

IRISH OPINION

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SINN FEIN and LABOUR. By THOMAS JOHNSON.

When Mr. Darrell Figgis advises Irish workers to cut all connection with "English" trade unions, we wonder if he realises the consequences that may follow?

If the summary of his lecture on "Sinn Fein and Labour," which appeared in the "Independent," is anything like a fair indication of his views, one can only suggest, in charity, that he has not given much thought to his subject. Otherwise one would be driven to the conclusion that he was an enemy of Trade Unionism and had chosen the surest way of depriving the Irish workers of their most valuable weapon, unity in the industrial field.

The argument runs that Trade Unions having their headquarters in England, militate against the growth in Ireland of the national virtue of self-reliance, that English Unions drain away from Ireland the funds collected from Irish workers and use these funds to compete with Irish industry, that the interests of the Irish workers are always subordinated to those of the English majority, and therefore good Nationalists, who have been misguided enough to join an international Union, should immediately secede, and cut all connection with the foreign Union. (I am not sure whether Mr. Figgis is of the number who would thereupon assist in establishing Irish Unions, or of those who advise the workers to wait until the National question is settled before setting out to fight their own fight.) I agree with a good part of this indictment. I believe that on occasions when the interests of the Irish membership runs counter to the interests of the English membership the Irish often go under; many times action demanded by the Irish membership is delayed too long by the executives because they don't understand our conditions, and I believe that it is extremely desirable that the responsibility for the management of Trade Union affairs should be borne by the Irish workers. Further than that I think it probable that the English form of Union may be improved upon by Irishmen, that we would develop a form of fighting organisation based more upon aggressive industrial action than upon friendly society benefits. But no weight should be laid upon the argument that Irish contributions go to swell the coffers of the English Unions. Anyone conversant with the facts knows that in the past a great deal more money has been received in benefits by the Irish membership of International Unions than they have ever paid in. This, indeed, is one of the reasons that may

be added in favour of Irish autonomy in Trade Unionism—it will develop a sense of responsibility which has too often been absent in the conduct of Trade Union branch affairs.

But, while favouring the establishment of Irish Unions and supporting the movement towards the autonomy of Irish sections of International Unions, I think it well to point out that this question should be discussed upon its merits as an industrial, not a political problem. Which form will best promote the interests of the Irish workers in their struggle for economic freedom, not merely their interests in the immediate future, but taking a long view?

If our industrial interests are always to take second place and political strategy to claim our first allegiance, then we may say good-bye to all hopes of building up a strong, independent working class movement in Ireland. For the political leaders will always be able to invent reasons why the workers should devote their thoughts to something apart from their economic conditions. Jim Larkin's successful efforts to weld the unskilled workers of Belfast into a compact industrial organisation, irrespective of political colour, were eventually brought to nought by the Orange leaders' device of splitting the workers into rival Unions on the plea that political and sectarian interests were in danger.

The A.O.H. has tried the same dodge with less success in Dublin, Cork and elsewhere, and all the signs point to another "big push" coming from that quarter with a similar end in view. Anything and everything will be tried by the enemies of the working class to prevent effective combination and solidarity amongst the wage earners. It is a sure class instinct that inspires this opposition. For, once the principle of solidarity takes hold of the workers the day of the landlord and capitalist sweater, the rule of the gombeen man and publican, the dominance of the exploiter—whose principle is greed—will be over. With solidarity amongst the workers the power of imperialism may readily be destroyed. There is no real difference between the exploitation and subjection of Irish labour in Ireland by Irish capitalists, and the exploitation and subjection of the Irish nation by the imperialist capitalist government of England. Greed for profit is the motive in both cases. Freedom will be won for Ireland when freedom is won for the Irish workers. As Connolly always insisted, when the lowest social class in the

nation achieves freedom, the nation will be free, and not before.

But to revert to Mr. Figgis' advice. Three-fourths of all the trade unionists of Ireland are members of international unions. It is unthinkable that the whole of the members of any single society will follow the advice to secede without a long sustained propaganda. For any small section to do so weakens the whole body without doing any good to the seceders. In fact, it makes blacklegs of them. Take as an illustration the railway men. The N.U.R. has about 20,000 members in Ireland. They have won, by unity, notable increases in wages. The membership comprises adherents of the U.I.L., the Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, and the Irish Labour Party. (They all ought to belong to the latter, but there are still some exceptions!) When Mr. Figgis addresses his audience he is speaking as a politician, and as such only the Sinn Fein section will listen. If they were to follow his advice, they would secede from the Union, form a rival sectional Union with a political basis, and thus present to the railway directors the spectacle of dissension and strife in place of a united front. Do the railwaymen think they would have won in their recent struggle if they had been split up into three or four Unions based upon rival political doctrines? So it is with other Unions.—If the Nationalist members of the Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners, who may be followers of Mr. Figgis, secede from their Union and establish a rival Irish Union, it weakens their power as workmen in their bargaining with the employers, who never

divide on political issues when engaged in an industrial fight.

I suggest to our Sinn Fein readers, who are members of international Trade Unions, that their best work can be done within the Union by spreading the idea of autonomy for the Irish membership, and when that idea is general then a mass movement for a distinctly Irish Union may be safely promoted. But to attempt to attain this end by way of secession and division of forces—that way madness lies.

May I suggest a bit of practical work in the direction of consolidating Irish Trade Unionism? The Irish Drapers' Assistants Association is a distinctly Irish Union. Its membership is restricted to workers in the drapery and allied trades. Several attempts have been made to widen the scope of their Union to make it possible for all shop workers to be admitted, but hitherto these have failed because of the conservative ideas prevailing amongst the assistants of Dublin and one or two other centres.

At the next annual meeting to be held at Easter the proposal is to be again considered. Here is a chance to make the way clear for one Irish Union for all workers in the wholesale and retail distributing trades. If Mr. Figgis and his friends and followers will use their influence in favour of this reform they will do something valuable towards building up Irish Trade Unionism. If the attempt succeeds it will provide an opportunity for shop workers of all grades to combine in an Irish Union, and I am confident that the Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants would give a hearty welcome to the forward move of the Irish Drapers.

Irish National Aspirations and British Labour

By P. COATES, Irish Automobile Drivers and Mechanics Trade Union.

The Irish Labour movement would be well advised to take immediate steps to place their views respecting Irish self-government before organised Labour in Great Britain.

A fairly wide experience of the Labour movement in that country has convinced me that the aspirations of the Irish race, for an Irish Republic, are not known, and consequently not understood in England. For instance, quite recently I was speaking to one of the best informed of the Labour M.P.'s—a man who is in favour of applying the principle of national self-determination to Ireland—and he asked me, quite seriously, if the Republican movement in Ireland was not a mere passing phase, which would soon give place to the old demand for local autonomy within the British Empire. I informed him that I was quite certain that the vast majority of the Irish people would vote in favour of an Irish Republic; but, I am afraid, he was only half convinced. The gentleman referred to is one of that small group of Labour members who have played a prominent part in opposing the war.

His views are similar to those of other members of the English Labour movement with whom I discussed the question.

Is it a matter for surprise? I don't think so.

A subordinate Parliament with limited powers was the utmost demand of the Redmondite Party, and they were elected and financially supported for decades by the Irish race at home and abroad.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor said in the House of Commons that if Home Rule was granted, "God Save the King" would be sung on every Irish hillside and in every Irish valley, and no protest was made by the Irish masses. Can we wonder then that the Republican movement is not regarded as a permanent one.

It is up to Irish Labour to remove the delusion, and it is of the utmost importance that the matter should be taken up at once. The English Labour movement has appealed to the Social Democrats of Germany and Austria to force their governments to grant national freedom to the Poles, Italians, etc., now living under German and Austrian rule, and Mr. Arthur Henderson has accepted the principle—true, in a

modified form—in connection with Ireland, Egypt and India. Still, he has accepted the principle, and that is an important gain.

Irish Labour must now act. I would suggest that the E.C. of the Irish Trade Union Congress should send delegates to the English Labour Party Conference, to be held at Nottingham next week, and should ask the Conference for permission to state their views. Also, that a manifesto be drafted giving a brief indictment of British rule in Ireland, and setting forth our immediate demands. The manifesto should be placed in the hands of every delegate to the Conference. Such a statement is very necessary if we are to win the sympathy of English Labour, because, the average Englishman knows little about the history of his own country, and absolutely nothing about the history of Ireland.

