciliatory fashion on February 25th. He said Connolly's letter was discussed at a meeting and

that his action "left no other course open to the party"; his resignation was not accepted gladly but "with the utmost sorrow." His personal sacrifices for Socialism in Ireland were well known. Meanwhile the party had decided to pay two weeks' rent at once.

Stewart added that he hoped Connolly would put the interests of the movement "above any considerations of personal feeling" and "suitably acknowledge the mistake of a movement" by asking the I.S.R.P. "to cancel a resignation which was a painful incident to all parties concerned."

Whatever the intention, Stewart's letter did little to mollify Connolly who replied on March 4th: "I have been informed that it was resolved at your last meeting by a vote of eleven to eight that I be not readmitted unless I withdraw the statements made in my first letter to you re resignation... I beg of you therefore, *not to consider this letter as a continuation of my application for membership under present circumstances...*

"To particularise: you state that the American account was paid. I say it was not. If you can produce a receipt for it I will apologise for saying so; if you cannot then you ought to apologise to the members for telling an untruth when acting as their mouthpiece in such a delicate matter..."

"I have not the slightest fear that any man benefited personally except in the degree that scarcely any dues were coming in while I was sweating to send in money, only to be thrown out when it did come in.

"Of course I am aware that you, like myself, are somewhat handicapped in this matter for lack of information. I have been absent from the city, and you although present in the city have generally been absent from the work of the party, and consequently never felt the drag and strain of the work bear upon you as heavily as I did even when I was absent. But this does not justify you in attempting to lecture me upon it being my 'duty to put the interests of the party above personal considerations.'

"I am instructed that you opposed the motion for my re-admission, after stating in your letter to me that if I applied the motion would have your 'warmest personal

support,' but probably you forgot, as you generally forgot to register yourself as a voter, in case you might be a candidate."

In Connolly's view, Stewart was seeking to win control of the party for his own purposes, essentially because the policies he wished to pursue were "reformist". On March 9th, 1903, Connolly wrote Matheson:

The curious thing is that the whole fight is being fought out "round the corner", so to speak from the real issue. The only thing that is discussed is the financial situation, and the other point is only noticeable by the fact that all the moderates are aligned against me and all those who have no use for moderation are for me. Of course my position on the finances is sound in itself and I am in dread that as a consequence of their carelessness with the money they will not be able to fill out the American subscriptions, which you will realise would leave *me* in a most undesirable light in the eyes of our American comrades, if I continued in the party and made no public and vehement protest... Since I withdrew they have had a great searching of hearts and much mutual recrimination; many members who were not present at the meetings when the fights were on have turned up since and threatened their resignation also, and the general opinion seems to be that the element who have charge cannot run it; that they might do well enough for an ordinary branch of a big organisation, but can not handle the peculiar position we have to work in. However that may be I am resolved to let them try. They need not complain of my desertion, they have now thanks to my efforts principally, as they themselves admit, got machine, presses, type, a whole printing establishment, in fact, and a good reputation politically. Socialism in Dublin stands now in a position such as seven years ago its most ardent advocates did not hope to see it in, and it ought to be able to walk alone. I think that if my side comes uppermost the Kangaroo element will resign, and if they do I may rejoin but it will only be at most a nominal connection in order to keep them together until the angry passions are quiet. I leave Dublin in any case at the first opportunity. Of course if those present in possession held their own I will

have to git, as it would only be a short time until they kangarooed openly.

Now about Scotland. My letter to Edinburgh arrived too late for the business meeting, but it will come up this week when I hope to be admitted to the communion of the faithful.

Then I suppose my engagement with the Scottish District Council still holds good. I wrote to the secretary accepting it at the same terms as last year...

Connolly hinted strongly that he wanted to leave Dublin. He spoke of making arrangements "about a domicile for my family." This was the letter containing an ironic account of his work experience: carter, proofreader, tile-layer, mason's labourer, cobbler. Any kind of work would do to "keep the wolf from the door", he said, until his lecture engagement with the Scottish District Council began in the summer.

On March 24th, Connolly wrote again to Matheson ostensibly on the lecture tour but really because he was bothered about his future. "The trifling circumstance of having a family to lug around makes it undesirable for me to settle precipitately upon any plan or place," he wrote. "Not that I can wait with equanimity for I have not been so poverty stricken for six years. I have only drawn 20/- wages since I returned from America."

The dispute split the small party and the issues were not at all clear to many members. Young Bill O'Brien, for example, had moved the motion on withholding the rent. Stewart and four of his followers, including O'Brien, resigned from the I.S.R.P. "Stewart's expulsion was moved, but he escaped by one vote," Connolly informed Matheson in the March 24th letter. "But their looseness with the cash has almost killed us."

On April 8th, 1903, Connolly told Matheson he planned "to go to America in the autumn and bring my family out after me." He added: "You are, so far, the only Socialist to whom I have mentioned my intention on America. Do not send it over here yet. America itself does not know the honour I propose conferring upon her." In the course of the letter he remarked:

This is the outcome of our little Kang (kangaroo)

episode. We squelched the reptiles, but they dissimilated so well that, as you saw, my kindly intention to drag their scalps around as a trophy in the public gaze was frustrated and I have no doubt they will be allowed to crawl back. They may not Kang again but in any case I consider that the party here has no longer that exclusive demand on my life which led me in the past to sacrifice my children's welfare for years in order to build it up. I only wish I had known it in America before I came home, as when there I received tempting offers to stay, and it is not likely that having rejected them once I will receive them again...

