

# **James Connolly**

## **The Re-Conquest of Ireland**

### **Foreword**

“The conquest of Ireland had meant the social and political servitude of the Irish masses, and therefore the re-conquest of Ireland must mean the social as well as the political independence from servitude of every man, woman and child in Ireland.”

The underlying idea of this work is that the Labour Movement of Ireland must set itself the Re-Conquest of Ireland as its final aim, that that re-conquest involves taking possession of the entire country, all its power of wealth-production and all its natural resources, and organising these on a co-operative basis for the good of all. To demonstrate that this and this alone would be a re-conquest, the attempt is made to explain what the Conquest of Ireland was, how it affected the Catholic natives and the Protestant settlers, how the former were subjected and despoiled by open force, and how the latter were despoiled by fraud, and when they protested were also subjected by force, and how out of this common spoliation and subjection there arises to-day the necessity of common action to reverse the Conquest, in order that the present population, descendants alike of the plebeian Conquerors and the Conquered plebeians, may enjoy in common fraternity and good-will that economic security and liberty for which their ancestors fought, or thought they fought.

The United Irishmen at the end of the Eighteenth Century in an address to the conflicting religious sects of Ireland declared:—

We wish that our animosities were buried with the bones of our ancestors, and that we could *unite* as Citizens and claim the Rights of Man.

We echo that wish to-day, and add that the first social right of man is to live, and that he cannot enjoy that right whilst the means of life for all are the private property of a class. This little book, as a picture of the past and present social conditions of the Irish masses, seeks to drive that lesson home, and to present to the reader some of the results which have followed in Ireland the capitalistic denial of that human social right.

***James Connolly.***

# Chapter I

## The Conquest of Ireland

Before we can talk of or develop a policy for the re-conquest of Ireland it is well that we picture clearly to our mind the essential feature of the conquest itself, how far it went, and how far it has already been reversed. Let it be remembered, then, that the conquest was two-fold – social and political. It was the imposition upon Ireland of an alien rule in political matters and of a social system equally alien and even more abhorrent.

In the picturesque phrase of Fintan Lalor it meant the "conquest of our liberties and the conquest of our lands". The lands being the material basis of life, alike of conquerors and conquered, whosoever held those lands was master of the lives and liberties of the nation. The full extent of that mastery, that conquest, is best seen by the record of the Cromwellian settlement in 1654. In that settlement the conquest reached its highest and completest point. Never before, and never again, were the lives and liberties of the people of Ireland so completely at the mercy of foreign masters as during the period in question.

Previously the old Gaelic culture and social system still held sway in the greater part of Ireland, and the armed force of the Gael still existed to curb the greed of the alien enemy and restrain, by the example of its greater freedom, the full exercise of his tyrannical propensities, and subsequently the gradual growth of the ideals of a softer civilisation, and the growth of democracy, contributed to weaken the iron rule of the conqueror. But the Cromwellian settlement well understood was indeed the final consummation of the conquest of Ireland. There are then three pictures we must needs conjure up before our mind's eye in our endeavour to understand the point we have reached in the history of the Irish nation. These three pictures are successively – of Ireland as she was before the conquest; as she was at the completion of the conquest; as she will be at the re-conquest by the people of Ireland of their own country. The first is a picture of a country in which the people of the island were owners of the land upon which they lived, masters of their own lives and liberties, freely electing their rulers, and shaping their castes and conventions to permit of the closest approximation to their ideals of justice as between man and man. It is a picture of a system of society in which all were knit together as in a family, in which all were members having their definite place, and in which the highest could not

infringe upon the rights of the lowest – those rights being as firmly fixed and assured as the powers of the highest, and fixed and assured by the same legal code and social convention. It is a system evolved through centuries of development out of the genius of the Irish race, safeguarded by the swords of Irishmen, and treasured in the domestic affections of Irish women.

The second picture is a picture of the destruction by force of the native system and the dispersion and enslavement of the natives. Let these few quotations from Prendergast's **Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland** place before our eyes this picture in all its grim and agonising horror. He tells of the proclamation issued by the English Parliament directing that "by beat of drum and sound of trumpet, on some market day within ten days after the same shall come unto them within their respective precincts", the English governors throughout Ireland shall proclaim that "all the ancient estates and farms of the people of Ireland were to belong to the adventurers and the army of England, and that the Parliament had assigned Connaught for the habitation of the Irish nation, whither they must transplant their wives and daughters and children before the First of May following (1654) under penalty of death if found on this side of the Shannon after that day".

