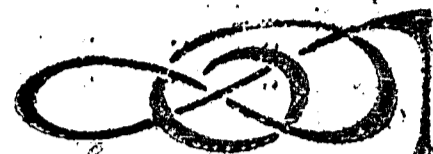


IRISH OPINION

THE VOICE OF LABOUR



A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL
AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY.



EDITED BY CATHAL O'SHANNON.

NEW SERIES. Vol. I, No. 19.

APRIL 6, 1918.

ONE PENNY

"C. U." on
the Gaelic.

Tuppering the
International.

Rural
Workers.

SOCIALISM AND SINN FEIN.

BY PATRICK THOMPSON, Assistant Editor, "The New Way."

(R. J. P. MORTSHED)

Sinn Fein and Socialism in Ireland are both in need of constructive criticism and the two movements must furnish it to each other reciprocally, for no other parties are disposed to do any thinking about fundamental issues. The controversy between Father Gaynor and "E. Guff," ought, therefore, to be welcomed and continued. So, I venture to offer some criticism from the standpoint of an Irish Socialist (probably in "Guffic" phrase a "drawing-room" Socialist).

Father Gaynor does Irish Socialism good service in so flatly contradicting its favourite assertion that the Gaelic system was communal and that modern Socialism is therefore in a special sense natural to Ireland.

From Communism to Landlordism.

The ownership of land everywhere and at every time has taken three main forms. Firstly, land is owned by the community as a whole; the several families have the right to cultivate each a particular portion, but part remains always in common and the whole is periodically redistributed. This develops into the second form when, though some land is still absolutely common, the periodical distribution has lapsed and the several families, each tilling the same plot year after year, have become in effect the owners of those plots. In the third form, the individual owners of plots diminish in number and a single owner acquires special, if not exclusive, rights over common lands and absorbs or obtains rights over the other landowners. That is in broad outline the development from primitive communism to feudalism, the forerunner of modern landlordism.

In Ireland

the native development had reached, I think, the end of the second and the beginning of the third stage. I do not know of any reason for supposing that the future development would not have followed the normal course in Ireland as elsewhere, invasion or no invasion. The invasion was an abrupt and painful attempt to impose a complete feudalism from the outside before the internal development was ripe for it.

But there can be little doubt that the internal development would have been essentially the same. The process can be traced in every country of Europe and the earlier stages are still visible in Russia and in India and other parts of Asia. The Gaelic State may have had its peculiar excellences, though it would require a knowledge of comparative history far surpassing that of the average Sinn Feiner or Socialist to appraise them rightly—but its "communism" was neither peculiar nor specially excellent. The Sinn Feiner may perhaps be excused for making that mistake, but the Irish Socialist's reading might be expected at least to have included some reference to the "manorial system" in England.

Failure of Peasant Proprietorship.

But if it be agreed that the Gaelic State of the past was based on peasant proprietorship of land rather than communal ownership, it does not follow that peasant proprietorship can be a sufficient basis for the Gaelic State of the future. It offers no solution at all of the urban problems which daily grow more urgent. Nor does it really solve any rural problem. To begin with, peasant proprietors are not the only rural workers. There are agricultural labourers—landless wage-slaves still, and likely to remain so for all the help the proprietors will give them. Moreover, farmers have children. Either the land must descend to the eldest son alone and all the rest be disinherited, or else the holdings must be continually subdivided down to the point where economic farming becomes impossible. It is still an unsettled issue whether large-scale or small-scale farming is the more advantageous in the long run, but peasant proprietorship tends to enforce small farming and make large farming impossible. From the point of view of the consumer, peasant proprietorship as we have it now is indefensible. The State has transferred the ownership of land to some thousands of individuals, who are left to do as much or as little with it as they please. Whatever progress has been made

(Continued on page 219.)

NOTES OF THE WEEK.

(As Passed by Censor.)

We Will Not Have It.

It is impossible to estimate the numbers of dead and dying and wounded on both sides in the human slaughter-house of the great battle on the Western front. The carnage has been terrific, and of the hundreds of thousands of torn and mangled men and boys, the overwhelming majority are of the working class. Unselfish, unthinking, blinded working class!