Everyone was sorry when Bill O'Brien left the party with Stewart. He was the financial secretary and the soul of probity. Jack Lyng, who moved the motion to expel Stewart and succeeded him as party secretary, wrote O'Brien on March 18th, saying Stewart "attributed all Connolly's actions to the very basest of motives and personal considerations." In Lyng's view, Stewart wanted to pull out of the I.S.R.P. and take as many members as he could influence, thus wrecking the party and destroying the *Workers' Republic*. He wanted Stewart expelled, he explained, because "I was unwilling to let him go off with all the honours of war and wrecking the party as he thought by his resignation..." Lyng believed Connolly was wrong to resign.

O'Brien was only twenty-three and one of the party's hardest workers. Connolly wrote a personal letter on March 24th urging him to withdraw his resignation:

I desire to inform you that in reference to the unfortunate dispute arising out of your unfortunate motion about the rent, and my ill-judged action upon it, that I feel your loss to the movement so keenly that after due deliberation upon it I have resolved to make you an offer.

It appears that in resigning you and your friends (of course I except Stewart) were actuated by the belief that I am an obstacle to the progress of the party, that I am a danger to Socialism in Dublin. Now I do not know upon what facts such reasoning is based, but that is beside the point. I believe that you, being a much younger man, and having fewer ties to embarrass you than I have, are a help

and a hope of the Socialist movement here, and also that you could be depended upon to run the movement upon the same lines as in the past — the only lines that can be permanently successful. Therefore, I make you this offer: I am willing if you will agree, to retire from all participation in the party, to resign my membership and go out in order that you may come in. As I have proven that the men who were slandering me could not even attempt to defend their charges before my face, I can now leave the party without fear that men are left in who would defame me.

To sum up if you consider my presence in the party an insuperable obstacle to your resuming membership, say so, and I am willing to go out. It shall never be said of me that I kept back the movement anywhere.

Lyng wrote Connolly on April 14th, that since his resignation from the party was not accepted when he tendered it, his comrades still considered him a member of "the only revolutionary socialist party in the country — the I.S.R.P." Connolly's reply, if any, has not survived.

Connolly went to Edinburgh in April and produced two issues of the *Workers' Republic*. He started his tour of the Social Democratic Federation clubs in Scotland on May 1st and was there when the split occurred that led to the formation of the Socialist Labour Party of Scotland on June 7th, 1903. Connolly was in the chair.

Tom Bell who was present said Connolly proposed the name "Socialist Labour Party," after De Leon's group in America. The delegates at the conference had been arguing about the proper name. Connolly came to the point in his usual direct fashion.

"It isn't any use boggling over the name," he declared. "We are known to be S.L.P'ers; our programme is the same as the American S.L.P., and whether we like it or not we shall be called S.L.P'ers." ²⁸

That settled the matter.

Connolly was appointed organiser of the new party. He was backed by Matheson and the *Socialist*. In the June 1903 issue of the *Socialist* Connolly charged that the Social Democratic Federation claimed to be a political party but did

not run candidates in elections. It attacked trade unionism for being outdated but when Socialists criticised union leaders the S.D.F. defended them. "The S.L.P. does everything the S.D.F. had not the heart to do," Connolly concluded.

Connolly did not remain long in Scotland. His cousin Margaret Humes wrote from Troy, N.Y. on June 29th, 1903, inviting him to America with his family. She suggested he leave before October. She would send him the fare. His family could follow when he was settled. He had wanted to bring his daughter Mona with him but his cousin said they could not manage that "at present... but with the help of God it may not be so long until the family can come altogether."

The decision not to take Mona with him — although the choice was not his — was to haunt Connolly for the rest of his life. The family remained in Dublin for a year after Connolly left and on the day they were to sail Mona died in a kitchen fire at the home of an aunt.

Connolly wrote O'Brien from Glasgow explaining his reasons for emigrating and bitterly assailing those who had split the party.

As you say the conditions under which I existed in Ireland were very hard to my family and myself, but hard as they were they were not hard enough to drive me from the country. No, the glory and pride of that feat was reserved for my quondam comrades, whose willingness to believe ill of me, and to wreck my work, seems to have grown in proportion to the extent I was successful in serving them.

When members used me as an intermediary with comrades beyond the sea, and then dishonoured their obligations to those comrades, when my vehement protest against such action was represented by one member as the result of anger at not getting a good job, when another member asked the business meeting to refuse me membership because I wanted to live upon the Party and had kept it back in the past by doing so, when a traitor, whose treason is only limited by his opportunities, twisted my every word out of all meaning it could bear and had his interpretation accepted for the sake of doing me an injury,

and when a section of the party withdrew in alliance with a man who had openly declared he would "wreck the party in six months", Ireland was scarcely habitable for me.

These things have changed the whole course of my life, but my conscience is clear, as my judgment was correct; let those who are responsible for those acts be assured that no amount of belated praise can gild the pill, or sweeten the bitterness of my exile.

My career has been unique in many things. In this last it is so also. Men have been driven out of Ireland by the British Government, and by the landlords, but I am the first driven forth by the "Socialists."

Connolly returned to Dublin from Scotland on August 30th. Matheson, who was very unhappy to see him leave for America, sent him a short note of farewell:

I am intensely sorry that you are going to leave us – but there's no use talking about it. I had looked forward to many years work along side of you for the cause and many years of your comradeship and friendship but destiny and capitalism have been against it. As I said before I feel pretty damned blue about it now that the time has come, but there's no use wasting words...