In addition to this transplanting to Connacht, gangs of soldiery were despatched throughout Ireland to kidnap young boys and girls of tender years to be sold into slavery in the West Indies. Sir William Petty, ancestor of the Lansdowne family and a greedy and unscrupulous land-thief, declared that in some Irish accounts the number so sold into slavery was estimated at one hundred thousand.

This ancestor of Lord Lansdowne, the founder of the noble Lansdowne family, Sir William Petty, landed in Ireland in 1652 with a total capital of all his fortune of £500. But he came over in the wake of Cromwell's army, and got himself appointed 'Physician to the Army of Ireland'. In 1662 he was made one of a Court of Commissioners of Irish Estates, and also Surveyor-General for Ireland. As the native Irish were then being hunted to death, or transported in slave-gangs to Barbadoes, the latter fact gave this worthy ancestor of a worthy lord excellent opportunities to 'invest' his £500 to good purpose.

How this hunting of the Irish was going on whilst Sir William Petty was founding the noble Lansdowne family may be gauged from the fact that over 100,000 men, women and children were transported to the West Indies, there to be sold into slavery upon the tobacco plantations. Prendergast, in his **Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland**, gives the following illustration of the methods pursued:—

“As an instance out of many:— Captain John Vernon was employed by the Commissioners for Ireland to England, and contracted in their behalf with Mr. David Sellick and the Leader under his hand to supply them with two hundred and fifty women of the Irish nation, above twelve years and under the age of forty-five, also three hundred men above twelve years and under fifty, to be found in the country within twenty miles of Cork, Youghal and Kinsale, Waterford and Wexford, to transport them into New England.”

This Bristol firm alone was responsible for shipping over 6,400 girls and boys, one of their agents in the County Cork being Lord Broghill, afterwards Earl of Orrery.

Every Irishman or woman not able to hide in the woods, morasses or mountains, or not able to defend themselves by force of arms, was good prey at that time, and hence, when Sir William Petty coveted a piece of land, he but required to send a party of *soldiers* to hunt down the owners or occupants, ship them out to the West Indies as slaves, and lo! the trick was done. The land was thenceforth the property of the Lord's anointed. So when Sir William Petty died the original £500 with which he came to Ireland had swelled to an annual rent roll of £18,000, and from one mountain peak in the County Kerry he could look round and see no land that had not fallen into his grasp.

Here then is the conquest. Fix it clearly before your eyes. National liberty, personal liberty, social security all gone; the country ruled from its highest down to its meanest officer by foreigners; the Irish race landless, homeless, living by sufferance upon the mercy of their masters, or trusting alone to the greed of their conquerors to gain that toleration which even a conqueror must give to the slaves whose labour he requires to sate his avarice or minister to his wants.

This, then, is the second picture. Mastery of the lives and liberties of the people of Ireland by forces outside of and irresponsible and unresponsive to the people of Ireland – social and political slavery.

The third picture must be drawn by each, as it suits his or her fancy, who wishes to visualise to the mind's eye the complete reversal of all that was embodied in the second. As they construct that picture of the future so they will shape their public actions. In the belief that the labour movement alone has an ideal involving the complete reversal of the social and political consequences defined in the second picture, these chapters were written to help the workers in constructing that mental picture aright.

But how far has that conquest been already reversed? As a cold historical fact that conquest fell far short of the impious wishes of its projectors. The projected removal

of the entire people to within the confines of Connacht came into collision with the desires of the land-thieves for a tenantry upon whose labours they could grow rich. Land without labour is valueless; and to be an owner of confiscated land, and that land lying idle for want of labourers did not suit the desires of the new Cromwellian squire-archy. So gradually the laws were relaxed or their evasion connived at by the local rulers, and the peasantry began to re-appear at or near their former homes, and eventually to gain permission to be tenants and labourers to the new masters. Into the towns the Catholic also began to find his way as a personal servant, or in some other menial way ministering to the needs of his new rulers.

