

ENLARGED
ISSUE.

Articles by Darrell Figgis, Louie Bennett, and others. Exclusive news for Railway Clerks, and items of interest for all workers by brain or hand.

IRISH OPINION

The VOICE OF LABOUR

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ONE PENNY

A Rural District Under the Bolsheviks. An Eye-witness states Facts which contradict Press Slanders.

(By John Rickman.)

This article, re-published from the "Manchester Guardian" of January 1918, furnishes first hand information about the life of the common people in Russia, under Bolshevism. The author, John Rickman, was a member of the 'Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee. His work brought him into intimate contact with the peasants in their villages, and as he spoke the peasants' own dialect, he was able to gather the undercurrents which foreign correspondents usually miss.

This accurate, factful statement should be widely circulated as a conclusive answer to the slanders voiced by the enemies of labour in the Irish Press.

In the following article I discuss the condition of a rural district under Bolshevik rule during the winter and spring 1917-18. At that time I was engaged in relief work in the Buzuluk department of the Samara government on behalf of the 'Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee.

If all the industrial and economic enterprises in the district none suffered less damage than the Co-operative Society, which had been started before the war under the old regime, and which continued unchanged under the Provisional and Kerensky Governments, and enlarged its membership 500 per cent. under the Bolsheviks. In the time I speak of the Co-operative Society had virtually become a monopoly, and had either put out of business or absorbed the small traders. It could get credit from the Soviet, was recognised by the railway officials almost as a Government department, and could undertake purchasing operations on a large scale and look to guarantee of transport. It had an organisation of sub-stations in nearly every village, and

could distribute and sell its goods without having to get permits and licences from the Soviet. The Government decided to purchase wheat and rye in Siberia for seed and consumption, and naturally placed the order with the Co-operative Society. Purchase of medical requirements in Moscow for the numerous Soviet hospitals was done through the same channel, members of the Soviet often travelling with the buyers in order to guarantee good faith.

The profits of the Co-operative Society, which were reduced to a minimum, but which on the millions of roubles of turnover amounted to a considerable sum, were devoted to educational purposes. Evening classes were started in modern languages, geography, history, and the Russian language; in bookkeeping and business training; subsidies were granted for agricultural colleges and schools, and scholarships were founded for the gymnasias (secondary schools).

An Educational Revival.

The educational programme of the Bolsheviks was ambitious, but it was this ambitiousness which commended it to the people.

The Bolsheviks aimed at starting a school in every village and increasing the number of gymnasias in the district and founding a university, but in this project they were stopped by lack of teachers. To overcome this difficulty they started training colleges for teachers which were financed by the Soviet.

Scholarships were given to promising pupils, which would carry them through the gymnasias, and on to the universities already founded, such as those at Kazan, Odessa, and Samara. In this work they co-operated with the Buzuluk Co-operative Society.

The enthusiasm of teachers for their

work, which had been depressed by the restrictions of the old regime, revived. They gave up their holidays to attend university extension lectures and evening classes, in order to improve their teaching capacity for the coming terms. Technical classes were started, and the agricultural schools and colleges, some of which were already in operation under the old regime, were revived, additional instructors obtained, and new institutions begun.

The thoroughness with which the educational programme was dealt with is illustrated by a movement to start a George Junior Republic by the President of the Teachers' Union, a man who had come from Moscow. (A "George Junior Republic," it may be explained, is an expedient which has been successfully tried in the United States for giving self-government to wayward boys and girls who have not proved amenable to the ordinary school discipline.)

On this subject, as on many others dealing with education, he sought the advice of English and Americans who had had experience in educational problems and with kindred activities, such as the Boy Scout movement. Under the stricter days of the old regime the Boy Scout movement was not permitted in Russia, but latterly was allowed a certain amount of liberty under police supervision. Under the Bolsheviks, however, it flourished, and troops were formed in many of the cities and department towns.

Industrial Control.

We had few industries in our district, and the few we had were nearly all taken over by the Soviet. A lumber factory, previously run by the Ministry of Forestry, with the help of the Zemstvo, was now run by the Soviet of the department.

(Continued on next page.)

Bolsheviks Lead Europe in Education, Business Management & Real Democracy

(From front page.)

which controlled the same geographical area as the Zemstvo. The wages paid in this factory to the workmen were 300 roubles per month, and the organisation was such that the factory ran full time and could not extend itself, owing to the food shortage in the immediate neighbourhood and to the absence of empty houses near by which prevented an influx of workmen. A large flour mill fitted with the latest machinery was taken over by the Soviet, and, under great difficulties owing to shortage of paraffin and small parts needed for repairs, was able not only to pay its way and its workmen, but also to be a rich source of revenue to the community.

The forests were controlled, so far as they were controlled at all, by the Soviet, who employed the forestry experts who had been brought into the district by the old regime. The forestry schools were full, the Soviet realising the great value of expert advice in any matter that pertained to industry or agriculture.

Railway Administration.

Perhaps in no department of administration did the Bolsheviks realise the need for humouring their workmen more than in the control of the railways. Under the old regime it was a notorious fact that local abuses could never be remedied, suggestions for the improvement of the service received practically no attention at headquarters, and without permission given in writing from headquarters, no variation in routine was permitted.

There had accumulated through the years in the minds of all the railway workers little ideas which they individually would like to have seen tried, and in the minds both of the workers and of the public there was an impression that the central control from Moscow or Petrograd should be loosened.

Soon after the Bolsheviks came into power they showed their wisdom and their courage by favouring an experiment which should teach the people a lesson and satisfy the minds of the workmen with respect to these innumerable little ideas which had irritated them because they had been neglected. Accordingly the railway passing through every county in the Samara government, at any rate, was placed under the full control of the county Soviet. No train could pass along that line without the permission of the county Soviet, and the head stationmaster in the county was made Commissary of Railways.

Complete disorganisation resulted—which was what the Bolsheviks wanted. We were told by one such Commissary that the boiler-cleaners had devised a new way for cleaning the engines—one of the little ideas that had rankled long in their minds. He gave them full permission to go ahead and clean the engines in their own way. Within a week the engine-drivers complained; so he called a meeting—one of millions of such meetings—and let the engine-drivers and engine-cleaners settle the matter in their own way. Within a day the old system of engine-cleaning was restored, to the complete satisfaction of both. In this way the Bolsheviks were building up again a stable railway system, based not so much on orders from Mos-

cow which had to be obeyed as on motives for good work and co-operation which carried their own inducement.

Settling the Land.

On the land question, the Bolsheviks and the peasants were of differing opinions. The former wished to manage the large estates with agricultural experts and the latest machinery that could be obtained; the latter wished to own the land communally, according to the village custom. Nationalisation of land has never appealed to the peasants; village ownership has almost always seemed to them the proper course. There might have been a serious division between the Bolsheviks and the peasants had the matter come to a head, but as there was not enough rye or wheat for planting in the peasants' own allotments, the question of what was to be done with the large estates did not arise.

Food and Medicine.

Food committees were established in every district for the purpose of commandeering food and for its just distribution, and revenue was raised by the Soviet by means of commandeering stores and selling part of the produce so taken at a high price. Another source of revenue was a capital levy, another by taxation on wages and salaries. No one was exempt. The banks were controlled by the Soviet, and the limit that any private person was allowed to withdraw in any month without previous permission was fixed at 100 roubles.

The medical needs of the community were met by department medical committees and village medical committees centring round the hospitals. The public sent their delegates to these committees, representing the patients; the doctors in their capacity as workmen also sent delegates. Accounts were audited by a neutral body, usually the Soviet of the district.

Even-handed Justice.

The Russian public had not been accustomed to reliable law courts or a just police administration. Under the Bolsheviks, as under the Provisional and Kerensky Governments, the villages appointed their own police when necessary, choosing the oldest men as those most likely to have wisdom and discretion in human affairs. The Red Guard, and later the Red Army, supplemented and sometimes over-rode the simple requirements of the peasants. **For 6 months under Bolshevik rule order of a kind superior to that ever experienced under the old regime was maintained.**

As an instance of this may be mentioned the way in which the old regime and the Bolsheviks dealt with illegal vodka distilling. In the days of the Imperial police anyone caught in the act was arrested by the police, but, as everyone knew, each offence had its price, except that of political propaganda, and a sum of money amounting maybe to several hundred or several thousand roubles, would settle the matter, and until the time of blackmail came round again the business could continue unmolested, however much the public might be against it. Under the Bolsheviks a man found dis-

tilling vodka would not be punished, but his still would be taken from him, the public would be informed of his guilt, and the amount of grain which the food committee would allow him to buy would be limited to that needed for his own domestic use.

THE HANDS OFF RUSSIA CONFERENCE.