And it is at this moment when great armies are locked in a struggle to the death—for we cannot see how the war is to continue indefinitely after the last dread days of March—it is at this moment that some of the people responsible for the hell's broth of these last four years are making a final effort to conscript the manhood of Ireland. Frankly we do not believe that direct conscription will come; but it is certain that the most powerful forces in Ireland and England are moving earth and hell to impose it upon us. It is, therefore, unnecessary to warn all whom it may concern that we must not be taken unawares. In this Irish Labour and the Irish working class have been, are, and shall be at one with any party or section that is opposed to conscription. We need say no more. "—"

Tuppering the International.

How long are the English workers going to tolerate the Tuppering of their plans by Messrs. Havelock Wilson and James Sexton—knock-out blowers both, and the most fatal friends the British working-class has ever taken to its bosom? The latest victims of these two eminent war-mongers are M. Camille Huysmans, Secretary to the International, and Mr. Stuart-Bunning, of the Fabian Society, prevented by force from sailing to the United States last week. Their purpose, it will be remembered, was to confer with the American Labour leaders with a view to securing their adherence to the recent inter-Allied Conference's Memorandum on War Aims and an International Congress. For that mission they hold the direct mandate of the by no means pacifist majority of the Labour movement in the countries still in the Entente. But Huysmans is internationalist. Therefore the delegates are to be blocked at the instance of the most contemptible bounders that could disgrace any movement. Sexton's chief, T. P. O'Connor, can secure a protected passage to America, but the delegates of the Allied workers themselves are Tuppered! The sooner the British Labour Movement and the British workers put a stop to this blackguardism the sooner they will earn respect for themselves. Huysmans' reports on the "champion of small nations and civilisation" will not be more satisfactory than Kameneff's.

After Russia the snub to Belgium, France, and the International. Yea, even to the Fabian Society. Oh, Sidney Webb!

The Teachers in Congress.

The annual Congress of the National teachers is being held in Galway this week as we go to press. We can thus do little more than wish the teachers much and rich fruit from their deliberations. They are a hard-working and scandalously underpaid body of men and women, and for none more than they are decent wages, decent conditions and a higher status imperative. Too long they lay down quietly under the most degrading system any body of educationalists have experienced. But within recent months the worm has turned and the teacher to-day is taking his place with other wage-slaves in the fighting ranks of Labour. It is more fight that will win the teachers what they want, and the better and keener the fight they make the sooner they will be in a position to call themselves men and women. We do not believe that high wages is or ought to be their final aim. But the raising of their wages is an essential step to their advancement to that status befitting their calling and the calling of every man and woman earning his or her livelihood by work. For both the immediate and remote ends of the teachers' Trade Unionism is the best and indeed only machinery available. This it is that makes the Galway Congress of the first importance. Galway will be an historic milestone to the teachers as Waterford will to the whole Labour movement.

The Rural Workers.

Our readers will have noted that a convention of delegates from various organisations of rural workers in the counties of Meath, Louth, Longford, Kildare, Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford met last week and joined forces under the name of the Irish Agricultural and General Workers' Union. No workers more urgently require organisation and unity of effort and direction than the workers in the country, and for that reason the new A. and G. W. U. is a welcome sign of the times. We are not enamoured of the anti-strike programme of the new body, but we wish these workers every success. At the same time we must say that while we welcome unity, even territorial unity, we should still more warmly approve of the linking on of bodies like this to some one or other of the already existing general unions that have a national, as distinct from a local basis. We have far too many unions in Ireland and not enough unity. The whole tendency nowadays in Ireland as elsewhere is towards mass organisation, and this policy is both sound and effective.

Mass organisation does not prevent sectional movements and sectional direction where necessary, but it does prevent the clashing of sectional interests. We hope these workers will carry their principle of amalgamation still further and meanwhile we suggest to them that they should adopt the Trade Union basis and affiliate to the Irish Trade Union Congress. Mr. J. R. Etchingham and his friends are great believers in "diplomacy and negotiation." Strikes have their limitations but so has diplomacy.

Trades Councils.