Catholic women were within the forbidden territory as wives of Protestant officers or soldiers, and by rearing up their children in their own faith, whispering old legends into their ears by day, or crooning old Gaelic songs to them at night helped, consciously or unconsciously, to re-create an Irish atmosphere in the very heart of the ascendancy. Ere long, by one of those silent movements of which the superficial historian takes no account, the proscribed people were once more back from the province into which they had been hunted, heartbroken and subdued, it is true, but nevertheless back upon their own lands.

In the North the proscription had been more effectual for the reason that in that province there were Protestant settlers to occupy the lands from which the Catholics had been driven. But even there the craving for a return to the old homes and tribelands destroyed the full effect of the Cromwellian proscription. The hunted Ulstermen and women crept back from Connacht and, unable to act like their Southern brethren and re-occupy their own lands upon any terms, they took refuge in the hills and 'mountainy' land. At first we can imagine these poor people led a somewhat precarious life, ever dreading the advent of a Government force to dislodge them and drive them back to Connacht; but they persisted, built their huts, tilled with infinite toil the poor soil from which they scraped the accumulations of stones, and gradually established their families in the position of a tolerated evil. Two things helped in securing this toleration.

First, the avarice of the new land-owning aristocracy, who easily subdued their religious fanaticism sufficiently to permit Papists settling upon and paying rent for formerly worthless mountain land.

Second, the growing acuteness of the difficulties of the Government in England itself; the death of Cromwell; the fear of the owners of confiscated estates that the accession of Charles II might lead to a resumption of their property by former owners, and, arising from that fear, a disinclination to attract too much attention by further attacks

upon the returning Catholics, who might retaliate, and, finally, the unrest and general uncertainty centering round the succession to the throne.

Thus, in Ulster the Celt returned to his ancient tribelands, but to its hills and stony fastnesses, from which with tear-dimmed eyes he could look down upon the fertile plains of his fathers which he might never again hope to occupy, even on sufferance.

On the other hand, the Protestant common soldier or settler, now that the need of his sword was passed, found himself upon the lands of the Catholic, it is true, but solely as a tenant and dependant. The ownership of the province was not in his hands, but in the hands of the companies of London merchants who had supplied the sinews of war for the English armies, or, in the hands of the greedy aristocrats and legal cormorants who had schemed and intrigued while he had fought. The end of the Cromwellian settlement then found the 'commonality', to use a good old word, dispossessed and defrauded of all hold upon the soil of Ireland – the Catholic dispossessed by force, the Protestant dispossessed by fraud. Each hating and blaming the other, a situation which the dominant aristocracy knew well how, as their descendants know to-day, to profit by to their own advantage.

This, then was the Conquest. Now sit down and calmly reason out to yourself how far we have gone to the reversal of that conquest – how far we have still to go. The measure of our progress towards its reversal is the measure of the progress of democracy in this island, as measured by the upward march of the 'lower classes'. The insurgence of the peasantry against the landlord, the shattering of the power of the landlord, the surrender of the British Government to the demand for the abolition of landlordism, all were so many steps toward the replanting securely upon the soil of Ireland of that population which, "with sound of trumpett and beat of drumme", were ordered 300 years ago "with their women and daughters and children" to betake themselves across the Shannon into Connacht, there to remain for ever as the despised and hated helots of foreign masters.

The unsatisfactory nature of the scheme for replanting may be admitted; the essential fact is the reversal of that part of the conquest which demanded and enforced the uprooting and expropriation and dispersion of the mere Irish. In this, as in the political and social world generally, the thing that matters most is not so much the *extent* of our march, but rather the *direction* in which we are marching.

On the political side the Re-conquest of Ireland by its people has gone on even more exhaustively and rapidly. We remember sitting as delegates to the '98 Centenary Committee' in the Council Room of the City Hall of Dublin in 1898, and looking around upon the pictures of the loyal ascendancy Lord Mayors of the past which