No one present at the "Hands off Russia" conference convened by the London Workers' Committee last Saturday, Jan. 19th, could doubt that the Russian Revolution and the Spartacist developments in Germany, the deaths of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, especially, have moved considerable sections of the rank and file of organised Labour in Britain to the very depths. The conference was summoned to the Memorial Hall, London, a building which has the spirit of British non-conformity in its very stones, but on this occasion the gathering within its precincts was animated by a nonconformity of quite an opposite sentiment, "Long Live Bolshevik Russia," proclaimed a streamer in the hall; the 306 delegates representing, at least, 30 separate Labour and Socialist organisations and presided over by W. F. Watson, an enthusiastic and fiery Cockney, came to decide that long life to Russia means vigorous propaganda and better organisation in Britain.

The proceedings opened with a Russian revolutionary funeral march played by the Russian violinist, Edward Soermus, the audience standing as a tribute, but not the final tribute to the memories of the dead Spartacist leaders. After prolonged discussion a resolution moved by T. L. Smith and seconded by Arthur MacManus was adopted as a substantive resolution. It was carried by 145 votes to 4. It reads:—"This rank and file conference of delegates from British and Irish Socialist and Labour organisations hereby resolve to carry on an active agitation upon every field of activity to solidify the Labour movement in Great Britain for the purpose of declaring a general strike, at a further conference to be held, unless before that date the unconditional cessation of Allied intervention in Russia, either directly by force of arms or indirectly by an economic blockade by supplying arms or money or by other sinister means to internal opponents of Bolshevik administration, shall have been officially announced, and to continue the strike and agitation until the desired announcement shall have been made, until we are satisfied of the truth of the announcement; and, also, until the Allied attack upon the German Committees of Soldiers and Workmen is stopped and the blockade raised."

The eloquence and arguments of the Glasgow and Clyde delegates had a large share in shaping the final form of the resolution (for which, by the way, the S.P.I. delegate voted). A "Hands off Russia Committee" of 16, with power to co-opt, was elected to give effect to the decision of the conference. We had clear thinking, some hot air, plain speaking, and if the Censor will permit us to say so, gallant rebels go leor at the conference. The evening's mass meetings in the same place were enormous.

FREEDOM by Darrell Figgis.

If a man set forth in this life to think for himself, or to see by the light of his own eyes the tangled problems that are a continual challenge to his faith, he will soon find himself in strange case. Of all hard estates to win, Freedom is the hardest. For life is encompassed with prohibitions and decrees. Across all its roads injunctions are written. Even those who rise to break their chains make queer cabals among themselves; and quickly stab their comrades who step clear of groups and sections. Yet such things matter little if a man truthfully serves the faith that is in him; for that service, stumbling and faulty though it be, is his only guerdon here or hereafter. And if he can but do that, life will be bonny; and may, peradventure, be gracious.

Certainly, the title-page of this book before us is crowded with interdictions. It declares its intention to examine "Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism" as "Roads to Freedom." All these things have become loaded with sinister meaning. Moreover, its author's name has been twisted before men. Foremost amongst mathematicians, his university, Cambridge, deprived him of his post for unpopular views on the war; and his nation, England, consigned him to jail for his declared faith that war was not the only arbiter against force.

Interdictions enough! Yet the very interdictions are an earnest (did Mr. Russell require that earnest) that we are in the company of a man with whom we might violently disagree, but who at least will look through his own eyes and frame his own judgments. And in a world of stale phrases and glib judgments received at many removes, that is a very great deal.

For we are all in quest of freedom. There is no man, however he may seem to acquiesce in his chains, whose spirit has not arisen in that demand. It is the great secret that he bears through his most commonplace hours. It is the chord of music, coming down we know not what mysterious avenues, that attunes and approves the spirit in him. It may make a rebel of him; in which case the chord will be heard by his adversary, who, even while striking him down, will fall to praising "his ideals." Therefore, when we read Mr. Russell: "Freedom is the greatest of political goods," we were halted. Nor did his assurance, that he "did not speak of all goods," since "the best things come from within," comfort us at first. Yet it is clear he is right. For these "best things" are only allowed to us by the measure of the political freedom that we enjoy.

Love, thought, beauty, adoration; what chance has man or woman of these things while they serve a whirring machine for ten hours a day, and fight desolation from week to week and year to year, with the spectre of Fear walking the road with them? And how can men make beauty while another nation holds theirs in bondage, and endeavours to turn their national intuitions and de-

vices into alien channels? Man is man's greatest enemy, who should be his greatest friend; and so it comes about that Freedom is a political good, without which the best of life cannot be earned, and without which the "best things" which "come from within" cannot flower as they would. And the virtue of that political good (as is too often forgotten even by those most zealous for freedom) is discovered, not only by the exercise it allows of best things from within, but no less by the inspiration it gives for their exercise.

So Mr. Russell sets before himself the answers given by men who rose against industrialism with trumpet and with banner. That these answers are surging across Europe to-day in forms that affright and appeal, makes his book one of immediate importance; and the fact that Europe is on the eve of economic ruin and unemployment on a vast scale, will add to that importance day by day. Wise men in times like these will prepare themselves by thinking out anew the relation between Governments and peoples, and they will accept no coin till they have rung it on the counter of their thought. For, whatever happen, we have turned our back on the materialism of the past century, when men, "made in the image of God," were only accessories to dividends, and export and import white papers.

Mr. Russell rings the coins, in a lucid and delicate economy of phrase that very seldom fails in entire faithfulness. Socialism, Anarchism (not, it is hardly necessary to say, the crude thing of bombs and blood) and Syndicalism, are first placed in history; and then he faces "The Problems of the Future":—"Work and Pay," "Government and Law," "International Relations," and "Science and Art." "At the present moment," he says, writing before the close of the war (if the war is indeed closed), "not only do many people enjoy a comfortable income derived from rent or interest, but about half the population of most of the civilized countries in the world is engaged, not in the production of commodities, but in fighting or in manufacturing munitions of war. In a time of peace the whole of this half might be kept in idleness without making the other half poorer than they are at present, and if, instead of being idle, they were productively employed, the whole of what they would produce would be a divisible surplus over and above present wages." And that is true; for war-debts are in the main a device of the money-market that a true democracy would quickly revolutionise. Put thus, however, the thought is startling. The mask of the old economic order is torn away. And as the politics of nations are a true reflex of their economic systems, politics, too, come to have a new significance.

How then may our economic systems be so ordered that that divisible surplus may be made available for a whole people; and how shall governments be

A released prisoner's book reviewed by a man in Jail.

so ordered that such systems cannot be perverted from their intention? Mr. Russell has his answers; and if we do not agree with them all, if we think he tends to simplify too much a complex case, he at least promotes thought acutely, and that, we take it, was the intention of his book. Not the least value of his book is that he emphasises the need of true freedom for the creator of beauty. "Where there is no vision the people perish"; and, as he acutely points out, bureaucracies (and we have had some taste of bureaucracies) and vision do not consort happily together. Wisdom was not born with State officials; and assuredly wisdom will not die with them. If politics are so to be made that freedom will be found in them, the people must enter where hitherto Governments have been supreme. Power must come from below, not down from above; and that power must be continuously retained, not delegated for long periods.

To us in Ireland (where the people's voice has now been heard in challenge against a foreign government) much of what Mr. Russell deals with can, without great difficulty, be adjusted. Our State, destroyed three centuries ago as a visible entity, still lives in the instincts of the nation, and answers many of his queries. We have no need to search the writings of modern scribes to meet the case he argues. Moreover, much of the old State can be erected here now—to-morrow morning, if need be, a beginning can be made—without awaiting further powers. A State organisation can at once be created, that would not only require little revision with fuller powers, but would by its very creation eliminate the foreign State organisation against which we war. In no better way could we prove our self-reliance: in no truer way could we enrol all the nation. By clear thought, wise administration, courage and hard work the task can be accomplished; and the picture presented to the world of a foreign administration, proved to be alien simply because it does not function, the people's function being elsewhere, in their own created polity. So would a people enter as a people have seldom entered before, to whom real power would pass with all its responsibilities. That beginning can now be made.

"Roads to Freedom." By Bertrand Russell. 7s. 6d. net. Allen and Unwin.

Liberty Hall Players.

The production of "The Slough," by P. A. Wilson, on the last two Sundays, proved very successful. The subject of the play is the 1913 lock-out, in which both actors and audience had their part. Sydney Arnold's play, "The Vegetarian," was also produced to appreciative audiences, with Mrs. Cogley, as Leone; Miss Pollard, as Miss Talbot; Mr. T. Smith, as Bertie, and Mr. J. Rogan, as Uncle Paul. The plays were supported by enjoyable concerts.

LABOUR IN IRELAND

ENNIS TRADES COUNCIL.