Another promising development is the coming together of different unions to form Trades Councils. A few years ago Trades Councils were confined to the larger cities of Ireland, to-day they are forming in all the smaller but equally important centres. The newly formed Trades Council in Mullingar is the latest on our list, and our readers will join us in wishing our Mullingar comrades a fighting and successful future. The Mullingar Council has had a splendid send-off at a big demonstration in the County Hall, and it is to be observed that among the bodies taking part were the Trades Congress, Asylum Workers, Railwaymen, National Teachers, and Grocers' and Vintners' Assistants, all militant organisations whose activities are just now making a stir everywhere. If properly organised and developed to their fullest extent Trades Council will play an important part in the future of Irish Labour. Up to the present we do not think they have fulfilled their real and proper function, the focus of the whole movement in their districts and the supply of the central motor power of their localities. To-day everything is in the melting pot, Trades Councils with the rest, and we look forward to the extension of their activities and their assumption of greater powers and responsibilities and wider and better defined functions. They might well begin with the organisation of great demonstrations like that of last week at Mullingar. South Kildare, too, we see is moving in the right direction, and here again at Athy the Trades Congress had its spokesmen. All this is very much to the good and bodes well for the summer offensive on all fronts.

Secure Your Vote.

The young men up and down the country who are burning to prove their ability for work will find plenty to fill up their spare time for many weeks to come. April 15 is the last day of the qualifying period for the new electoral register, and from now onwards Trades Unionists, whether men or women, should be getting their names on the register of their respective divisions, both local and parliamentary. Here is work for the young bloods to do and we urge them to take it in hand and at once.

LABOUR IN IRELAND.

Tramwaymen.

A long slow movement against a treacherous enemy is wearing the patience of the men, but now that their case is going once more before the Committee of Production the men will consolidate their forces. Murphy can't escape this time.

The Connolly College movement is going on and has received a decided impetus from Mr. Foran's presidential address at the Trades Council last week. The committee will meet in the Trades Hall on Saturday, 6th inst., at 5 p.m.

Ernest Kavanagh.—The cartoons of the late Ernest Kavanagh are being prepared for publication with an introduction by Constance Countess Markievicz. Inquiries and orders sent to this office will be handed on to the proper quarter.

Shop Assistants' Union has added 5,000 members in 1917, lost 8,726 by enlistments, increased reserve funds to £81,433, and secured £238,362 increased wages.

Dope Merchants' Rise.

The Wholesale Druggists have gained the very substantial concession of a 25 per cent. increase in wages from a well-known city house, which has also agreed to adopt the N.U. Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks' minimum scale as printed here two weeks ago.

The firm in question, manufacturers of the best boot polish on the market, has always had a clean record in respect of trade union conditions, and enjoy therefore the whole-hearted support of their staff.

The Black North.

The same cannot be said of another house in the trade which has been attacked in the "Leader" because of its partiality for filling its best jobs with men from Belfast. Unfortunately they don't get the best men.

When overtime is chronic, the management is convicted of inability to organise the work. If this firm had to pay hard cash for the overtime worked, some endeavour would be made to re-organise.

We hold over a pretty story about this latter firm, but meantime we can confidently recommend "Max" Boot Polish, as Irish, efficient and "untainted."

Public Speaking.

A meeting of those interested in the art of public speaking will be held on Wednesday, 10th April, at 8 p.m. sharp, when it is hoped to arrange a class for training speakers. The services of an expert instructor are available. A general invitation is extended to all interested.

H. Burke. A. E. M. highly gratified by your appreciation.

PUBLIC SPEAKING:

Intending Students of the art of public speaking are invited to attend a meeting in Room 3, Liberty Hall, on Wednesday, 10th April at 8 p.m. sharp. Business: Formation of Speakers' Class.

Socialist Party.

The Dublin Branch meeting on Friday last was small but businesslike. As usual, a number of applications for literature were received and arrangements were made for opening summer propaganda on May 5th in Phoenix Park and Beresford Place. Members are urged to attend next Friday and pay up dues.

Dublin.

Comrades in County Dublin towns who can arrange meetings are urged to write the secretary. Speakers are available for meetings convenient to the city. Sinn Fein Clubs and other organisations wishing to vary their lecture programmes are also invited to apply for speakers.