cover the walls of that room. At first we thought merely that if the dead do have cognisance of the acts of the living, surely fierce and awful must be the feelings of these old tyrants at the thought that such a room should be handed over gratuitously to the use of such rebels as were there upon that occasion. Then our thoughts took a wider range, and we went in imagination back to that period we have spoken of as the culmination of the Conquest, and forward to the following year when we were assured that under the Local Government Act the representatives of the labourers of Ireland might sit and legislate all over Ireland in such halls of local power as the Council Room of the Municipality of Dublin. What a revolution was here! At the one period banished, proscribed, and a serf even to the serfs of his masters; at the other period quietly invading all the governing boards of the land, pushing out the old aristocracy and installing in their places the sons of toil fresh from field, farm and workshop, having the legal right to grasp every position of political power, local administration and responsibility – where at the former period they were hunted animals whose lives were not accounted as valuable as foxes or hares. Truly this was, and is, a rolling back of the waves of conquest. But how many had or have the imagination necessary to grasp the grandeur of this slow re-instatement of a nation, and how many or how few can realise that we are now witnessing another such change, chiefly portentous to us as a still further development of the grasp of the Irish democracy upon the things that matter in the life of a people.

It shall be our task in future chapters briefly to portray that development, to picture how far we have gone, to illustrate the truth that the capitalist and landlord classes in Ireland, irrespective of their political creed, are still saturated with the spirit of the conquest, and that it is only in the working class we may expect to find the true principles of action, which, developed into a theory, would furnish a real philosophy of Irish freedom.

But in this, as in many other conflicts, the philosophy of Irish freedom will probably, for the great multitude, follow the lines of battle rather than precede them. The thinking few may, and should, understand the line of march; the many will fight from day to day, and battle to battle, as their class instincts and immediate needs compel them.

For the writer, our inspiration, we confess, comes largely from the mental contemplation of these two pictures. The dispossessed Irish race dragging itself painfully along through roads, mountains and morasses, footsore and bleeding, at the behest of a merciless conqueror, and the same race in the near future marching

confidently and serenely, aided by all the political and social machinery they can wrest from the hands of their masters, to the re-conquest of Ireland.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Labour and Co-operation in Ireland**

In an earlier work, **Labour in Irish History**, we dealt at some length with an experiment in co-operation at Ralahine, County Clare, in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, and quoted extensively from contemporary witnesses to show the very great success achieved by the participants in, and promoters of that historic venture.

In the course of that description we were compelled to note the manner in which an attempt significant of so much, and revealing in the Irish nature so many untried possibilities of expansion and adaptability, had been ignored by successive generations of Irish historians and politicians.

These latter seem, indeed, always to have floated along the surface of events and to have recoiled from any investigation involving a challenging of the orthodox basis of society, with more timidity than that with which his Satanic Majesty is popularly supposed to recoil from holy water. Their one governing idea has, at all times, been to represent the Irish cause as but a variant of a reform movement in English society; that Ireland was restive because she was not treated with the same equal justice as England, and that if she was only so treated it would be found that Ireland was essentially orthodox, and lacking in sympathy for any attacks upon accepted social institutions.

Hence such historians and politicians have ever felt that the story of a co-operative experiment like that of Ralahine – an experiment initiated by believers in Utopian Socialism – required care in the telling lest its example became infectious, and was, in fact, better left untold.

Following along the same lines of action, when the modern co-operative movement was preached to the Irish farmers by the lecturers of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, when the literature prepared by Mr. George Russell, Father Finlay, S.J., Sir Horace Plunkett, and their fellow-labourers, was being pushed throughout Ireland, it was early discovered that their attempts to regenerate Irish

agricultural life had no more bitter enemies than the political representatives of the Irish people, irrespective of their political colour.

The Unionist politicians opposed the co-operators because the movement tended to bring together Protestant and Catholic on a basis of friendly and fraternal helpfulness – a state of things that, if persisted in, would inevitably destroy that bigoted distrust and hatred upon which Unionism depended for its existence.

The Home Rulers opposed the co-operators upon the alleged grounds that their success in increasing the finances of the farmers would only redound to the advantage of the landlord, but really because the practice of co-operation would necessarily interfere with the profits of those leeches who, as gombeen men, middlemen and dealers of one kind or another in the small country towns, sucked the life-blood of the agricultural population around them.

Anyone acquainted with rural Ireland knows that, next to the merciless grinding by the landlord, the tenantry suffers most from the ruthless exploitation of the classes just mentioned, and that, indeed, the buying-out of the landlords in many cases served only to gorge still further the ever rapacious maw of those parasites upon rural life.

But whereas the landlords were ever regarded in Ireland as alien to Irish life, the gombeen men and their kind, from their position in the country towns, their ostentatious parade of religion and their loud-mouthed assertions of patriotism, were usually the dominant influences in the councils of the local Home Rule or other constitutional national organisation.