Wins £1,600 in Four Months.

The usual monthly meeting of the above Council was held on Sunday, the 5th inst., under the chairmanship of Mr. Ml. Glynn, the President of the Council. The different affiliated societies were well represented.

The following officers were unanimously re-elected: Messrs. Ml. Glynn, N.U.R., president; John Kennedy, builders' union, vice-president; P. J. McKenna, treasurer; Pk. Hogan, I.C.W.U., secretary. The Council unanimously elected Mr. J. J. Scanlan, Ennis Shop Assistants' Association, as assistant secretary. The secretary read a short report of the work of the Council since its foundation and it was unanimously adopted. It was directed to embody it in the minutes and have it published in the local press.

The Ennis United Trades and Labour Council is the outcome of a meeting organised by the workers of the town and district and addressed by Mr. William O'Brien, secretary of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, on the 15th of September, 1918. Its inception was marked by enthusiasm and its activities since have the same encouraging characteristic. Over 23 bodies of organised workers affiliated with the Council at its first meeting and it is expected to increase the number in the coming year. The difficulties the Council had to overcome were many, although the principles of trade unionism may be said to be innate in most of the working people of Clare, yet the application of these principles to the requirements of everyday life was not generally understood; but it must be chronicled to the credit of the workers that they learned quickly the benefits of combined action and acted loyally to the principles to which they subscribed. The Council presented an unbroken front from the start, there was never a blank file in its ranks, nor did it essay anything that it did not achieve. This is a record to be proud of and it will surely be interesting to some to know what the Council has actually done for the workers of the town and district in the four months of its activities. It has helped to secure increases amounting in the aggregate to £1,600 per year for the shop assistants of the town, it has been a source of strength to the labourers of Ennis in obtaining the hard earned increases amounting to £20 per week which they now possess. The asylum workers willingly acknowledge their indebtedness to it for their war bonus of £52 per week, and the Ennis Direct Labourers' Association make no secret that the increase of £20 per week in the Ennis Union alone is mainly due to moral support of the Council.

There is an ambitious programme before us for the coming year, many re-

forms are long overdue in the coming and many abuses are long overdue in taking their departure. Better housing is needed in town and country, better conditions of labour, better opportunities for the capable children of poor parents, in short the Council proposes to put the local working class movement in its proper place in the social and public life of the county.

Self interest may be a powerful factor in every struggle, but the working man has ever been self sacrificing on behalf of his fellow man, and now he has a higher object than the gaining of a few shillings increase in his wages for himself. He aims at making the lives of all nobler, higher, purer and grander, and his conception of life is that no class advances itself in the social plane without raising correspondingly every other class.

Hence we appeal to all the members of the Council to preserve the loyalty which secured victory during the past months and then go forward with renewed courage for greater achievements.

BRAY, KINGSTOWN AND DISTRICT TRADES COUNCIL.

The South County Trades Council has made another big break, this time in bringing together a band, which, last Friday week, paraded from Kingstown Trades Hall through the town in procession with the delegates and officials of the Council.

The band is composed entirely of trade unionists, and will serve the movement directly at demonstrations, and indirectly by proving that Labour in its progress is seeking for the beauties as well as the necessities of life. We doubt, however, if the music of the Kingstown Band will soothe the alarm that Labour's advance awakes in the savage breasts of the suburban bourgeoisie.

Joe Metcalfe addressed a large gathering in the Trades Hall after the procession, and fell to the temptation to say the band would "play" a prominent part in labour's struggle and victories. He urged that every workingman and working-woman should concentrate on the labour movement. It alone would change them from cringing slaves to human beings. In the coming Poor-Law and Urban Council elections Labour was prepared to take the field against all-comers, and he hoped the band would take its place in the public propaganda of Labour's candidates.

Grist Mills.

The Ministry of Labour is in communication with the owners of the 86 mills throughout Ireland, in which Union members work, regarding the demand for a 16/- advance and a 48-hour week. The Union has claimed that a "prescribed rate of wages" under the Wages Act, 1918, exists, viz—the wages in Flour mills, and that these should be made applicable to the grist mill men,

ENGLISH CO-OPERATION AS OPERATED IN ARMAGH.

Indictment by Workers' Union Secretary.

The Co-operative Movement, with its numerous ramifications, built up by the tenacious industry and careful foresight of the British working classes, is to-day a colossal tribute to united thought and effort. The working man, out of the bondage of the present, looks to Co-operation as an agency whereby he can gain immediately material concessions.

Do the Co-operative Wholesale Societies fulfil the latter function and look to the interests of their own workers?

Let us see. The present-day labourer has two definite points to gain before he considers himself given the fruits of free citizenship, viz., a reduction in working hours and a concrete advance in wages. In struggling for these concessions his aims are those of every Trade Union in the country. The Co-operative system is really one huge Trade Union run on commercial lines, and being born of the masses, its fundamental policy should agree with the essentials of representative Trade Unionism. There are three "wings" of the Labour army, under the headings, Political, Co-operative, and Syndical, and though there may be numerous and complex difficulties between the various "wings," yet they all strive after the one ideal, the emancipation of the Fourth Estate.

Having reached this stage, let us pull aside the curtain and behold the juggernaut car of Co-operative Capital built by the workers for the accomplishment of their own destruction. The fact is, the C.W.S. system as demonstrated in Armagh, is diametrically opposed to the working man's welfare.

A Few Pertinent Questions.

Is it consistent with the principles of Co-operation to have a worker stand immersed to the knees in ice-cold water, his hands encased in light gauntlets, his feet protected only by rubber boots, from half-past eight in the morning till six at night, for the paltry weekly wage of 30s.? If he be a married man he is expected to keep his family in decency.

Is it the policy of the C.W.S. to have women carry out the work hitherto apportioned to men, or is it a sign of the industrial progress of the age to see fragile girls ordered by a supercilious foreman to hoist cases, weighing 1½ cwts. each, on to lorries and carts?

Is it a maxim of the C.W.S. to have three persons belonging to one Trade Union, and twenty-six belonging to another, work side by side in the same yard, a constant trouble and irritation to each other?

I could go on in this strain ad libitum, but of what avail? The C.W.S. in Armagh is the bete noir of local Trade Unionists, and is a standing reproach to the name it bears, a name full of promise to the working man. There are only two courses of action open, reform the local C.W.S. and have it run on the same basis as the other C.W.S. establishments throughout Britain, or else as Trade Unionists treat the C.W.S. in Ireland with as little consideration as we give to the ordinary private capitalist.

JOHN J. HUGHES.

DRAPERS FORGE AHEAD.**£100,000 a Year Won.**

In the current issue of the "Drapers' Assistant," the official organ of the Drapery and Allied Trades Employees' Association, further important progress in regard to increases of salaries is reported, the most notable being in the case of Messrs. Pim Brothers, where an all-round increase at the rate of twenty-five per cent. was secured, and, in addition, one month's salary, by way of bonus, was given to each employee. The increase of salaries, together with the bonus in one year alone amounts to the very considerable sum of nine or ten thousand pounds. In addition, bonuses and increases were secured in the firm of Messrs. Hyam and Co., Dame Street, and throughout the country increases were secured in Cork, Limerick, Tralee, Ballyhaunis, Claremorris, Ballinasloe, Clonakilty, and Tullamore. In the latter town, where "living-in" obtains, the increases all round amounted to fifty per cent.

The Limerick settlement also is very satisfactory, those on an extremely low wage being brought up to something approaching a fair minimum. In several of the towns strikes had to be threatened, and in one town, Ennistymon, a strike took place, affecting most of the assistants employed there. This has since been satisfactorily settled, increases all round having been obtained.

It is noteworthy that where the Organisation is strongest, the most satisfactory results were secured. This, of course, is a well-known lesson of organisation, but unfortunately it is a lesson which a number of shop assistants and clerks have not yet fully realised and inwardly digested. The great successes achieved by organisation in some scores of towns throughout the country, amounting to over one hundred thousand pounds (£100,000) a year, should be an object lesson on Organisation for the most dense.

The current issue of the "Drapers' Assistant" also contains important proposals by way of alteration of rules, which we hope to see adopted, and which would place the Organisation in a more secure and satisfactory basis.

Arising out of an application by the Irish Drapers and Allied Trades Assistants' Association for increased wages, an exchange of views between the various employers in Fermoy and Mr. L. J. Duffy (Munster organiser of the Assistants' Association) took place during the week, and resulted in a very satisfactory settlement being arrived at, except in one or two instances, where a difference of opinion arose, and where, at the moment, no decision has been reached. The Association's application was for an increase in wages varying from 33 1-3 to 50 per cent., and the establishment of a minimum wage for shop assistants, and the agreement provides for the establishment of the minimum and for increases varying from 30 to 50 per cent., and is, in most cases, retrospective to January, 1918. The Assistants concerned have expressed themselves satisfied with the terms of settlement, and the greatest enthusiasm prevails.