Connolly left for America on September 18th. No one in Dublin saw him off. He was quite sure he would never return to Ireland, for as he told Jack Mulray, formerly of the Dublin I.S.R.P., in New York: "If I was satisfied that the propaganda is as clean and true to Socialist principles as I in my 'bullying way' strove to keep it in my time, I would be happy even in my banishment in this cursed country. For after all it is to Ireland all my thoughts turn when dreaming of the future. I suppose I will never see it again, except in dreams. But if Ireland and the Socialist cause therein ever find another willing to serve them and fight and suffer for them better or more unselfishly than him they cast out, who is now writing to you, they will be fortunate indeed... Handicapped as I am with a large family it is not an easy thing to move about the world. And at any rate I regard Ireland, or at least the Socialist part of Ireland which is all I care for, as having thrown me out, and I do not wish to return like a dog to his vomit."²⁹

16. Socialism in Ireland

The dissidents who withdrew from the I.S.R.P. with Stewart formed the Socialist Labour Party of Ireland. It made no headway but Connolly in a letter to Michael Rafferty, secretary of the I.S.R.P., from Glasgow (August 17th, 1903), warned of the possible game afoot.

I am more pleased than I can tell you to hear you have got rooms again, and in such a central position. It shows you mean business. I will be home in a fortnight, on Sunday August 30th, I think is the date.

I suppose you appreciate the move of the wreckers in calling themselves the S.L.P. They would not like openly to show their compromise all at once, so they can take the name in order to delude the few honest men among them, and also to win the sympathy and support of the Americans, and the S.L.P. in Great Britain. In other words they want to trade on the good reputation earned by the Irish Socialist Republican Party in the past. There is a chance that their game might succeed in the latter respect if you do not meet it by a countermove that will leave them permanently out in the cold.

You say that you received a letter from Neil MacLean, the Secretary of the S.L.P. of Great Britain asking you to propose some basis of agreement between you and that body. Now, under the circumstances in which you are at present I would advise you to pass the following resolution, and propose it as the basis of a working agreement between the two countries:—

“Resolved: that the Irish Socialist Republican Party while retaining its present name and autonomous organisation proclaims itself to be the Irish Section of the International Socialist Labour Party and resolves to affiliate itself to the S.L.P. of Great Britain as the nearest representative of that party, and to be represented at all future annual conferences of that body.

"That a Committee be appointed to adapt the rules of the S.L.P. as the basis of our future organisation."

P.S. By the way why was the paper not sent to the Edinburgh branch of the S.L.P.? They have, from the issue of our first pamphlet, been always ready with their money for us, and it looks strange to see Leith with their single copy and Edinburgh left without their bundle, and they not a farthing in our debt.

It is clear from the above that Connolly still considered himself a member of the I.S.R.P., whether formally in the organisation or not. As for the readers of the *Workers' Republic* — which was fated to die soon anyway — he still had their interests at heart.

The two Socialist parties continued their separate ways till the spring of 1904 when both groups held a conference with a view to amalgamation. They could not agree on a name for the combined party. Motions to call it the "National Socialist Party" and the "Socialist Revolutionary Party" lost. Bill O'Brien moved that it be called the Socialist Party of Ireland and that was agreed to unanimously. The date of this meeting was March 4th, 1904. P. Creede was named secretary *pro tem*. J. Cowell became treasurer with Daniel O'Brien and P. Dunne as auditors. The details of the amalgamation were worked out apparently by Brannigan of the I.S.R.P. and Bill O'Brien. Rafferty opposed any dealings with the S.L.P.

O'Brien was the mainstay of the reorganised party. In the next half dozen years it made little progress and most of the original I.S.R.P. members withdrew, fell away or were expelled. O'Brien learned to his dismay that a good feud can keep people active politically. When it is resolved the most bitter of the in-fighters lose all interest in the cause. In this category were Mark Deering and P. Creede, long-time members of the I.S.R.P.³⁰

Stewart and McLoughlin were expelled for supporting the Home Rule M.P. and Labour Lord Mayor of Dublin, J.P. Nannetti, the man who declared that "the Irish Parliamentary Party were the Labour Party."³¹ Arnall was expelled for supporting the election of John Burns to the House of Commons in the British general election of 1906. Burns was

named to the Liberal Cabinet of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in December 1905 as president of the Local Government Board and O'Brien complained to Connolly that Arnall and George Bernard Shaw "were the only Socialists that spoke in favour of Burns' candidature."³²

Stewart went on to become secretary of the Irish Trade Union Congress. After the split Connolly commented to Jack Lyng on a letter Stewart wrote to *Justice*, the London weekly; "You know the saying, 'Like cleaves with like,' and so it was only natural Stewart should rush to the paper whose friendship for the middle class Home Rulers caused us so much trouble. I hope this will open the eyes of our members to the character of the man they were so anxious to save from public condemnation. It means he has begun his policy of wrecking openly."³³

The statement was prophetic from an Irish Socialist standpoint. Stewart was indeed "a wrecker". He killed Connolly's journal, *The Harp*, with the threat of a libel action in June 1910.³⁴ Acting for William Martin Murphy, according to Jim Larkin, Stewart moved in the courts to have Larkin's election to Dublin Corporation invalidated in 1912 because he was "a convicted felon". He succeeded and the judge congratulated him. The following year Stewart backed the employers' lock-out of Dublin workers, in effect. He charged Larkinism was "anarcho-syndicalist" and against the interests of skilled trade unionists. He said in a public lecture that Larkin was paid by the Orange Order to "deport" Dublin Catholic children to England during the strike. His friend, P.J. McIntyre, editor of the anti-labour journal, *The Toiler*, specialised in character attacks on Larkin, Connolly, P.T. Daly, O'Brien and other strike leaders. One of *The Toiler's* less vicious attacks on Connolly had a Stewart touch. "The only occupations that he ever worked at were drilling in the militia and keeping a Socialist shebeen," *The Toiler* declared. The shebeen broke up, it said, "because the Socialist comrades robbed each other. Connolly went to America."³⁵

Nearly three years after the I.S.R.P. split, Connolly was still smarting at the indignities showered on him after his years of sacrifice in Dublin. Writing from Newark, N.J., on

December 17th, 1905, he told Matheson:

You see I have grown cautious and reserved. At one time if I thought a thing was right I just up and did it, and let the consequences take care of themselves, but now I sit down and carefully consider all the consequences first, and do the thing after, if at all. The next step in my evolution, I much fear, will be that when a thing is to be done I will consider the consequences so carefully and so long that by the time I have made up my mind the opportunity to act will be gone. This is a frame of mind I owe to my Dublin friends and to Uncle Dan (De Leon).