We may be inclined to smile at Mr. Henderson's naive opinion that England's treatment of subject races has given little cause for reproach, and his view is, I think, typical of his followers; but himself and his friends are thinking about the question of suppressed nationalities for the first time in their lives, perhaps, and Irish Labour must assist in their enlightenment in reference to Irish affairs. Apropos of Egypt and India, the many very able men in the national movements of these countries can be safely entrusted to voice the aspirations of their followers.

There are abundant signs that at the next general election the Labour Party in the House of Commons will be considerably augmented, and the new M.P.'s will include, it is reasonable to assume, a number of the younger and better informed men, men holding very advanced views, who realise that Imperialism benefits only the capitalists and financiers, and who will be as ready to apply the principle of national self-determination to the British Empire as Trotsky and Lenin are to the Russian Empire.

Surely it is reasonable to try and win the aid of such men, the coming men in the English Labour movement. But Irish Labour must not merely seek English working class support, it must place Ireland's claim before the next International Labour Congress. But, if the Editor is agreeable, that will form the subject of another article.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES

The Humble American.

Solemn warnings have appeared in the Sinn Fein press from time to time against a certain George L. Fox, Principal of the University School, New Haven, Connecticut. This estimable citizen of the great plutocratic Republic has been deluging this country and America with pamphlets purporting to give the real truth about Irish problems and Irish history. He has exposed the hideous crimes of Roger Casement; he has proved that Ireland is not overtaxed, and, by means of a statistical table, he has shown the monopoly of crime enjoyed by Germans. In short, George is a typical American soothsayer of the purest war vintage. His enthusiasm and respect for England equal the best that Woodrow Wilson is capable of; a more perfect specimen of the "loyal" American it would be difficult to find. Consequently, discarding the warnings of our contemporaries, we have delved, in the interests of truth, into the publications of George L. Fox, from which we have secured the following pearl:—"In the last seventy years Ireland has suffered less oppression from Great Britain than Porto Rico, Hawaii and the Philippines have suffered from the United States." This tribute from a patriotic American to the imperial policy of the United States is recommended to all students of President Wilson's uplifting prose. And so that there may be no doubt as to the relative merits of those who govern the two "great Anglo-Saxon democracies," we cull a further stanza from Fox:—"Both in intellectual and in moral and religious training the English schools are far superior to those of this country." Clearly the Americans are beautifully fitted to repair the errors of their cousins of Gallipoli and Mesopotamia fame.

Making the World Safe for . . . ?

We have been regaled with many a tale to the discredit of those who died for Ireland in 1916, but we have had to wait for an American commentary to discover the real offence of the executed men. Irish Labour will be interested in the undiluted Americanism of our Foxey critic: "If one studies the previous careers of the men who signed their names to the proclamation of the so-called Irish Republic, he can easily realise what a hell on earth those portions of Ireland would have been over which they gained sway. Not one had ever had a successful business career, nor acquired by his own exertions any moderate amount of property." Successful Business Men and Property Owners, the venerated deities of America, why do we not entrust them with our destinies? Then we might count on the approval of Uncle Sam, whose pens and guns are always at the disposal of practical democrats, like Rockefeller, Morgan and Company. O, fortunate Wilson to have George L. Fox, in this grand crusade for democracy!

Box and Cox: An Anglo-American Farce.

The Sinn Fein Executive, if we may judge by its public statements, agrees with at least one policy of the British authorities in Ireland, namely, the shielding and whitewashing of America from all criticism. At times we are amazed by the magnanimous toleration of critical comment upon England and France which, when directed against America, is considered blasphemous. It is possible to quote facts from English and French papers which reveal the difficulties arising out of war conditions, but no reference is allowed to subjects which are commences in all American newspapers and magazines, including those allowed into Ireland by the postal Censor, and those supplied by His Britannic Majesty to the National Library. This keeping of information in cold storage is, if short sighted, at least a part of the English administration of this country, but we are quite unable to understand the tenderness of Sinn Fein for a Power which has branded Irish independence as "treason," and has pursued Sinn Fein with a venom which cannot have diminished now that America is in the war, since, even while neutral, it lost no opportunity of discrediting and thwarting the expression of independent nationalism. The Ard Chomhairle of the Irish Republican Party protested last week against the arrest of Dr. McCartan by the Canadian authorities, as if it were not well known to every reader of the American press, and to any person at all familiar with the American view of Sinn Fein, that the United States Secret Service has been on McCartan's trail. In all such cases the American and Canadian authorities have co-operated, and it is impossible to acquit the former while accusing the latter. Moreover, as the resolution showed on the face of it, there was no logic in this preposterous differentiation. The Ard Chomhairle stated that McCartan was arrested for the crime of "presenting to the President and Congress of the American Republic" the demand of Ireland for self-government. Why then did the American authorities pursue McCartan into Canada, as they themselves announced at the time of his arrest? To economise the time and the blue pencil of the Censor we refrain from details, but assure our readers that, so far as Ireland is concerned, the English and American Governments are a case of Box and Cox.

Virtue Rewarded.

The laws of supply and demand are invariably invoked by Capital when they favour profiteering and exploitation. So sacred are these laws that they must on no account be disturbed, so long as they mean an unlimited Labour market and limited employment, or a great demand for a commodity in which there is a real or artificial shortage. But should supply and demand threaten profits, then the

law is suspended. The wholesale dealers in Vancouver had made a corner in eggs, which they hoped to export to England, but owing to the scarcity of shipping they have been prevented from doing this bit to win the war. They find themselves therefore, in possession of some 4,500,000 dozens of eggs in cold storage. A benevolent food controller has come to their rescue, and lest they should be obliged to sell whatever they can get, the Government has undertaken to finance an advertising campaign "to popularise the eating of high-priced eggs," as the "Edmonton Bulletin" puts it. This charming picture of State-aided profiteering is recommended to those who believe in the operation of "economic laws." Such solicitude for those caught in the trap of their own food corner is a touching example of that "overseas" democracy" so popular these days.

Hunger!

In its rare references to recent conditions in Spain, the press has talked knowingly of military revolts, as if the discontent of the army officers explained everything. Now the Labour leader, Egocheaga, supplies a real clue to the mysterious "disorder" in Spain, which is reported incoherently from time to time. Egocheaga says: "Things before the war were bad, but now they are intolerable. Every article of consumption has gone up, thanks to cornerers, from 100 to 300 per cent., while wages have remained stationary, and the lack of employment becomes greater every day. . . . Something must be done, and that soon, for hunger knows no law. Thousands of honest wage-earners are on the verge of starvation." This prosaic fact is sadly lacking in that melodramatic interest which has captured the scribes who write up the tales of pro-Germanism in Spain, describe the submarine bases on the Mediterranean, and hint at the terrible retribution being exacted from the Spaniards for their wicked failure to join the Allied crusade for the Good, the True and the Beautiful. Spain, like all other neutrals, is suffering from the abominable privations inflicted upon the world by the militarists who are destroying civilisation. There, as elsewhere, the working classes are realising how little they are profited by political independence divorced from economic and industrial liberty. Here in Ireland that interesting fact will doubtless continue to be only vaguely perceived, until self-government enables us to indict the Irish exploiters of the Irish people.

APOLOGY.

Last week we referred to Mr. McGuffin of Belfast Co-operative Society, as the "Revd" If it is an exaggeration to say Mr. McGuffin is revered, it is at least true to say he is respected.

LITVINOFF AND IRELAND.**RUSSIAN REPUBLIC.**

Plenipotentiary for Great Britain of the
People's Commissary of Foreign
Affairs.

To the Editor "Irish Opinion."

January 18th, 1918.

Dear Sir—The message I wrote, which was widely published in the Socialist and Labour press in England, applies equally to Ireland, as to English, Scottish, and Welsh workers. As Internationalists we recognise no national difference between the workers of any country. The peace and freedom of the world depend entirely upon the solidarity of the workers of all countries. To secure that we rely upon the efforts of the Irish people no less than upon the workers of other countries.