CLONMORE WAGES SCANDAL.**Where is Charles H. O'Connor?**

Is Charles H. O'Connor still drawing allowances as chairman of the Agricultural Wages Board? If so we would invite his attention to that idyllic spot in Co. Wicklow known as Clonmore.

There the gentle farmer, the genial father of his labourers, rewards them faithfully every week end with sums of from seven to twelve shillings—just enough to supply them with a reasonable quantity of silk cut or gold flake fags. They are besides fed by the farmer!

Some of them, mindful of the Pauline dictum, "Better to marry than to burn," have been improvident enough to encumber themselves with a wife and family. They may in this have been obeying laws natural and Divine, but their wages make no allowance for feeding and clothing their hapless dependents.

The farmers, scourges of God for the folly and imprudence of the labourers, are improving the situation by ceasing to employ men by the week. Two days a week is all the work offered to labourers until the spring comes.

Arrears of wages have not been paid. Some cases will be heard at the next court, but suing under the Corn Production Act before farmer J.P.'s is like going to law with the devil and the court in hell.

A word might be said about the capacity of the farmers to own and manage the land. All around fences are broken down, drains and watercourses choked, briars and rushes are growing all over once fertile soil. Incompetence and sweating go hand in hand, and there will be no cure for either until the labourers refuse to plough or sow in the coming spring. Now, Charles, are you going to act?

MOTOR AND CYCLE CLERKS.

An organising meeting of clerical workers engaged in the motor and cycle trades was held on Saturday last in the offices of the I.C.W.U., 1 College Street. The chair was occupied by Mr. C. Cluskey. The Branch Sec., F. R. Higgins, in the course of his address, referred to the insecurity prevailing at present among all workers in this business; the economic pressure that is becoming intolerable, and, therefore, the absolute necessity of each individual seeking refuge in an Irish trade union, such as the Clerical Workers' Union, where his interests are best served by the protection and promotion of this particular clerical class.

After the meeting a number of applications for membership were handed in. The provisional Committee, established for the motor and cycle section, are meeting again on Thursday evening to consider further applications.

New Zealand's Losses.

The "Times" correspondent at Wellington telegraphs that the total New Zealand casualties in the war were 57,932, made up as follows:—Officers, 2,588; other ranks, 55,344.

BELMONT MILL STRIKE.**Transport Secretary Must be Reinstated.**

The dispute in the Belmont Flour Mill is now in progress for almost ten weeks, and still there is no sign of an immediate settlement. The issue is clear and definite, and admits of no compromise on the part of our Union. Our Secretary has been victimised ostensibly for "intimidation" and "unwarrantable interference," but really because he has acted as chief spokesman of the men, and has actively concerned himself in matters really affecting their interests. The men have determined to see that the Secretary is reinstated, the proprietor seems equally determined that the man shall not re-start. The issue is therefore knit, the mill is closed, and 40 men, many of them married and with large families, are left idle.

The Union and the men are prepared for all contingencies except that of surrender: There shall be no lowering by Belmont of the banner of the Workers' Rights.

Mr. Eamonn Rooney, Organiser, visited Belmont on 22nd ult. On that night he addressed a large meeting of the Branch in the local hall, and dealt with the general position of Labour, and particularly with the growth of the Transport Union, which, he pointed out, was the largest and most progressive unit in the Irish Labour movement. On the following day the Organiser called upon Mr. Perry, director of the mill, but failed to reach a satisfactory settlement. The dispute, therefore, enters upon a more intense period, but it is anticipated that circumstances will ultimately compel the firm to realise the folly of fighting the Transport Union.

Mr. Rooney addressed a further meeting of the men on Thursday night, and on the following day he held a very successful organising meeting in Cloghan.

THOS. MURPHY.

Soldiers Protect Belmont Scabs.

The strike at Perry's flour mills in Belmont, King's Co., is now 9 weeks old. Secretary Cassidy's comrades holding out with splendid loyalty for his reinstatement. The firm as yet is impervious to reason, but will learn sense ere the men have to tighten their belts much further. When will the British soldiers who are guarding the four scabs in the mill begin to realise that they are only helping to rivet the shackles of wage-slavery more firmly on their own limbs.

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FRUGAL AND DECENT COMFORT.

While the peace fakirs are quarrelling amongst themselves at the Versailles pow-wow, the workers in these countries, as on the Continent, are taking their own measures to bring about those conditions of labour which will make life worth living. The Peace Conference of the States is of course going to draw up international regulations to govern labour conditions in the various countries. This is all to the good, especially in view of the undertaking Mr. Lloyd George has given Arthur Henderson that representatives of the International Socialist and Labour Conference will be entitled to put the views of Labour before the Versailles gathering. Already Henderson and Thomas are reported to be in consultation with the Versailles Commission on industrial and labour questions. But the Commission had better hurry up in its deliberations, for the workers are stirring, and Capital and the State are faced with a crisis which may overwhelm both of them.

For the moment we are much more interested in the direct action of the workers near home than in the indirect action of the diplomats abroad. In England and in Scotland the unrest promises well, and the gallant rebels of the Clyde are making it hot for the bosses. But the splendid stroke of the Belfast workers is the real business which appeals most to us, and to all who work for wages in Ireland.

The Belfastmen have followed up their ballot for a 44 hours week with a strike of unprecedented dimensions. The shipyards are idle this (Monday) morning as we write, and over 30,000 shipyard workers are taking it easy and jolly. Today Belfast is having a taste of that wholesome experience of working class power which most of Ireland had in April last year. The strike is affecting the whole city, and practically all of its industries and services. The gas and electricity supplies have been cut off, and the tramways, mills, and factories and bakeries are closed down. The streets are in darkness at night, and even many of the churches were compelled to dispense with their Sunday evening services. The newspapers are seriously hit, and transit and transport are almost suspended. In short, Belfast, from one end to the other, and all its domestic and pub-

lic services have been dislocated. A Strike Committee directs operations with the precision of a military General Staff, an official Strike Bulletin is issued daily, and the industrial capital of Ireland is held under siege by the men and women who were its real builders and its true wealth producers.

Belfast Labour is acting magnificently and its experiences of these days and nights will teach both workers and employers the much-needed lesson of the strength and possibilities of a well-organised and determined working class that knows its own mind. The best of luck to it. Belfast will be worth working in after this.

Elsewhere in Ireland the workers are preparing for the fray, and when they enter it they will, we trust, fight with the same big aims and stern will of their Belfast comrades. In Dublin on Sunday the Post Office employes decided to demand a minimum wage of 50s. and a working week of 42 hours with no split duties. That's the stuff to give them. On Tuesday of this week a conference of the trade unions in Dublin will discuss an all-Dublin campaign in the same direction, and other bodies are making similar moves. A national movement was wanted, and it has come from the National Executive of the Irish Labour Party. At its meeting on Saturday the National Executive called an All-Ireland Conference for February 8 and will propose to the Conference an All-Ireland movement for higher wages and shorter hours. We hope the Conference will go further than the National Executive, but the National Executive, while willing to lead, is naturally reluctant to take action which the majority of the Unions might not follow. The Workers can rest assured that the leaders will go as far as the rank and file will let them.

In the meanwhile we commend to the letter writers in the Dublin daily Press a careful study of the grounds upon which Labour's demands are based. Put briefly, those grounds are the necessity of securing to all workers that "frugal and decent comfort" which Pope Leo XIII. advocated but which is sadly lacking in the best of both Catholic and Protestant business establishments. The wages demand is for a mere advance of 20 per cent. over the real pre-war value or of 150 per cent. above actual pre-war rates as distinguished from real value. The demand for shorter hours is based upon the higher plane of leisure for recreation, and the provision of employment for the surplus labour which the inhuman labour market of capitalism throws upon the streets and roads. These proposals are far from revolutionary; they are a mere instalment of practical Christianity; and we hope that in its effort to get them applied Labour will have the assistance of all professing Christians, both lay and clerical. The laymen in Labour will see to it that the workers get their help and advice. Will the laymen and clerics in the Church and in Capital see to it that their influence is brought to bear upon the employers to the same ends?

The workers are awaking and they are not going asleep again for a long time. They are not out for revolution just now, they are out for shorter hours and better wages and, with or without allies, Labour is going to see that they get both.

The International Conferences.