As to what side Brady voted on, he was on both. Like a lot more he distrusted the Stewart element but feared that I wanted to be a boss, and so voted for Stewart because they could fight him easier than they could Connolly. As you must have noticed there are a lot of men in the Socialist movement who are wonderfully clear when there is nothing (such as a personal element) to confuse them...

The Socialist Party of Ireland lacked much influence or standing until Connolly returned in the summer of 1910. It had about eighty members, twenty-five to thirty of them active. Its links with the trade union movement were weak, although Larkin took an interest in its work on occasion and more than any other man made it possible for Connolly to return to Ireland. (Connolly was offered two pounds a week as S.P.I. organiser, double the 1896 scale: as in 1896, it was rarely paid!)

The I.S.R.P. failed because as a party it could not broaden its base. The members were young, unconventional, somewhat Bohemian (they tended to wear their hair long, O'Brien noted), enthusiastic and many were hard working, but they were shunned by the rather conservative trade union movement — skilled workers who were Home Rulers in politics. Despite these drawbacks a breakthrough of sorts, into both the trade union and national movements, was achieved by Connolly.

Sean O'Casey was not a member of this little band: in the early years of the new century his interests were the I.R.B. and the Gaelic League. But in *Drums Under the Windows* the

playwright remembered Connolly addressing a meeting near the Royal Bank of Ireland: large slouch hat covering his head, thick but neatly trimmed moustache, obstinate eyes, neck bulging over white hard collar. "Broad sturdy trunk of a body... carried forward on two short pillar-like legs, slightly bowed, causing him to waddle a little in his walk." He was preaching "the gospel of discontent" to a "tiny dribble of followers."

Jack Lyng remembered it another way. After seeing the film version of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, he wrote Bill O'Brien on March 15th, 1937, from the Bronx, New York:

Yet Bill, it had its humble beginnings when *you* were swinging the *Ink Roller*, Murtagh pulling the impression, Connolly with his 2½-inch pencil and yours truly setting type from those shapeless hieroglyphics that James substituted for the English alphabet. We sure had something else in our blood stream, but Dublin porter, to see visions so far away and with such equipment.

As for *Erin's Hope* (the pamphlet I mean) I went looking up old friends and found so many had kept their date with the funeral director that I was lonesome... We did not set the Irish aflame when the foreign-speaking S.L.P. published *Erin's Hope*. It is a treasure that only an addict would preserve and the search goes on.

Connolly believed the Irish Socialist Republican Party opened up "all the new fields of thought and action" later "exploited by other and less revolutionary organisations." He had in mind Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin.

Connolly always held that the *Workers' Republic* could pay for itself, build a treasury for the I.S.R.P. and preach Socialism in Ireland.

"In the last two years of existence of the *Workers' Republic* it more than paid for itself, and gave us all our election literature free," he told Matheson in a letter from America. "And, of course, we never numbered more than a few dozen men..."

The split put an end to his hopes.

As Tom Bell noted Connolly was a versatile propagandist. "He could write articles, handset type, print and sell the

paper." This he did on several occasions, Bell remarked.³⁶

Connolly was a man of straight, hard principles and for most of his life he rarely had enough money at the end of the week to make ends meet. His American biographer, Samuel Levenson, found him too demanding and thus in part blames him for the fatal split in the I.S.R.P. But one as poor as Connolly could not possibly tolerate what he rightly called "their looseness with the cash." Since many of his comrades disagreed with him, he was forced to leave Ireland to feed his family.

Yet he did not carry a grudge. "As revolutionaries the Irish comrades are immeasurably superior to anything I have met in America," he told Matheson in January, 1907.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Irish Socialist Republican Party was that "it gave James Connolly a platform and allowed him in his speeches, and in the first of his newspapers, the *Workers' Republic*, to evolve his doctrines not from theory alone, or by observation from afar, but through direct experience of what it meant to be a poor man living in the Dublin slums," as Professor F.S.L. Lyons states it so well in his fine work *Ireland Since the Famine*.³⁷

17. The Political Thought of James Connolly

While other members of the I.S.R.P. played draughts in the party club rooms, Connolly sat in a corner writing the early chapters of his classic, *Labour in Irish History*.³⁸ Here he built his theories. Some of the most controversial of them have stood the test of time and the analyses of professional historians. The German political scientist, Dr. Leo Kohn, in *The Constitution of the Irish Free State* (1932), says Connolly's ideas imbued traditional Republicanism "with a powerful realistic content." He added:

Thus the last decade before the War, which witnessed the dynamic revival of Republican thought and action, saw also a growing rapprochement between revolutionary nationalism and militant socialism. In Pearse's last writings,

which restated Lalor's doctrine in the comprehensive application of Connolly's individualist socialism, the theoretical fusion of the two aspirations was consummated. The establishment of a truly democratic social order became as essential a postulate of the revolutionary programme as the establishment of a Republic or separation itself.