—With fraternal greetings,

For M. LITVINOFF,

E. SOERMIS, Temp. Sec.

**ADDRESS TO CITIZEN M. LITVINOFF,
RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR FOR
GREAT BRITAIN.**

We, the undersigned members of the Russian Socialist Bund (Maximalists) of Dublin, have the pleasure in sending you our best wishes and felicitations on the occasion of your appointment as the Peoples Plenipotentiary of the Russian Republic for Great Britain.

Conscious of the immense upheaval that took place in the political and social life in Revolutionary Russia, which is not only significant for our dear Fatherland, but also for the world at large.

With pride and glory we realise the lofty tendencies of the Russian Proletariat, and their unselfish heroism in overthrowing Czardom and the Bourgeois regime.

They are indeed the bearers of the beacon that will lead the Proletariat of the world to real happiness, and thus establish a world of a nobler and free humanity.

We are convinced that you, too, are imbued with the ideal of universal democratisation of society, leading to a system of society, that will grant to all men and women economic and political independence.

We are also convinced that you will prove congruous for the task bestowed upon you, and that you will, proudly and high, uphold the banner of the great ideal of the Russian Revolution, and that you will stoically pursue the path marked by the great men and women of Revolutionary Russia.

Unswervingly, challenging the misconstrued ideas formed in the Capitalist Press about Revolutionary Russia, and thus render a great service to the policy of the Bolshevik ideal.

May your work and proceedings be crowned with love and justice for the benefit of humanity and for the glory of our great country.

Long live the All-Russian Socialist Republic!

Long live Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!

XMAS EVE: A CONTRAST.

The winter sun shone pleasantly; the day was so mild and the air as genial as if Spring were already well advanced. All eyes were turned skywards attracted by the hum of an aeroplane, which circled and hovered, seemed as if going to alight, then rose majestically and made a straight line back to its source. The click of motor-boats on the canal was too commonplace to divert one's mind from the greater and more recent wonder; the motor-van on the road delivering bread passed unnoticed; the fortnight-old installation of electric light in the village had been already exhausted as a subject of conversation.

"Where are they coming from," I said, as a group of men—all powerfully-built—some young, some middle-aged, approached. "They have just left off work," my companion replied; "they are engaged in cutting turf for the—Go. They are paid at piece-rates; they usually work from daylight to dark; up to their knees in water all the time, and never earn more than 25s. a week. At dinner hour they take off their icy, dripping socks and dry them at a fire in a hut they have erected for shelter. Then they proceed with their task and when the day is over repeat the drying in their more or less comfortless homes."

I could not help dwelling on the contrast; how little reason the proletariat have to wonder at or to admire our wonderful civilisation. Here were able, honest, intelligent and religious men with muscles and constitution which should be a national pride earning a poor living in the most cruel hardship it is possible to conceive. For their own purposes they cut turf in the summer months when the bog is tolerable; in winter with no land and no other employment to claim them they have to endure it for our luxurious needs. Blighting, mortifying to body and soul, the work proceeds during the hardest days of winter when there is not even human necessity urging it on; when if it were not for greed and the fetish of dividends the world could build aeroplanes, motor cars and even more wonderful things, growing fat meanwhile, while giving to every man a share in their enjoyment without an iota of this slow murder. Yet our idle aristocrats are hardly aware that such horrors exist, and our snug middle-class regard a reference to them as savouring of the much-dreaded Socialism.

Meantime, why is the great Trade Union for all rural labourers—so long overdue—so slow in making its appearance? Have we no public-spirited philanthropist who will guarantee even £1,000 to set it going? It would be a greater boon materially and morally than either a hospital or a church. Some of our great ladies would win a noble fame were they to organise a flag day for the purpose.

LEIX.

IRELAND: ITS SAINTS AND SCHOLARS.

It is an ambitious project to set out to write an epitome of Montalembert's "Monks of the West" in one hundred and eighteen small pages. In his preface to "Ireland: Its Saints and Scholars," Mr. J. M. Flood makes the frank admission that "in the words of St. Columbanus, I wished to include everything, but I found it impossible to compass everything within a small compass." He goes on to quote from Dr. Healy to the effect that "while we speak glibly of the Saints and Scholars of the early times, we know, in general, very little about them," and expresses the hope that his work may in some degree supply the deficiency. That is to say, Mr. Flood's book is not intended for historians or specialists in early Irish monasticism, but for the ignorant and the uncultured, or, in other words, for ninety-nine per cent. of his possible readers.

Judged by the standard which he sets for himself, Mr. Flood's little book is a distinct success. Most of us know that St. Patrick banished the snakes from Ireland, that St. Columcille went to Iona, where he blessed the birds and fishes, that St. Kevin lived in St. Kevin's bed at Glendalough and pushed a lady called Kathleen into the water;—and, when that is said, our knowledge of Irish sanctity and scholarship comes to an abrupt and untimely end. We have no conception, if a reviewer of a very average amount of culture may be permitted to judge of others by himself—of the circumstances attending the introduction of Christianity into Ireland or its subsequent diffusion from Ireland through the continent of Europe. It is these circumstances that the author has, very briefly, it is true, set before his readers,—with the intention probably of encouraging them to have recourse to other and complete works on the same subject.

Mr. Flood has wisely devoted separate chapters to the three outstanding features of early Irish Christianity—St. Patrick, St. Columcille, and St. Columbanus. His account of each is, of necessity, fragmentary, but he has contrived to set down sufficient detail to give an impression of distinct personalities. One must be glad that he has found space to quote the closing passage in St. Patrick's Confession, and Adamnan's account of the Death of St. Columcille. Excellent also is his selection from the numerous incidents of the life of St. Columbanus of the Saint's letter of farewell to his community at Luxeuil,—a letter of which Montalembert writes that "recollections of classical antiquity mingle with evangelical instruction to dictate to the Saint some of the finest and proudest words which Christian genius has ever produced."

Space has not permitted Mr. Flood to write of the other Irish saints and missionaries except in the very shortest form, and his general chapters inevitably consist largely of lists of names. Yet even in these there is an interest for the average reader when he realises the extraordinary influence which Ireland, through her unflinching Catholicism,

THE STRIKE AT INCHICORE

The remarkable victory of the Transport Workers' Union in the recent dispute at Inchicore Railway Works is to some extent indicative of the new spirit. The issue from the outset was one of pure principle. The all-absorbing question of increase, the question of improved conditions of labour, and the other important questions that agitate the modern labour world were all absent from the dispute. But, "An injury to one is the concern of all," proved, on this occasion, a far more effective rallying cry than any prospect of material advantage or appeal to one's selfish interest could possibly furnish. As attempts have been made in certain quarters to cloud the issue and distort the facts, and, as the case is one of peculiar interest for the worker in general, a full statement of the case in the columns of "Irish Opinion" is desirable.

Two members of the Irish Transport Union employed at the Railway Works, Inchicore, were sent by their foreman at 12.45 to perform certain duties at places situated at some distance from the workshop where they are usually employed. The particular duties generally take about 20 minutes to perform, and, as the dinner hour is at 1 p.m., the men were obliged to exert themselves to the full so as to enable them to complete the work in time for dinner. This they succeeded in doing. But when returning to the workshop at 12.59, having carried out the work allotted to them by the foreman, they were met by the under-manager who, paying little heed to their

exercised over the mediaeval world. When contemporary English writers of the Belloc school write of Germany as a country which never accepted the Christian condition which England is supposed to have preserved in its purity, it is interesting to read of Irish monasteries at Erfurt, Wurzburg, Nuremberg, Memmingen, Vienna, and even in Bulgaria, and to know that in the tenth century Cologne possessed a large Irish colony, and that from 975 to 1061 all the abbots of the monastery of St. Martin in that city were Irishmen. Mr. Flood's accounts of "The Irish Learning" and "Early Christian Art in Ireland" are also much condensed; but within their limits they are well written and illuminating.