February 3 is the date fixed for the International Socialist and Labour Conference. For the past week there has been some difficulty in finding accommodation in Berne, but the latest news to hand seems to indicate that Berne, and not Thun or Interlaken, will be the place where the delegates of the workers of all the world will foregather. So far delegations have been appointed in France, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Bohemia, Ireland, Finland, Esthonia, Sweden, Denmark, the Argentine, Australia, Greece, the Ukraine and Spain. The Menshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party will be represented, as will also the Moscow trade unions. That no news of Hungarian or Italian or Dutch delegations has reached us is probably due to cable difficulties. We hear that the American Socialist delegates, Hilliquit, Lee and Berger have been refused passports. The Gompers crowd are already in Europe, but they and the official Belgian Party decline to go to Switzerland, but they are to take part in what will be an Inter-Allied trade union conference in Paris on January 30.

The S.P.I. Fund.

The International Delegation Fund of the S.P.I. is doing well, but we want it to do better. We understand that the Party has received £10 on behalf of the imprisoned Irish Republican deputy, Countess de Markievicz. This handsome subscription is another splendid proof of that grand internationalist spirit which has always been so characteristic of the Countess. The party appreciates it all the more because it comes from Holloway Prison.

The Immediate Future of "The Voice."

The plans of which we spoke last week for increasing the size and influence of "The Voice of Labour" have made some headway, but are not yet completed. For this nobody connected with the paper is to blame, but the fact is regrettable above all in these days when important events happen simultaneously. This week, owing to the extension of our circulation abroad and the big happenings in Ireland and Europe, we have as much first class copy, home and foreign, as would fill the "Irish Times," but we are unable to use it. We suggest to our friends and readers that they help us to add four more pages to our present size by working up the home circulation. A little help in circulation from our readers will enable us to give a twelve-page paper for a penny, and a twelve-page paper is a necessity if our readers are to follow the proceedings of the International Conference in Switzerland through the direct despatches which we hope, if facilities allow, to arrange from Berne. Now for a boom in circulation, and then look out not only for more and better matter in the paper but for other important changes.

DAIL EIREANN.

We are unable to say what we want to say about the historic first session of Dail Eireann, and therefore say nothing this week. Next week, perhaps, we shall have so chosen our vocabulary that some of our impressions may be printed.

Friendly Critic (Phibsboro').—Come along Monday nights, at 7 p.m., and help.

The Workers' Republic. The great only appear great because we are on our knees: LET US RISE.

Bolshevism at Versailles.

Nobody who has followed current international history with interest and understanding was surprised when the Versailles Conference performed a volte face on the Russian question last week. As the Bolsheviks knew, Versailles was quickly driven to recognition of the terrible fact that there can be no peace in Europe until there is first of all peace with the Soviet Republic of Russia. To be sure the diplomats of the capitalist Powers give it out that they are not recognising the Soviet Government as fit companions for themselves, and no doubt the Bolsheviks quite believe them. But the Soviet is recognised as a de facto Government; indeed, as the strongest and most stable of all the Governments in All the Russias, and the Versailles invitation to its representatives to put the case for the Soviet and to make peace with the counter-revolutionary Governments is a triumph for Lenin and Trotsky, and for Labour everywhere, not less than that of Brest-Litovsk. We note that the Soviet is still keeping a friendly eye upon Ireland—more power to it. The refusal of the counter-revolutionaries to accept the Allied invitation will weaken themselves and strengthen the international position of the Soviet. As we write we learn that even the bitterly anti-Bolshevik delegates of the Russian Social Revolutionaries in Paris cordially approve of the Allied invitation to the Soviet, and suggest that in addition to the Russian Governments the Prince's Island Conference should be attended by

representatives of their own Party, of the Constituent Assembly, of the Mensheviks and of the International Socialist Conference. If the International goes to Prince's Island as well as to Versailles it will, indeed, have become the People's Peace Conference.

The Struggle for Peace.

Evidence accumulates that the rifts in the lute at Versailles are widening. The strong protest of the smaller nations on the question of their representation on the League of Nations Commission shows how the wind is blowing, and Canada's hearty association with the protest was not less welcome than it was surprising and significant. Even from the Press reports of the Conference the careful observer can see the drift of things. President Wilson's speech on Saturday on the League was significant of much and is promising after his study of the European situation at first hand, and his personal intercourse with all the leading figures at the Conference. It quite confirms the information we have from a private but reliable source that the American President is meeting with many obstacles in the Conference, but that he is exerting himself to break them down. Whether he will succeed or not nobody knows, and we shall retain our scepticism until the final issue dispels it. Yet, things are moving.

Ireland in Paris.

Our readers will be as glad as we are to note that in Paris "The Herald" and its editor, George Lansbury, are as steady and consistent friends of the Irish people

as they are in London. Last week Lansbury sent from the French capital the following hopeful message, amongst others, to his paper:—

"I was struck by the fact that even in such a crowd some were talking of Ireland, a burly American telling a short, thick-necked Lancashire boy that it was a pity Ireland could not be as contented as England, Wales and Scotland. The Englishman smiled and said: 'You don't seem to understand it is a question of nationality. Ireland wants freedom, and I'm damned if I can see why she shouldn't get it.' . . .

"It is instructive to notice, however, that neither Albanians, Sinn Feiners nor Egyptian Nationalists are allowed here: only those who support the established order or are willing to fight for landlordism and capitalism are welcome in Republican France. . . . Although the Sinn Feiners are not here, their cause, like that of other small and large nations, under British dominion, is being discussed, and no doubt, before very long, we shall hear that some member of the [Peace] Conference has raised the question of Ireland's, India's and Egypt's right to self-determination."

It is Labour that sends this message of hope and promise from the portals of the Peace Conference itself, and it is not without good reason that we again assert our conviction that justice and peace for Ireland, as for the world, will be secured by the exercise of the influence of International Labour upon the Peace Conference of the capitalist States.

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LABOUR'S JUST DEMANDS.

The New National Programme.

At a meeting of the National Executive of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, on Saturday, the following resolution was adopted, on the motion of Mr. Thomas Johnson, seconded by Mr. Cathal O'Shannon:—

"That the National Executive call an All-Ireland Conference of Trade Unions, to be held in Dublin on Saturday, February 8, to consider the following proposition, and to take such action thereon as may be decided:—

"The pre-war standard of wages ruling in Ireland was too low for even that 'frugal and decent comfort' which Pope Leo XIII. declared that justice demands. The cost of food, based upon the low standard of pre-war days, for a working-class family of five persons (see Board of Trade returns) is to-day 129 per cent. higher than in July, 1914. To secure a 20 per cent. improvement on the pre-war standard requires an increase of money wages of 155 per cent. on the rates ruling in July, 1914. The needs of to-day also call for a reduction in the hours of labour—first, to give leisure for recreation; and, second, to absorb the unemployed. It is, therefore, necessary that a general united national demand be made to establish—

"1.—A working week of 44 hours.

"2.—A wage of not less than 150 per cent. above pre-war rates—i.e., about 20 per cent. advance on pre-war real wages.

"3.—An absolute national minimum of 50s. per week for all adult workers throughout Ireland who are at present, or who, after the 150 per cent. increase, would still be in receipt of less than that amount."

It now becomes the duty of every Trades Council and every trade union branch to plan its course of action to achieve this programme. Ireland, before the war, was a country of sweated, under-paid workers. To-day it is no better. It is, indeed, worse, for few, if any, wage-earners are receiving the real value of their pre-war wages.

The "New Statesman" of last week furnishes a reply which will well serve to answer the master class clamour that will greet these new demands.

"It is, we suggest, useless for those who oppose the workmen's demands to bring forward the hoary argument that the industry, the export trade, or the nation cannot afford any such increases in the expenses of production. The mere fact that exactly the same argument has been brought forward on every previous occasion deprives it of any power to convince. It is, of course, obvious that the producers can divide among themselves no more than is produced. What is never demonstrated is that no change in the way in which the product is shared is practicable. We suggest that behind the Labour revolt is the feeling that the present extreme inequalities of distribution cannot and will not be permitted to continue. What the workmen feel is that, if there is a shortage, the shortage must be shared all round, not concentrated on the wage-earner. The average workman

may reconcile himself to go short of what he desires, if everyone else goes short, and if it is plainly in the service of society. He will not remain content to spend eight hours a day down the mine, or to go on working day after day at the forge, for little more than will pay for the keep of his household, in order that 'captains of industry' may amass fortunes, or shareholders and landlords draw what are relatively large incomes. Very dangerous will be the state of working-class feeling if the luxurious expenditure of those with large incomes is resumed on the pre-war level."

VICTORY'S AFTERMATH—RUIN.

Empire in Dissolution.

The Empire is at peace. Not half, or as they say at Hotel Majestic, Paris, pas demi. The "Manchester Guardian" alarms the Lancashire investors by telling them that the strike of thirty thousand mill workers in Bombay portends the shattering of the fond illusion that Asia is the reservoir of plentiful, cheap, and docile labour.