To those who saw Ireland's past as a chronicle of English misdeeds, or those others who considered it "a trouble of fools", *Labour in Irish History* was a revelation. Using Marx's economic interpretation of history as a tool, though not a Bible, Connolly came up with a case study of British colonialism. The roots of the conquest were economic. Connolly said bluntly that "capitalistic society and the laws thereof" caused the Great Famine. A.J.P. Taylor accepts this view. Robin Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams in their foreword to *The Great Famine* say "modern research has much in common with James Connolly's *Labour in Irish History*." While Owen Dudley Edwards has written:

It is not too much to say that that book brought the people back into Irish history. At the distance of nearly sixty years it remains a work of the greatest value for placing in the hands of students as a stimulus for helping them to do their own thinking; and on a higher level a glance at the recent works of professional historians shows how profoundly Connolly redirected the attention of scholars.³⁹

Connolly believed that the "true revolutionist" must call to his side "the entire sum of all the forces and factors of social and political discontent." These ideas he developed in his early years in Dublin. His pamphlet, *The New Evangel*, a collection of essays from early issues of the *Workers' Republic*, puts forward some ideas that may be worth pondering today. "Socialism properly implies above all things the co-operative control by the workers of the machinery of production; without this co-operative control the public ownership by the State is not Socialism — it is only State capitalism." And again:

... state ownership and control is not necessarily Socialism — if it were, then the Army, the Navy, the Police, the Judges,

the Gaolers, the Informers, and the Hangmen, would all be Socialist functionaries, as they are all State officials — but the ownership by the State of all the land and materials for labour, combined with the co-operative control by the workers of such land and materials, would be Socialism.

Connolly declared his belief in “a social system of the most absolute democracy.” He held that the liberties, individual and social, enjoyed in Ireland, Britain and America, limited as they were, had been fought for and won by the working class and must be defended by the working class. In consequence he maintained that “the working class must grapple with every form of government which could interfere with the most unfettered control by the people of Ireland of all the resources of their country.” This led him to the conclusion, which indeed became his life work: “The Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself it must, perforce, free its country.”

“We are told to imitate Wolfe Tone,” Connolly wrote in the *Workers' Republic* (August 5th, 1899), “but the greatness of Wolfe Tone lay in the fact that he imitated nobody. The needs of his time called for a man able to shake off from his mind the intellectual fetters of the past, and to unite in his own person the hopes of the new revolutionary faith and the ancient aspirations of an oppressed people; as the occasion creates the hero, so the Spirit of the Age found Wolfe Tone.”

One could say the same of Connolly.

The same year he wrote the ironic “Let us Free Ireland.” It runs in part:

“Let us free Ireland,” says the patriot who won't touch Socialism. Let us all join together and cr-r-rush the br-r-rutal Saxon. Let us all join together, says he, all classes and creeds. And, says the town worker, after we have crushed the Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do? Oh, then you can go back to your slums, same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

...After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under command of the sheriff, will wear green

uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic. Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the poorhouse door to the tune of "St. Patrick's Day." Oh! it will be nice to live in those days!

In time it came to pass, more or less as the young Connolly predicted.

When Connolly left Ireland for America in September 1903 he thought Socialism in Dublin would be "able to walk alone" without him. A year and a half earlier he believed Socialism had "taken root" in Ireland, the title and subject of an editorial in the March 1902 *Workers' Republic*. He was wrong of course. Socialism put down roots in Dublin between 1896 and 1903 but it had not taken root. Matters might have been different had Connolly stayed. But he left and the hope of building a Socialist movement left with him.

Connolly anticipated much of the ideas and activities of Sinn Féin which did indeed take root between 1905 and 1908. Its national and economic thinking was quite different and it did not try to link the national and class struggles in the Connolly manner.

Connolly was a Marxist. He believed in class conflict and historical materialism. He studied every question by its economic roots. He was more of an economic determinist than Marx himself, as *Labour in Irish History* makes clear. In order to understand an historical epoch he studied "the prevailing method of economic production and exchange, and the social organisation necessarily following from it."⁴⁰ Some have charged Connolly with oversimplifying Marx. In fact Connolly made his own of this Marxian formula and was not the prisoner of any doctrine.

Marx had a higher regard for "Grattan's Parliament" — the period of Ascendancy legislative independence between 1783 and 1801 when some firms were subsidised and foreign goods were taxed — than Connolly had. For Connolly, as for Wolfe

Tone and James Fintan Lalor, the so-called Constitution of 1782 that ushered in "Grattan's Parliament" had little to recommend it.⁴¹ It was widely held in pre-1916 Ireland that Grattan's Parliament brought economic development and indeed prosperity. Eoin Mac Neill said Ireland had made more progress in that period economically than modern Japan. Historians now say it was a boom period, especially for linen, and that consequently Ireland's exports profited. Connolly's view was more analytical. He said the Industrial Revolution was responsible for economic progress not Grattan's Parliament. He was taken to task for this after his death by orthodox economists and nationalist writers.⁴²

In *Labour in Irish History* Connolly's heroes are the poor and the rebels: the United Irishmen, the men and women who flocked to Smith O'Brien at Mullinahone and Ballingarry, the Fenians, the Land Leaguers and the labourers who supported the tenants in the fight for the land. He resurrected thinkers like William Thompson, the West Cork landlord who wrote on political economy in the 1820's and anticipated Marx's theory of surplus value.⁴³ Connolly cleared away the romanticism from Robert Emmet and showed that his insurrection was a movement of mechanics and labourers. He told of the Ralahine (Co. Clare) experiment in co-operation in the early 1830's. Always he asserts that the humble workers of town and country are the real fighters for freedom, while the Irish middle class denied "all relation between the social rights of the Irish toilers and the political rights of the Irish nation." From this analysis he drew the conclusion: "Only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

Conor Cruise O'Brien (*States of Ireland*) charges that Connolly equates the "subject people" of Ireland with the Catholics of Ireland and ignores the Protestant working class of Belfast. The heart of Connolly's thought is the class struggle. He sees it as the force that steeled resistance to British colonialism. He explains at some length in the final paragraph of *Labour in Irish History* what this theory means and in the process answers his critics.