It is to be hoped that this little book will find a wide circulation. It deals with a subject which should be familiar to every Irishman, but of which most of us are lamentably ignorant. Our excuse for such ignorance is now taken away from us, since we can acquire at least the rudiments of knowledge of his subject from Mr. Flood. It only remains to say that the photographic illustrations from blocks lent by the National Museum, Dublin, are well selected, and that the book is, as one would expect, excellently printed and bound by the Talbot Press, Ltd. B

*By J. M. Flood, Dublin: The Talbot Press, Ltd. 2s. net.

legitimate explanation, peremptorily demanded their working checks and suspended them, one for a period of nine days, and the other for a period of seven. The punishment, severe at any time, and far in excess of the measure of the alleged offence, was considered unusually harsh under the prevailing circumstances when people are at their wit's ends to maintain themselves on the full weekly wage and when the difficulties of procuring the merest necessities are daily multiplying.

When the particulars of the suspensions became known to their fellow-workers feeling was roused to an extraordinary pitch. A special meeting of the committee was immediately summoned to consider their case. The General President, Mr. T. Foran, on being apprised of the facts, assured the Committee that the entire resources of the Union were behind them in any measures they considered it necessary to take in order to obtain justice and fair play for their victimised comrades. The general management was at once communicated with on the matter, but no reply was vouchsafed. The same scant courtesy was extended to a request to hear a deputation on behalf of the victimised men. In the meantime, the indignation roused by the autocratic action of the under-manager, fanned by what now appeared to be a studied attempt to ignore the men's union, had reached an almost uncontrollable pitch. An extraordinary general meeting of the members of the branch was summoned for Monday night. The men in large numbers went straight from work to the hall. They had come to act, and to act they determined without any waste of words. The facts were placed before the meeting in a few sentences. The letters to management were read: Then it was unanimously decided that unless the deputation appointed were received before 11 a.m. next day all would withdraw their labour at dinner-time. A further letter to the management requesting a hearing for their deputation with an intimation of the alternative decided on by the men, was dispatched from the meeting. But the management, blissfully ignorant of the extent of the discontent they had created, and with that perversity so characteristic of autocratic institutions, persisted in its ostrich-like tactics. The men, true to their decision of the night before, refused to return after dinner. Not a single man proved false to his principles. About 750 transport men and upwards of 100 men of kindred Unions participated in this protest.

Then, and then only, it seems, was it realised in responsible quarters that the old order had changed somewhat in recent years and that signs of the new era of the emergence of the worker from the serfdom of the past were beginning to manifest themselves even in Inchicore. At 6 p.m. the deputation so studiously ignored all the week was hurriedly sent for to discuss the affair. And in a sub-

sequent interview the deputation agreed to place the following terms of agreement before the men:—

"The men in question to be reinstated and paid their time. A day and a half's pay to be stopped and held for a twelve-month, to be then refunded if no offence were in the meantime committed by the men. All questions of suspensions and dismissals to be in future referred to manager for confirmation."

On first hearing the proposed terms the unanimous voice of the meeting was to insist on no penalisation whatever. But when it was pointed out that the men could not produce their working checks when desired to do so by the under-manager and that consequently a technical breach of the disciplinary regulations had to be admitted, the majority of those present agreed to accept the terms. Night men were requested to resume work at once, and all hands returned to work next morning. Mr. T. Foran was in attendance early in the night and was present when the deputation left to interview the management. He thanked the men for the splendid spirit displayed and congratulated them on the moral victory that had so speedily crowned their action. Their Union, he added, was untrammelled by connection with the other side of the Channel, and were therefore in a position to apply direct action on the spot without undergoing the circumlocutory processes so necessary in other organisations ere any redress of grievances could be gained. Their enemies boasted that the absence of Larkin and the death of Connolly had killed the Transport Union, but the militant spirit of their leaders had been bequeathed to everyone of the rank and file. They were a body of Irishmen controlled by Irishmen, and he hoped to see soon the day when a grand Federation of Irish workers would attend to the interests of the Irish workingman.

Expressions of approval of the stand made and congratulations on the victory are pouring in from all sides. The Committee desire to thank the various bodies for their whole-hearted support. They also wish publicly to thank the General President, Mr. T. Foran, for his unflagging interest during the dispute.

A TRANSPORT WORKER.

LABOUR PARTY FOR MANXLAND.

The working classes of the Isle of Man have marked the new year by the formation of a Labour Party in the island with the object of influencing the House of Keys elections, and generally of guarding the interests of wage-earners. All the trade union branches in the island have given their adhesion to the movement. Already the party is taking steps to fortify the Lieutenant-Governor in his refusal to accede to the Manx farmers' demands that the export of farm produce should be permitted.— "Justice."

Notes and Comments

This too, I know, and wise it were if each could know the same,
That every prison that men build, is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars, lest Christ should see how men their brothers maim.—Oscar Wilde.

Organising Ireland's Food Supply.

We have said repeatedly that the Irish Food Control Committee, appointed by Rhondda, was and is a farce and a fraud. Because those of its members who were really in earnest came to realise that, they resigned their seats. The Labour and co-operative representatives left the committee in disgust. They saw that nothing could be done in the interests of the Irish people, when those interests conflicted in any way with those of the English people. The means of subsistence were up to auction, they were for sale to the highest bidder. And England can bid higher than we can, so the beloved "law of supply and demand" was invoked. Ireland can be starved by the "law of supply and demand," if we stand idly by and permit that law to work itself out logically: If we do we shall have a goodly supply of English paper money and England will have eaten our food. The chairman of an English company stated recently, that "Rhondda was endeavouring to feed the people on printed forms." In Ireland we are to be fed upon "John Bradburys." The nourishment to be extracted from these will not keep us alive very long. We have sufficient food and we must conserve it for our own needs first. We have oats, but we are short of milling accommodation. We cannot procure the small mills necessary because the material and the labour is being employed in war. Yet if one had these mills we could have oatmeal in abundance and shipping space might be spared. The point of the whole obstruction policy seems to be that our oats crop is for export. We must make ourselves felt upon this question. We must get our mills and we must make certain of our own food. Each and every one of us must do our part, we cannot delegate our responsibilities. We hope that the Labour, Sinn Fein, and co-operative movements will come together and define an Irish food policy. These three forces can give us a Food Committee that will be genuinely Irish, and a committee that can and will control food in the interests of our people. We trust that an effort will be made to get these three great Irish movements to work harmoniously together for this purpose. If they do, much of our anxiety will be relieved.

The Convention and the Land.

The Convention that sits in Trinity College, Dublin, has, according to its published statements, been considering the question of land purchase. We do not see how this question comes within the scope of its terms of reference, but we suppose that some soft-soap was necessary to make the ramshackle thing carry on so long as it has. Land is a very useful thing politically as well as agriculturally in Ireland. If the landlords can sell out at a very good price they may reconsider their attitude towards self-government, and on the other hand the Irish farmer might be caught easily enough by a land purchase bait. The land gamble might be used both ways. If a land sale and purchase scheme is floated at present it is probable that the landlords will do very well indeed. They have done very well in their previous deals, more particularly in their last. At present, however, land is changing hands at very exorbitant prices, the demand for land is very great and the money available is equal to the necessities. So if the landlords can get a scheme going now they will make even greater fortunes than they made before. The Chairman of the Bank of Ireland, at the recent meeting of that body, pointed out the dangers of speculating in land, and warned his hearers against such dealing. When a warning comes from this quarter it is worth while listening to. It is probable, according to the evidently inspired words of the English Press, that the Convention will end its labours during this week. Should this be so we must scan its findings very carefully, and above all watch the land bribe. It is, perhaps, thought that the bribery that carried the Union might, perhaps, be usefully employed in an opposite direction. Our farmers must watch the political effects of this suggested land scheme, and the entire Irish people is con-

cerned in the price given to the landlord class to give up, not only their land, but their political grip. We shall probably be asked to pay heavily for both, and shall pay more dearly in the future.

Portarlinton.