The Clerks' Victory.

The award issued in the Boland dispute, while not conceding the full claims of the workers, has resulted in an average increase of 10/6 to the male clerks and 6/- to the females. There should no longer be any hesitation among clerks. Trade Unionism pays. Join up and it will pay better.

COMRADES

The Cumannacht na h-Eirinn

is growing. We want you to form a branch in your Town. Write for information and send your subscriptions to the Secretary, Socialist Party of Ireland, Liberty Hall, Dublin.

UP, CONNOLLY!

Doctors' Strike.

Enniskillen Guardians decided to summon a special Board to consider the letter from the L.G.B. urging them to reinstate their doctors, and to come to terms with them on the question of salaries. The Enniskillen workers should see to it that they secure a new Board of Guardians at next election.

The Millmen.

The Transport Union has recently carried out a movement to make equal wages and conditions prevail in Cork flour and meal mills. Advances of from 3/- to 5/- have been won with a reduction in hours. Average wages now are 33/- for a 54-hour week. The movement affected upwards of 300 men, and they are a well-organised section of the Union.

Farm Labourers in Revolt.

The farmers at Whitechurch declined to give their labourers the 30/- minimum fixed by a recent convention of the Cork Agricultural Section, and on March 25 the men were locked out. Day by day the commander on the Whitechurch reported surrenders on all sides until the majority of farmers had given in to conceding the 7/6

advance on the Wages Board scale. By Saturday only half-a-dozen farmers remained to fight. The Agricultural Section has won its spurs in handsome fashion. From £3 to £5 per man of back-money are being recovered in the Cork area.

The New Front.

Two hundred Cork breadvan men are on strike for what are practically Dublin rates. On Friday the Lord Mayor attempted to bring about a settlement. At a conference under his presidency the bosses declared they had said their last word when they made the offer rejected by the men and then withdrew. Notice of withdrawal expired on Saturday night and the fight goes merrily on.

TAILORS GAIN 15s. ADVANCE.

The International Tailors and Tailoresses last week secured a striking success in Dublin. The Union this year circularised employers with a view to securing increased wages and a regular standard of piecework prices, or, as it is called, a log, but the grasping selfishness of some employers prevented a peaceful settlement.

The Union called a strike therefore on Monday, 25th ult., which resulted in a complete stoppage, which the workers celebrated by a social and dance. But alas, their pleasures were short-lived, for boss after boss came to the Union headquarters to beg them to return to work.

They did return. Girls who had 3/6 or 4/- a day went back at 5/- a day and some at 6/- a day. The men shared in the increase. The average increase amounts to 15/- a week. There are only two rat shops left outside, but if the owners are to retain their trade they must come to terms for the Union will rather pay full wages to its members than let them work for sweaters.

On Sunday last the Union celebrated its victory by a special meeting, which Mr. Joseph McDonnell addressed, by invitation, on the Labour Press. Result: The Union placed an order for 10 dozen copies of "Irish Opinion and the Voice of Labour" each week.

Comrade Carpenter and his committee are to be congratulated on their smashing victory, and their method of celebrating it is to be commended to other Unions.

WHAT'S THE GAME?

The Irish Press, City Councils and all local authorities are urging economy in coal because the English Government has reduced the allocation of coal for Ireland and commandeered Irish coaling vessels. Lighting must be reduced, shops closed early, and even manufacturers limited on this plea of coal shortage.

Yet "Commonsense" last week published the following from its Cardiff correspondent:—

COAL ACCUMULATION.

It is estimated that there are over three million tons of small coals on the pit banks in South Wales awaiting disposal. Some of these large heaps have been waiting for months. The capacity for production is very great, and much short time is being worked.

LIMERICK NOTES.

Labour Day will be "some" day in Limerick. The first Sunday in May has been fixed for the celebration, which will take the form of a big parade of all Trades Union bodies in the city and district, at the termination of which a mass open-air meeting will be held. The Trades Council have the matter in hands, and with the help of an energetic Arrangements Committee it is expected to have everything in apple-pie order for the occasion.