South Africa demands its independence, being dissatisfied with that Dominion status that is the pinnacle of the hopes of William Martin Murphy, Sir Hubert Gough and Stephen Gwynn. French Canadian Nationalists are waiting the return of their soldiers. Elsewhere in Canada repression is in force and three years' hard labour is the punishment for possessing Socialist literature.

In Britain the following workers are either on strike or threaten to strike:—Shipwrights, blacksmiths, foundry engineers, engineers, toolmakers, miners, teachers, boilermakers, shipyard workers, railwaymen, farm workers, electricians, gasworkers, ironmoulders, textile workers.

Glasgow has rallied all sections of labour, pro-war and anti-war, to secure employment for every fit worker, by reducing the hours of labour. The only issue that divided the strike committee was whether the demand should be for a thirty-hour or forty-hour week. Forty hours won by a narrow majority and was made the unanimous demand of the entire body. Nor is Glasgow alone in the Scottish movement. Rosyth, Edinburgh and Leith are acting concurrently, and communications are established with Yorkshire and Lancashire.

Belfast workers, deeply impressed by their employers' argument that conditions in Belfast must be regulated by those obtaining in Britain, have timed their strike to begin on the same day, January 27th, as the strike in Scotland. That is a use of their own argument the employers did not contemplate.

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SHORT DAY INCREASES PRODUCTION.

Why Employers Resist It.

Employers are preparing to fight the issue. Why? Experience goes to show that the shorter working day actually helps production. Lord Leverhulme has applied the six-hour day with profit to the Soap Trust. Sir John Brunner has nearly thirty years' experience of the eight hour day in the works of Brunner, Mond and Co. Lost time by the workers averaged ten days per annum under the eleven hour day. It has been reduced to two days per annum under the eight hour day.

The cost of production per ton is no more when the worker spends only eight hours in the factory than when he spent eleven.

An American financial paper supplies the reason for the employers' opposition. American employers conferred recently on the subject of high wages and resolved not to make any attempt to reduce wages, but to allow the unemployment consequent on the closing down of munition works and the demobilisation of the army to have its natural result.

Their method is increase the number of hungry men hunting jobs and the competition among them will lower wages. Their method is the British employers' method. Britain's biggest army is being disbanded. Millions of munition workers, men and women, are out of work. Keep them out, say the bosses, until they will work on our terms. After war unemployment gives big capital its great opportunity of smashing trade unionism once and for ever.

So despite all we have heard about the necessity of increasing production, the proven means of increasing workers efficiency and output is rejected by employers in order that they may bludgeon and starve the working class into a worse slavery than obtained before the war. Having won the Anglo-German war the boss class is bent on winning the class war.

SPRINGBURN IRISH LABOUR PARTY.

The above Party held its weekly meeting on Sunday, 19th Jan., in the hall, 19 North Street, at 1 p.m. Mr. H. Bradley presided.

Chief interest centred in a discussion on the question of the release of the untried Irish political prisoners, and the Chairman read a signed and witnessed statement detailing the treatment to which Irishmen have been, and presumably are being, subjected in Irish gaols. The Secretary was instructed to get into touch with other interested Irish bodies with a view of securing joint action on this question. We got five new members, and sold 6/3 worth of Labour literature, thus ending an interesting meeting.

JAMES ROE, Sec.
25 Avenue Road, Springburn.

"WASTE OF MACHINE POWER."

By Louie Bennett.

At Denmark House, one night recently, we discussed the problem of shorter working hours, especially in relation to the younger workers. We adopted a resolution in favour of a 44-hour week for adults, and we all agreed that such a limitation was still too high for children under 16. For them a 34-hour week was proposed. It was pointed out that in many factories the occupation of the older hand demands the assistance of a junior; hence a difficulty in giving different hours to the youngsters. The representative of one factory declared—"It could not be done in our place, because it would mean **waste of machine power!**" The phrase sums up the position—Shall we choose waste of machine power—i.e., loss of money—or waste of human life—loss of health, joy, youthful energy? Our factories and workshops show the choice made by the "bosses" of industry; they have, as result, their rich homes, their motor cars, their Victory Balls. We in the Trade Union movement see the result on the other side. We know how much of childhood's freshness and innocence and gaiety is sacrificed to save machine power! We can guess how much natural talent, how much good physical strength has been thrown away in the service of that machine power.

Two facile points are raised to our protest against an 8 hour working day for youngsters. First, we are told their parents are anxious for them to go into the workshops and it keeps them out of mischief. But why are the parents anxious to get their children into employment? Given different conditions, would they be any more anxious to rush them into paying jobs than are the parents who live in Merrion Square? As for mischief, opportunities for play and pleasure might be tried as an alternative measure to prevent mischief instead of overwork.

The second objection is more subtle, it raises the question of educational facilities. It is argued that as there are not at present arrangements for more advanced education for the boys and girls of workers' families, it is better for them to be learning their trade than learning nothing. We agree up to a point. We should like to see all boys and girls kept at school until they are 16 years of age. And perhaps if we press our demand for a 34 hours' working week for them, we may speed up education reform. But in any case we hold to our belief that 6 hours is long enough for any youngster to spend in school or in factory, or between both.

Therefore, we of the I.W.W.U., have decided that we shall do our utmost to impose our choice between machine power and human life upon the bosses of industry, and whatever the difficulties involved for the employer, we shall insist that the lives of the children must be released from the destructive slavery of modern industry. As a step towards that end we shall work for the realisation of our resolution in favour of a 34 hour

working week for young people under 16.

It is problems of this sort which lead us to the ideal of National Guilds, where the responsibility of safeguarding human life and giving freedom and scope to human potentialities devolves upon the workers themselves.

HOTEL AND RESTAURANT ACTIVITIES.

Mr. L. Murphy presided over the first annual meeting of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Section of the I.T. & G. W.U. on 10th January, when upwards of 700 members, just about the entire number free from their duties, attended to review the progress of their section since it was born out of the National Anti-Conscription strike. The heartening feature of the financial report was that £300 had been spent in excess of income—a feat only made possible by the section's alliance with the One Big Union.

The Committee for the ensuing year consists of sixteen members, representing the three categories of workers in the branch. From June to December, 1917, 1,835 members had been enlisted. Mr. Foran attended to congratulate the Hotel and Restaurant Workers on their substantial achievements, and to advise them on their deportment to recalcitrant employers.

The first annual dance in the Mansion House on 4th January was an event marked by all-round excellence. The musical programme, the catering and floor management were first-class.

The new rule-books are now on sale, and every member should have one. The price is 2d.

Shop-stewards are notified to collect the quarterly levy—men, 6d.; women and boys, 4d.

The Employment Agency scandals are engaging the attention of the Committee, but members are asked to give their serious attention and full support to all methods of ending the evil.

T. GORDON.

I.T.G.W.U. NOTES.**Voting for E.C.**

Last day for receiving nominations for General Treasurer and Executive has been extended to Feb. 4th. The poll in the case of No. 1 and Theatrical Workers' Groups, Dublin, takes place on 31st Jan. and the three following days.

Bolands' 3d. per Hour.

Rather than increase the wage of the manager of their stores in a large Western town, Boland's Ltd., closed it down. The manager had been getting 14/7 per week! And, if he dare seek the Unemployment Donation, John Scully, the ratepayers' Guardian angel, will screech "Fraud!"

Kiltimagh Again.

The revered P.P. still refuses to pay arrears to his man, whose wage is now 7/- below the minimum. His confrères in munificence include a Canon, a J.P. and a C.P.S.—goodly interpreters of the moral law and of the law of the land in holy Ireland. And they "cannot see their way" in 14 Stephen's Green.

The Snail's Progress.

The Wages Board's Inspector's speed is truly lightning-like. For preference give us caterpillars with acute lumbago. It remained for Granard Branch to discover a farm labourer who has received no wage for 15 months. On this standard the wageless man from Streete, who is allowed two pairs of socks and a pants annually, is living riotously. But, bless you, the A.W.B. will find that neither is a labourer "within the meaning."

Women Organising.

Nora Connolly and Maire Mullen are doing god work in Cork, where the Printing and Laundry sections are filling in well, and in Blarney and Cove. In Longford, domestics, dressmakers and shop assistants are joining up.

In Co. Tipp.

Thurles bakers won abolition of Sunday work. Eamonn Hayes has set Fethard going, and spoke in Clonmel on Sunday.

Co. Kildare Farm Workers.

Twenty men at Naas and five near Rathangan are on strike because the employers sought to clip wages. Recent negotiations with the N. Kildare farmers to fix rates for this season broke down, and the next move lies with the farmers.