For some weeks past a strike has been in progress at Messrs. Russell's saw mills at Portarlinton. The men employed demanded an increased wage, and the firm offered an increase to all who were not members of any trade union, but more especially to those who did not belong to the Transport Workers' Union. This was virtually a lock-out notice, it was a challenge to the men, and the men accepted it as such. They have now been out for several weeks and throughout that period their conduct has been exemplary. Despite the peaceful demeanour of the men, extra police forces were drafted into the town. It appeared as if the "authorities" were going to assist Messrs. Russell to break the spirit of the men. This has been tried before in many places and it has invariably failed. It will fail in Portarlinton as it has failed elsewhere. The tactics of the agent-provocateur, of those who employed the notorious Alex. Gordon in England, are being employed in Portarlinton. They began by the arrest of Mr. Dowling, the Transport Union organiser, on Friday last. So far as we can learn no provocation whatever was given for this arrest. The police took the initiative as they have done on so many other occasions in similar circumstances. The organiser was hurried off to the train and conveyed to Dublin, under a strong escort, where he was lodged in Mountjoy Jail. The police in Portarlinton, and elsewhere, must be taught that a strike is a perfectly legal method of redressing a grievance. At present they seem to lack this knowledge, and the sooner it is imparted to them and to their superiors, the better it will be for all concerned. The loss of Dowling at this juncture may be severe, but it may be made up by a willing determination on the part of those who are fighting the battle of labour in Portarlinton.

Forcible Feeding.

At present some political prisoners in Mountjoy Jail are on hunger strike. They are Kerry men, convicted upon charges arising out of the Listowel races affray. The men contend that they are entitled to treatment as political offenders and, of course, the prison authorities deny them this status. As a consequence the men have now been hunger striking for over a week. The prisoners demand the treatment granted to prisoners after the death of Thomas Ashe; instead they are being forcibly fed as he was. This inhuman torture is now being endured by these men. One would think that it is possible for governments to learn by experience; if so one would be wrong. Experience evidently teaches governments nothing, particularly in Ireland. The death of Thomas Ashe and the stories told at the inquest touched the Irish people very deeply. The details of the treatment known as "forcible feeding" revolted us, as they would revolt all civilized human beings. The prisoners are strapped to a chair, a tube is inserted through the nose or down the throat, and liquid food is inserted. We know from the evidence at the inquest upon Thomas Ashe that this treatment is extremely dangerous. From the medical evidence we conclude that this treatment is not of a very refined kind. All the doctors who gave evidence at the Ashe inquest condemned it without reserve, yet, despite this, the men now in Mountjoy Jail are being subjected to it. The effort of the prison authorities is towards breaking the spirit of the men. They will not succeed, but if they persist they may make the men physical wrecks or lunatics. We must enter our protest as vigorously as we can against the continued resort to these methods which still disgrace what we are sometimes pleased to call Christian civilization. Such inhumanity must cease, and the entire people must bring that about.

IRISH OPINION

THE VOICE OF LABOUR

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY.

EVERY THURSDAY, ONE PENNY.

Literary communications should be addressed to the Editor, and business communications to the Manager, at the Office, 27 Dawson Street, Dublin.

Matter intended for publication in the following issue must reach the Office not later than Monday forenoon.

Subscription Rates.—13 weeks, 1s. 8d.; 26 weeks, 3s. 3d.; 52 weeks, 6s. 6d., post free in Ireland and Great Britain, payable in advance. Cross cheques and p.o.'s and make payable to "Irish Labour Press," 27 Dawson Street, Dublin.

Advertising Rates may be obtained from Advertising Manager, 65 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.

Man-Power and Conscription.

The British Government has gone on one of its periodic combing-out expeditions. More men are, it appears, necessary to carry on the war to what Lloyd George and his friends would call "a victorious peace," and accordingly the pledges given from time to time to the British trade unions are again to be violated. The necessity for more men, for more "food for powder," is of course the primary cause of all the definition of war aims speeches of the past few weeks. We have heard much of war aims when what we want to hear is of the war end. However, if the British people desire to carry on a war it is very little concern of ours except in so far as we are incidentally affected thereby. And we are affected. We are being taxed in the most shameless manner; our taxation has been doubled during the war period, and except we can take preventive measures that taxation will be enormously increased in the very near future. Then the economic effects of war are also being felt in Ireland. We have found the cost of living steadily mount higher and higher as the war is prolonged; we find ourselves in common with practically all Europe on the verge of famine. We are affected by the war. The worker here is certainly not a war profiteer, he cannot afford to purchase costly pianos or go to an expensive spa, as we are told some workers in English war works do. European civilisation is in danger, and when this is so it is our duty as Europeans to do our best to terminate this war upon a basis of justice. The alternatives are not as Lloyd George stated to "go out or go under." We refuse to believe that the war cannot be ended now. We refuse to believe in the Lloyd George alternatives. We believe a peace can be made now on the basis of the Russian formula.

We should not be interested in the callousness of British statesmanship if we were not so vitally affected by it. As Europeans we have no desire to see the Europe that we knew and all it stood for go down in horror. But if people have imperial ambitions they must be prepared to pay imperial prices for them. If English democracy cherishes, as we believe it does in

its heart, that imperialism for which in pre-war days it sang and cheered it must be prepared to pay the price demanded. If English workers desire to set the Jews once again in Palestine, when the Jews themselves are none too keen on such a state, it is again none of our business, the English workers must pay the price. Sufficient for us at this time to guard our own interests. English labour if it wants this horror to continue will pay the price gladly; if it does not the price need not be paid as the horror must cease. It is not Lloyd George or Clemenceau, or even Woodrow Wilson or the Kaiser that keeps this bloodshed going. It is the workers of Europe both in the trenches and in the workshops. And if it is their desire to continue this war they have but to say the word. They can stop it if they so desire. We have none too high an opinion of what is called English Democracy, in fact we do not believe in its existence. We believe the English people has been steadily and continuously prevented from becoming a democracy as much by its own leaders as by those whom those same leaders oftentimes revile. The spirit of true democracy is not yet in England the flame it is in other lands. An Englishman will not believe in the brotherhood of man so long as he continues to think of himself as a super-man, and he thought of himself as a super-man before Nietzsche was born. Imperialism and conceit are not the visible signs of democracy; they are the visible signs of the England of to-day.

As usual when this man-power question comes up for discussion in England there are people there who cast envious glances at Ireland. Take these Irish shirkers and make them fight, the English press screams on its top note, and people in England are being asked to sign petitions in favour of the conscription of our people. It is perhaps for such people as useful an occupation as they might be engaged in; it is at all events less irritating to others than flag days and the good souls are filled with the imperial zeal of "doing their bit." We should think that the lessons of the Australian referendum would in any case be lost upon such people who are of the same calibre as the great Hughes himself, but we are not quite prepared to believe that any power on earth can make unwilling men fight. As we have said before, we want this war to end immediately, and that is at least a logical reason for not wanting to continue it by going into it ourselves. We detest militarism more heartily than those in England who denounce the Prussian brand. All militarism is equally detestable to us as all militarism is equally anti-democratic. We doubt the sincerity of the war aims as outlined by those in power. We doubt them because we in Ireland come within the clause about the liberation of small nations, and we have so far seen no hurry manifested in the withdrawal of the British garrison from Ireland and the reception of our ambassador at the Court of St. James. The alleged war aims of Lloyd George and Clemenceau will require to be put into operation before any enthusiasm can be manifested in this country. Till then we refuse to listen. We will not accept conscription upon any terms whatsoever. That perhaps is definite enough to be understood and we mean it.

LABOUR IN IRELAND.

Achill.

From far-off Achill comes a request for trade union organisation for the two-thousand migratory labourers, men, women and children, who go to Great Britain for about six months in the year. Those who have seen them under the vile conditions of housing afforded them by the fat and prosperous farmers of Great Britain can only marvel at the God-like nobility of the human nature that passes annually through these hells untainted.

Enniskillen.

The Enniskillen workers are forming a Labour Club, and have enrolled over 50 members. They are anxious to forward the organisation of farm labourers, Council workers and carters; and to improve the position of carpenters, masons, building trade workers, railwaymen, postmen, and all grades and sections. The club is an experiment inspired by Connolly's policy of "one big union." The divisions in the ranks of our class make for weakness. Where unions are competing for members, the non-unionists slip between the rival organisers. The club will make it an object to eliminate the non-unionist, and we hope to see it a vigorous centre of the Irish Labour Party.

TINORI.

Cork Chemist's Queer Query.

We have no objection to giving publicity, at the request of the Irish Chemists' Assistants' Association, to the following letter from Mr. Eugene MacSweeney, "Pharmaceutical Chemist and Optician, M.P.S. (Lon.); M.P.S.I., F.S.M.C., F.I.O., Diplomas by Examination, the Modern Pharmacy, 91 Patrick Street, Cork." It was addressed to a mere male who applied to Mr. Eugene, etc., etc., for a berth.