As we have again and again pointed out, the Irish

question is a social question, the whole age-long fight of the Irish people against their oppressors resolves itself in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production, in Ireland. Who would own and control the land? The people or the invaders; and if the invaders, which set of them — the most recent swarm of land thieves, or the sons of the thieves of a former generation? These were the bottom questions of Irish politics, and all other questions were valued or deprecated in the proportion to which they contributed to serve the interests of some of the factions who had already taken their stand in this fight around property interests. Without this key to the meaning of events, this clue to unravel the actions of "great men", Irish history is but a welter of unrelated facts, a hopeless chaos of sporadic outbreaks, treacheries, intrigues, massacres, murders, and purposeless warfare. With this key all things become understandable and traceable to their primary origin... it is undeniable that for two hundred years at least, all Irish political movements ignored this fact, and were conducted by men who did not look below the political surface... Hence they accomplished nothing, because the political remedies proposed were unrelated to the social subjection at the root of the matter. The revolutionists of the past were wiser, the Irish Socialists are wiser today. In their movement the North and the South will again clasp hands, again will it be demonstrated, as in '98, that the pressure of a common exploitation can make enthusiastic rebels out of a Protestant working class, earnest champions of civil and religious liberty out of Catholics, and out of both a united Social Democracy.

James Connolly's social and national thinking stands or falls by that interpretation. To adapt a phrase: he wanted to make Ireland Socialist since that was the logic of history; but his Socialism had a Fenian face.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE

1. Six Connolly letters to Lillie Reynolds are in William O'Brien's Papers in the National Library of Ireland. They cover the period April 1888 to April 1890, apparently from the time of his desertion to their marriage, but most of them are undated. The following dated "April 7" (no year) from Dundee is probably his first letter to Miss Reynolds after taking French leave of the army:

Lil/ For the first time in my life I feel extremely diffident about writing a letter. Usually I feel a sneaking sort of confidence in the possession of what I know to be a pretty firm grasp of the English language for one in my position. But for once I'm at a loss. I wish to thank you for your kindness to me and I am afraid lest by too great protestations of gratitude I might lead you to think that my gratitude is confined to the enclosure which accompanied your letter than the kindly sympathy of the writer. On the other hand, I'm afraid lest I might, by too sparing a use of my thanks lead you to think I am ungrateful to you for your kindness. So in this dilemma I will leave you to judge for yourself my feelings towards you for your generous contribution to the "Distressed Fund". So my love, your unfortunate Jim is now in Dundee and very near to "the girl he left behind him" but the want of the immortal cash and the want of the necessary habiliments presses me to remain as far from her as if the Atlantic divided us. But cheer up, perhaps sometime or another before you leave Perth, if you stay in it any time, I may be enabled to see you again. God send it...

2. C. Desmond Greaves in his *Life and Times of James Connolly* (London: 1961) gives the date of Connolly's marriage as April 13th, 1890, and the place as St. James Church. Samuel Levenson in his *James Connolly* (London: 1973) gives the date as April 20th, 1890. The marriage certificate in William O'Brien's Papers is April 30th, 1890.

Naturally enough much of Connolly's early life is undocumented and credit must go to both Greaves and the late Sam Levenson for establishing certain facts: Greaves for place and date of birth and service in the British Army, Levenson for name of church of marriage and name of regiment in which Connolly served. Connolly used a false name and age when joining up. He was extremely reticent about these matters later in life, although by 1913 it was apparently well known that he had served in the army to judge by the attacks made on him in the anti-union papers, *The Toiler* and *The Liberator & Trade Unionist*, during the Dublin lock-out in 1913. The October 4th, 1913,

issue of *The Toiler*, for example: "Then there was a terrible revolutionary Socialist, Jim Connolly, the old woman hunger striker. It is rumoured that he is an ex-member of the Monaghan Militia, or, at least, that he took the Queen's bounty about twenty odd years ago, and then 'hopped the twig' to Scotland..." The October 31st issue said that all it could find out about Connolly was that "he was born somewhere in Co. Monaghan" and at an early age "he joined the British militia, deserted and went to Scotland."

Before the wedding Connolly wrote Lillie: "Why if I was ever so miserable the thought of having such a sweet wife to come home to... would make me brave in the face of any difficulty, cheerful in the face of any misfortune."

CHAPTER THREE

3. Told to the writer by Bill Dunne, leader of the general strike in Butte, Montana, in 1917, who knew Connolly during the latter's time in the U.S. labour movement.

4. Connolly letter to Daniel O'Brien, March 11th, 1899, in William O'Brien Papers in the National Library of Ireland.

CHAPTER FOUR

5. Irish University Press, Dublin, 1974. Page 17.

6. Rooney died in 1901 at the age of twenty-seven. His significance is that he maintained that the Irish language could be saved only by making it a political issue. Like many other Gaelic League supporters Griffith never bothered to learn the language. Connolly tried to master Irish a number of times but apparently failed. However he supported the revival strongly.

7. See *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (New York: 1951). p.233. "Belfast big business was the backbone of the resistance movement (to Home Rule), because it regarded Home Rule as a mortal threat to its monopoly of power and even to its economic survival." This states the matter succinctly.