From all national organisations not constitutional, or ‘respectable’, they usually kept aloof, but this fact did not interfere with their power to dictate the attitude of the Irish Parliamentary representatives to every manifestation of Irish life. They were ever the local wirepullers, and, as such, posed as the representatives of the political thought of Ireland.

Thus it was in no wise strange that the Irish politicians as a whole were averse to all propaganda upon co-operative lines, and that as a writer in **The Irish Homestead**, says:–

Sir Horace Plunkett, Father Finlay and Mr. Anderson were assured that their ideas were quite unsuitable for Ireland, that the people wanted something else, that they were going contrary to Irish instincts, that their ideas might suit people like the Danes and Germans, but they must remember that Ireland had a unique character.

But neither was it strange that the co-operative principle had in itself an appealing force, quite sufficient to surmount this factitious opposition, although fifty meetings were held before a single society was formed.

Apart from the direct appeal founded upon self-interest, an appeal rooting itself in the necessities born of an ever-increasing difficulty in finding a profitable market for their commodities, the Irish farming population had long been accustomed to practical co-operation for given objects.

The sight of a whole countryside agreeing to build a cabin for some one left shelterless, to save the crops of a neighbour too sick to bring in his own, to dig the field of a widow, to raise money enough to enable a promising boy to get the education necessary to become a priest or a doctor, or in the olden days to bring in and support a hedge-schoolmaster, was not unfamiliar to Irish eyes, nor were the practical value of such kindly lessons lost to Irish understanding. And, in the days immediately preceding the co-operative propaganda, the Irish Land League had found the peasantry willing co-operators in a score of ways when such co-operation formed part of the campaign against landlordism.

Nor yet had all the insidious tendency of leaders, infatuated with capitalist doctrines, and too ignorant of their country's real history to understand its ancient institutions, ever been able to take from the peasantry the possession of traditions which kept alive in their midst the memory of the common ownership and common control of land by their ancestors – an ownership and control which were the very flower of co-operation.

Scattered around amongst them also they found the Catholic Church in all its convents and monasteries, practising co-operation alike upon the consumers' and producers' model, and with the element of personal profit or aggrandisement entirely eliminated.

When those considerations left the Irish agriculturalist still unconverted, there were still pressing upon him the forces born of economic development, urging him with an irresistible pressure toward a remodelling of his methods, and a reconsideration of his ideas. He found that he had no longer even a partial monopoly of the home market, but that, on the contrary, each development of the transport facilities of the world brought him a new danger, added a new menace to his anxiety. The inventor who enabled the steamship companies to shorten the time taken to convey agricultural products across the ocean; the engineer who laid down railroads which tapped new or backward lands and brought their crops to the ports of the world; the government which placed the resources of its scientists and its chemists at the

disposal of its producers and merchants, all, all were new factors *bringing* new perils for him to face. In less than a generation New York, New Orleans, or the River Plate, the Black Sea and the Baltic have moved up, so to speak, to within easy commercial striking distance of the farmers of Ireland, and their merchandise confronts him in all his markets. From the Scandinavian countries the farmers, organised and taught with Government aid upon co-operative lines, were pouring in butter, cheese, and eggs, packed and forwarded in a manner infinitely superior to the old slipshod methods of the individual petty Irish farmer; from the South of France and the Channel Islands came all the varied output of highly-trained market gardeners working with all the advantages of climate and efficient transport service on their side, and all around the unfortunate Irish agriculturist was met with the competition of rivals much better trained, better educated, better led, better served, and by the demands of merchants and customers calling for greater nicety, greater cleanliness, greater despatch, and greater variety.

Under such pressure, face to face with such increasing competition, it is little to be wondered at that the propaganda of the co-operators eventually reached the Irish peasantry, despite all the obstacles raised and imaginary dangers invoked by the interested enemies of the new doctrine. To-day up and down through Ireland a network of co-operative societies has spread and is spreading amongst the peasantry, whilst new and more fruitful fields of enterprise are continually being opened up by their resourceful leaders and members. Over 100,000 Irish farmers are now organised in co-operative societies. We have co-operative creameries, co-operative marketing, co-operative banks, and projects for co-operative fishing are already well on their way.