28th December, 1917.

Dear Sir—I duly received your letter re assistantship and would have replied sooner but pressure of business during Christmas prevented me. I have no vacancy for a man assistant but could put you in touch with a firm where a good man is wanted if you are suitable. Please let me know if you are a member of the Chemists' Assistants' Association or contemplate joining.—Yours faithfully,
EUGENE MacSWEENEY.

Eugene, etc., is described as the largest advertising chemist in Ireland and the vendor of "Tinori," which has become familiar to all newspaper readers.

We are informed that he conducts his business with a staff of sixteen women, some of whom are premium apprentices.

We invite Eugene to tell us if these women are paid the same wages as men would receive, and to explain to the Trade Unionists of Ireland why he asks "if you are a member of the Chemists' Assistants' Association or contemplate joining." We shall publish his explanation with pleasure, without charge for the advertisement.

BELFAST NOTES.

The Linen Workers have demanded a further advance of wages and the Committee of Production have heard the arguments for and against. The workers ask for an increase of 12s. 6d. for men and 7s. 6d. for women. A decision is expected during this week. This is now a "controlled" industry. The shortage of flax may necessitate short time in the mills. The workers won't object to the short time provided full wages are paid! We hope they will see to it that the shortage of flax won't be made an excuse for the shortage of dinners.

Bookbinders.

The Belfast Bookbinders have won a further 4s. 6d. per week; this time without a strike. This makes 9s. 6d. within two months, bringing the weekly standard up to 47s. 6d.

Dock Labourers.

The men at the cross-channel boats, members of the National Union of Dock Labourers, have been out for a week over a dispute about wages. These are time-workers and they demanded an increase in rates. The employers, taking advantage of the fact that the traffic has been seriously interrupted recently, retorted by a counter-offer which would mean a serious loss to the men. Hence the strike. The Liverpool, Ardrossan and Ayr boats are affected and they have been obliged to sail without discharging or loading cargoes—with passengers only. Developments are expected.

Drapers' Assistants.

Another struggle is threatened between the Union and one or two of the drapery houses. It appears evident that some victimisation is going on which may portend serious trouble. We shall not say anything further for the moment pending negotiations, except this: that the action of the police in one case deserves the severest condemnation and ought to be dealt with by the highest authority.

Boilermakers.

The recent strike was brought to an end on the promise of an early decision of the Ministry of Production on the matter in dispute. Deputations have been to London and returned with stories of double-dealing and deceit. And this time it is not the Government that is the culprit. A mass meeting was called for Thursday last to decide upon further action, but on receipt of a definite promise by telegram that a decision would be arrived at on Tuesday the meeting reluctantly adjourned until that day. If the verdict is not satisfactory—well, we hope Harry Howard (the district delegate) is of pensionable age!

SYRUP.

"Your little paper is great, and every Irishman should read it. It is the finest pennyworth on the market. I have enclosed 1s. 8d. for next quarter."—Battersea, London.

FLAX SCUTCHING CHARGES.

Departmental Inquiry at Strabane.

At the above Inquiry held in Strabane on Thursday, the 10th inst., before Mr. W. J. McGaw, Mr. J. W. Stewart, and Mr. J. Stewart,

Mr. Leo W. Mulhern, President of the North-West Flax Scutchers' Branch of the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, stated that his Union was putting in for an increase of wages for its members, made up at the following rates: £3 bounty and 10s. per cwt. for scutching, and 8s. per cwt. with board and lodging and a war bonus of 10s. per week from the opening of the 1917 season.

Mr. McCaul, Tyrone, supported Mr. Mulhern's proposal, and denied that the scutchers' wages had gone up 100 per cent.

Mr. Mulhern, Raphoe, is a well-known figure in the labour movement and President of the Agricultural Workers' Section N.A.U.L. He has placed the flax scutchers in a good position to get a fair wage for a fair day's work, and drafted out scutchers' bye-laws, which protects their interests in every way. In the harvest strike and trouble last year Mr. Mulhern was a leading figure, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the agricultural labourers getting a living wage, and but for the harvest strike in Derry, Donegal and Tyrone, we question if we would have a minimum wage fixed for Irish agricultural labourers to-day.

Mr. Mulhern has organised a great number of branches in Tyrone and Donegal, his last successful effort being the organising of the workers of the Convoy Woollen Mills, and though only a short time organised, on Mr. Mulhern and Mr. George Greig, Irish delegate, Belfast, making a claim on their behalf, the workers were successful in getting a fair increase on time and piece rates.

WEXFORD WORKERS' GAINS.

Our Wexford Notes last week were attributed to Mr. P. White, Secretary of Wexford Trades and Labour Council. This we regret to state was an error. The article was compiled from information culled from several sources and used in the form in which it appeared to fill a space left vacant by the operation of the censorship. The make-up of the page afforded evidence of this. We at this office accept full responsibility for all that appeared under the above heading.

Wexford Trades and Labour Council is to be commended for its enterprise in issuing a list of the Maximum Retail Prices for the protection of consumers from the exactions of profiteers.

GAELIC STATE FELLOWSHIP.

Sir,—Mr. Donovan's article on the New Gaelic State is splendid and timely. The time has come when the question of putting our social system on a new and national basis must be discussed. I hope Labour and Sinn Fein have read the article in question with seeing eyes. The time for "rubbing vaseline on the cancer" is gone, I hope for ever. Let us form the Gaelic State Fellowship.—Yours, etc.,

KATELEEN M'GOWRAN.

FILÍ AGUS LUÓT SAOCHAIR.

Le LIAM P. Ó RIADH.

Na dánta agus na hamháin atá i gcóir... "Dánta Spioruithe Gaedhal" agus "Sliocht Duanaire Gaedilge" (Maunrel) bíodas i n-úil dom ceana, ac má bí péin, do faoiltear agus mé 'sá léigead sup leabair nua do bí agam. Do b'úna liom có mór agus do tairnig pé liom. An có-maitear, an glémeadonú, fá ndear é, soubriar liom péin ra veirpe. Tá d'fhioc mór idir na hairtí úp ioxta péin, ac ar rli táro ar don ixléact amáin. Táro go léir pitea/a, ar móda éasrúla. Fanann a léigteoir ar don-rtáro intleacta le linn a léigte. Doim iolarúda d'éin-bhí amáin ip ead iad, dar leir. Ip ionann ran agus a pláó go ndearna an piarraó a curo oibre go paitéac ealadanta. File a b'ead é, agus fion-filioct de éineál éigin do toig pé sac uair.

Ip annam a b'ior na cnuarairí agus na heasairtóirí có hairteac, có rnuaintéac, có glé-breiteamda agus do bíod páoraió. An Craoibín, an Laoirdeac, Eoin Mac Néill, an tAdair páorais Ó Duinnín, Enrí Ó Muirgeara, "Tóma," Tomár Ó Rataille, an tAdair Seán Mac Siolla Éain (nó Mac an Fion Léiginn?), Tomár Ó Máille, Míceál Ó Tiománaide, "Fingín na Leanna," Ríreáro Ó Foglúda, agus easairtóirí eile nac iad, ip seál liom a raótar; ip doimín oíur iad máí cnuarairí filiocta na fúola. Ac tá cam-éiarúioct, leam-panntaóct, craobrgaóilte aca, có mait leir an deas-filioct. Tá dhruim rin ip mimic léigteoirí na linne reo tuirreac de'n "éigre." Eapbaró fion-iasairtóiréacra ip cinnte le n-a lán de'n tuirre, dar liom. Toza na filiocta dar cum sac ugoarí gan bacad leir an gcuro eile rin an méro ip cuibe ceart a cur amac ip na laete reo. Nuair a b'ear éipe an-doimín ar filioct na nGaedhal arir béro a malairt de rseal agáinn, b'éirip.

Dubairt an Stóiceac fá "féilipe Dongura" (Céile Dé): "Hepe ar in almoré all the Celtic poetry that I have read, substance ip ruchtlerly racuriceo to form, and the obreivance of the rigoirour ruter of metric reemp rergaróed ar an end in irrelp." Tá an méro rin nó-éruaró, ac tá curo de'n fipinne ann. Tá panntaóct

Gaedilge agáinn agus tá rí go han-fuirmeac; nil bhí ná intleact le n-aiurú inre ac an oirtear agus a b'ior i n-imipt carcaí. Ar an tairó eile de'n rseal tá a lán dar b'filióct agus tá iol-áille le motú inre; tá iol-aoibneap le baint airé. Ni léir do'n dor ós ac fion-beasán de'n áilleact agus de'n aoibneap go fóill. Na fion-easairí ar na meapadóirí ac ip rava filite an rseal é.