CHAPTER FIVE

8. Introduction to American edition of *Erin's Hope* (New York: 1909) by James Connolly.

9. *The People*, New York, December 20th, 1896, "Bravo Ireland!" Two weeks later the same paper under the heading "The Irish Socialists" described the aims of the I.S.R.P. Presumably the reports were supplied by Connolly.

CHAPTER SIX

10. See Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly* (London: 1961), pp. 69-70.

11. See *Labouring Men* (New York: 1964), p.277.

12. Connolly changed some sections in later editions of *Erin's Hope*. What is quoted here remained constant through all editions. New material noted that the Irish working class was "the only secure foundation on which a free nation can be reared" because it "has no interest to serve in perpetuating either the political or social forms of oppression — the British Connection or the Capitalist system." For an examination of the original and later texts see *James Connolly Selected Political Writings* (London: 1973) edited by Owen Dudley Edwards and Bernard Ransom, pp.165-191. Connolly developed these ideas more fully in *Labour in Irish History* and *Reconquest of Ireland*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

13. See *Leaders and Workers* (Cork:ND), ed. J.W. Boyle. Quoted in "William Walker", by J.W. Boyle, p.58.

14. *Shan Van Vocht*, November 1896.

15. O'Brien's Papers. The minutes are in O'Brien's hand, apparently, so are not the original. However, O'Brien was a link in the various Irish Socialist parties up to 1916 and presumably copied the original. Maud Gonne may have presented a difficulty to the members since there were no women members. John Daly, a Fenian, was Mayor of Limerick.

CHAPTER EIGHT

16. American introduction to *Erin's Hope*, 1909.

CHAPTER TEN

17. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: 1972), p.81. Lenin used Hobson's study extensively when he wrote his own study in 1916. Other turn-of-the-century Marxists who wrote on imperialism include Karl Kautsky, Rudolf Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Rosa Luxemburg and Nicolai Bukharin.

18. The I.S.R.P. letter pays handsome tribute to Connolly's "long experience as an organiser, his capacity as an exponent of our views and his thorough knowledge of the politics and history of this country."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

19. O'Brien Papers. Lehané letter to Horgan is dated February 5th and 6th, 1904.

20. Connolly letter to Rafferty is dated May 29th, 1902. O'Brien Papers.

21. Lehané letter dated August 15th, 1899.

CHAPTER TWELVE

22. Quoted in Desmond Ryan's *James Connolly* (London: 1924), p.21.

23. See *The Workers' Republic* (Dublin: 1951) ed. Desmond Ryan, pp.44-5.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

24. Matheson letter to Connolly in O'Brien Papers dated June 7th, 1904.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

25. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: 1958), "Preface to the First German Edition," p.19.

26. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* (New York: 1955), p.73. Miss Flynn, her sister, Kathleen, and her father Tom Flynn, worked with Connolly later in the Irish Socialist Federation.

27. The Connolly article is datelined "Salt Lake City, Utah, Nov. 10." The headline reads: "Connolly in America/The S.L.P. 'Being Dead Yet/Speaketh'"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

28. *Labour Monthly*, April 1937. The cause of the split in the S.D.F. was the resolution moved by Karl Kautsky at the International Congress in 1900 accepting Millerand's decision to join the French government. Hyndman supported the resolution, the "leftists or "impossibles" opposed it.

29. Quoted by Desmond Greaves in *Life and Times of James Connolly*, p.148; he calls Murray "Mullery."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

30. Connolly was told of these developments by Bill O'Brien in a letter at the end of 1907.

31. See F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: 1971), p.273.

32. O'Brien 1907 letter to Connolly. Burns became an Independent Radical member of parliament in 1895. He resigned from the Liberal Cabinet in 1914 because of the British government's decision to enter the first world war.

33. O'Brien Papers.

34. *The Harp* was a monthly published in New York. In January 1910, preparatory to returning home, Connolly transferred the paper to Dublin under Larkin's editorship. Larkin's report of the Trade Union Congress in June 1910 led to four libel actions, two from Stewart and McIntyre. McIntyre was shot without trial by Captain Bowen-Colthurst with Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and a third man named Dickson in 1916.

35. *The Toiler*, October 31st, 1913. *The Toiler* said it was "established to advance the interests of Labour and protect Irish industry and commerce." It told its readers: When you buy *The Toiler* you are helping the Labour movement, and killing Larkinism." Another article said of Connolly: "Then along came Connolly, the

ex-militiaman, ex-Socialist lecturer, ex-carter in the Glasgow corporation, who is about the ablest and most scientific looper for a living that Jim has about him. Connolly said he had fasted for seven days and nights rather than recognise a government he despised... Are these men in league with the Tory Party? Are these men getting paid from Tory sources."

36. See *Labour Monthly*, April 1937.

37. page 271.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

38. *Labour in Irish History* was published as a book in 1910 but the early sections were written in Dublin during Connolly's I.S.R.P. days and the remainder in America.

39. *Irish Times*, June 5, 1968, on the centenary of Connolly's birth, "The Mind of Connolly," by Owen Dudley Edwards. Brian Inglis, reviewing the Levenson biography for *The Guardian*, remarked that it "remains a model, which can be studied with profit by historians of very different views." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, July 7th, 1973.)

40. Marx's dictum according to Connolly in *Labour in Irish History*: "That in every historical epoch the prevailing method of economic production and exchange, and the social organisation necessarily following from it, forms the basis upon which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch."