Trades Unionism has made rapid strides of late locally, and now is making its way into the outlying country districts. The dispute at Drombanna Creamery has centred attention on rural workers, and has set this class of workers thinking, with the result that they are joining up with their fellow-workers in the city. The Drombanna Co-operative Creamery Society dismissed their butter-maker, giving him a month's wages in lieu of notice. The creamery workers say this is a clear case of victimization, for the butter-maker's activities in organising the creamery workers and helping to obtain increased wages for them, and they are on strike determined not to go back unless and until the butter-maker is re-instated. The committee appear also to be determined—not to take him back. Moral and financial support is pouring in weekly for the strikers. The Creamery is being run by three or four blackleg farmers' sons—at a weekly loss.

A Co-operative Store, it is hoped, will soon be an accomplished fact in Limerick. A number of ardent "progressives" have made a start. A respectable sum has been subscribed, and a provisional committee appointed to take steps to get the society registered and get in sufficient capital to warrant a start. It is high time that Trades Unionists took steps to protect themselves from high prices and unsound food-stuffs.

The Strike of Messrs. Spaight's hardware employes (members of the I.T.W.U.) has been settled after a duration of four days, the firm recognising the Union and entering into an agreement with it as to higher wages and increased rate for overtime, etc., which is being kept. The strike against employment of non-union men by Mr. J. J. Foley, forage contractor, has also been amicably settled by negotiation between Mr. M. J. O'Connor I.T.W.U., and the firm.

NORTHERN ECHOES.

Lipton's employes in Belfast received £286 extra last year.

Sixty hairdressers in Belfast secured £1,014 increased wages among them last year.

The Ninth Part.

Belfast tailors (A.S.T.) have, after a week's strike, won a penny per hour on the log, equal to 6/- or 7/- a week for a full week's work.

Now Murphy.

Belfast tramwaymen, including electrical station employes, have been awarded 20/- advance on pre-war wages, this to include all previous advances since Aug-

ust, 1914. This means, in other words, for conductors and motormen 8/- a week rise. The 12½ per cent. for conductors and motormen is left over for further consideration. About 900 men will benefit by this award. The National Amalgamated Union of Labour and the Municipal Employes' Association are to be congratulated.

The Rag Trade.

The drapers' assistants have now three disputes in Belfast shops—Robinson and Cleaver's—"Sweaters by Royal Appointment"—Shannon and Co., and Sinclair's again. The two latter firms are patronised mainly by the wives and sisters of trade unionists. Both are fighting Trade Unionism; there is no wages question involved, but the right to combine and resent victimisation. The Irish drapers are showing Ulstermen that doggedness is not an Ulster monopoly, as some of our townsmen profess to believe.

The Wire-pullers.

The private meeting of selected T.U. officials to discuss parliamentary representation for Belfast was a fiasco, as it deserved to be. Men who profess loyalty to the British Labour Party should try to understand that party's constitution before taking action.

Getting Ready.

The Trades Council has called a meeting of representatives of all societies—affiliated or not—for April 11th to consider this question. It is to be hoped that delegates will have their minds clear as to the position—if they speak of West-

minster they may think in terms of the British Labour Party to which the Trades Council and most of the Unions are affiliated; if they think of representation in an Irish Parliament their allegiance is due to the Irish Labour Party, and they should act therewith.

Mr. Broadbent Speaks.

"The brave challenge of Mr. Redmond's son to the constituency to remain true to the policy of the late leader must have appealed to the chivalry of a race to whom such an appeal never fails to meet with some response."—Philip Snowden in "Labour Leader."

It would take James Joyce to make a fitting comment on this tosh. Snowden should take a week-end in Ireland before he writes again on Irish affairs.

"Margit Bella" Speaks.

The Executive of the Textile Operatives' Society of Ireland, representing 12,000 women, hears "with alarm" of the proposal to make Mr. Ian Macpherson, M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland, after his published statements on the brothel system in France.

The War Office and Vice.

The Army Authorities, foiled by public opinion from the introduction of regulated brothels, have now published an order under the Defence of the Realm Act, "making it a summary offence for any woman suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form to have or solicit sexual intercourse with any member of His Majesty's forces."

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UP WITH THE GAEDHEALG.