Daineann ceirt na héigre go mór le luóct raótar. Ni béro rí áicionta neaprtmar, iomlán nó go mbéro rí i mboirrad r i mblac na meaprg. Ni béro ríad-ran raor, rona, fion-rármair gan i. San péim acá ríomáinn béro sac d'ime pláinteac na raótruí agus sac raótruí na eolac. Béro curpóir Séamuir Uí Conraile i ngníom ra traozal coitianta.

Ag tagairt do na filí, cuimngim ar Dora Sigeirron. Ip rrua liom a himeact uainn. Do élarí rí leir na Gaedala i gcóinnú. Tárla dhiread cpoí ói i n-aimpír páire ar bair na laóera. Ac do sab bhóo agus beoact anma i ar oteact airéirge rrioparó ar fuo na héireann. Ip iomda amlán ríamair do ceap rí, le linn dian-breiteacra péin, fá céarad ar éróact a rúcair i seém. Cúgam-ra, i gcóir an "Neparó," do cuiread a b'pupmóir. Do fáruig curo aca ar a ndearna rí ríome rin "The Sacred Fire," cur i sacp. Tairfear a rseal go léir lá éigin, agus ip seál a b'ear a hainm i rtaip na linne reo.

One Big Union

To the Editor of "Irish Opinion." Sir,—The questions you ask in reference to Labour organisation are such as are difficult to answer definitely enough to meet future conditions. I agree with that part of the late James Connolly's article which condemns the present system of sectional Trade Unionism. Under that system we have so much overlapping, so much time and energy wasted, not to speak of financial loss through organisers and secretaries covering the same areas, looking after the interests of different units which under one centralised scheme, would be component parts of a whole.

The Ideal Labour Union, in my opinion, is one including all classes of both what is termed skilled and unskilled labour. It should have one executive to control finances, to receive recommendations, to prepare rules and shape policies. Next, district committees extensive enough to have a sound fin-

ancial basis and with powers to arrange local conditions and to settle disputes, also to link all sections and grades of labour so that the influence of one trade or section could be used to help others working under less advantageous circumstances. This would also in due course tend to develop the spirit of brotherhood which is the fundamental principle of trade unionism, and which has been so much restricted under the old methods that we have one body of craftsmen despising another, not because their work is not of the same utility or value, but rather because through lack of organisation they have not been able to command the same wage rate. There should be at least one organiser for each district, holding a permanent appointment and responsible to the district committee only. The work of organisers would be to open new branches and to assist those already in existence.

Under a system of this nature the branches should not have too great a membership.

The Diversity of Interests, the assistance and advice which one class of workers could render to another would make the ordinary work of the "branch" far more interesting than that of a single trade or craft. There is so much monotony where you have only one interest that members as a general rule prefer to send their contributions and take no further trouble in the work. Again, members of a union such as I am trying to portray would find their knowledge of the general conditions of life much more comprehensive, their interest in the well-being of their fellow-men more earnest, and as a result the trend of their whole outlook on life would be such that with broadened vision and greater strength of mental power, they would become better citizens and more able to shape and control not only the functions of labour, but also the destiny of the nation of which they form a part.

Another point is the name and aim of such a system of organised labour. As a cosmopolitan myself, I object to the idea of giving a labour organisation a national name. The history of the evolution of world government teaches us, if it teaches anything, that the day of nations is passing away as surely as that of clans and kingdoms. We speak now of the confederation of States, the co-ordination of empires, and a league of nations. Seeing this, would it not be a backward step to nationalise a union of labour? What is actually needed to-day is the federation and amalgamation of trade and labour societies into one centralised system, having for its aim similarity of conditions, equality of remuneration, and an opportunity for the development of both mind and body to the work best suited to the individual taste. The ultimate aim of all its operations should be to unite the workers of the world.—Yours faithfully,

ALEXANDER ADAMS.

Siege of Derry: Clarke Plays King James.

Bonus for Factory Workers.

Apparently the female workers in the shirt industry in Derry are beginning to learn the value of Trades Unionism. For many years these workers have been exploited by the arrogant tribe of capitalists who control this industry in the Maiden City. Starvation wages were the rule and would still have been had the workers remained inactive and been content to allow the wealth they create to slip quietly into the pockets of their exploiters. After a short and brisk campaign the workers have scored an initial success over the employers, making up by their determination and fighting spirit on this occasion for their apathy of the past.

In July last Mrs. Pete Curran came to Derry to organise the factory workers, and succeeded in forming a Factory Workers' Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses. The first offensive of the newly-formed Organisation was to make a demand to the employers for a 15 per cent. war bonus. In connection with this demand Mrs. Curran on several occasions waited on the employers without success. The matter being then reported to the Ministry of Labour an enquiry was ordered. The employers made an offer of a war bonus to apply to those only who were engaged on military work. This was promptly rejected, and after some delay a second enquiry was ordered. As a result of this, the Arbitrator, Mr. Jas. Andrews, issued the following award:— The wages of time workers of 18 years and upwards to be advanced 12½ per cent. and of piece workers of 18 years and upwards 10 per cent; workers under 18 to receive half these awards; the advance to apply to overtime.

At a mass meeting of the Society in the Guildhall on Tuesday evening, 8th inst., presided over by Councillor Con Doherty, the awards were unanimously accepted.

Mrs. Curran said it did not surprise her that there was some dissatisfaction with the amount of the award, yet considering the conditions under which they had to fight and the short time at their disposal there was not much ground for complaint. They should accept it and, like Oliver Twist, ask for more. A point to be emphasised was that the bonus applied to country workers, a class which had been too much neglected in the past and consequently used time and again by the employers against the town worker. She reminded those engaged in the knitting and underclothing industry that their interests were also being looked after, and hoped they would soon be awarded a bonus.

A rather disagreeable duty which had to be performed by the meeting was the passing of a resolution condemning the action of a workers' representative in agreeing with a representative of the employers on the Trade Board to alter the date of the increase of rates from 31st December to 24th January.

This will surely bring home to workers

the necessity of appointing to negotiate with employers only those who have the courage of their convictions and who recognise, with Marx, that "by cowardly giving way in their every-day conflict with capital they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement."

Straight Talk to Teachers.

A meeting in support of the teachers' demands was held in the Guildhall on Saturday evening, 4th inst. On the platform were representatives of all the Churches, the Corporation, and the Trades Council. Letters expressing approval of the objects of the meeting were received from the Catholic and Protestant Bishops and from Messrs. O'Doherty and Kelly, M.P.'s.

Resolutions were adopted demanding a grant adequate to place Irish education on a footing similar to that of Great Britain; declaring the proposed grant to be unjust; calling for the appointment of a body similar to the Craik Committee in Scotland; and demanding a war bonus on at least civil service lines, retrospective and payable without delay. A number of speakers, lay and clerical, explained the grievances of the teachers, which, by the way, were perfectly well known to all present. The right note, however, was struck by Dean M'Glinchy, St. Columb's College, who stated that for the last forty years the teachers, as he knew from experience, had put too much dependence on kid-glove methods. They should recognise that they were up against the British Treasury and Dr. Starkie himself, for all that gentleman's professed sympathy for them. He regretted the teachers had not an organisation like labour, with funds at its disposal, so that they could go on strike. He advised them to enlist the support of all organisations, Orange, Hibernian, Sinn Fein, and Labour, and create such an agitation as would compel the concession of their demands.

Corporation Crux.