41. "Grattan's Parliament" was a misnomer. Grattan himself had no power and was in opposition through most of its life. The English government still ruled Ireland – with the aid of "Grattan's Parliament." The English Privy Council could veto its legislation. Actually the parliament remained a fairly pliant tool of Dublin Castle. Of the 300 M.P.s only 64 were elected by any kind of franchise. It was a landlord parliament, but like all institutions could have been reformed. However, parliamentary reform and a broader franchise would have meant the end of landlord control.

42. See "Grattan's Parliament" by Joseph Lee, *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition* (Dublin: 1973), ed. by Brian Farrell, pp.149-159, which pays Connolly the compliment of being a better economic historian than George O'Brien (*Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*) and a better political historian than Eoin Mac Neill, at least as far as Grattan's Parliament is concerned.

43. William Thompson used the term "surplus value" in his work, *Inquiry Into the Distribution of Wealth*, in 1824. Along with much other material, Marx read Thompson's *Inquiry* during his visit to Manchester in 1845. Thompson also raised the matter of "increasing misery" in the form of a question: "How comes it that a nation abounding more than any other in the rude materials of wealth, in machinery, dwellings and food, in intelligent and industrious producers, with all the apparent means of happiness, with all the outward

semblances of happiness exhibited by a small and rich portion of the community, should still pine in starvation?"

Thompson asked why the industrial system enriched a few "at the expense of the mass of producers" and why the latter sank deeper into poverty? He maintained that the worker had a right to the whole produce of his labour; wealth should be in the hands of the producer of that wealth. The capitalist demand that the owner of the machinery be allowed to appropriate "the additional value" (i.e. surplus value) produced by his "machinery or other capital" and that he should enjoy "the whole of such surplus value" for his intelligence and skill in accumulating this capital was rejected by Thompson. Thompson said the worker was entitled to the "right to the whole product of labour."

Thompson's unacknowledged contribution to the socialism of Marx and Engels received its proper recognition from Connolly who went to the trouble of studying at first hand these long-forgotten writings.

For more on Thompson see *William Thompson, 1775-1883*, by Richard K.P. Pankhurst, published in London in 1954.

Connolly also brought to light the story of the Ralahine Co-Operative of the 1830's "And when Ireland does emerge into complete control of her own destinies she must seek the happiness of her people in the extension on a national basis of the social arrangements of Ralahine," he wrote. Perhaps this was the Co-Operative Republic in action! Its modern form is the Israeli *Kibbutz*. Connolly read the original account of the experiment by E.T. Craig, secretary of the Ralahine Co-Operative. He was a true scholar for he always went to primary sources.

Appendix

Some Problems of Editing a Socialist Journal

James Connolly to J. Carstairs Matheson

Accrington

14/7/02

Dear Matheson,

...When I got home I found the paper in a much more backward state than I expected and that it was practically impossible to get it out in time without also making inevitable the retarding of the next issue. So after due consideration of all the pros and cons I decided to instruct the boys to get it out in the middle of July, but to date it for August. By this means you will have a couple of weeks extra in which to push and get rid of your first issue (of the *Socialist*), and will have the certainty that the next issue will be out up to date. I may mention that we did not get the heading sketch from Yates until I was going home that Saturday, where he had kept it for me at his lodgings instead of forwarding it to Dublin. This caused an awful delay — in fact the block had not been delivered to us when I left Dublin.

Then some of the copy. Glasgow did not arrive until Wednesday that week. So that you see we have been considerably handicapped and although the thing is regrettable there will of course require to be patience and allowance made on both sides — I hope you approve of what I have done. The naive surprise expressed by Yates and yourself when I ventured to declare that in order to give us a chance you ought to have sent in your copy a fortnight before still lingers with me as an amusing recollection...

6 Lr. Liffey St.

Dublin,

August 22, 1902.

Dear Matheson,

Will you please go and lay violent hands upon Yates, and restrain him from attempting to write enough copy for the *Weekly People* under the impression he is going to get it into the *Socialist*. Tell him also that we cannot undertake to make

corrections unless the proofs are returned the post after receipt. He got proofs on Tuesday, and we only had them returned this (Friday) morning, too late, of course. Then both of you please note that *we can make no corrections* at all in proofs *other than of typographical errors arising out of misreading* or punctuation. Yates seems to think he can rewrite his article and get it altered in the proof. It is not possible, you would not get a printer to do it for you even if he was at your own door, except he charged you a very high figure for doing it. Let the article be carefully written to start with, you have time enough.

I find I have to sail on the 30th August from Londonderry instead of on September 4th from Liverpool. The swarms of Americans returning from coronation 'debaucheries' have crowded me out of the boat in question at Liverpool, and I had to change to Allen liner "Sardinian" at Derry, in order to keep my engagement. Our boys had not paid sufficient down to secure the berth at Liverpool. That reminds me that if you people can pay now the balance which will be due on the third month of the *Socialist*, after the £10 has been fully accounted for, that sum, £2, would be a very great service to me now.

Buying and dispatching the paper for the *Socialist*, paying wages, etc., leaves us pretty low down when we want to raise the money for the American trip which must be paid down before Tuesday or the fat will be in the fire. If you can possibly get the branches to advance that sum so that I could get it before Tuesday, you would perform a signal service and I will remember you in my prayers.

Fraternally,
James Connolly.

In Dublin from 1896 to 1903 Connolly tested his theories by seeking to apply them to the actual facts of Irish life. His experiment has not received the attention it deserves. His goal, as always, was social revolution. His means were limited to the Irish Socialist Republican Party and — when there was enough money to print it — the *Workers' Republic*. The day-by-day problems Connolly and his colleagues faced and sometimes overcame are the subject of this short study.

ISBN 0 86064 015 9

Price £1.20.