In the towns co-operative societies of consumers have taken a firm foothold in the North and in the extreme South, whilst the result of the beneficent activities of the co-operative distributive societies during the great Dublin Labour Dispute left such an impression upon the minds of the workers in the Irish Labour movement, that a great crop of co-operative enterprises under the auspices of that movement may be confidently anticipated in the very near future.

Up to the present the participants in the co-operative movement amongst the agricultural population have, as is usual in Ireland, troubled themselves little about fashioning in their minds any form of ideal to result from their labours, but have instead attended strictly to the immediate needs of the moment. Amongst the leaders in the town movements, on the contrary, it may be said that as a rule their activities

would be much less were it not for the ideal that inspires them. That ideal is the one common now to the militant workers of the world – a Co-operative Commonwealth. The immediate difficulty if the two movements – i.e., of town and country, are not to remain strangers, with all the possibilities of developing from estrangement into hostility – will be to find a common basis of action in order that one may support and reinforce the other. Mr. George Russell, the gifted editor of **The Irish Homestead**, points out that the fact that the overwhelming proportion of Irish farmers employ no labour, but generally work their own farms, makes that problem not so difficult in Ireland as it would be in countries where the farmers were employers and therefore supposedly hostile to the claims of Labour. This idea, with all its implications, is worthy of careful examination.

Stated briefly it may be thus summed up: Since the great development of transatlantic and cross-sea competition, and the supplanting or curbing of the landlord, the chief problem for the Irish farmer is to find a good market where the balance will not be weighted against him. He can only find this by creating a market amongst a sympathetic and prosperous Irish working class. His products are not fancy products, they only appeal to the needs of the human stomach, and not to the whims, passions or fantasies of the imagination. A millionaire, having only one stomach, can only consume what one stomach requires, he cannot consume more of the staple products of our Irish farms than a well-paid tradesman would require and demand.

The dainties, delicacies, wines, &c., which go to make the dinner of the millionaire more costly than that of the tradesman are imported, and hence the greater cost of his dinner does not represent a greater demand for Irish agricultural products.

Thus the Irish farmer cannot increase the demand for his products by any support of the well-to-do, the millionaire, or the budding millionaire. On the contrary, every upward move of Labour in Ireland which adds to the income of the working class, and transforms its members from semi-starved slaves into well-paid toilers able to purchase a sufficiency of food, creates thousands or tens of thousands of new customers. Every defeat of Labour, accompanied by a reduction of purchasing power, lessens the demand for the products of Irish farmers; every victory of Labour increases the purchasing power of the working class and thus sends fresh customers into the Irish market. And if that victory for the Irish working class was won by the support of the co-operative farmers of Ireland, then every constituent of the Irish Labour movement would be morally bound to give preference to the commodities produced by their agricultural allies.

To that moral obligation the establishment and popularisation of co-operative stores under the aegis of the Labour movement would add another, that of self-interest.

Stocking the products of the agricultural co-operative societies in time of industrial peace, the workers would enjoy their credit in time of war; then the trades union in time of peace could invest its funds in the co-operative societies; in time of lock-outs or strikes it would fight with food guaranteed to its members by such societies which, for the food required, would be able to pledge their credit to the organised co-operative farming community.

Trade union funds, instead of being deposited in banks to be let out by those institutions to capitalist exploiters, could be placed to the credit of soundly conducted co-operative enterprises, developing the farmers and aiding the resources of the toilers in town and country. In so doing the urban workers would know that, in helping to make life in the rural districts less unbearable, they were also helping to stem the flow of labour into the towns, thus increasing the security of their own position.

The idea is capable of almost infinite expansion, and not least amongst its attractions is the hope that the minds of Irish men and women, once set thus definitely in the direction of common work, common ownership, and democratically conducted industry, their thought would not cease from travelling that path until they had once more grasped the concept of an Ireland of whose powers, potentialities and gifts each should be an equal heir, in whose joys and cultures all should be sharers.

The letter to the Dublin Employers (printed in the [Appendix](#)), though it excited the wrath of all the tyrants and reactionaries in Ireland, served to win for Mr. Russell that hearing for the Co-operative position we have just outlined, which may yet make it in a double sense a historic document.