By C. U.

Popular Control of Schools Wanted.

The case is not so desperate with Irish as Sean O' Cathasaigh's articles represent, though I agree with him that if the language perishes we cannot shift the responsibility on to the British Government or to its jackal, the National Board. The appalling indifference of the Irish people will be mainly responsible; and as your correspondent points out the most professedly patriotic bodies are often as guilty as are professed West Britons. Even Sinn Fein with its Gaelic leaders, MacNeill, de Valera, etc., is in grave danger of proving as unreliable towards the language as any previous organisation.

The Gaelic League are now tackling
In Dead Earnest

the schools of Dublin, which have done more than their share of Anglicisation, and it is to be hoped no difficulties will be thrown in its way by teachers or others who are friendly to the language. The work will not add to the burdens of the teachers or to their poverty, and if it has not an opposite effect it will only be because Gaelic Leaguers cannot influence very much the fortunes of the teachers—at present. The five hours a day suggested for teachers of Irish is a mere suggestion to economise Irish teaching power, but the League would not object to substitute 4 hours or even 3 hours. The essential thing is that the children shall get at least an hour's teaching of Irish daily until they are able to speak the language.

There will be mountains of opposition from all the elements of Anglicisation and reaction and it will require a long pull and a strong pull on the part of all Gaels to

Overcome this Opposition.

Personally I think parents of children ought to take the lead in this matter. We are frequently reminded by our mentors of our obligations to educate our children and see that they get a sound and moral education, and this should carry the corresponding right to a decisive voice in the character of the education given. We need not look to Myles Starkie and his piebald Board to educate our children as Irish children; that is not what they are there for. As for the managers, they do not seem to realise that they have a duty to the nation. They accept without protest the English education designed at Tyrone House. But if they will not manage for the nation they are worthless managers and the people must take the management in their own hands. Too long has the treachery to the nation been allowed to have its way in the schools. Let democracy call a halt to it and see that Irish children are educated as Irish children.

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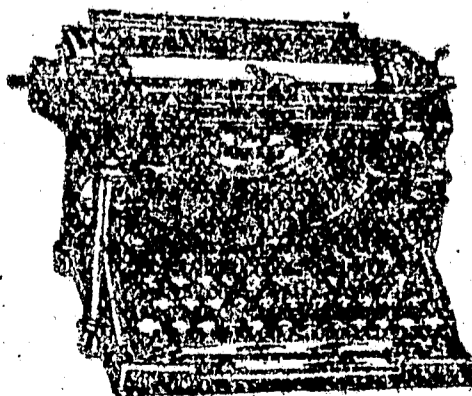
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SOCIALISM AND SINN FEIN.
(Continued from Front Page.)

in Irish agriculture recently is due not to the change in the ownership of land—which might have been transferred from the landlord to the State instead of to the individual—but to the changes in the use of land conveniently summed up as "Co-operation." Finally, Irish farmers now are paying annuities so that their sons or grandsons may own the land free of all charge, in other words so that they may appropriate the economic rent and thereby perpetuate all the old inequalities and injustices. What hope for the future can be seen in that direction?

The Right Line of Development,

it seems to me, is for the State to insist more and more on the right and full use of land and for the farmers to apply the right methods of use through co-operative organisation. Use is more important than ownership and may be expected eventually to effect a practical transfer of ownership from the individual to the co-operative society or other form of "commune." The area of the "commune" is not a matter that will greatly perturb the "drawing-room" Socialist. Indeed, the central government might more conveniently equalise the economic rent appropriated by landowners by taxing a number of communes rather than a multitude of individuals.

The Menace of Capital.