Maryboro'

Has had a gingering-up from Tom Farren, who confers on Sunday with L. and L. officials re amalgamation. Malt-house men secured an increase to 46/8 and loft men to 33/-. The Gas Co. employees have been offered a 4/- advance, and a reduction of hours from 84 to 48.

In Connacht.

W. J. Reilly and M. Healy opened a Branch at Mohill. Colloney has been organised, and with Riverstown will become a section of Colloney Branch. Balinamore and Loughrea will shortly come in. The Arigna miners are considering the company's amended offer to increase drawers' rates from 2/3 to 2/6 per ton.

A Dungarvan Volte Face.

Erstwhile the Union's bitterest opponent locally, a Dungarvan employer is now actually advising applicants for jobs to join the branch. Good for you, Larry Veale.

County Meath.

F. McCabe spoke on Sunday at Ashbourne, which is to be linked up with Ratoath Branch, and at Drumree, while E. Rooney attended at Trim and Kilmessan.

Balbriggan Coalies.

The strike at the coal merchant firm was fixed up at a conference with the employers at Liberty Hall, the men getting a 7/- advance.

O'Donnell's Cat Trick.

In Caledon, Peadar O'Donnell, Organiser, beat a lunar eclipse with cycle lamps and, unable to secure a hall, shinned up a tree and orated, taking 107 members of all political lines into the fold. Peadar, in the past few months, has blazed a trail of glory clean across Ulster.

Kiltmacthomas

Bakers are demanding Dungarvan rates, viz—Foremen, 42/-; 2nd hands, 38/-; and a maximum of 24 batches per week, batches in excess of this to be paid at 2/- per batch per man. Demands have also been formulated for Co. Council men for whom there is to be a general movement in the county, and are pending in the case of Stephens' woollen mills.

A SHAM, SECRET UNION.

Railway Managers Organise for No. 1.

An astounding document has reached us proving that the pernicious principles of Larkinism are spreading in circles which have held the name of Larkin in horror. Alarmed at the prospect of railway nationalisation and the fear that they may be crushed between the upper millstone of Parliamentary control and the nether of trade union organisation, the Railway Managers of Ireland have set on foot an "Irish Railway Officials' Association," of which the great E. A. Neale is Chairman. The Committee includes the General Managers of the following roads:—G.N.(I)R., D.S.E.R., Midland N.C.C., C.B.&S.C.R., M.G.W.R., B.&C.D.R., with F. A. Campion, C.E., of the Great Northern, E. A. Watson, Engineer, G.S.&W.R., P. A. Hay, Secretary, M.G.W.R., C. E. Riley, Accountant, G.S.W.R., R. Gamble, Goods Manager, G.N.R.(I.), R. R. Stewart, C.&L.R., Croker Barrington, Esq., C. Bailie Gage, Esq., F. De Vere White, Esq., Sir William Fry, D.L., with J. Ingram, of the Irish Railway Clearing House, as Secretary.

Unfortunately these eminent gentlemen want to do their trade unionism on the cheap. All they propose to change is 10s. per annum. We warn them solemnly that no effective trade union can exist and prosper on so narrow a financial basis.

These superior gentlemen are inviting the select class whom they designate "officials" to become members, but what intelligent official is going to trust his interests in the hands of a committee composed exclusively of the highest officers of the Railway Hierarchy, who, although they have had perforce to be respectful to the organised workers in the service, have hitherto shown neither respect nor consideration for the upper grades of the clerical staff.

We are glad to say that officials are joining the R.C.A. in great numbers, and quite seriously we would advise Mr. Neale to become either a "Dear Comrade" of the R.C.A. or a "Dear Sir and Brother" of the N.U.R. There they could rely on the solidarity of Labour to back their claims for consideration under any scheme of nationalisation. A furtive hole-and-corner clique organised by circulars—to "be kept private, and . . . its contents must not be divulged to anyone"—will not command respect in any quarter.

The Railway Guild should be their objective, not pensions and retiring allowances.

SMALL NATIONS OVERLOOKED.

Poland relapses into "status quo,"
Censor and bayonet stifle Erin's woe.
Wales stands forsaken by her own Lloyd G.,

And Scotland's epitaph remains "N.B."
—H. E. G. Rope in the "Scottish Review."

German Socialists.

The Socialist Government in Germany has polled fifteen million votes, three times more than were cast for Lloyd George's Coalition.

This was James Connolly's estimate of the I. T. & G. W. U.

"It found the Workers of Ireland on their knees, and has striven to raise them to the erect position of manhood; it found them with all the vices of slavery in their souls, and it strove to eradicate these vices, and replace them with some of the virtues of free men; it found them with no other weapons of defence than the arts of the liar the lickspittle and the toady, and it combined them and taught them to abhor these arts and rely proudly on the defensive power of combination."

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A. Byrne, Phibsboro'	5	0	0
M. Neligan, Listowel	0	5	0
Subscribed by members of Hotel Workers' Branch, I.T.G.W.U. (per N. Murphy)	10	0	0
Archie Heron, Belfast	0	5	0
Countess Markievicz, I.R.A., T.D.E., Holloway Jail	10	0	0
Thomas Foran, Liberty Hall	1	0	0
"A.E."	1	1	0
H. C. Neill Watson	1	0	0
D. Logue, I.O.W.U.	0	5	0
P. O'Kelly, Liberty Hall	0	5	0
E. O'Carroll	0	2	6
J. Russell	0	2	6
J. J. Kennedy	0	1	0
T. H. O'Mahoney	0	1	0
W. Davin	0	1	0
W. Murray	0	1	0
E. Doolan	0	1	0
H. Hughes	0	10	0
J. J. Walsh, High Street I.T.G.W.U.	0	10	0
J. O'Sullivan, I.T.G.W.U.	0	5	0
Adolph Shields	0	5	0
J. Lawless	2	0	0
J. Nagle	0	2	0
P. S. O'Hegarty	1	0	0
M. Roberts	0	5	0
Miss Bowen	0	2	6
Sean P. O'Seaghdha	1	1	0
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W. Powell, Clonmel	0	5	0
Sean O'Cuill, Cork	0	2	0
L. J. Duffy, Cork	0	10	0
	£54	4	6

Allied Rivalry.

American ship-plates are ousting English from the Japanese trade.

In South Africa, imports of British agricultural implements fell from forty to one per cent., while American imports rose from thirty-three to sixty-seven per cent.

500 SECOND-HAND BICYCLES, Ladies' and Gent's; Price £4 10s. 0d., £5 10s. 0d., £6 10s. 0d., £7 10s. 0d. to £8 10s. 0d.; carriage paid. Also 500 stove-enamelled frames, all sizes, ladies' and gent's; Trade supplied. New Covers from 5/-, 6/6, 9/-, 12/-, 15/-. Tubes from 2/6, 3/6, 4/6, 5/-, carriage paid. New Machines from 11 to 15 gns.; Dunlop Tyres and Brooks' Saddles. No shortage of anything.

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FACT, NOT SLANDER.

Soviet Decree on Marriage and Children.

Much has been written against the attitude of the Russian Soviets towards marriage and children, whilst pernicious use has been made of an article advocating compulsory free love, which appeared in the organ of a small local Soviet in the Ural district.

The Soviet Marriage Decree in reality differs not at all from the laws of this country unless in the following paragraph:—

"In entering upon wedlock the couple may freely decide what surname they will adopt, the name of the husband, the name of the wife, or the joint surname of both."

On the subject of children the following clause marks the only difference from the British regulations:—

"Illegitimate children are to be treated in a similar manner as legitimate children in regard to their rights and obligations towards their parents, and also in regard to the rights and obligations of the parents towards these children."

"The persons who notify and give their signatures as the parents of the child are recognised as the father and mother of the child."

In case of an illegitimate child, where the father omits to give the above-mentioned notification, the mother, the guardian, or the child itself has the legitimate right to prove the paternity."

Policeman Shot.

In Glasgow, according to the organ of the Scottish Intelligentsia, "Thomson's Weekly News," a policeman fell a victim to a "vile and dastardly outrage," being shot by some person who has so far escaped apprehension.

So far the Scottish Office has not proclaimed the district, and no troops have been moved into the area. Nor have the several ecclesiastical authorities found it incumbent on them to issue circulars to their clergy, asking them to denounce the outrage, in terms which libel the district.

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"Congratulations on issues received." —*Jim Larkin.*

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Shock the highbrows.
Make the capitalist rub his eyes.

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THE TRUTH, Duluth, Minn.
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

SHOP ASSISTANTS' CONFERENCE.

Record Gains in 1917.