If, to that combination of agriculturalists and urban labourers we have just hinted at as a possibility of co-operation upon the economic field, we add the further possible development of an understanding upon the political field between these two groups of co-operators, we begin to realise the great and fundamental change now slowly maturing in our midst.

Such a political development may not, indeed probably will not, come soon, but the necessity of seeking legislation to aid their activities, as well as the necessity of preventing legislation to obstruct their activities, will force forward that development in due time.

Then, when to the easily organised labourers of the towns is added the immense staying power of the peasantry, and when representatives appear in the Halls of

Legislature voicing their combined demands, the Party of Labour which will thus manifest itself will speak with a prophetic voice, when it proclaims its ideal for a regenerated Ireland – an Ireland re-conquered for its common people.

For the only true prophets are they who carve out the future which they announce.

## **Chapter IX**

### **Re-Conquest – A Summing Up**

Recent events in Ireland have gone far to show that the old lines of political demarcation no longer serve to express any reality in the lives of the people. The growth of unrest in the industrial field, the bitterness of industrial conflict, the manner in which employers of the most varying political and religious faiths combine against the workers in the attempt to starve them into submission, and the marked increase in the fraternal feelings with which all classes of Labour regard each other, all serve to indicate that there is preparing in our midst the material for a new struggle on a national scale – a struggle fierce enough, deep enough, and enduring enough to obliterate completely all the old landmarks carried over from past political struggles into the new conditions.

In the great Dublin lock-out of 1913-1914 the manner in which the Dublin employers, overwhelmingly Unionist, received the enthusiastic and unscrupulous support of the entire Home Rule Press was a foretaste of the possibilities of the new combinations with which Labour in Ireland will have to reckon. The semi-radical phrases with which the middle-class Home Rule Press and politicians so often duped the public (and sometimes themselves) were seen to have no radical feeling behind them. Sham battle-cries of a sham struggle, they were hurriedly put out of sight the moment the war-cries of a real conflict rose upon the air.

From this lesson, as from the others already mentioned in this book, Labour must learn that the time has come for a new marshalling of forces to face the future. As the old political parties must go, so must many of the old craft divisions in the ranks of Labour. We have learned the value of the sympathetic strike; we must no longer allow craft divisions to fetter our hands and keep us from helping our brother or sister when they are attacked by the capitalist enemy. We must pursue the idea to its logical conclusion and work for the obliteration of all division of the forces of Labour on the industrial field.

The principle of complete unity upon the Industrial *plane* must be unceasingly sought after; the Industrial union embracing all workers in each industry must replace the multiplicity of unions which now hamper and restrict our operations, multiply our expenses and divide our forces in face of the mutual enemy. With the Industrial Union as our principle of action, branches can be formed to give expression to the need for effective supervision of the affairs of the workshop, shipyard, dock or railway; each branch to consist of the men and women now associated in Labour upon the same technical basis as our craft unions of to-day.

Add to this the concept of one Big Union embracing all, and you have not only the outline of the most effective form of combination for industrial warfare to-day, but also for Social Administration of the Co-operative Commonwealth of the future.

A system of society in which the workshops, factories, docks, railways, shipyards, &c., shall be owned by the nation, but administered by the Industrial Unions of the respective industries, organised as above, seems best calculated to secure the highest form of industrial efficiency, combined with the greatest amount of individual freedom from state despotism. Such a system would, we believe, realise for Ireland the most radiant hopes of all her heroes and martyrs.

Concurrently with the gradual shaping of our industrial activities towards the end of industrial union, Labour must necessarily attack the political and municipal citadels of power.

Every effort should be made to extend the scope of public ownership. As democracy invades and captures public powers public ownership will, of necessity, be transformed and infused with a new spirit. As Democracy enters, Bureaucracy will take flight. But without the power of the Industrial Union behind it, Democracy can only enter the State as the victim enters the gullet of the Serpent.

Therefore political power must, for the working classes, come straight out of the Industrial battlefield as the expression of the organised economic force of Labour; else it cannot come at all. With Labour properly organised upon the Industrial and political field, each extension of the principle of public ownership brings us nearer to the re-conquest of Ireland by its people; it means the gradual resumption of the common ownership of all Ireland by all the Irish – the realisation of Freedom.