Father Gaynor's constructive suggestions deserve more consideration than I can now give them. But they can hardly be accepted, as he appears to offer them, as reasons why "capital, like the British Government, will oppose Sinn Fein." Capital will oppose Sinn Fein—or use it, as suits it best. British capital (or any other kind of capital) will bribe, manipulate, or browbeat an Irish Parliament as easily as it can a British Parliament, and whether through the Irish Parliament or independently of it, will exercise just as baneful an effect on Irish industry as hitherto. (I may say, in parenthesis, that much current Sinn Fein criticism of the wickedness of English capital shows a ridiculous disregard of economic realities—e.g., in regard to harbours and shipping.) The only preventative is the presence in the Parliament and among the people of the spirit of Socialism. For the moment I am using the word Socialism to cover roughly all opposition to production for profit instead of for use, so including Father Gaynor's "social reform" as well as "extreme Socialism"—though I do not admit that all would be equally effective. But does Sinn Fein recognise the necessity of that preventative? Has it declared for national exploitation of Irish resources as against individual profit-making exploitation? If so, where and when was the declaration made? The last Sinn Fein Convention merely expressed a pious hope that Irish workers would receive a living wage—a hope as inadequate as it is futile. So far, Sinn Fein, in spite of the progressive ideas germinating in such favourable dispositions as those of Father Gaynor and other individuals, remains a purely political party, proposing merely a change in the form of government.

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THE USURERS.

Maypole Dairy Company pays 225 per cent. to its shareholders this year. That is, the shareholders receive 2½ times the amount of their capital as interest, and their capital remains unreduced.

Chinese 1898 Loan at 4½ per cent. is more valuable on London Stock Exchange than French 5 per cent. War Loan.

THE WORLD FOR THE WORKERS.

Notes and News of the International.

Trotsky on Japanese Intervention.

Interviewed on Mr. Balfour's pro-Japanese speech M. Trotsky told Mr. Arthur Ransome of the "Daily News" that the Japanese intervention in Siberia is certainly not intended to help the Soviet power but rather the bourgeois classes. In Germany the bourgeois must see their only hope of support against the social revolution. But their social revolution, even if momentarily suppressed, will turn into a volcano beneath them, compelling them to closer and closer reliance on their reactionary neighbours, Japan and Germany.

The control of the Siberian railway by bourgeois Russians and the Japanese, said Trotsky, would throttle the Soviet power in European Russia and result in a German-controlled bourgeois European Russia and a Japanese-controlled bourgeois Eastern Russia. Since his resignation of the Foreign Affairs office Trotsky is the Russian People's Commissary for War.

The International Congress.

In a statement which he issues through the British Labour Party's Press Bureau M. Huysmans declares that he and Vandervelde, as secretary and chairman of the I.S.B. will transmit the inter-Allied Memorandum to the Socialist Parties in neutral countries, who in turn will forward these documents to the German, Austrian and Bulgarian Socialists. The arrangements for the General Socialist Congress shall be left in the hands of a small committee, consisting of three men, one chosen among the leaders of neutral parties by the parties of the Inter-Allied countries, one chosen among the same leaders by the parties of the Central Powers, and the third will be the secretary of the International. The parties in the Allied countries, Huysmans thinks, will probably be M. Branting and probably M. Troelstra will agree to represent the other parties.

The Conditions of Representation.

Irish readers will be interested in what Huysmans says on the conditions of representation. "As to the conditions, I think there will be no difficulty. These questions were considered during the discussions about the Stockholm Conference, and the conditions will be practically the same as those formerly accepted. All parties will be represented, and no body desires to have any section excluded." As part of M. Huysmans' recent business was to ascertain the views of different parties on the conditions of representation we take it that there will be no question of the exclusion of Ireland.

TRADES-UNIONISTS' POLITICS.

Some discussion has taken place in the pages of "Irish Opinion" recently as to the relative merits of the Sinn Fein and the Irish Labour Party's policies. In considering the subject I would put two questions to your readers:—(1) Is the Sinn Fein Party as at present constituted identical in aims, or nearly so, with the party or parties to which the leaders of the Insurrection belonged? (2) Has the Labour Party a definite political policy of its own?

To answer the first question it is necessary to examine the position before the Easter of 1916. There was then in existence a Sinn Fein organisation presided over by Mr. Arthur Griffith. None of the rebellion leaders—the signatories to the Republican proclamation—were identified with it, but were responsible for the more advanced National movement. The only Labour Leader amongst them, James Connolly, was out also for a Socialistic Republic. Now, what do we find to-day? The advanced National movement has been captured, to all intents and purposes, by Griffith's Sinn Fein, or, passive resistance policy. The constructive policies preached from Sinn Fein press and platform are Griffith's, and the principal offices in the movement are held, with the exception of the presidency, by men who took no part in the rebellion—vice-president Griffith, secretaries Figgis and Stack, No. 1 in the committee, MacNeill, etc.