Under the presidency of Mr. R. W. Todd (Dublin), the delegates of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, assembled on Sunday, 19th inst., in the Irish Chemists' Assistants Rooms, 38 Upper O'Connell Street. Delegates were present from the following areas:— Dublin (Dublin Branch, Chemists' Assistants' and Tobacconists' Assistants' section), Cork, Dundalk, Belfast (No. 27 Branch, Pawnbrokers and Chemists).

Several branches sent apologies for absence, including Sligo, which pleaded its success at the municipal election in excuse. A wire was despatched extending congratulations to Ald. Luke Gilligan and Councillor Michael Nevin on their victory at the polls.

The vice-president, Mr. T. Dorgan (Dundalk), was moved to the chair for the ensuing year, and after his brief presidential address the officers were re-elected.

Mr. E. Owens (organiser) presented his report on 1918, which showed a very substantial growth in membership. During the year the unreasonable attitude of many employers, most of whom had been approached for the first time by a trade union, compelled withdrawal of labour in Dublin, Cork and Kerry, but most of the claims made had been secured by negotiation. The results spoke for themselves.

Annual Increases Gained during 1917.

	Employees Participating.			
Dublin	... 378	£11,055	12	0
Cork	... 48	878	17	4
Belfast	... 65	1,083	16	0
Dundalk	... 29	1,048	0	0
Londonderry	... 39	687	4	0
Sligo	... 40	1,000	0	0
	599	£15,753	9	4

These increases will stand comparison with those secured by any other union working in Ireland. They compare very well with £44,000 gained by the Shop Assistants' Union in Scotland, where the membership is seven times greater than the membership in Ireland. In most cases, however, the claims made in Ireland were so to speak breaking fresh ground, while in Scotland the Union was adding to already substantial gains. With continued extension of the Union and a maintenance of solidarity, 1918 triumphs could be excelled.

Mr. T. Johnson was nominated to represent the Union at the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, and Mr. J. W. Kelly as delegate for the Union's

annual general meeting. Instructions were given to the Administrative Committee to prepare propaganda literature for use in union recruiting.

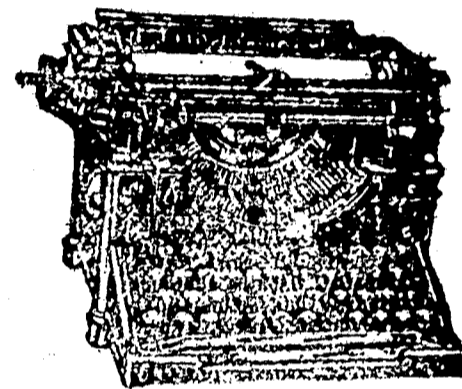
The conference adopted a resolution requesting the National Executive of the I.L.P. and T.U.C. to convene a conference of the unions in Ireland catering for workers in all branches of the trade of distribution with a view to amalgamation or the adoption of some plan of federation that will effectively prevent overlapping and competition.

The vice-president for 1919 and president-elect for 1920 is Mr. O. W. Humphrey of Cork, who distinguished himself in the struggles of the past year in that city.

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NATIONAL UNION OF LIFE ASSURANCE AGENTS.

January 23rd, 1919.

Dear Sir,—We would esteem it a favour if you will publish in your valuable paper the following statement re the Irish Refuge Agents' Strike.

Two years ago the Refuge Assurance Company introduced the Block System of collecting, which materially reduced the earning capacity of their agents, whilst it greatly increased their labour, it was by subterfuge and coercion that agents were thrust upon these terms.

The earning power of agents were abnormally low prior to the introduction of the system, and with the refusal of the Company to grant any War Bonus, the agents were driven to down tools in order to procure a living wage. After a ten days' strike the Dublin agents were granted a change of terms, but the concession was refused to other Irish agents, with the result that the Refuge Agents at Belfast, Portadown, Dundalk, Drogheda, Navan, Kingstown, Bray, and Enniskillen came out on strike supported by the Dublin Refuge Agents.

The notices of the agents were handed in through the Agents' Union, who requested an interview with the Company's representative, but to this request received no reply, and the Company have advertised their determination not to

meet the Union officials, also they refused the services of the Dublin and other Trades Councils to act as intermediary, a course taken by every employer in the country at the present time.

This strike, which had been prolonged 26 weeks in Belfast, and 12 weeks in other places, caused uneasiness amongst the policy-holders, so the Lord Mayor of Dublin interceded in hope of bringing about a settlement, and interviewed the two responsible representatives of the Refuge Company, and requested them to meet the representative of the agents. To this they answered that an offer had been made to all the men.

This statement was untrue, which they now acknowledge, for they offered positions to 17 agents to do the work of 36, and suggested that the Lord Mayor should endeavour to find employment for those they had victimised for participating in the strike for a living wage.

The Lord Mayor kindly requested the representative of the agents to forward their views, and a letter was sent to the Refuge Company through the Lord Mayor placing two proposals before the Company.

(1) That Mr. Marriott, or some responsible official of the Refuge Assurance Company, meet the representatives of the National Union of Life Assurance Agents, to discuss the demands of the agents;

A record of a brave struggle —of Men against Millions.—

(2) That Mr. Marriott agree to the appointment of some prominent and impartial person to arbitrate upon the justice of the demands placed before the Refuge Company by the National Union of the Life Assurance Agents upon behalf of the Refuge Agents.

After ten days the Company forwarded a letter to the Lord Mayor, in which they entirely ignored the two proposals, or in fact did not refer in any way to matters in dispute, but once more boasted of their success in further imposing upon their agents worse conditions than appertained prior to the strike, and finally stated that if the Lord Mayor would use his good offices to obtain employment for their late agents, that would end the matter.

After such high-handed treatment the agents on strike have decided to transfer their services to other offices that grant Trade Union terms and conditions, plus greater facilities to the policyholders, and it is for the public who are the providers of the wealth of these Assurance Companies, after interviewing their respective agents and perusing this statement, to judge upon the merits of the Refuge agents' dispute.—Yours faithfully,

BERNARD BROOKE,

General Secretary.

Nat. Union of Life Assurance
Agents.

THE EYESIGHT TEST.

Cork Cure for Bad Sight.

One of the abiding grievances of the railwaymen which the State is in conspiracy to maintain is the eyesight test to which all footplate men, guards, and signalmen are subjected.

The test is administered in the interests of the public and no one disputes the necessity of such a safeguard. The men feel, however, that the tests are not a proper measure of eye-power under actual conditions of service. The officials of the companies apply the test and they may reject on the ground of defective vision any man who has been marked out as an agitator. Cases have occurred of this victimisation and may recur at any time.

The threatened stoppage at Cork in the case of Comrade Lenihan emphasises another aspect of the test. Nine years ago Lenihan entered the service of the G. S. and W. Railway as an apprentice, passing all the tests satisfactorily. The conditions of footplate work, the eyes now blinded by the blazing fires, and again, closed by smoke, beaten by rain and hail, and strained by excessive hours of work, are actively destructive to vision. When Lenihan failed to pass the periodi-

cal tests the company proposed to scrap him as so much old metal.

He was to be turned adrift, with eyesight ruined in the company's service, the formative years of his life during which he might have equipped himself for another occupation gone and wasted beyond recovery—and all without compensation. Trade unionism stopped that game and a threat to down tools has secured Lenihan for the present.

For railwaymen the rule of the future must be a full maintenance for every man whose earning power is reduced by causes arising from his employment and action, prompt and spontaneous, must always be taken to enforce the rule.

Japan's Oversea Trade.

Japan's exports for 1918 amounted to £196,800,000, and her imports to £166,800,000.

Back Numbers.

A few copies of No. 41 of the "Voice of Labour" are wanted. Address this Office.

Printed for the "Irish Labour Press," 27 Dawson St., by Messrs. Cahill and Co., Ltd., Ormond Quay, Dublin. Registered as a Newspaper.

LABOUR IN FRANCE.

An interesting fact in connection with this Conference is that the united Christian syndicates of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine have given their adherence, by a formal declaration of their representatives, both to the new organisation of Alsace and Lorraine and to the General Confederation of Labour.

"Economic struggles are now among the first projects of political life," said their delegate, M. Amman. "The workman class, all round, can no longer accept the actual state of affairs; like other syndicates, Christian syndicates wish to take part in the struggle that is forced upon us."

In congratulating all the syndicates upon entering into the great French family, M. Imbs said:—"We are French, we wish to remain so, and we are going to work in the interest of Alsace-Lorraine and of our dear France." We may say, further, the union between the Christian Trade Unions of Alsace-Lorraine and the General Confederation of Labour, which is neither Christian nor anti-Christian, but simply an organisation of workers for economic purposes, proves that the Christian unions have realised at last that by imposing sectarian tests in trade unions, as they did within the German Empire, they were guilty of dividing the workers' forces in face of the common enemy of their class.