Not the least of the many encouraging signs given to the world during the great Dublin Labour dispute just mentioned was the keen and sympathetic interest shown by the 'intellectuals' in the fortunes of the workers. In itself this was a phenomenon in Ireland. Until then, there had been discovered no means of bridging the gap between the Irish workers who toiled as ordinary day labourers, and those other workers

whose toil was upon the intellectual plane, and whose remuneration kept them generally free from the actual pressure of want.

In other European countries the Socialist movement had brought these two elements together, in organised defensive and aggressive warfare against the brutal regime of the purse; but in Ireland the fight for national freedom had absorbed the intellect of the one, and prevented the development of the necessary class-consciousness on the part of the other.

But when the belief that some form of national freedom was about to be realised spread in Ireland, and consequently the minds of all began to turn to consideration of the uses to which that freedom might be put, the possibility of co-operation between these two classes became apparent to the thoughtful patriot and reformer.

The incidents accompanying the great Labour struggle furnished just the necessary common denominator to establish relations between the two.

We have no doubt that it will be found in Ireland, as it has already been found in Italy, that the co-operation of the wage labourers and their intellectual comrades will create an uplifting atmosphere of social helpfulness of the greatest benefit in the work of national regeneration. We have in Ireland, particularly outside of the industrial districts of the North, a greater proportion of professional, literary and artistic people than is to be found in any European country except Italy, and, without enquiring too closely into the cause of this undue proportion, it may be predicted that its existence will serve the cause of Labour in Ireland.

Arising out of the same struggle, what may yet develop into a perfect understanding and concert of action was opened up between the Urban labourers and the apostles of co-operation amongst the agricultural population of Ireland. The great genius and magnetic personality of Mr. Russell, editor of **The Irish Homestead**, brought to the long-neglected toilers of Dublin a new conception – viz., that the co-operative societies which had been so long and so successfully propagating themselves throughout the agricultural areas of the country, might yet be linked up with the fortunes of the industrial workers in such a manner that, each serving the other's temporary needs, they could between them lay the groundwork of a new social order.

Almost throughout all historic periods there has been a latent antagonism between town and country; the Socialist has predicted that the Socialist state of the future will put an end to that antagonism by bringing the advantages of the city to the toiler in the country; Mr. Russell foresees, however, a co-operation in which the city and the country shall merge in perfecting methods of fraternal production and distribution that shall serve, first to enable each to combat capitalism, and finally to supplant it.

Such a development of co-operative effort between the workers of town and country would be a great achievement, and we can at least bespeak for the effort *and* the constant support of every friend of progress in Ireland.

In conclusion, we may say that this hope of co-operation between town and country for the purpose of common regeneration is typical of the hopes and possibilities now opening up to the workers of Ireland.

Everywhere we see friends, where formerly we met only suspicion and distrust; and we realise that the difference in the attitude with which Labour is regarded now to what it met formerly, is the difference with which the world at large treats those who simply claim its pity, and those who are strong and self-reliant enough to enforce its respect.

Labour in Ireland tends to become more and more self-reliant, and in its self-reliance it discovers its strength. Out of such strong self-reliance it develops a magnetism, which will draw to it more and more support from all the adherents of all the causes which in their entirety make for a regenerated Ireland.

The Gaelic Leaguer realises that capitalism did more in one century to destroy the tongue of the Gael than the sword of the Saxon did in six; the apostle of self-reliance amongst Irishmen and women finds no more earnest exponents of self-reliance than those who expound it as the creed of Labour; the earnest advocates of co-operation find the workers stating their ideals as a co-operative commonwealth; the earnest teacher of Christian morality sees that in the co-operative commonwealth alone will true morality be possible, and the fervent patriot learns that his hopes of an Ireland re-born to National life is better stated, and can be better and more completely realised, in the Labour movement for the Re-Conquest of Ireland.

Our readers will help forward the purpose of this book, and hasten the coming of the good results that should flow from the happy synchronising of facts just alluded to, if they will always remember that the objective aimed at is to establish, in the minds of men and women of Ireland, the necessity of giving effective expression, politically and socially, to the right of the community (all) to control, for the good of all, the industrial activities of each, and to endow such activities with the necessary means.

This, historically speaking, will mean the enthronement of the Irish nation as the supreme ruler and owner of itself, and all things necessary to its people – supreme alike against the foreigner and the native usurping ownership, and the power dangerous to freedom that goes with ownership.

***JAMES CONNOLLY.***