Refusing to pay fines, defying British law in the courts, hunger-striking can all be classed as part of the passive resistance policy which Griffith so long and so eloquently championed without getting any real support until now. Judged, therefore, by its policy and the personnel of its leaders we can answer the first question in the negative.

Taking up the second question, we know the Irish Labour Party has as planks on its programme those objects which are common to the Labour parties of all countries—shorter hours, minimum wages, better working conditions, etc. But this is not enough. In a subject country like ours it must of necessity have what, for want of a better term, I shall call a foreign policy. However they may differ about the means to secure it, all workers desire a free Ireland, free from English oppression and suppression and from capitalistic domination. Is there no choice for them outside Griffith's abstention from Westminster and representation at the Peace Conference policy and Dillon's (or is it Devlin's?) less popular old Parliamentary policy? Certainly there is. Let the Labour Party concentrate on representation at the Stockholm Conference, or wherever the Labour and Socialist Conference of the different countries proposes to meet. Let all trade-unionists support the demand for representation. There is far more probability of Ireland's voice being heard there than at the Peace Conference, and it is sure to have practical sympathy for Ireland as one of the small nations. As to its power all well-informed critics of world politics agree that democracy's day has at last dawned.

I have briefly tried to answer the two questions which vitally affect Irish trade-unionists' politics to-day, and I only hope I have helped to throw some light on a subject much debated.

J. R.

[We are afraid our correspondent is making the all too common mistake of Irishmen and confusing aim with method. The two, of course, are distinct, and it was this distinction that Connolly took pains to emphasise in all his writings and speeches upon revolution in Ireland. Our correspondent

is not quite accurate when he says that none of the seven signatories were identified with Sinn Fein before Easter Week. Some were, others were not. In fact the republican and physical force section was in close alliance with the passive resistance section as, for instance, in the first series of "Nationality," whose editor was Arthur Griffith, with Séan MacDermott as manager. Our correspondent suggests that the physical force movement has been swallowed by the passivist movement, but the reverse operation would be as near the truth as this suggestion. It is beside the question to say that "the principal offices in the movement are held by men who took no part in the rebellion." The point is whether their aims and methods are those of the men of Easter Week, and with certain exceptions we can observe little difference. We hold no brief for MacNeill and we differ sharply with Griffith and others on social economic questions, but in "Irish Opinion," as in all else, we want accuracy of statement and fairness of treatment for both policies and persons. Many who took no part in the Insurrection are as good insurrectionists and revolutionists, for that matter, as the men and women who did the actual fighting, and Stack, we believe, is one of them. Indeed, there are several of the comrades of the seven signatories among the present leaders, and a few at least are out for a Socialist Republic. Sinn Fein is not Socialism, but then neither is Labour. Our correspondent's negative to his first question has not been proved and we do not think he has answered the second—Editor, "I.O."]

Dublin Farmers' Folly.

The County Dublin Farmers' Association has for some time back been in negotiation with the I.T. and G.W.U. with a view to settling the wages for the summer's work, but owing to the stupid recalcitrance of some of the members, agreement among the farmers has not been attained.

At the monthly meeting of the association, this resolution was adopted:—

"That as the Government have fixed a maximum price for almost all farm produce, and the Agricultural Wages Board have fixed a minimum price for labour, we will advise all our members to pay at least the minimum rate for the various classified grades of labourers, and a bonus at the end of the harvest."

The labourers can give no thanks to the association for its generosity in conceding the minimum wage, since the law can be invoked to compel them to do so. The legal minimum is much below the actual cost of living in the county and the best farmers have already made agreements with the Union to pay 30s. and goods, bringing the wages up to 35s. per week.

The failure of the association to agree to make reasonable terms with the Union will compel the Union to deal with the farmers individually. If trouble ensues, the fault will lie on the obstructive farmers and not on the labourers.

It will be noted that even the 35s. has only a pre-war value of 16s. 7½d.