A serious municipal crisis has arisen in Derry which is pregnant with grave possibilities. In accordance with pledges given to the promoters of the Shipyard, the Corporation are promoting a Municipal Improvement Bill the chief feature of which is a water supply on an extensive scale. The Nationalist members (numbering 16 and representing about 22,000 citizens), who are in favour of the undertaking, and who have hitherto supported the promotion of the Bill, have now threatened opposition in Parliament unless the Unionists (numbering 24 and representing about 18,000 citizens) consent to such a redistribution of the municipal wards as will ensure the Nationalist population a representation at least equal to that of the Unionists. Alleging that the holding up of the Bill, if persisted in, will "successfully swamp" the establishment of shipbuilding in Derry, Mr. Trevisa Clarke, managing director of the Foyle Shipyard, has suspended all work connected with the development of the

firm, including erection of a boiler and marine engine factory intended ultimately to employ about 3,000 hands, and the erection of houses for workers. The result is that between 300 and 400 men are thrown out of employment. A special meeting of the Corporation was held on Tuesday, 15th inst., to consider a communication from Mr. Clarke, in which he also refers to the possible removal of the business to some other port. The Nationalist Party (which includes five Labour men) maintained an attitude of opposition. Alderman M'Carron (Labour), member of the Irish Convention, stated that he had been undecided as to what attitude to adopt until he heard Mr. Clarke's letter read. He regarded it as an attempt to intimidate the workers from asserting their rights. The only attitude consistent with trades union principles was that of opposition. Councillor Logue (Chairman of Trades Council) said that the last meeting of the Corporation had been adjourned, at the suggestion of the Mayor, to see if unanimity could be arrived at. With full knowledge of this Mr. Clarke took matters into his own hands, with the result that hundreds of men were now out of work and their wives starving. This only strengthened the determination of the workers to have their rights. The Unionists created the only obstacle to the Bill by their attempt to maintain ascendancy. After a long debate the Nationalist motion, that the Shipyard be informed that the Corporation would agree to redistribution and that all opposition would be dropped, was defeated, and the Unionist amendment, that the matter be referred to a meeting of the electors on 4th February, was carried by 16 votes to 13.

Apart altogether from the political question involved, there is something radically wrong with the social system which leaves in the hands of one individual the power to deprive hundreds of his fellow-men of their means of livelihood, and under which it is possible to withhold from workers "the right to labour" unless they be prepared to pay the degrading price of the surrender of their political rights.

Backsheesh for Butter.

O'Connell's remark as to driving a coach and four through any Act of Parliament is amply justified by what is taking place in Derry at present. People are going out into the country roads to meet the butter and milk-carts on their way to the city, handing the driver 3/6 or 4/-, ordering a pound of butter and telling him to keep the change.

As the poorer class cannot afford to grease the "Clutching Hand" there need not be any fear of too much butter sliding in their direction. If the workers desire to stop this sort of thing they must "Wrench" the control of food from the present caucus and insist on its being vested in a trustworthy body with full power to commandeer and distribute any commodity, when the occasion demands such action.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES BOARD FOR IRELAND

ORDER FIXING MINIMUM RATES OF WAGES FOR MALE AGRICULTURAL WORKMEN UNDER 21 YEARS OF AGE IN IRELAND.

WHEREAS, on the 1st December, 1917, the Agricultural Wages Board, under the powers vested in them by the Corn Production Act, 1917, made a proposal to fix Minimum Rates of Wages for male workmen under the age of 21 years, and for the different areas in Ireland as set out in the Schedule annexed to their Order dated the 10th November, 1917, and

WHEREAS the said proposal was duly advertised and published on the 5th day of December, 1917, and

WHEREAS a month has elapsed since the publication of said Notice,

NOW THEREFORE WE, the Agricultural Wages Board for Ireland, having considered the objections to the said proposal lodged with us during the said period of one month, do hereby fix minimum rates of wages as hereinafter stated; for the different classes of male workers under 21 years of age, and for the different groups of areas mentioned in the Schedule annexed to the Board's Order of the 10th November, 1917, and these rates of wages shall apply except in so far as otherwise expressly provided in this Order.

TABLE OF SUMMER RATES.
Male Workers, aged 18 to 21 years.

GROUP.	Week.	Day.	Hour.	Overtime.
I.	...	23/0	3/10	4½d. 7d.
II.	...	21/0	3/6	4½d. 6½d.
III.	...	19/0	3/2	4d. 6d.

Male Workers, aged 16 to 18 years.

GROUP.	Week.	Day.	Hour.	Overtime.
I.	...	16/-	2/8	3½d. 4½d.
II.	...	14/0	2/4	3d. 4½d.
III.	...	12/0	2/0	2½d. 3½d.

TABLE OF WINTER RATES.
Male Workers, aged 18 to 21 years.

GROUP I.	Week.	Day.	Hour.
8 Hour Day	...	18/6	3/1 4½d.
9 Hour Day	...	20/6	3/5 4½d.
10 Hour Day	...	23/0	3/10 4½d.

GROUP II.	Week.	Day.	Hour.
8 Hour Day	...	17/0	2/10 4½d.
9 Hour Day	...	19/0	3/2 4½d.
10 Hour Day	...	21/0	3/6 4d.

GROUP. III.	Week.	Day.	Hour.
8 Hour Day	...	15/6	2/7 4d.
9 Hour Day	...	17/0	2/10 3½d.
10 Hour Day	...	19/0	3/2 3½d.

Male Workers, aged 16 to 18 years.

GROUP I.	Week.	Day.	Hour.
8 Hour Day	...	13/0	2/2 3½d.
9 Hour Day	...	14/6	2/5 3½d.
10 Hour Day	...	16/0	2/8 3½d.

GROUP II.	Week.	Day.	Hour.
8 Hour Day	...	11/6	1/11 3d.
9 Hour Day	...	12/6	2/1 3d.
10 Hour Day	...	14/0	2/4 3d.

GROUP III.	Week.	Day.	Hour.
8 Hour Day	...	10/0	1/8 2½d.
9 Hour Day	...	11/0	1/10 2½d.
10 Hour Day	...	12/0	2/0 2½d.

Male workers under 21 years of age employed regularly as Ploughmen, Herds, Marketmen, or Carters, shall be paid the full wage applicable to these classes as fixed by the Board's Order of the 10th November, 1917.

Male workmen under 21 years of age, whose hours of work, owing to the nature of their employment cannot be strictly limited and who have to work overtime or on Sunday, shall not be subject to the overtime provisions contained in this Order, but shall be paid for overtime and Sunday work an inclusive amount in excess of the minimum rate for the different classes as follows:—

18 years to 21 years, 16 years to 18 years.

GROUP I.	...	2/6	...	2/0
GROUP II.	...	2/0	...	1/6
GROUP III.	...	1/6	...	1/0

This Order shall be read with the Board's Order of the 10th November, 1917, and except as herein stated, the conditions of the said Order of the 10th November, 1917, shall apply to the Rates fixed in this Order in the same manner as if this Order formed part of the Order on the 10th November, 1917, and the Schedule to the Order of the 10th November, 1917, shall likewise apply to this Order.

The provisions of this Order shall take effect as from the 14th day of January, 1918, and shall remain in force until the 9th day of November, 1918, or until varied either wholly or in part by the Board.

CHARLES H. O'CONNOR (Chairman).
M. C. RUSSELL.
E. M. CUNNINGHAM.
KILLANIN.
P. BRADLEY.
TIMOTHY RALEIGH.
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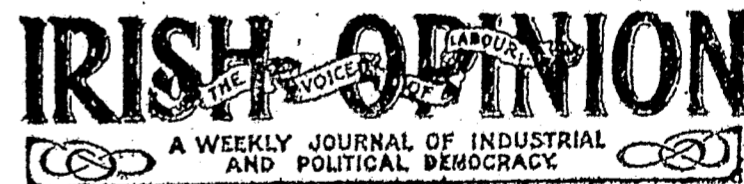
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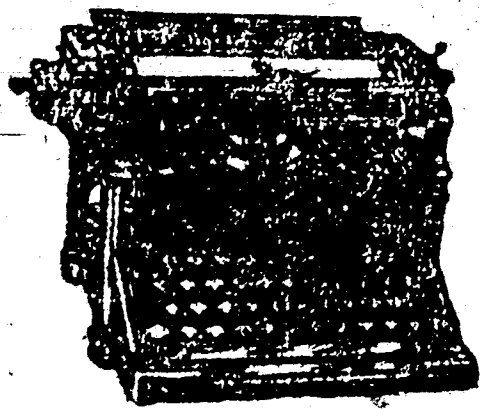
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